

Revelation and Bible Prophecy

A Comparison of Eschatological Views: Dispensationalism and Preterism

Major Keywords: Heaven, Hell, Christ’s Second Coming, End Times, Rapture, Revelation, Prophecy, Eschatology, Dispensationalism, Preterism, Apologetics

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Introduction

Eschatology is the study of “last things” or the “end times”; but implicit within that is a new beginning: the future Millennium and the Eternal State, and both involve people and the earth. The word “eschatology” is derived from the Greek word *eschatos* meaning “last”.

This book is about a fascinating debate going on in evangelical Christian circles regarding the book of Revelation and other books of the Bible that have eschatological themes. We will take a big picture approach to see the purpose and goal of Bible prophecy, but we’ll also go into detail as we explore prophetic passages from almost every one of the 66 books of the Bible. The pieces of the prophetic puzzle will gradually snap into place. It will be shown that saved persons will get resurrected (real) bodies, and will forever enjoy the new heavens and new earth (Revelation 21-22). We will learn that the Millennial/Kingdom reign of Jesus Christ will take place on earth; and during that time, the world will experience tremendous prosperity, peace, justice, and righteousness—with no more war. If you’re interested, keep reading! God has a personal interest in *you*.

In my opinion, the model of eschatology that is the most consistent with the Bible is the *dispensationalist* (futurist) one. This view states that most of the events described in the book of Revelation are in the future. It interprets Scripture *literally*, wherever possible. Furthermore, many future events in the Old Testament including passages from the books of Daniel, Zechariah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, etc. line up with key passages in the book of Revelation. In fact, from Genesis to Revelation, the books of the Bible fit together wonderfully to provide a complete panorama of human history, including God’s future plans for mankind.

An opposing viewpoint that has gained some popularity is the partial *preterist* position. The word “preterist” in Latin means “past”. Preterists believe that most, or all, of the events in the book of Revelation have already taken place, with most preterists applying the fulfillment mainly to 65-70 AD (with 70 AD being the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple); however, a second camp within preterism views prophetic fulfillments in both the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD and the fall of Rome in the 5th century [Pate, 1998]. The preterist viewpoint states that many key prophecies need to be understood *symbolically* rather than *literally*—because many prophecies are written in apocalyptic language (e.g., a genre that makes use of hyperbole and symbolism).

This book will give the best arguments for both preterism and dispensationalism. I believe that the evidence greatly favors the dispensationalist position. This view best harmonizes the Scriptures, facts, and doctrines. It is supported by archeological and historical evidence confirming past fulfillments of prophecy; consequently, we have strong reasons to believe that unfulfilled prophecy will also be fulfilled. Just as the first coming of Jesus Christ the Messiah (i.e., the Anointed One, the Son of God) was literal, so will be the Second Coming.

This book addresses questions about the Bible such as: Is the book of Revelation to be taken literally? Is Revelation mostly historical—or is it mostly about the future? Is the

Antichrist mentioned in 1 John 2:18 a real human being who will appear on the world stage prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ? Will there be a cashless society? Will there be a pretribulation rapture? Is the “70th Week of Daniel” that was prophesied circa 540 BC a literal 7-year Tribulation period immediately preceding the return of Jesus Christ? Could this happen in our lifetime? On the doctrine of *imminence* (Latin: “any moment”): could Christ rapture (remove) and translate (to glorified bodies) the Church at any time? What does an end times timeline or Revelation timeline look like? Is a European superpower part of a revived Roman Empire described in the book of Daniel? Is the Antichrist the world’s final Gentile leader? Will there be a literal, 1,000-year Millennium, when Jesus Christ physically rules and reigns on Earth, and the earth is greatly transformed? Is Satan imprisoned during the Millennium, and then released at the end of the 1,000 years prior to his final attack on Jerusalem? Is hell a *real* place? Is Heaven a *real* place? Will we have *real* bodies upon resurrection? What happens after we die?

The word “Revelation” comes from the Greek word meaning “to reveal”. Prophecy is not written to *scare* us; but, rather, to *prepare* us [Hindson, 2012b]. In fact, the book of Revelation—and the rest of the Bible—is written with the hope that as many people as possible will accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Jesus paid the penalty for our sins, on the cross, and He wants to give everlasting life (“Heaven”) to those of us who believe in Him. It does not matter whether you have passed away by the time He returns because we know from Scripture that God will raise the dead, and that we will have physical (“real”) bodies upon resurrection. This, and much more, will be explained in this book. *Be sure that you make a commitment to Jesus Christ by asking Him to forgive your sins and come into your life. Don’t put off the most important decision in your life, because you may not make it to tomorrow. The Bible says, “... now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2), and “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31).*

A summary of the major definitions used in this book is available below in the section titled “The Four Major Views of Revelation”. Next, as a preview, the four major *views* or *models* of eschatology related to timeframes are presented and summarized in the order: (1) future (futurism, and this is where dispensationalism falls), (2) past (preterism), (3) present (historicism), and (4) timeless (idealism):

1. ***Futurist*** (of which the most popular position is that of *dispensationalist*)—Most of the events of Revelation are in the *future*, including these literal events: Rapture, Tribulation, rule of Antichrist, Battle of Armageddon, Second Coming, and Millennium. Furthermore, the Jewish people will play a major role in End Times events; God has a plan for them.
2. ***Preterist***—Most of the events of Revelation are in the *past*, with most fulfillments having occurred by 70 AD. The Millennium is not literal, but instead the “Millennium” describes the success of Christianity over the centuries, eventually bringing in a utopia [Watson, 2015].

3. **Historicist**—Most of the events of Revelation have been progressing *throughout history*. The 2,300 days mentioned in Daniel, and the 1,260 days mentioned in Revelation are *years*, not days. There is no Rapture in historicism; however, Armageddon and the Second Coming are still to come. Historicists believe that most of the events documented in Revelation—including the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments—are symbolic descriptions of *historical events* from Church history over the past 2,000 years, with most of the events—not necessarily all—already fulfilled [Rose, 2013; Ice, 2021c]. It is believed that we are already in the Tribulation, and have been for most of the past 2,000 years. Historicists think that the successive Popes represent the Antichrist. Date setting has also been a part of historicism.

Historicism was the most common view from the Reformation to the mid-1800s; but, historicists view the Olivet Discourse from a preterist perspective and it is separate from the “Tribulation” described in Revelation [Ice & Gentry, 1999]. Historicists try to find events in church history that line up with Revelation. Thus, the “tribulation” actually falls into the church age, which is a different timeframe than what dispensationalism believes. For example, Steve Gregg summarizes: “The *historicist* view has seen the final overthrow of the papacy depicted in these final judgments [in the book of Revelation]. The language is symbolic, referring to the French Revolution and subsequent events in European history—as well as some yet future—which bring the papal power to a complete end.” [Gregg, 2013, p. 457] In his book, Gregg comments that Martin Luther was one of the first to view Revelation Chapters 4-22 as a survey of church history.

The Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Seventh-Day Adventists are among the few groups to hold to historicism [Ice, 2021c].

4. **Idealist**—Revelation is largely symbolic (i.e., ideas and concepts), and represents the timeless battle between good and evil. The events of Revelation are meant to be taken symbolically, not literally, and therefore it makes no sense to infer their timing. Babylon, for example, could apply to literal Babylon, circa 600 BC; or it could refer to Rome, or even to cities in the US and elsewhere. The idealist view is sometimes called the spiritualist view because it spiritualizes or allegorizes prophecy [Hampson, 2022].

Although some authors (e.g., [Irwin & Perry, 2023]) adopt an “eclectic” approach that combines several—or all—of the above 4 viewpoints, this book is primarily an analysis and contrast of the two most popular positions in Biblical prophecy: dispensationalism and (partial) preterism. We will demonstrate that the position that most consistently fits Scripture is dispensationalism. Elements of the other positions may *also* be present, but when they are, it is usually as a *secondary*, rather than as a *primary*, application. In other words, certain events in Scripture may have: (a) both a near-term and a far-term fulfillment, (b) both a literal and a symbolic meaning, or (c) both a current and a historical (e.g., Old Testament) reference. As a general case concerning End Times prophecies, we believe that the primary meaning or application of such a prophecy is *literally* an event looking

forward to the physical Second Coming of Christ, rather than simply a symbolic or vague historical reference that may be clouded in apocalyptic language. The Bible is rich with repeated examples, analogies, and *types* (e.g., Joseph as a type or pattern of Christ). A Biblical truth might be played out numerous times with different circumstances and personalities, so that we understand the underlying message—not to mention gain a greater appreciation for the depth of Scripture. We have no doubt that some secondary applications exist, but we don't believe that they are the primary or only interpretation. The rest of the book will explain, in detail, what we mean. We encourage the reader to carefully consider the evidence.

Dispensationalists believe that history is broken into eras or dispensations (Greek: *oikonomia*, meaning “administration” or “stewardship”):

1. *Innocence* (from Creation to the Fall of Adam & Eve, Genesis 1:1 to 3:7)
2. *Conscience* (from the Fall of Adam & Eve to Noah's Flood, Genesis 3:8 to 8:22)
3. *Human Government* (from Noah's Flood to Abraham, Genesis 9:1 to 11:32)
4. *Promise or Patriarchal Rule* (from Abraham to Moses, Genesis 12:1 to Exodus 19:35)
5. *Law* (from Moses to the Day of Pentecost, Exodus 20 to Acts 2:4)
6. *Grace* (from the Day of Pentecost to the Rapture (or Christ's Second Coming), Acts 2:4 to Revelation 20:3)
 - The 7-year Tribulation prior to Christ's Second Coming is sometimes considered a separate dispensation. This is the 70th Week of Daniel, which was put on hold when Christ was rejected by the Jews, circa 30 AD.
7. *Kingdom* (from the Second Coming to the End of the Millennium, Revelation 20:4-6)

Dispensation (7) is followed by the new heavens and new earth (Revelation 20:6-22:21)—for all eternity. Here is a good definition of dispensationalism:

The word [dispensational] means “administration” or “stewardship” ... Dispensationalism teaches that there are successive dispensations throughout history and each one involves a test or responsibility, which man fails, followed by God's judgment. Thus, God's grace through Jesus Christ becomes the only basis of hope for mankind. The present dispensation is known as the “age of grace” or the “church age.” The previous dispensation was called *law* or *Israel*. There are two peoples of God, Israel and the church. However, God's plan for Israel is not yet finished, and He will return to deal with them during the seven-year tribulation and the thousand-year millennium.

Dispensationalism is characterized by: (1) a consistent (from Genesis to Revelation) literal interpretation of the Bible, (2) a distinction between Israel and the church, (3) the glorification of God as His main purpose for the world. Dispensationalism is a theology deduced from the Bible that emphasizes the glory and grace of God. [Ice, 2011a]

A dispensation can be viewed as a time of probation that has a distinct beginning and end [Kilpatrick, 2017a]. It is also a time of testing. Even the Millennial Kingdom represents a time of testing for the mortals in it.

Classical dispensationalists:

- *Are pretribulational*, meaning that they expect Christ to *rapture* (or translate) them to Heaven prior to a 7-year period of chaotic time on Earth called the *Tribulation*—a time of God’s wrath on Earth coinciding with the temporary reign of Antichrist.
- *Are premillennial*, meaning that they expect Christ to physically return to Earth (at Armageddon), and then establish a 1,000-year earthly kingdom under His reign—a time of great peace and prosperity. Thus, classical dispensationalists hold to two stages in the coming of Christ: a pretribulational rapture, and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ seven or more years later.
- *Apply a consistent distinction between Israel and the Church throughout history.* God made some unconditional promises to Israel, and those still apply today. God has separate programs for Israel and the church. The doctrine of the pretribulational Rapture comes out of this. In other words, the church won’t be here during the Tribulation.
- *Use a consistent, literal interpretation of prophecy.*

I believe a consistent, literal approach to interpreting Scripture (which, of course, allows for clear figures of speech and poetic language) from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21 will logically and methodically lead one to conclude that it presents a clear, basic order of events defined loosely as pretribulation premillennialism. That is a fancy way of saying, “The rapture will occur before the tribulation period, and the tribulation period will occur before the millennial kingdom.” [Hampson, 2022, p. 186]

Daniel Hummel writes about the development of dispensationalism and its leading schools, scholars, and personalities—although he does not agree with the dispensational viewpoint:

This eschatological thrust [from creation to the return of Christ, with a focus on the latter] has undoubtedly been one of dispensationalism’s most significant contributions to American Christianity. It has supplied dispensationalists with vast amounts of energy and purpose, and deeply shaped the spiritual lives of millions of Christians both within and outside its direct influence. If nothing else, dispensationalism has prompted those who have encountered its teachings to take stock of the eschatological dimensions of the historic Christian tradition. Even in arguing against dispensationalism, other Christians have sharpened their own understandings of the kingdom of God and the consummation of history. [Hummel, 2023, p. 337]

There is a variant of dispensationalism called *progressive dispensationalism* [Price, 2018]. Although it is mostly pretribulational and premillennial, it does not draw a distinction between Israel and the Church. In other words, it spiritualizes the Church, claiming that the Church has replaced Old Testament Israel as the “true Israel”. Progressive dispensationalists are looking for a future Millennial Kingdom, but believe that we are already in the first phase of this kingdom. Furthermore, they take prophetic passages more symbolically than literally. For example, progressive dispensationalists believe that Christ is ruling on David’s Throne in Heaven right now; whereas, classical dispensationalists believe that Christ’s reign on David’s Throne will take place on Earth during the Millennium (i.e., Christ will physically and literally rule during the Millennium).

In this book, we will use the term *dispensationalist* as a synonym for *classical dispensationalist*.

Hank Hanegraaff (not a dispensationalist) acknowledges:

Dispensationalism is distinctive for its teaching that the Church will be “raptured” from the earth in the first phase of Christ’s second coming so that God can return to his work with national Israel, which was put on hold after Israel’s rejection of Messiah. God’s renewed working with Israel is thought by many dispensationalists to include a seven-year period of tribulation under the Antichrist in which two-thirds of the Jewish people will be killed, followed by the second phase of Christ’s second coming in which Christ and the martyred “tribulation saints” will rule for a thousand years ... [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 272]

The term *preterism* is derived from a Latin word for “past”. Preterism claims that at least some—if not all—of the prophecies in the book of Revelation were fulfilled during and before 70 AD. The “last days” started when Jesus was alive on earth, and ended in 70 AD with the fall of Jerusalem [Newton, 2012]. The fall ended after the 3½ years of the “Great Tribulation”. Also, 70 AD was the end of the “old covenant” era [Newton, 2012]. Preterism does not believe in a pretribulational rapture. “The church lives in the kingdom now. The kingdom of God will be victorious in time and space in the earth. There is no need for a new temple in Jerusalem; neither will animal sacrifices ever be accepted by God.” [Newton, 2012, p. 22]

Historically, the label *preterism* referred to what we would call partial preterism or mild preterism today [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007]. In some circles, partial preterism is referred to as postmillennialism, dominion theology, or victorious eschatology [Newton, 2012].

An essential component of preterism is the acceptance of an early writing of Revelation, that is, somewhere between 64 AD and 70 AD [Gentry, 1998b]. Dispensationalism, on the other hand, assumes that Revelation was written around 90-95 AD, with 95 AD being commonly accepted [Hitchcock, 1995]. In fact, “the majority of current scholarship accepts a late date for Revelation—a date of around A.D. 95” [Gentry, 1998b, p. x]. This would coincide with the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian. The first preterists were believed to be Roman Catholics, and the first Protestant preterist was believed to be Hugo Grotius, circa 1640 [Watson, 2017].

I will try to update this book when corrections or revisions are in order. I believe that certain aspects of *both* of dispensationalism and preterism are correct; however, in my opinion, the dispensationalist position fits *much* better with the Scriptures (i.e., the books of the Bible). Prophecy sometimes has a double fulfillment: a secondary fulfillment and a primary fulfillment—and usually, but not always, the secondary one comes first, especially if it’s symbolic. Thus, some of the preterist, idealist, or historicist arguments, especially the symbolic aspects, may have value.

Because of the Bible’s track record regarding the literal fulfillment of prophecy, we can trust the Bible. Mark Hitchcock writes:

Even the most skeptical person can put the Bible to the test by noting the literal, precise fulfillment of past prophecies. ... Think about it: If hundreds of biblical prophecies have been meticulously and accurately fulfilled, then it stands to reason that what the Bible has to say about other things—such as the nature and character of God, creation, the nature of man, salvation, and the existence of heaven and hell—are 100 percent accurate as well. [Hitchcock, 2010, pp. 8-9]

The book of Revelation is highly prophetic, and is relevant to every age—especially to today! Where I differ from preterists is that I believe that much of Revelation is *still future*, and that much of Revelation is to be taken *literally*; however, the metaphors and symbolic language are also indicative of various past events. Since the prophecies of Christ’s first coming were literally fulfilled, it stands to reason that the prophecies of His Second Coming will be literally fulfilled. Furthermore, often the past event is a foreshadowing of a much greater fulfillment in the future. God is a genius: I believe these “complications” (e.g., evidence suggestive of both dispensationalism and preterism; arguments for literalism and symbolism) are intentionally put there by God because He wants us to actively study and debate prophecy, without giving everything away, and without having people “influence” the fulfillment of prophecy (which, these days, could have disastrous global consequences). My view is that the dispensationalist view is the *primary* application (or “feature presentation”—to use an analogy from the theater/motion picture world); and that *some* parts of the preterist view are also correct, but they only provide a *secondary* application (even though those fulfillments were earlier).

Regarding the time in which we live—a time that is getting very close to the return of Christ, Chuck Missler writes:

We are being plunged into a period of time about which the Bible says more than it does about any other period of time in history, including the time that Jesus walked the shores of Galilee or climbed the mountains of Judea. [Missler, 2003a]

By studying various books and listening to various speakers, we learn a lot about the Bible, and are strengthened with “the blessed hope” of Christ’s imminent return (Rapture). Hank Hanegraaff often says that “iron sharpens iron”, that is, we learn from each other: we can agree to disagree on non-essential parts of Christianity, vigorously debate them, but hold to the essential doctrines of Christianity. Such essential doctrines include: original sin (Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden), Noah’s Flood, God taking on human form (i.e., Jesus Christ), Christ being born of a virgin, Christ’s sinless life, Christ paying the *full* penalty for our sins through His death on the cross (i.e., God Himself dying for his creation), Christ’s resurrection on the third day, the future personal appearance of Christ (“the Second Coming”), the future judgment of all people who have ever lived, the existence of Heaven and Hell, the restoration of the earth and the rest of creation, etc.

One may summarize the Bible as a drama in four acts—**creation, fall, redemption, and restoration**:

The purpose of Jesus’s coming is to put the whole world right, to renew and restore the creation, not to escape it. It is not just to bring personal forgiveness and peace, but also justice and *shalom* to the world. God created both body and soul, and the resurrection of Jesus shows that he is going to redeem both body and soul. The work of the Spirit of God

is not only to save souls but also to care and cultivate the face of the earth, the material world.

It is hard to overemphasize the uniqueness of this vision. Outside of the Bible, no other major religious faith holds out any hope or even interest in the restoration of perfect *shalom*, justice, and wholeness in this material world. [Keller, 2008]

There appears to be substantial evidence for an early rapture (i.e., a rapture that takes place considerably earlier than a simultaneous event on judgment day). Although some aspects of prophecy have both a near-term and a far-term fulfillment, the majority of the prophecies found in Revelation still refer to the future.

Why do Christians have different views on eschatology? Many such individuals truly love the Lord, genuinely seek the truth, and try to put Christ first in their lives. Perhaps the Lord has cleverly designed Scripture in the way He did to make us excited about prophecy, to continue studying it, to debate it, and to avoid having us “cause” Scripture to be fulfilled in a particular way through our own actions. God knows the future, but that does not mean He *causes* it.

All Scripture is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16-17), and is inerrant in the original manuscripts. About 27% of the Bible is about prophecy (i.e., 8,352 verses out of 31,124 verses in the whole Bible) [House & Price, 2003], and up to 80% of those passages have already been fulfilled [Hampson, 2022]. This means that at least 20% of those prophecies will be fulfilled in the future. There are 1,845 *references* to Christ’s Second Coming in the Old Testament, and 318 such references in the New Testament. Compare that to the 109 declarations in the Bible about His first coming [LaHaye, 2012]. In the Bible, the doctrine of salvation is mentioned the most in Scripture; then, Christ’s Second Coming; and in third place, we have the Tribulation, which is mentioned in more than 60 Scripture passages [LaHaye, 2011a; Hindson, 2021]. The apostle Paul mentioned the Second Coming 50 times, baptism 13 times, and communion twice.

The Bible was written by 40 authors, supernaturally inspired by God, over a period of 1500-2100 years. Moses wrote the *Pentateuch* or *Torah* (“Law”), that is, the first 5 books of the Bible—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—in approximately 1400-1450 BC; and the last book of the Bible—Revelation—was written by the apostle John shortly before 100 AD; but, it’s possible that the book of Job was written around 2000 BC—even before the Pentateuch. Bible prophecy can be used to confirm that the God of the Bible is the one true God, by tracking the fulfilled prophecies.

The table on the following pages list the “books” of the Bible, and the approximate dates when these books (scrolls, parchments) were written. There are 39 books in the Old Testament, and 27 books (some of them as short as a page or two) in the New Testament. The Old Testament Scriptures are the same as those used by the Jewish people.

The New Testament means “New Covenant”. It begins—and ends—with the story of Christianity, that is, the life, testimony, and teachings of Jesus Christ the *Messiah* (also known as “the Anointed One” or “Savior” or “Son of God”). “Jesus” is the Savior’s actual

name (“Yeshua” in Hebrew). In either Hebrew or Greek, His name means “Jehovah is salvation”, or more informally, “the Lord saves”. The name “Christ” might seem like a last name; but, instead, it is His title. “Christ” is Greek for “the anointed one” (the Savior that had been promised and expected since the days of Adam and Eve). “Messiah” is Hebrew for “the anointed one”; so, “Christ” in Greek is the same as “Messiah” in Hebrew.

The Bible teaches that there is only one God, and that He exists in three “persons” (called “the Trinity”): Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (A weak, natural analogy to this might be *water* which exists in 3 different forms: solid (ice), liquid, and gas (water vapor).) Thus, all three personalities are “God”, and all three are eternal, all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-loving. All three were present at creation time, and at the baptism of Jesus Christ (Matthew 3:16-17). (a) The Father exists as a Spirit. (b) Jesus is called “the Son of God” because He is the image of the invisible God, that is, of God the Father (Colossians 1:15-16; Hebrews 1:2-3). God took on human form when He came to earth, as a baby. His purpose was to die as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind, that is, as a substitute in our place. Since eternal beings cannot die; God had to become a man [Heiser, 2018]. In John 10:30, Jesus says, “I and the Father are one.” Jesus is also called a Prophet, Priest, and King. When He died on the cross, a sign was placed above Him that read, “Jesus, King of the Jews”. It was a sarcastic title at the time; however, Jesus will literally be King over the earth at His Second Coming (Zechariah 14:9). The Creator of the universe died for His creation ... for all who choose to recognize Him as Savior. (c) The Holy Spirit is sometimes called the counsellor or helper. We cannot see the Holy Spirit, but like the wind, we can see His effects. The Holy Spirit permanently indwells, seals, and empowers each believer. Believers still sin and disappoint the Lord; however, that will change when we receive our resurrected bodies.

“Lord” is a title that is often used as a synonym for “God”. In English Bibles, the name “Lord” is often written in capital letters: LORD. In that case, it is a translation of “Yahweh” or “Jehovah” (Yahweh is the Hebrew name for the one true God (i.e., the God of the Bible), and Jehovah is the Latin transliteration (equivalent) of the name Yahweh) [Stewart, 2022]. LORD means: the self-existent One (who has no beginning and no end). He is the covenant-keeping God who created the universe. Yahweh (LORD) is the God of the Bible, and the *only* self-existent one; and everything was created by Him. All good angels, bad angels, Satan, and other created beings were created with choice, and the ones who rebelled decided to side with Satan. There are only two choices: Yahweh’s side, or Satan’s side—i.e., Heaven or hell. Despite the many religions on earth, only the God of the Bible provides the road to salvation and everlasting life.

The New Covenant will apply to Israel upon Christ’s return. In the meantime, the Christian church has been able to partake in its blessings (e.g., Holy Spirit, Lord’s Supper (communion), and forgiveness of sins) [Stallard, 2022]. This everlasting covenant is different than the Mosaic Covenant. Here are some provisions of the everlasting covenant: it is made with the Jewish people; it is unconditional; and it puts God’s Law in their minds and hearts, guarantees their salvation, and guarantees that all Israel will know God [Levy, 2022].

Christ was the fulfillment of what the Old Testament prophets had prophesied about, for many hundreds of years. The Jewish people largely rejected Christ, and are still looking for the (first) appearance of the Messiah. Interestingly, it has been said that 30% of the Jews in the first century accepted Christ, including some of the Pharisees [Ice, 2021d].

Christ made it clear that: (a) He is the Messiah, and (b) He is coming back.

The Hebrew (Jewish) Bible (also called the *Tanakh*) orders the Scriptures as follows:

- Torah – “The Law”
- Nevi'im – “The Prophets”
- Ketuvim – “The Writings”

The Old Testament in the Christian Bible contains the same Scriptures, but orders them as follows:

- The Historical Books (17 of them)
- The Wisdom Books (5 of them)
- The Prophets (17 of them)

How do we know that the Bible is the Word of God? Hank Hanegraaff uses the acronym MAPS to provide proof of the Bible's divine inspiration [Hanegraaff, 2011]:

- Manuscript C-O-P-I-E-S
 - Copyist Practices—very careful copying of manuscripts
 - Oral Culture—memorization was stressed, before the print age
 - Papyrus & Parchment—many old documents exist
 - Internal Evidence—within the Bible
 - External Evidence—from outside the Bible (i.e., from secular history)
 - Science of Textual Criticism—an integrated message
- Archaeologist's S-P-A-D-E
 - Steles & Stones—archaeological finds in the Middle East
 - Pools & Fools—references to locations that weren't found until recently
 - Assyrian Archaeology—major archaeological finds
 - Dead Sea Scrolls—in 1947 and beyond: a gold mine of very old documents (Old Testament books; scrolls of other pre-Christian, Jewish writings that are useful for edification, and serve as a form of progressive revelation giving us more insight); they confirm that the previous oldest manuscripts that we had been relying on, are virtually unchanged from what appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls
 - Epic of Gilgamesh—records of a major flood
- Prophetic S-T-A-R-S
 - Succession of Nations
 - Typological Prophecy
 - Abomination of Desolation
 - Resurrection Prophecies

- Superstar ABCs
- Scriptural L-I-G-H-T-S
 - Literal Principle
 - Illumination Principle
 - Grammatical Principle
 - Historical Principle
 - Typology Principle
 - Synergy Principle

For example, the ancient manuscripts, of which there are many, confirm the integrity of the Scriptures. There are very minor differences among some of these parchments, often just small copying mistakes (e.g., a spelling mistake or an omitted word, and these are only in a small number of manuscripts rather than all of them, so that the original can be confirmed by the majority).

Archaeology continues to reveal historical, buried artifacts and even buried towns—some of which had not been confirmed by documentation external to the Bible—until recently. Thus, the historical and chronological writings of the Bible stand the test of time, and can be relied upon.

There are many fulfilled prophecies in the Bible—prophecies that could not have been fulfilled by chance. Many such prophecies are listed throughout this book. In fact, there are about 1,000 prophecies in the Bible, and about 500 have been literally fulfilled, so far [Hitchcock, 2019c]. This gives us confidence that the Bible is true. Of the approximately 500 prophecies that are left to be fulfilled, we can be confident that they, too, will be literally fulfilled.

Finally, the scriptural synergy of the Bible is amazing: it is a series of interwoven messages that together explain God’s complete, sufficient, and saving message to mankind.

The Books of the Bible

... are listed here in their order of appearance in most modern translations (e.g., [NIV, 2002]). Each book's author(s) wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (i.e., under the direction of God); hence, the Bible is acknowledged to be "the Word of God". The Old Testament is the same as the Hebrew Scriptures (i.e., Law, Prophets, and Writings).

Old Testament (39 books)	
Book	Author(s)
Genesis	Moses
Exodus	
Leviticus	
Numbers	
Deuteronomy	
Joshua	Possibly Joshua and Eleazar, a son of Aaron
Judges	Possibly Samuel
Ruth	
1 Samuel	Unknown (possibly Jashar, David, Samuel, Nathan, and/or Gad)
2 Samuel	
1 Kings	Unknown
2 Kings	
1 Chronicles	Possibly Ezra
2 Chronicles	
Ezra	
Nehemiah	
Esther	Unknown
Job	
Psalms	Various (including David, Asaph, the sons of Korah, singers, and musicians)
Proverbs	Solomon
Ecclesiastes	
Song of Songs (also known as Song of Solomon)	
Isaiah	Isaiah
Jeremiah	Jeremiah
Lamentations	
Ezekiel	Ezekiel
Daniel	Daniel
Hosea	Hosea
Joel	Joel
Amos	Amos
Obadiah	Obadiah
Jonah	Jonah
Micah	Micah
Nahum	Nahum
Habakkuk	Habakkuk
Zephaniah	Zephaniah
Haggai	Haggai
Zechariah	Zechariah
Malachi	Malachi

New Testament (27 books)	
Book	Author(s)
Matthew	Apostle Matthew
Mark	John Mark
Luke	Luke
John	Apostle John
Acts	Luke
Romans	Apostle Paul
1 Corinthians	
2 Corinthians	
Galatians	
Ephesians	
Philippians	
Colossians	
1 Thessalonians	
2 Thessalonians	
1 Timothy	
2 Timothy	
Titus	
Philemon	
Hebrews	Possibly Barnabas or Apollos
James	James: probably the oldest brother of Jesus
1 Peter	Peter
2 Peter	
1 John	Apostle John
2 John	
3 John	
Jude	Jude (also known as either the Apostle Judas or Judas the brother of Jesus)
Revelation	Apostle John

Timeline of the Books of the Bible

... listed by their approximate date of writing [AiG, 1995+; Hitchcock, 2005; Jones, 2004; NIV, 2002].
The dates are subject to revision, as more reliable information becomes available.

Old Testament	
Date	Book
2000-1800 BC	Job
1446-1406 BC	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
1400 BC	Joshua
1400-1050 BC	Judges
1015-897 BC	1 Kings
1000 BC	Psalms, Ruth
1000-686 BC	Proverbs
990-970 BC	Song of Solomon
960-940 BC	1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, Ecclesiastes
897-562 BC	2 Kings
890-840 BC	Obadiah
830-810 BC	Joel
782-753 BC	Jonah
760-750 BC	Amos
760-681 BC	Isaiah
760-740 BC	Hosea
735-700 BC	Micah
664-654 BC	Nahum
630 BC	Zephaniah
628-585 BC	Jeremiah
609-605 BC	Habakkuk
607-534 BC	Daniel
593-573 BC	Ezekiel
588-575 BC	Lamentations
536-440 BC	Ezra
520 BC	Haggai, Zechariah
500-460 BC	Esther
454-430 BC	Nehemiah
450 BC	1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles
441 BC	Malachi

New Testament	
Date	Book
37-50 AD	Matthew
46-49 AD	James
50-53 AD	1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians
50-59 AD	Mark
50-60 AD	Galatians
50-63 AD	Luke
54-59 AD	1 Corinthians
55-59 AD	2 Corinthians
57-60 AD	Romans
60-61 AD	Philemon
60-63 AD	Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians
60-66 AD	Acts
62-63 AD	1 Timothy
63 AD	Titus
63-64 AD	1 Peter
64-66 AD	2 Peter
64-68 AD	Hebrews
65-69 AD	John
66 AD	Jude
66-85 AD	1 John, 2 John, 3 John
67 AD	2 Timothy
95 AD	Revelation

Percentage of Prophecy in Each Book of the Bible

For each of the following 66 books of the Bible, an estimate of the percentage of each book that was prophetic at the time of its writing is given [LaHaye, *et al.*, 2001]. The percentage is computed as the number of verses containing prophecy in a given book divided by the total number of verses in that book.

Old Testament	
Book	Prophecy
Genesis	14%
Exodus	40%
Leviticus	59%
Numbers	36%
Deuteronomy	36%
Joshua	12%
Judges	7%
Ruth	18%
1 Samuel	15%
2 Samuel	10%
1 Kings	23%
2 Kings	20%
1 Chronicles	14%
2 Chronicles	31%
Ezra	23%
Nehemiah	11%
Esther	1%
Job	2%
Psalms	10%
Proverbs	1%
Ecclesiastes	3%
Song of Songs (also known as Song of Solomon)	0%
Isaiah	59%
Jeremiah	60%
Lamentations	5%
Ezekiel	65%
Daniel	45%
Hosea	56%
Joel	68%
Amos	58%
Obadiah	81%
Jonah	10%
Micah	70%
Nahum	74%
Habakkuk	41%
Zephaniah	89%
Haggai	39%
Zechariah	69%
Malachi	56%

New Testament	
Book	Prophecy
Matthew	26%
Mark	19%
Luke	22%
John	20%
Acts	13%
Romans	21%
1 Corinthians	19%
2 Corinthians	5%
Galatians	11%
Ephesians	5%
Philippians	10%
Colossians	9%
1 Thessalonians	18%
2 Thessalonians	40%
1 Timothy	4%
2 Timothy	20%
Titus	2%
Philemon	0%
Hebrews	45%
James	6%
1 Peter	20%
2 Peter	41%
1 John	6%
2 John	15%
3 John	0%
Jude	40%
Revelation	95%

Translations of the Bible

There are many translations. The original documents are called the *autographs*. Obviously, they are the oldest and most reliable documents; however, we don't have them. The most recent autographs would have been the New Testament books from the first century, and they were written on papyrus or parchment, and would have deteriorated long ago [Mounce, 2013]. Many copies were made even in the first century, with the objective of sharing those documents among many churches. Those copies are called *manuscripts*. A *translation* is what results when moving from one written language to another. These are also called *versions*.

The individuals doing the copying would most likely *not* have been professional scribes. Thus, random, minor errors, such as spelling mistakes, or a dropped word, would have been introduced. Sometimes other errors, even intentional changes, may have been introduced. However, since there are many manuscripts, they can be compared; and with good confidence, we can figure out which words were most likely correct.

It is important to remember that *all translations are interpretations* [Mounce, 2013]. *Textual criticism* is the “science of studying the differences among the manuscripts and deciding which reading [words used by a specific manuscript] is most likely to be original.” [Mounce, 2013, p. 252]

As the manuscripts were studied, it was found that they fall into four basic groupings. Manuscripts that showed the same types of changes, corrections, readings and physical location were said to belong to a text-type. Four text-types are hypothesized: Alexandrian, Caesarean, Western, and Byzantine. The basic conclusion of textual criticism is that the manuscripts that belong to the Alexandrian text-type are most likely to consistently contain the original wording. ... Two of the more famous Alexandrian manuscripts are Sinaiticus, written about 350-375, and Vaticanus, also fourth century. On the other hand, textual critics are nearly unanimous that the Byzantine text-type is the least reliable, showing the greatest willingness on the part of the scribes to amend the text. [Mounce, 2013, pp. 260-261]

... no cardinal doctrine is brought into question by any viable variant ...

The KJV is a beautiful translation written by the best scholars of their day, scholars who also had a command of the English language that has not since been paralleled. But the English language has changed substantially, superior Greek manuscripts have been found, and the purpose of translation is to convey the beautiful message of God's salvation in terms that the untrained person can understand. After all, the New Testament is written in “Koine” Greek—not the fancy Greek of previous centuries, but the language most familiar to Jesus, Paul, and their contemporaries. So should our translations be understandable. [Mounce, 2013, pp. 262-263]

When I started writing this book, I thought I would find many places where the translations differed sharply from each other. To my surprise and delight, that proved not to be the case. Rather, what I found was that some translations leave a verse ambiguous, and others take a more interpretive stance and remove the ambiguity; but the majority of the time the

latter group of translations take the same interpretive stance. The NIV and NLT are remarkably similar in what they understand Scripture to mean. [Mounce, 2013, p. 272]

With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (1947), we have Old Testament manuscripts that now go back over 2,000 years, to about 250 BC. These manuscripts are essentially identical to our previously known, oldest manuscripts—namely those from about 1,000 years later. Copies of all of the Old Testament books, except the book of Esther, are found among the documents. The Dead Sea Scrolls also contain a lot of commentaries about the books of the Old Testament. These provide greater insight into the Scriptures, especially since the authors were so much closer to the events than we are today.

The history of the Dead Sea Scrolls is very complex. We know that the Essenes kept an ancient library in Qumran. We also know that sometime before the Roman destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in AD 70, the Essenes sealed the scrolls of their library in jars for a future generation. ...

Between AD 1948 to 2016, twelve caves were found in Qumran containing many ancient scrolls that are pre-Christian. A forty-volume set of the Dead Sea Scrolls was produced entitled *Discoveries in the Judean Desert*. This set contains every photo, description, and translation of these scrolls. Fragments of five of the twelve sons of Jacob were found in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Levi, Judah, Naphtali, Joseph, and Benjamin.

When looking at a Dead Sea Scroll, it will have a title like 1Q21. The Testament of Levi is 1Q21. The “Q” in this designation means it was found in Qumran. The number “1” means it was found in cave one of the twelve caves. The “21” means it was the twenty-first scroll found in that cave. [Johnson, 2021a, pp. 111-113]

At Qumran, nearly 900 manuscripts were found in some twenty-five thousand pieces, with many no bigger than a postage stamp. A few scrolls are well preserved, such as the *Great Isaiah Scroll* from Cave 1 (1QIsa^a) and the *Great Psalms Scroll* from Cave 11 (11QPs^a). Unfortunately, however, most of the scrolls are very fragmentary. The earliest manuscripts date from about 250 BC, while the latest ones were copied shortly before the destruction of the Qumran site by the Romans in 68 CE. Approximately forty-five more manuscripts were discovered at the other sites: about fifteen at Wadi Murabba’at, eighteen at Nahal Hever, and twelve at Masada. [Abegg, *et al.*, 1999]

Dead Sea Scroll manuscript 11Q13 states that the Messiah (Jesus Christ) would be God incarnate, He would come in 32 AD [according to our calendar] to die for the sins of mankind in order to reconcile us to God, and this would be followed by the Age of Grace [Johnson, 2023]. The start of the Age of Grace would coincide with the end of the Age of Torah, including the sacrifices. When Jesus came, He was to be named Yeshua; be born in Bethlehem; and He would heal people, raise people from the dead, heal the blind, etc.

Dead Sea Scroll manuscript 3Q15 is The Copper Scroll, whose letters were chiseled onto sheets of copper to help preserve the contents over a long period of time [Neese, 2019]. It is a map of temple treasures and massive amounts of gold, silver, and precious stones. These treasures were hidden some time before Babylon’s King Nebuchadnezzar invaded the Holy Land, destroyed the Temple, and took many exiles. However, no one knows where to start looking for the treasures because the manuscript doesn’t give enough details. Jim Barfield’s team has put a lot of time and effort into searching for the treasures [Neese,

2019]. The Copper Scroll indicates that about 4,500 talents of precious metals are hidden. One talent is approximately 75 pounds. In the days of King Solomon, the temple treasury gained 666 talents of gold per year (1 Kings 10:14). Where did all that gold go to? It has to be hidden somewhere in Israel. 666 talents of gold is worth about \$1.6 billion at \$2,000 per ounce.

With confidence, we can get a good idea of what the Dead Sea Scroll autographs are by examining the thousands of copies that have been discovered. A (usually minor) copyist error may appear in a manuscript, but not in all manuscripts. Experts report that only one variation occurred per 1,580 words on average, and 98% of those are minor variations in spelling. Thus, there will be substantial agreement among the copies, inferring the contents of the original manuscripts. This is a positive apologetic for Christianity. It means that the originals for many books of the Bible are within a few hundred years of the Dead Sea Scrolls; and in the case of the second oldest books—Genesis Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—approximately 1,300 years' difference; and in the case of the oldest book—Job—perhaps 1,800 years' difference. All of the New Testament writings took place in the first century, with Revelation having been written in 95 AD (although some scholars claim that Revelation was written circa 65 AD).

Originally, the Old Testament was written almost entirely in Hebrew except for portions of the following books which were written in Aramaic: Ezra 4:8–6:18 and 7:12-26, Daniel 2:4–7:28, and Jeremiah 10:11 (one verse). The New Testament was written entirely in Greek.

The languages in which the Bible is written—Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek—have peculiarities unknown in the English language. For example the Hebrew and Aramaic of the original Old Testament manuscripts included only consonants. Vowels were understood and therefore not written (though they were filled in hundreds of years later around A.D. 900 by the Masoretes). Also Hebrew and Aramaic are read from right to left rather than from left to right. In addition no spaces were inserted between words. The words in all three biblical languages ran together. [Zuck, 1991, p. 16]

All authors of the books of the Bible (e.g., Moses, Paul) were men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write down the original manuscripts.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 **All Scripture** is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be **thoroughly equipped** for every good work.

By 200 AD, the Bible had been translated into 7 languages; by 500 AD, 13 languages; by 1400, 17 languages; by 1800, 57 languages; by 1900, 537 languages; and by 1980, 1,100 languages [Rose, 2005; referencing *The World Christian Encyclopedia*].

Differences and preferences among translations are often due to using a word-for-word translation (sometimes called a *formal* translation) as opposed to a thought-for-thought translation (sometimes called a *dynamic* or *functional* translation). Sometimes a phrase in Hebrew is an expression or an idiom, and a word-for-word translation into English (i.e., a transliteration) would not convey the underlying meaning. Paraphrase versions of the Bible

are subjective, but can be useful in conveying the thought and spirit underlying the original documents. Furthermore, some Bible versions are easier to read than others (see the grade levels in the spectrum of Bible translations below).

Here is an example of Romans 4:4 comparing 3 word-for-word translations followed by 2 thought-for-thought translations [Champeon, 2021]:

- NASB: Now to the one who works, the wages are not credited as a favor, but as what is due.
- ESV: Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due.
- KJV: Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.
- NIV: Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation.
- NLT: When people work, their wages are not a gift, but something they have earned.

Here is an example from [Mounce, 2013, p. 267] that shows why you sometimes do not want a word-for-word translation. In the original Greek, a sentence that really means “How long will you keep us in suspense?” is rendered as follows when we use a word-for-word translation from Greek to English: “Until when the soul of us will you lift up?” That said, Mounce does not recommend dynamic translations for “serious Bible study” because “the possibility for (mis)interpretation is greater” than when using a formal translation [Mounce, 2013, p. 270]. For serious Bible study, if you are using a dynamic translation as your primary Bible, it is recommended that you also read the passages in a formal translation, or vice-versa ... and perhaps compare multiple versions. Commentaries can also be helpful, and again, it helps to consult more than one.

Many people use multiple versions. These days, there are many online tools that let you drill down on the Hebrew and Greek words, and compare the different translations for a given verse. Generally speaking, the translations tend to agree, sometimes using slightly different English words. The major doctrines are the same.

On a scale from Word-for-Word translations to Thought-for-Thought translations, we have the following spectrum, going from Word-for-Word (top) to Thought-for-Thought (bottom) [Brimmer, 2014; Rose, 2005; Rose, 2008]. There are other translations, too.

At This End of the Spectrum are Bible Translations that are Closest to Word-for-Word:

- Original Manuscripts (circa 1450 BC to 95 AD, or possibly 2000 BC to 95 AD due to the uncertainty about the time of writing of the book of Job)
- Early Copies: Codex Alexandrinus (circa 425 AD), Codex Vaticanus (circa 350 AD), Codex Sinaiticus (circa 350 AD)

- Various modern *interlinear* versions (i.e., Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek manuscripts ... with English or other languages given alongside the words on each page)
- New American Standard Bible (NASB, 1971 & 1995, Grade 10 reading level)
- Amplified Bible (AMP, 1965, Grade 11 reading level)
- English Standard Version (ESV, 2001, Grade 8 reading level)
- Revised Standard Version (RSV, 1952, Grade 10 reading level)
- King James Version (KJV, 1611 & 1769, Grade 12 reading level)
- New King James Version (NKJV, modernization using the same manuscripts, 1982, Grade 9 reading level)
- Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB, balanced between word-for-word and thought-for-thought, 2004, Grade 7 or 8 reading level)
- New Revised Standard Version (NRSV, 1990, Grade 8 reading level)
- New American Bible (NAB, official version of the Catholic Church, 1970 & 1986, Grade 6 or 7 reading level)
- New Jerusalem Bible (NJB, by Catholic scholars, 1966 & 1985, Grade 9 reading level)
- New International Version (NIV, 1978, Grade 7 reading level)
- Today's New International Version (TNIV, modernization of the NIV, 2001 New Testament)
- God's Word (GW, 1995, Grade 5 reading level)
- New Century Version (NCV, 1987, Grade 5 or 6 reading level)
- New Living Translation (NLT, a revision of The Living Bible, 1996)
- New International Reader's Version (NirV, simplified NIV: Grade 3 or 4 reading level, 1998)
- Good News Translation / Today's English Version (GNT, 1976, Grade 6 reading level)
- Contemporary English Version (CEV, 1989, Grade 5 or 6 reading level)
- The Living Bible (TLB, paraphrase, 1971)
- The Message (paraphrase by Eugene Peterson, 2002, Grade 6 reading level)

... and at This End of the Spectrum are Bible Translations or Paraphrases that are Closest to Thought-for-Thought.

Bibles and Bible References

Note: Throughout this book, quoted words of Scripture that are in **bold font**, or that are underlined, or that are in *italics* are *my emphasis* (i.e., they are not highlighted in the original text). Similarly, any words in [square brackets] found within Scripture verses are my own words that are used for clarification. Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture verses are taken from the New International Version (NIV) of the Holy Bible. The NIV Bible that I use is published by Zondervan [NIV, 2002], which also includes numerous study notes. The NIV periodically gets updated for English style (e.g., “Behold” becomes

“Look”, and “he” becomes “they” when the word “he” is understood by the original context to be gender-less), or when the scholarship/evidence determines that a better choice of words should be used for a particular passage. Three recent NIV translations are from 1984, 2001, and 2011. Many of the Scripture passages which I quote are from the 1984 version of the NIV Bible [NIV, 1984]; and because the 1984 version is no longer available online, I also quote the equivalent 2001 or 2011 NIV translation.

The autographs would have been written on papyrus or parchment, and are understood to be perfect; however, we only have *copies* of the autographs. Nevertheless, even the copies are quite old, and scholarly studies have shown them to be quite reliable (e.g., the Dead Sea Scrolls). Some of the Dead Sea Scrolls are written in Hebrew; others are written in Greek; and still others are written in Aramaic. The Dead Sea Scrolls confirm the reliability of the (original) Septuagint (LXX), which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament (starting with the first 5 books of the Moses, around 250-285 BC). Greek was an important language at that time in history. Hebrew was already starting to die off since 200 BC [Woodward, 2020]. About 80% of the quotations in the New Testament come from the Septuagint.

As soon as we enter the second portion of the first century AD, the New Testament as well as *Flavius Josephus* demonstrate a liberal use of the LXX. The New Testament undoubtedly uses the Septuagint for 80% of its Old Testament quotations.

Thus, the LXX was widely accepted and became the Bible of Christianity, but also it served as the Bible for Jews everywhere including many in Judea. [Woodward, 2020, pp. 29-30]

In 1611, the KJV translators had only 7 Greek manuscripts (excluding the Septuagint) to work from to translate the *New Testament*, and these are all from the Middle Ages (approximately 500-1500 AD) [Gonzales, 2020a]. These 7 manuscripts are called the *Textus Receptus* (for “received text”) and collectively, they became the dominant text for *New Testament* translation purposes from approximately 1526 to 1881 [Mounce, 2013]. After that, more accurate texts were used. By 2013, there were over 5,600 Greek New Testament manuscripts, including the Dead Sea Scrolls [Mounce, 2013]. All of these are part of the *Nestle-Aland* (NA28) text, used by many modern translations of the New Testament. These texts are more accurate than the *Textus Receptus*; however, the KJV translation is still pretty good.

With respect to the *Old Testament*, most translations (including the KJV) used the *Masoretic Text*. Although these documents were from no earlier than 900 AD, the Dead Sea Scrolls have confirmed that that Masoretic Text is fairly reliable, especially with respect to chronologies. That said, the original LXX is about 1,000 years earlier than the oldest known Hebrew manuscripts; therefore, some scholars believe that it should be used instead of the Masoretic Text [Woodward, 2020; Van Dorn, 2023].

... the LXX is usually superior to the Masoretic Text in the first five books of the Bible. In many other books, such as Psalms and Proverbs, the Masoretic Text is far better. The New Testament frequently quotes from the Old Testament, and in several of these instances there are some discrepancies in the wording. More often than not, when these

discrepancies arise, the quotation matches the Septuagint instead of the Masoretic. [Chaffey, 2019, p. 233]

All the Hebrew works agree in the chronology including the texts of Genesis found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. More than that, both the Septuagint and the Hebrew state that their chronology can be checked against the book of Jasher. ...

If both the Greek and Hebrew versions tell us to compare the text to Jasher, and Jasher agrees with all of the Hebrew manuscripts but disagrees with the numbers [chronologies] of the Greek text, that is amazing proof as to which set of numbers we should be using for our studies.

This is overwhelming proof that we should be using the Hebrew Masoretic text and Dead Sea Scroll texts for our Old Testament chronology. We should not use the Greek texts. [Johnson, 2020a, pp. 77-78]

Free, online copies of the Bible, in various, fine translations and in many foreign languages, are available at numerous Web sites, including the Blue Letter Bible project found at URL <http://www.blueletterbible.org>, the BibleGateway project found at URL <http://www.biblegateway.com>, the Bible Logos project found at URL <http://bible.logos.com>, and the popular YouVersion set of Bibles (numerous translations) for mobile apps. The BibleGateway project, in particular, has numerous foreign language translations. Some of these sites also include free, specialized search features, Bible study resources (e.g., Hebrew/Greek word analysis such as that provided by Strong's Concordance [Strong, 2016] within the Blue Letter Bible), the provision of multiple translations of a verse displayed simultaneously, and audio Bibles that you can play on your computer (using common Internet browsers).

The International Bible Society notes that the (Protestant) *canon* was established around 367 AD [Biblica, 2021]. The canon comprises the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament. These are collectively and officially recognized as the Bible. The word “canon” comes from a Hebrew-Greek word meaning “measuring rod” or “cane” [Peck, 2020]. The canon is a *standard* on which we can rely. We can use the canon to test other works.

There is a set of writings called the *Apocrypha* (meaning “hidden”) which “refers to the collection of religious writings that are found in the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate but not in the Hebrew Bible or most Protestant canons” [Wegner, 1999, p. 119]. That is not to say that the books of the Apocrypha don't have value; they are just not considered divinely inspired and are therefore not part of the canon of Scripture (although the Catholic canon includes them, as did the KJV for the first 150 years). Where the books of the Apocrypha—and writings of the early Church Fathers and historians—do not contradict Scripture, they can be valuable. The books were written between 300 BC and 100 AD. The Old Testament Apocrypha contains 15 books with the following Protestant names, and are dated as follows [Wegner, 1999]:

The Wisdom of Solomon	c. 30 BC
Ecclesiasticus (Sirach)	132 BC

Tobit	c. 200 BC
Judith	c. 150 BC
1 Esdras	c. 150-100 BC
1 Maccabees	c. 110 BC
2 Maccabees	c. 110-70 BC
Baruch	c. 150-50 BC
The Letter of Jeremiah	c. 300-100 BC
2 Esdras	c. 100 AD
Additions to Esther	140-130 BC
The Prayer of Azariah	1 st or 2 nd century BC
Susanna	1 st or 2 nd century BC
Bel and the Dragon	c. 100 BC
The Prayer of Manasseh	1 st or 2 nd century BC

Another set of useful writings by ancient Jewish (and some Christian) authors is the *Pseudepigrapha*. These writings often took the name of a Biblical character, even though they were not written by that Bible character. The writings are from a period of approximately 200 BC to 200 AD [Wegner, 1999].

Christian scholars generally recognize the value of these writings in helping us understand the religious, social, and political background of the people who lived around the time the New Testament was written. ...

Without question, the Book of Enoch is the most popular extra-biblical writing from this time period among those who discuss the sons of God and the Nephilim. This book dates to about 165 BC, and it is often included in the canon of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. It provides a detailed look at the common understanding of this issue from Jewish writers before the time of Christ. [Chaffey, 2019, p. 125]

Several of these pseudepigraphal books were found in the Qumran caves among the Dead Sea Scrolls; others are dated considerably later. Jude 14-15 quotes from 1 Enoch 1:9. Jude 9 mentions Michael arguing with Satan over the body of Moses, and this is believed to have come from The Assumption of Moses (also called The Testament of Moses). The Book of Jubilees is also quoted by some prophecy scholars and Old Testament scholars. Some of the more popular books among the Pseudepigrapha (there are at least 63 books) include the following titles, dated as follows [Wegner, 1999]:

1 Enoch	2 nd century BC to 1 st century AD
2 Enoch	Late 1 st century
3 Enoch	5 th or 6 th century AD
Sibylline Oracles	2 nd century BC to 7 th century AD
Treatise of Shem	1 st century BC
Apocryphon of Ezekiel	1 st century BC to 1 st century AD
Apocalypse of Zephaniah	1 st century BC to 1 st century AD
4 Ezra	Late 1 st century AD
Greek Apocalypse of Ezra	2 nd to 9 th century AD
Vision of Ezra	4 th to 7 th century AD

2 Baruch	Early 2 nd century AD
3 Baruch	1 st to 3 rd century AD
Apocalypse of Abraham	1 st to 2 nd century AD
Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs (records of the 12 sons of Jacob, including their misdeeds/confessions)	2 nd century BC
Testament of Job	1 st century BC to 1 st century AD

Another extra-biblical book is the Book of Jasher, circa 1500 BC. It is not part of the Apocrypha or the Pseudepigrapha, but it is referenced in the Bible: in Joshua 10:13 and 1 Samuel 1:18.

95% of the world’s population has the Bible in whole or in part, in their respective languages [Reagan, 2014a]. Around 2010, there were 2,100 translations of at least some part of the Bible. There are about 1,900 translations in progress that apply to language groups having less than 100,000 people each. Worldwide, Christianity is growing at 3 times the rate of population growth. In 1900, there were about 10 million Christians in Africa; today, there are about 516 million. In 1900, there were about 50,000 Christians in Latin America (including Central America and South America); today, there are about 60 million. China had about 700,000 Christians in 1949; today, it has about 70 million. Muslim sources state that about 6 million Muslims convert to Christianity each year.

The Four Major Views of Revelation

1. Futurist (or Dispensationalist)

Futurists believe that almost all of the events in Revelation, including the “70th week of Daniel” (the Tribulation) are still in the *future*. This view can include any of the following views of the timing of the Rapture: pretribulational, midtribulational, pre-wrath, and posttribulational. Note that it is possible to be a futurist, yet believe in a late (posttribulational) Rapture, that is, a rapture that is simultaneous with Christ’s Second Coming. Michael Brown and Craig Keener wrote a very good book on the posttribulational Rapture position [Brown & Keener, 2019]. Nevertheless, the pretribulational view is the most common. In my opinion, it has the strongest support. It is also called *classical dispensationalism*.

Hermeneutics is the art and science of Biblical interpretation. Futurism tends to take the Bible more *literally* than other approaches. When a figure of speech is used, it often refers to a literal event, and this can be determined from the context. Consider the personification: “All the trees of the field shall clap their hands.” (Isaiah 55:12) This is understood to describe a joyous event, which is indeed what verse 12 is about [Ice, 2011i]. Similarly, Genesis 37:5-11 uses symbols (sheaves of grain; the sun, moon, and stars) in Joseph’s dreams to describe future events in Joseph’s family; these symbols represented events that

literally came true (e.g., Joseph as a ruler in Egypt, and the nation of Israel in Revelation 12).

Futurism is the result of a consistent application of the grammatical-historical hermeneutic popularly known as the literal interpretive approach. The other three approaches use the grammatical-historical method to some extent, but they all allegorize the text to a large degree and in various ways to support their overall notions of when and how Revelation would be fulfilled. I believe futurism is the result of interpreting the book of Revelation literally, understanding that there are symbols, figures of speech, and various literary devices that the author intended in conveying the meaning of his message. [Ice, 2010b, p. 6]

This is similar to the *Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics*, as follows:

WE AFFIRM the necessity of interpreting the Bible according to its literal, or normal, sense. The literal sense is the grammatical-historical sense. That is, the meaning which the writer expressed. Interpretation according to the literal sense will take account of all figures of speech and literary forms found in the text. [Sarfati, 2015, p. 40]

Let us take a look at futurism's most popular position ...

Classical Dispensationalism (i.e., Pretribulational Futurism)

The notion of a *pretribulational rapture* that takes place at least 7 years before the physical return of Jesus Christ is not agreed upon by all futurists, but it is the most popular version of the doctrine of the Rapture (see below for more comments about the Rapture). Aside from the timing of the Rapture, the dispensationalist position is that *most of Revelation has not yet been fulfilled*. Although some short-term prophecies were fulfilled in the years between Christ's ascension and the years leading up to and including 70 AD, those fulfillments are only a small part of what the ultimate fulfillment of Revelation (and related Scriptures) are to be. In other words, in Bible prophecy, there can be both a *near-term* and a *far-term* fulfillment of a given prophecy. The near-term fulfillment is usually a small, partial fulfillment of what the intended outcome is to be. Dispensationalists believe that most of Revelation will be fulfilled in the future, perhaps in the near future.

Dispensationalism says that there are two distinct groups of people that God deals with separately in the end times: one is the Christian Church, and the other is the Jewish people. Ultimately, both groups are saved in the same way: by faith in Jesus Christ; but, the prophecies of the Bible seem to suggest different events for Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews) during different stages of the end times.

With respect to terminology: after the Babylonian exile, the terms "Jew" and "Israelite" appear to be used interchangeably in Scripture [Missler, 2005]. For example, Ezra called the returning remnant "Jews" 8 times, and "Israel" 40 times. Nehemiah used the term "Jews" 11 times, and "Israel" 22 times. The New Testament uses the term "Jew" 174 times, and "Israel" 75 times. Paul called himself both a Jew and an Israelite. Normally, these two terms are interchangeable, although in some contexts, Scripture refers to the physical land of Israel (e.g., Zechariah 13:8-9). Furthermore, the term "Hebrew" is used

in Scripture to describe Abraham (Genesis 14:13) and the sons of Jacob and their families, including when they were living in Egypt (e.g., Genesis 39:14,17; 40:15; 41:12; 43:32). There are numerous such connections in the rest of the Bible, including the books of Exodus, Nehemiah, Zechariah, Matthew, John, Acts, Romans, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, etc. [Gonzales, 2024a] In summary, the terms “Israelites”, “Jews”, and “Hebrews” all refer to the ethnic descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

First, the title *Israel* in the Bible refers only to ethnic Jews and never to believing Gentiles. Never are Gentiles or Gentile Christians ever referred to as “Israel” or “Jews.” It has been claimed by some that passages like Romans 9:6 and Galatians 6:16 refer to believing Gentiles as “Israel,” but this is not true. Both passages refer to Jews who are believers. Within the broader pool of ethnic Jews there is a narrower subset of Jews who have placed their faith in Christ. These are the “Israel of God” that Paul refers to in Galatians 6:16 and the Israel within Israel mentioned in Roman 9:6. So the designations “Israel” and “Jew” can be used of both the nation Israel and Jews as an ethnic group or as believing Jews in particular (see Romans 2:28-29), but they do not refer to Gentiles. [Vlach, 2011, pp. 227-228]

Dispensationalists divide history into seven dispensations, that is, time periods when God dispensed grace and “salvation” in different ways (see “dispensations or eras” above). The Old Testament believers indirectly looked forward to Christ’s atoning sacrifice on the cross.

Dispensationalists believe in *two phases of the literal return of Jesus Christ*: (1) *in the air* (i.e., Christ does not set foot on the earth *yet*) but at this time Christians are *raptured* (i.e., removed from Earth) to go with Christ to Heaven for a short period of time (e.g., 7+ years), and then (2) return with Christ to the earth at the Battle of Armageddon. It is important to draw the distinction between these two aspects of Christ’s Second Coming: first, the *Rapture*; and second, the “Glorious Appearing” when Christ actually sets foot on the earth. Tim LaHaye uses the term “Glorious Appearing” to describe the time when Christ reveals Himself to the whole world at/following the Battle of Armageddon. Because there are many events that must occur before the Glorious Appearing, this means Christ’s Second Coming *is not* imminent; however, the Rapture *is* imminent, that is, it could occur at any time—even today. Belief in the *timing* of the Rapture has nothing to do with one’s salvation; however, it will make a difference in how you study the Bible.

This question [imminence] is much more than just a theological, ivory tower debate. There is a great deal at stake depending on which view is biblical. Think about it. If the rapture occurs in our lifetime, your future will be very different depending on which of these views is correct.

... Only those who believe in a pre-trib rapture can honestly say, “Jesus may come today.” Since the tribulation period has not started yet, for mid-tribbers the rapture must be at least 3½ years away, for pre-wrathers it must be at least 5½ years away and for post-tribbers it is at least 7 years down the road. [Hitchcock, 2011c]

One never knows exactly when an imminent event will happen. Because of this, three things are true. First, one cannot count on a certain amount of time transpiring before an imminent event occurs. Thus, one should always be prepared for it to happen at any moment. Second, it is not legitimate to set a date for the occurrence of an imminent event.

Date setting insinuates that the event cannot take place until that date. It thereby destroys the concept of imminence. Third, it is not legitimate to say that, because an event is imminent, it will happen soon. The Bible indicates that the second coming of Christ was imminent when the New Testament was written.

... A significant contrast exists in the Bible. It teaches an imminent return of Christ, but it also teaches a return of Christ that is not imminent—a return that cannot take place until after the “great tribulation” (Matt. 24:21, 29-30). This contrast prompts the conclusion that the Bible teaches two future comings of Christ—the imminent one to rapture the Church and the non-imminent one to rule the world after the Great Tribulation.

... Any view other than the pretribulation rapture view conflicts with the biblical concept of the imminent return of Christ. [Showers, 2001]

The Battle of Armageddon is followed by numerous events, including a 1,000-year period of time called the *Millennium*, during which raptured believers (i.e., Christians, including those Christians who have died) will rule and reign—with Christ—over the remaining people on Earth for a period of 1,000 years. Before the start of the Millennium, the Antichrist and the False Prophet (the Antichrist’s “Minister of Propaganda” [LaHaye, *et al.*, 2001]) are the first two occupants of the Lake of Fire (“hell”). Sin will be greatly restricted during the Millennium due to the binding of Satan. At the end of the Millennium, Satan is released for a “brief” time, and he attempts to deceive the nations one last time. Although he gets some followers, fire comes down from Heaven to devour the rebels, and Satan himself is thrown into the Lake of Fire for eternity. At this point, the heavens and the earth are purged of evil, and a renewed heavens and earth are created in which there is no sin, and where time will never end. Prior to this time, of course, all believers from all ages are physically resurrected with imperishable/eternal bodies.

The saved include: the Old Testament believers (i.e., the believers before Christ’s incarnation), the believers since Christ, and those after the Rapture who will become believers.

Premillennialism (sometimes called *millennialism* from the Latin word for “a thousand years”—or *chiliasm* from the Greek, meaning “one thousand”) is the belief that Jesus Christ will literally and physically return at the Battle of Armageddon, and set up a 1,000-year Millennium—a period of time filled with peace, prosperity, and righteousness during which all of God’s covenants to Israel will be fulfilled, and during which Christ will rule from Jerusalem. This was the view of the early church [Hindson & Hitchcock, 2017]. Premillennialists are futurists, and are divided into at least five camps according to their understanding of the timing of the Rapture, the three most common of which are: pretribulation (the most common view, and a major focus of this book), midtribulation, and posttribulation. Some futurists, such as Walid Shoebat, take no particular position on the timing of the Rapture; so, this would be a fourth camp. A fifth camp includes a small number of others (e.g., Marvin Rosenthal and Robert Van Kampen) who hold to a “pre-wrath” Rapture that takes place about 5½ years into the Tribulation (i.e., about ¾ of the way through the Tribulation) [Rosenthal, 1990]. Their argument is that the first ¾ of the Tribulation is about man’s wrath and Satan’s wrath, and not God’s wrath. It is at the point of the Rapture that “the restrainer” (Michael, the archangel—not the Holy Spirit or human government) is removed, to fulfill 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7.

Amillennialism does not take Revelation literally. Adherents to this position believe that the Millennium is the current Church age (i.e., the time between Christ's first and second comings), that Satan is currently bound (he was bound at the cross), that the Rapture occurs at the same time as the Second Coming, and that a general judgment will occur at Christ's return [Gregg, 2013]. In other words, there is no literal 1,000-year Millennium when Christ will rule on Earth, with Satan bound during that time. In amillennialism, the 1,000-year period of time that is mentioned 6 times in Revelation 20 is *symbolic* not literal. Unlike postmillennialists, amillennialists think that things will get *worse* as we approach the return of Christ [Hindson, 2021]. Furthermore, the Church is the "new Israel".

The basic teachings in amillennialism are these:

1. The kingdom is in existence now between Christ's two advents. Since Christ is ruling now from heaven, He will not reign on the earth for 1,000 years. "We are in the Millennium now."
2. The kingdom is either the church on earth (Augustine's view now perpetuated by the Roman Catholic Church) or the saints in heaven (the view of Benjamin Warfield). Thus there will be no future reign of Christ on the earth, and 1,000 is a symbolic number indicating a long period of time.
3. The promises to Israel about a land, nationality, and throne are being fulfilled now in a spiritual way among believers in the church.
4. God's promises to Israel were conditional and have been transferred to the church because the nation did not meet the condition of obedience to God.
5. Christ is ruling now in heaven where He is seated on the throne of David, and Satan is now bound between Christ's two advents.

... Amillennialism had its beginnings with Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 155-216) and Origen (ca. 185-254). ... Origen "spiritualized" much of Scripture and taught that the present age between the two advents of Christ is the Millennium. The Emperor Constantine (272-337) helped pave the way for the development of amillennialism by uniting the church and the state. This led the theologian Augustine (354-430) to teach that the church is the kingdom on earth. Though he spiritualized much of biblical prophecy, he taught that Christ would return around A.D. 1000. In the Middle Ages the papacy taught that the Roman Catholic Church is the kingdom of God on earth. It is easy to see why the church then denied a future reign of Christ on the earth.

A number of the Reformers were amillennial. These included John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, Philip Melancthon, John Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli. However, William Tyndale and many of the Anabaptists were premillennial. ...

Postmillennialism was first taught by Daniel Whitby (1638-1725) and was held by Jonathan Edwards, Charles Wesley, Charles Hodge, ...

Postmillennialism virtually died out a number of years ago. The impact of two world wars led many to renounce postmillennialism because of its optimistic view that the world is getting better. But in recent years postmillennialism has been revived. [Zuck, 1991, pp. 231-232]

Postmillennialism is partially literal, and teaches that Christ's reign will be spiritual, accomplished through His Church by winning the world to Him through evangelism [Morris, 1983]. Some postmillennialists believe that the successful preaching of the gospel will, over time, reduce Satan's influence to nothing [Gregg, 2013]; hence, the connection to the binding of Satan. Thus, the present age merges into the "Millennium" because of the

propagation of the Gospel [House & Price, 2003]. In the postmillennial model, when the world finally becomes Christianized and the “future golden age” is achieved (after about 1,000 years), then Satan is released for a short time, and finally Christ returns and there is a general resurrection and judgment [Gregg, 2013, p. 547; Hindson & Hitchcock, 2017]. This is sometimes called Dominion Theology, and people who teach this are sometimes called Reconstructionists [Beshore, 2013].

Interestingly, the major eschatological views do not each line up with a particular view of the Millennium. For example, the *premillennial* view has adherents found in the historicist and futurist camps. It is possible to be premillennial, but be any of: pretribulational, midtribulational, pre-wrath, or posttribulational. Of particular relevance to this book: the *dispensationalist* view is that of a *pretribulational rapture* and a *premillennial return of Christ*. The Millennium is literal. The Church and Israel are two distinct entities (although Jewish believers in Jesus Christ become part of the Church). In contrast, historicists who are premillennial believe that the Rapture occurs *simultaneously* (at the same time) as Christ’s Second Coming, that is, at His return before the Millennium.

Postmillennialists believe that the church will largely fulfill the purposes of the Millennium, that is, it will deliver a world of peace and good government through Christian teaching and practices, whereby the world becomes “Christianized” [Gregg, 2013]. Then, Christ returns.

Amillennialists don’t believe in a Millennium, either before or after Christ returns. Amillennialists may fall into any of the major camps: *historicist* (e.g., Martin Luther or John Calvin), *preterist* (e.g., Jay Adams), *futurist* (e.g., Abraham Kuyper), or *idealist* (e.g., William Hendriksen) [Gregg, 2013]. In amillennialism:

Revelation 20 is understood symbolically or spiritually, so that the reign of the saints depicts either the vindicated martyrs reigning from heaven in the present age, or earthly believers achieving spiritual victory over personal sin during the same period. The time frame is seen to be the whole time between Christ’s first and second advents. Thus the binding of Satan at the beginning of the Millennium is associated with the First Coming of Christ, and the “fire from heaven” at the end of the Millennium is associated with His Second Coming. [Gregg, 2013, p. 517]

Here is a summary of the major views of eschatology, with specific reference to the Rapture and the Millennium [Hindson & Hitchcock, 2017]:

Model of Eschatology	View Held of the Rapture (pre-, mid-, post-, pre-wrath, partial)	View Held of the Millennium (pre-, post-, or a-)
Futurist (Dispensational)	Pretribulational	Premillennial
Futurist (Other)	Any	Usually premillennial
Partial Preterist	Rapture occurs at the same time as the physical return of Christ	Postmillennial or amillennial
Full Preterist	No Rapture	No Future Millennium

Historicist	Posttribulational	Any
Idealist	Posttribulational	Postmillennial or amillennial

A Pew Research study conducted in 2010 of US Christians claims that 47% of respondents believe that Jesus will “definitely” or “probably” return by 2050; 38% say that Jesus will “definitely” or “probably” *not* return by the year 2050; and 14% say that they don’t know [Hindson & Hitchcock, 2017].

In January 2016, Billy Hallowell surveyed 1,000 Protestant pastors in a LifeWay Research poll and found that 36% of them aligned themselves with the pretribulational view; 25% said that the notion of the Rapture was not to be taken literally; 18% held to a posttribulational view (i.e., the Rapture and the Second Coming take place around the same time); 4% held to a midtribulational view; 13% held to other variants and theories; and 4% indicated “not sure” [Hindson & Hitchcock, 2017; Miller, 2020].

Tim LaHaye claims that 85% of Christians hold the dispensational view of eschatology, whereas Timothy Weber thinks it’s closer to 33% [Weber, 2004]. Dispensationalism is in decline at the academic level, but remains fairly strong with the evangelical public. Unfortunately, history has shown that what gets taught in academia is what filters through to the next generation [Ice, 2011f (Q&A)].

Some Popular Dispensationalists (in alphabetical order):

Donald Grey Barnhouse	Mark Hitchcock	Rob Lindsted	C.I. Scofield
Lewis Sperry Chafer	David Hocking	John MacArthur	Renald Showers
J.R. Church	Thomas Hughes	Jan Markell	Chuck Smith
John Nelson Darby	Dave Hunt	J. Vernon McGee	Thomas Spurgeon
M.R. De Haan	Noah Hutchings	Chuck Missler	Charles Stanley
J.D. Farag	Thomas Ice	Henry Morris	Don Stewart
Charles Feinberg	Harry Ironside	J. Dwight Pentecost	Chuck Swindoll
Jerry Falwell	Grant Jeffrey	Don Perkins	Robert Thomas
Arnold Fruchtenbaum	David Jeremiah	Randall Price	Stanley Toussaint
Norman Geisler	Tim LaHaye	David Reagan	Amir Tsarfati
Billy Graham	Paul Lalonde	Ron Rhodes	Jack Van Impe
John Hagee	Peter Lalonde	Charles Ryrie	John F. Walvoord
Jack Hibbs	Greg Laurie	Bill Salus	Paul Wilkinson
Ed Hindson	Hal Lindsey	Francis Schaeffer	Andy Woods

2. Preterist

Full preterists (sometimes called hyperpreterists) believe that all prophecy in Revelation—including the Second Coming of Christ—was fulfilled at, or before, the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD [Walvoord, *et al.*, 2011]. They believe we are living in the new heaven and new

earth. Furthermore, they say that the Second Coming of Christ was spiritual, not physical; that resurrection itself is spiritual; and that there is no final resurrection and judgment. This model is inconsistent with the Bible; thus, full preterism is a heretical position. Jay Adams likes to use the term “unorthodox preterist” to refer to full preterists or hyperpreterists, and the term “orthodox preterist” to refer to partial preterists [Adams & Cook, 2006].

Partial preterists believe that some passages of Revelation are in the future, but *most* passages have already been fulfilled, either in the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD or in the fall of Rome in 476 AD [Mounce, 1998]. They believe that the resurrection from the dead is still to take place (i.e., at judgment time), and that the Second Coming of Christ is still future; but, they believe that the seal, trumpet, and bowl (vial) judgments have already occurred. (The judgments were prophetic at the time of their writing, but have since been fulfilled.) In other words, almost all of the book of Revelation has been fulfilled except for the last 3 chapters which look forward to the future (i.e., past us today). Some would argue that partial preterism is essentially a literal approach, but with a short future timeline—namely 70 AD [Adams & Cook, 2006].

Partial preterists believe that the beast of Revelation was Nero, that Babylon described in Revelation 17-18 was Jerusalem, and that “the coming of Christ in Revelation 19 [was] his ‘cloud coming’ in A.D. 70 to destroy Jerusalem through the Roman army” [Walvoord, *et al.*, 2011, p.22]. Partial preterists believe that much of the language of Revelation is written in Old Testament style (with connections to Old Testament writings), and it is not meant to be taken literally. Again, words about Christ “coming on the clouds” do not imply a literal event about Christ “riding” on a cloud in the sky. Rather, preterists argue that the term “coming” is symbolic of “judgment” in 70 AD. Christ gave a similar metaphor to the high priest Caiaphas (who condemned Him to death): “You will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds and sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One.” This metaphor implies that the high priest and those who were to kill Christ would see judgment coming upon them (i.e., in 70 AD, with the fulfillment of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple).

The term *preterism* originally meant partial preterism; full preterism or hyper-preterism did not appear until the nineteenth century [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007]. In this book, we will use the term *preterist* to mean *partial preterist*. A general rule of thumb with respect to the partial preterist model is that preterists tend to connect very little of the book of Revelation to future prophecies.

The major problem with the preterist position is that the decisive victory portrayed in the latter chapters of the Apocalypse was never achieved. [Mounce, 1998, p. 27]

A key difference between preterists and dispensationalists is the notion of the Rapture. In particular, partial preterists believe that *rapture and resurrection are the same event* (and they both occur simultaneously upon Christ’s return, rather than being separated in time):

While partial preterists acknowledge that in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 there was a *parousia* or coming of Christ, they maintain that it was not *the* parousia. That is, the coming of Christ in A.D. 70 was a coming in judgment on the Jewish nation, indicating the end of the Jewish age and the fulfillment of a day of the Lord. Jesus really did come in judgment at this time, fulfilling his prophecy in the Olivet Discourse. But this was not the

final or ultimate coming of Christ. The parousia, in its fullness, will extend far beyond the Jewish nation and will be universal in its scope and significance. It will come, not at the end of the Jewish age, but at the end of human history as we know it. It will be, not merely a day of the Lord, but the final and ultimate day of the Lord. [Sproul, 1998, p. 158]

Here is a summary of the partial preterist view of major prophetic events [Sproul, 1998, p. 170]:

A.D. 70	Still future
A coming (<i>parousia</i>) of Christ	<i>The coming (parousia) of Christ</i>
A day of the Lord	<i>The day of the Lord</i>
	The resurrection of the dead
	The rapture of the living
A judgment	The (final) judgment
The end of the Jewish age	The end of history

Partial preterists make a sharp distinction between (1) the judgment-coming of Christ to the Jews at the end of the Jewish age and (2) his parousia and final coming to the world at the end of history. For the full preterist the great resurrection and the rapture occurred in the past. For the partial preterist they remain in the future. [Sproul, 1998, p. 170]

Hank Hanegraaff argues that a *simultaneous* rapture and resurrection had been the belief of the church until the 1800s when Darby popularized the notion of a pretribulational rapture.

In summary, here are some of the views of *preterists* (but *not* of dispensationalists, other than the two views specifically identified below) [LaHaye & Ice, 2003]:

- *The Great Tribulation* “took place in the Fall of Israel. It will not be repeated and thus is not a future event.”
- *The Last Days* “is a Biblical expression for the period between Christ’s Advent [birth] and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70; the ‘last days’ of Israel.”
- *The Rapture* is “the ‘catching up’ of the living saints ‘to meet the Lord in the air.’ [Dispensationalists agree with this, but not with the next statement.] The Bible does not teach any separation between the Second Coming and the Rapture; they are simply different aspects of the Last Day.” (Note: In the Bible, all true believers are called “saints” [Morris, 1983].)
- *The Second Coming* “coinciding with the Rapture and the Resurrection, will take place *at the end of* the Millennium, when history is sealed at the Judgment.”
- *The Beast* “of Revelation was a symbol of both Nero in particular and the Roman Empire in general.”
- *The False Prophet* “of Revelation was none other than the leadership of apostate Israel, who rejected Christ and worshiped the Beast.”
- *The Great Harlot* of Revelation was “*Jerusalem* which had always been ... falling into apostasy and persecuting the prophets ... which had ceased to be the City of God.”

- *The Millennium* “is the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, which He established at His First Advent ... the period between the First and Second Advents of Christ; *the Millennium is going on now*, with Christians reigning as kings on earth”.
- *The First Resurrection* of Revelation 20:5 is a “spiritual resurrection: our justification and regeneration in Christ.”
- *The Thousand Years* of Revelation 20:2-7 is a “large, rounded-off number ... the number *ten* contains the idea of a fullness of *quantity* ...”
- *The New Creation* “has already begun: The Bible describes our salvation in Christ, both now and in eternity, as ‘a new heaven and a new earth.’”
- *Israel*: In contrast to the eventual faithfulness and empowerment by the Holy Spirit of the church, “ethnic Israel was excommunicated for its apostasy and will never again be God’s Kingdom.” Thus, “the Bible does not tell of any future plan for Israel as a special nation.” It is said that the church is now that new nation (Matthew 21:43) ...
- *The New Jerusalem*: “the City of God, is the Church, now and forever.”
- *Armageddon* ... a symbol of defeat and desolation ... *There never was or will be a literal ‘Battle of Armageddon,’ for there is no such place.*”

Some Popular Preterists (in alphabetical order, and most are partial preterists):

- Jay Adams
- David Chilton
- David S. Clark
- Gary DeMar
- Ken Gentry
- Steve Gregg (who also subscribes to some idealist views)
- Hank Hanegraaff (see my note below)
- Max R. King
- Gary North
- James Stuart Russell
- Moses Stewart
- Ed Stevens
- R.C. Sproul
- Milton S. Terry
- N.T. Wright

I’m somewhat reluctant to classify Hank Hanegraaff as a partial preterist. He claims not to adhere to any of the above four major models of eschatology (i.e., futurist, historicist, idealist, or preterist). For classification into one of these four models, I am including him here, largely because: (a) many of his arguments are shared by partial preterists, and (b) he strongly disagrees with most of the positions put forth by dispensationalists. He also has some idealist viewpoints.

- He adheres to an early dating (pre-70 AD) of the book of Revelation (as do preterists); however, dispensationalists adhere to a late dating (90-95 AD) of the book of Revelation.
- He does not agree to any of the millennial positions—amillennial, premillennial, or postmillennial—and he does *not* hold to the *literal* interpretation of Revelation [Hanegraaff, 2003+]. He connects prophetic events in Revelation to Old Testament passages, giving a symbolic or spiritual interpretation; however, dispensationalists would argue that the symbolism is a *secondary* interpretation, and the *primary* interpretation (for most such passages) is literal.
- He believes that certain events in Revelation: (a) have been fulfilled during 65-70 AD; (b) point to a literal, future fulfillment, such as Christ’s Second Coming, the physical resurrection, the judgment, and the renewed universe; and (c) were written using a style of writing called *apocalyptic language*. The events in (c)—of which there are many—are *not* to be taken literally (which rules out the dispensationalist viewpoint); and furthermore, those events *did not* take place in the past (which rules out the preterist viewpoint) [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, August 30, 2010].
 - Note that events in (a) are shared with the preterist camp, and events in (b) are shared with the dispensationalist camp (and actually, the partial preterist camp).
 - Dispensationalists recognize that *Revelation* (which means “unveiling”) is written in *apocalyptic* language, with numerous Old Testament references, but very importantly, it is also *prophetic* with many *literal* points. Many preterists disregard the literal parts claiming that they are to be interpreted in other ways. They claim that Revelation is more about history than the future. More will be said about these arguments throughout this book.
- Hanegraaff considers full preterism to be heretical.
- With respect to the label “partial preterist” and modern-day attempts to interpret fulfillments in prophecy, Hanegraaff argues that partial preterists have a history book in one hand, and a Bible in the other; whereas futurists (e.g., dispensationalists) have a newspaper in one hand, and a Bible in the other. Instead, he argues for the notion of *exegetical eschatology* (E^2), that is, the use of proper principles of hermeneutics (the art and science of Biblical interpretation), especially the use of references from other parts of Scripture to extract the meaning of passages in Revelation. He argues that the style or genre of writing needs to be taken into account when trying to understand passages in Revelation—and for that matter, elsewhere in Scripture. Rather than holding to any particular model of eschatology, Hanegraaff prefers the:

... plain and proper meaning of a Biblical passage ... in light of its literary, grammatical, historical, typological and broader context. ... [A]s with any literature, a thorough understanding of the Bible cannot be attained without a grasp of the basic rules that govern the relationships and usages of words in language (including syntax, style, and semantics). [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 272-273]

3. *Historicist*

Historicists believe that all of the events in Revelation have been fulfilled in church history, except for a few events such as Armageddon, Christ's Second Coming, and possibly the Millennium [Ice, 2010b; LaHaye, *et al.*, 2001]. They equate the present church age with the Tribulation period. A common historicist view is that the Tribulation began with Constantine in the latter years of the Roman Empire (circa 313 AD) [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007]. They believe that since that time, most of the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments of Revelation have occurred or are being fulfilled—as opposed to full preterists who believe that all of the events were fulfilled by 70 AD; and partial preterists who believe that almost all of Revelation was fulfilled by the end of 70 AD.

Fulfillment is thus considered to be in progress at present and has been unfolding for nearly two thousand years. [Gregg, 2013, p. 13]

They also believe that “Babylon” is a code word for Rome. Historicism is not embraced by very many modern academics such as New Testament scholars, except for Seventh Day Adventists [Gregg, 2013]. A problem with historicism is that there is no consensus on what the symbols in Revelation refer to [Hitchcock, 2012]. In fact, there are something like 50 different scenarios of how prophetic events were fulfilled, and which historical figures fulfilled them, within historicism [Walvoord, *et al.*, 2011]. Catholicism's Joachim de Fiora, of the 12th century, was largely responsible for the historicist viewpoint. He also introduced postmillennialism.

Classic commentaries such as those of Matthew Henry, John Wesley, Adam Clarke, and Albert Barnes employ historicism [Gregg, 2013].

4. *Idealist*

Idealists don't believe that Revelation is past or future, but rather they believe that Revelation describes an ongoing, timeless conflict between good and evil (i.e., between God and Satan). Thus, by definition, the idealist camp doesn't pay attention to timing issues. Instead, most of Revelation and other unfulfilled prophecies are to be taken symbolically. Evangelicals who are not in the futurist camp are more likely to move towards idealism than towards preterism. Some people mix idealism with preterism.

According to this view, the great themes of the triumph of good over evil, of Christ over Satan, of the vindication of the martyrs and the sovereignty of God are played out repeatedly throughout visions of Revelation, without reference to single historical events. The battles in Revelation may be seen as referring to spiritual warfare, to the persecution of Christians, or to international conflict in general throughout history. The beast from the sea may be identified as the satanically inspired political opposition to the church in any age, and the beast from the land as the opposition of pagan or corrupt religion to Christianity. The Harlot represents either the compromised church or the seduction of the world in general. Each broken *seal* or sounded *trumpet* depicts some reality (e.g., famine, war, natural disaster) that may be observed in history, on a recurring basis, as part of the sovereign outworking of God's purpose in history. [Gregg, 2013, p. 69]

[Idealism's] weakness lies in the fact that it denies to the book any specific historical fulfillment. From the idealist's point of view the symbols portray an ever present conflict: there exists no necessary consummation of the historical process. [Mounce, 1998, p. 29]

Chapter 1: General Topics in Prophecy

Topic/ Question	What is meant by the term “prophet”?
Both the Dispensa- tionalist and Preterist Positions Share the Same View	<p>In Biblical terms, a prophet can either <i>foretell</i> or <i>forth tell</i>. The first term implies that a prophet conveys a message about the future, and its fulfillment proved that the prophet was genuine. False prophets were stoned, under Old Testament law, even if only one part of their prophecy was false. It is claimed that only God knows the future, and, in fact, this is a hallmark of the God of the Bible. Most of the prophecies in the Bible are sufficiently detailed and unambiguous. The second term implies that a prophet is a messenger who takes existing Scripture, or a message given by God, and tells people about it.</p> <p>Prophets received messages from God in various ways, including visions, dreams, and even hearing God’s voice. Likewise, prophets used various means to deliver their messages, including a simple proclamation of the message in a sanctuary, speaking face-to-face with an individual, and acting out a message (see Jeremiah 19). Isaiah even went barefoot and naked for three years to demonstrate his people’s shame (Isaiah 20:2-3). Regardless of the means the prophets used to deliver the message, the people were expected to hear and obey.</p> <p>... when Nebuchadnezzar (the uncontested ruler of the world at that time) carried Ezekiel and other Jews into exile in Babylon, Ezekiel started to speak a new message—words of hope and comfort, teaching that God would regather His people from the ends of the earth (bringing all those bones back together again and resurrecting Israel from the dead—Ezekiel 37) and that a new temple would one day be built (chapter 40). He tried to give the people something to look forward to. At the same time, however, Ezekiel spoke of a horrendous invasion into Israel that would take place in the end times, an invasion that God Almighty would deliver them from (Chapters 38-39). [Rhodes, 2008, p. 132-133]</p>

Topic/ Question	What is the point of studying Bible prophecy? Doesn’t it suffice to believe in Jesus Christ—and to live life to the fullest, and let prophecy be fulfilled in its time?
Both Positions	<p>In the book of Revelation, Christ promises a special blessing to those who study it:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Revelation 1:3 Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.</p> <p>It is the only book of the Bible in which God explicitly promises a blessing; therefore, Revelation is definitely worth studying. Prophecy is a confirmation of God’s Word. It is an important part of apologetics (i.e., giving reasons for the “hope that we have” or, in other words, providing credible “evidence” for the confirmation of Scripture and existence of God).</p>

The book of Revelation brings together many of the key doctrines of the Bible. Revelation makes “at least 278 allusions to the Old Testament in the 404 verses of Revelation” [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007, p. 200]. All of Scripture is integrated. The “bookends” of Scripture, that is, the books of Genesis and Revelation are infrequently taught in churches, but they clearly describe our origin and our destiny.

As the Book of Genesis is the *foundation* of God’s written Word, so is the Book of Revelation its *capstone*. ... It is small wonder that the great Enemy of God’s truth has directed his most intense attacks against Genesis and Revelation ... [Morris, 1983]

There’s an old saying that Revelation is the Grand Central Station of the Bible because it’s where all the trains of thought throughout the whole Bible come in. While it is certainly true that Revelation looks ahead and reveals the future, it also looks back and brings together all the threads running through the first 65 books of the Bible. [Hitchcock, 2012, p. 27]

Fulfilled prophecy has confirmation in numerous forms of documented history, including archeology and extra-biblical sources (e.g., ancient Babylonian records). No other holy book compares to the Bible for accuracy. Because of the accuracy of fulfilled prophecies, Christians confidently know that currently unfulfilled prophecies will be fulfilled someday.

David Reagan gives some excellent reasons why prophecy is worth studying [Reagan, 2015]:

- The Bible has a large amount of prophecy. In fact, 27% of the Bible was prophetic at the time of its writing. God said that *all* Scripture was useful for teaching (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- The Bible is unique among books. No other religious book has even a single significant prophecy that has come true.
- It’s a tool for evangelism.
- It’s a tool for moral teaching.
- It stimulates spiritual growth.
- It helps us to understand current events.
- It validates Scripture. Here are some examples of how prophecy was fulfilled, and therefore validated. Note that many of these cases were validated by the secular world:
 - Isaiah 13: The prophet Isaiah said that Babylon would fall to the Medes & Persians. It did. Interestingly, at the time that Isaiah wrote it, Babylon was not even a world empire.
 - Jeremiah 29:10: Jeremiah said that Israel was going into captivity for 70 years in Babylon. That is how long they stayed there.
 - Isaiah 44-45: 150 years ahead of time, Isaiah prophesied that a man named Cyrus would release the Jews from captivity. That is what happened.

- Daniel 2: The prophet Daniel gave a preview of the world empires that were to follow, beginning with the current world empire: Babylon around 606 BC. The empires were: the Babylonians, the Medes & Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans. It was amazingly accurate. In the end times, Daniel says there will be a revived Roman Empire. In particular, Daniel 11:36-45 discusses the Antichrist and his reign in the end times.
 - Critics claim that Daniel must have been written *after* many of the prophesied events took place, namely after: Alexander the Great, the building of the Roman empire, Antiochus Epiphanes, etc., since it is so accurate in its predictions. However, it was written in the 6th century BC, roughly between 607-534 BC, and this was well in advance of the prophesied events.
 - A study of the book Daniel including its historic, prophetic, eschatological, and apologetic significance—including secular evidence supporting the book—is found in [Knorr, 2022].
- The books of Daniel and Zechariah (circa 520 BC) both make reference to Alexander the Great who lived around 333 BC.
- 1 Kings 13:2: Josiah was also mentioned by name, about 300 years before he was born into the house of David.
- There were 109 prophecies about Christ's first coming, and they were literally fulfilled, including where he would be born: Bethlehem Ephratah (Micah 5:2).
 - There are 321 prophecies about Christ's Second Coming, and we expect those to be literally fulfilled, as well.

Prophecy is extremely relevant for today, especially in light of all the problems in the world, and the number of people who do not follow God. Not only is Bible prophecy evangelistic, but it is a wake-up call to Christians to take their faith seriously (and to look for the Coming of the Lord). It is also a wake-up call to the unsaved world to come to salvation in Jesus Christ—before it's too late.

Matthew 16:26 What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

The easy optimism of the past generation has been shattered by two world wars, depression and inflation, with the accompanying social and moral evils. ... Realism has taken the place of optimism, and men have been forced to turn to eschatological considerations as the source of hope for a sin-cursed world. The Bible and the revelation it contains proves to be the one source of hope and confidence for the future, and men are turning more and more to it for light in the present darkness. [Pentecost, 1958, p. vii]

	<p>People are naturally curious about the future. Non-Christians have become interested in Bible prophecy, and have become saved, through prophecy ministries. Also, many Christians have grown closer to the Lord by studying prophecy. It gives us hope, even when times are depressing. By realizing the relevance of prophecy, believers are encouraged during dark times. For example, the persecuted church around the world is given an extra measure of hope. Heaven is what Christians all over the world look forward to.</p>
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Topic/ Question	How important is eschatology to apologetics?
Both Positions	It is important because all the parts of the Bible fit together to provide an integrated message. Dispensationalism and preterism have different viewpoints of eschatology, but both agree that eschatology is part of the big thread that weaves together all of Scripture.

Topic/ Question	<p>Are the catastrophes described in the Book of Revelation to be interpreted literally or symbolically? Examples of catastrophes in the book of Revelation include: the “stars” falling to the earth, the sun turning black, the sun becoming seven times hotter, the moon turning “blood red”, and the cities of the nations falling “and every island fled away and the mountains were not found”. Is this language a style of writing (e.g., “apocalyptic literature”) that is not meant to be taken literally?</p>
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>Dispensationalist and Bible interpretation expert Roy Zuck provides some comments on the term “apocalyptic literature” sometimes called “apocalyptic language” or “apocalyptic writing”:</p> <p>Besides being given in times of exile or Gentile oppression, apocalyptic literature has four other characteristics: (1) It consists of prophecies given in elaborate visions, (2) it includes many symbols, (3) an angel was often seen in the visions and frequently gave interpretations, and (4) it includes messages regarding the distant future.</p> <p>The heavy symbolic content of much of prophetic literature makes interpreting prophecy difficult. It also has caused many Bible students to assume that because some things in prophecy are symbolic, everything in prophetic passages is to be taken symbolically. This, however, is an error. If we follow the basic hermeneutical principle of normal, grammatical interpretation, then we should understand prophetic literature, as well as other forms of biblical literature, in their normal, ordinary-literal sense, unless there is reason for taking the material figuratively or symbolically. [Zuck, 1991, p. 243]</p> <p>It may well be that some of these events in Revelation are phrased in apocalyptic judgment language. Such a form or <i>genre</i> of writing appears not only in the book of Revelation, but in the Old Testament as well. For example, Isaiah uses some of this same language to describe Babylon, circa 500 BC. However, we should be careful about accepting all these judgments as being</p>

	written in “apocalyptic language”, that is, language which is simply meant to be taken symbolically or as a hyperbole.
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Topic/ Question	Does Scripture sometimes have a double fulfillment, that is, both a short-term (secondary) fulfillment and a long-term (primary/main/intended) fulfillment? For example, in the context of Revelation, might there be a short-term fulfillment in 65-70 AD, and then a long-term fulfillment in the 21 st century or later?
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>Scripture sometimes has double fulfillments. An example of this is Antiochus Epiphanes (short term), and the Antichrist (long term), both in Daniel 11. Antiochus Epiphanes (more formally cited as Antiochus IV Epiphanes) desecrated the second temple (a short term fulfillment of “the abomination that causes desolation” (Daniel 11:31)), with the long term fulfillment being when the Antichrist desecrates the future, rebuilt Temple (Daniel 9:27 and Matthew 24:15-16). Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:15 state, “... out of Egypt I called My son.” This might be applied to Israel coming out of bondage (symbolically) during the Exodus; however, Matthew uses this Scripture to refer to Jesus literally returning from Egypt after the death of King Herod. Recall that King Herod wanted to kill all the boys of age two or younger, to prevent a future king from taking his throne—after Herod was informed by the Magi (wise men) from the East about a newborn King of the Jews.</p> <p>Most of Revelation is still in the future, but some of the events mentioned in Revelation could have had some parallel in 65-70 AD. Nevertheless, the primary fulfillment is in the future. The New Jerusalem, the scope of the plagues (seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments), a cashless society, etc., can only be applied to a future generation beyond a first century audience. Preterists often refuse to accept many parts of Revelation literally, and this causes a great division between the two camps (i.e., dispensationalism and preterism).</p> <p>It is also interesting to note that the plagues in Revelation may be a re-visitation of some of the plagues in Exodus. For example, the plagues in Egypt during the time of the Exodus involved God versus Satan in 10 supernatural judgments, including plagues of: pestilence, boils, hail mixed with fire, locusts, darkness, death, and even water being turned to blood. These judgments were also on the gods of ancient Egypt [Zuck, 1991], such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hapi or Apis, the god of the Nile; Isis, the goddess of the Nile • Re and Horus, sun gods • Osiris, the god of crops and fertility • Pharaoh’s firstborn son, considered to be a god <p>The plagues in Egypt were real, and not symbolic; therefore, we should take the plagues in Revelation as being real, too [Hitchcock, 2014b].</p>

Other scholars have different opinions including: red tide caused by microorganisms in the sea giving the sea a red appearance (hence, the appearance of blood), fallout connected to radiation, or there may be a symbolic interpretation [Gregg, 2013].

Consider these similarities between the bowl judgments in Revelation 16 and the Egyptian plagues in Exodus 7-9 [Woods, 2016a]:

- The first bowl judgment of sores is similar to the sixth plague in Egypt. In fact, the translators of the Septuagint use the same Greek word for “sores” as they do for the Egyptian plague of “boils” [Walvoord, *et al.*, 2011].
- The third bowl judgment of rivers turned into blood is similar to the first plague in Egypt regarding the Nile River.
- The fifth bowl judgment of darkness is similar to the ninth plague.
- The seventh bowl judgment of hail is similar to the seventh plague.

“In Revelation, God will perform the ultimate Exodus by taking the entire world out of the Satanic bondage it has been under since the Fall.” [Woods, 2016a, pp. 172-173]

Although some of the plagues were on all the people of the land, God drew a distinction between the Hebrews and the Egyptians for some of the other plagues, namely the last 7 of the 10 plagues. God will draw a distinction in Revelation, too (Revelation 9:4). God will get the attention of the world. One would hope that people everywhere will heed the call and repent; but, sadly, many will not (Revelation 9:20-21 and Revelation 16:9-11). Revelation 9:20-21 describes a “Stockholm Syndrome” type of analogy or irony in which people will worship the very demons that inflict harm on them [Page, 1995]. Like the time of the 10 plagues in Egypt when Pharaoh hardened his heart towards the Lord’s message, the same happens here in Revelation with most of the earth’s inhabitants [Mounce, 1998].

Posttribulationists argue that because God distinguished between Hebrews and Egyptians in the past (e.g., Exodus 8:18; 9:26), He would do so again during the Tribulation, even if both groups are present throughout the Tribulation [Brown & Keener, 2019; Bar, 2023]. For example, in Revelation, God sometimes brings judgments on selective groups of people:

Revelation 9:4 They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

Revelation 16:2 The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly, festering sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.

This means God can protect Christians during the Tribulation, without removing us. However, these few cases appear to be exceptional cases, and are not the general rule. Most of the judgments in the book of Revelation appear to affect *both* groups of people—and the judgments are severe or devastating. In fact, there will be many martyrs during the Tribulation. Thus, if there is no pretribulational Rapture, believers during the Tribulation are not really protected from the Tribulation. This seems to contradict the words of Scripture about comfort and encouragement (e.g., 1 Thessalonians 4:18; Revelation 3:10). This is another reason why a pretribulational rapture makes more sense.

There are cases where a prophetic vision contains two or more “similar” prophecies that are widely separated in time [House & Price, 2003]. A term used to describe this is “prophetic telescoping”. Another way of stating this is that there is a *gap* of time between two separate fulfillments: a near fulfillment and a far fulfillment. Examples of a gap in Scripture include:

- Isaiah 9:6-7—the first and second advents (comings) of Christ
- Isaiah 11:1-10—the first and second advents of Christ (including the Millennium)
- Isaiah 61:1-2 and Luke 4:16-21—the first and second advents of Christ
- Daniel 2:37-45—the succession of world empires, including the final world empire (when Christ returns)
- Joel 2:28-3:1 and Acts 2—the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, and references to a far-future fulfillment (e.g., Tribulation and Millennium)
- Zechariah 9:9-10—the first and second advents of Christ
- Malachi 3:1-5—the ministry of John the Baptist and Christ’s first advent, and also His second advent
- John 5:28-29—a separation of 1,000 years between the time of the resurrection of the saved and the unsaved

Some of the most important Messianic prophecies are from the book of Isaiah (e.g., Isaiah 9:6-7; 53:1-10). Of the books in the Bible, only the Psalms have more Messianic prophecies than Isaiah.

Isaiah 9:6-7 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

Note that the “son” is Jesus Christ; but, because He was rejected by the Jews, the fulfillment of “the government will be on his shoulders” is postponed—it

	<p>is still in the future. Christ did not yet sit on David’s throne, nor did he take part in government. Jesus Christ is indeed God. He is the “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”. He will indeed rule the world, bring peace, and be physically present on Earth during the Millennium ... and, of course, for all eternity.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>Most of Revelation is historical. From the partial preterist viewpoint, no second fulfillment is needed or expected (e.g., other than Heaven, and the single rapture/resurrection event that occurs when Christ returns). Stephen Sizer writes:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Christian Zionists assume that the Old and New Testaments run parallel into the future, the former speaking of Israel and the latter speaking of the church; however, this is not the way the New Testament interprets, fulfills, and completes the Old. For example, Jesus annulled the Levitical food laws when He said, “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him ‘unclean’? For it doesn’t go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body. (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)” (Mark 7:18-19).</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The book of Hebrews explains the progressive movement of biblical revelation more fully. The Old Testament revelation from God often came in shadow, image, and prophecy. That revelation finds its consummation and fulfillment in the New Covenant (i.e., Testament) in Jesus Christ. The writer to the Hebrews, then declares, ‘By calling this covenant ‘new,’ he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear” (Heb. 8:13). He insists later, ‘The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship” (Heb. 10:1). [Sizer, 2006, p. 36]</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Colossians 2:16-17 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.</p>

Topic/ Question	Did Satan sin before Adam and Eve? When did Satan fall, with respect to the timing of the creation of the heavens and the earth?
Both Positions	<p>Satan fell before Adam and Eve did; otherwise, he couldn’t have tempted them in the Garden of Eden. God told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply, and they would have obeyed. Satan tempted them before they had their first child since all of their descendants had a fallen nature.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Ezekiel 28:12-15 ... 'You [Satan] were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you ... You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you.</p>

The timing of Satan's fall with respect to the creation of the heavens is uncertain. Paradox Brown argues that Satan was in the Garden of Eden starting on Day 6, that Satan fell sometime after Day 6 since God at that time stated that His creation was "very good", and that there is no evidence of a chaotic rebellion prior to this [Brown, 2015]. Young-earth creationists also believe that there was no fallen world between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. Others believe that there was a fallen world that involved a flood and destruction prior to Noah's Flood, and this includes the fall of Satan.

However, Arnold Fruchtenbaum writes:

It is agreed by most Hebrew scholars that Genesis 1:2 describes a chaotic state. The issue boils down to: Did God create it in a chaotic state and then bring order to it? Or, did some event cause it to become chaotic? The author prefers the second option because of Isaiah 45:18 and because terms used in Genesis 1:2 are used elsewhere in the Hebrew text describing divine judgments. Also, the new earth in Revelation 21:1-22:5 compares favorably with Ezekiel 28:13, showing that the new earth will look much like the old earth prior to the covering by seas in Genesis 1:2.

The earth became waste and void, although it was not originally created that way (Is. 45:18). ... Some time after this came the six days of creation recorded in Genesis one. The oceans were partially removed to allow dry land to appear, but the effects of Satan's judgment are still here in that most of the earth is still covered by oceans. The effects of the fall of Satan will not be fully removed until the creation of the new heavens and the new earth, which will not have any oceans (Rev. 21:1). [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 555-556]

Donald Grey Barnhouse conjectures that the pre-Adamic stage in Eden didn't necessarily have trees and other vegetation [Barnhouse, 1965]. Rather, Satan and all angels experienced a place of rare mineral beauty (Ezekiel 28, Isaiah 14), which ultimately finds its redemption in Revelation 21:19-20. Arnold Fruchtenbaum puts the fall of Satan in the "gap" between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 before Adam and Eve; however, he makes it clear that this gap is only for the fall of Satan, and not for any pre-Adamic animal death because death could not have existed before the fall of Adam [Fruchtenbaum, 2022].

It is interesting to note that Revelation describes the future environment as being a place of not only mineral beauty (e.g., streets and foundations of the New Jerusalem), but also trees, vegetation, water, etc. Barnhouse thinks that the pre-Adamic world may have been the subject of destruction due to the fall of Satan and his angels (sometimes called demons). In particular, he thinks Genesis 1:1-2's description of the earth being "without form and void" (KJV) could be translated "waste and void":

Somewhere back before the chaos of the second verse of Genesis there was a great tragedy and a terrible catastrophe. [Barnhouse, 1965, p. 18]

Satan's pride stimulated his envy, but as yet he saw nothing to excite his jealousy, for all these birds and animals had body and life but no spirit, and he knew that there was no creature here that could challenge the power and authority which he yet possessed in this domain.

But on the sixth day, God created man in His own image. ... There must have been an almost instant awareness in the mind of Satan that here was his rival at last. For man awoke to find himself a creature of noble beauty and wisdom, and to be informed that he was to have dominion over the whole of the renewed earth, over all that he could see around him. ...

Although we are interested here in man only insofar as he is a part of the invisible war, he is such an important weapon in that war that it is necessary to understand the nature of his creation. God was choosing man as the arm which would defeat Satan, both in bringing him to naught and in replacing him in the scheme of the government of the universe. It was to be out of man that Christ would come, and it would be through certain chosen members of the human race that God would proclaim the defeat of Satan (Ephesians 3:10). [Barnhouse, 1965, pp. 72-73]

Dispensationalists believe that Satan still has *access* to Heaven “not to worship or serve, but to communicate and accuse” [Woods, 2021c]. Halfway through the Tribulation, he will lose even that access (Revelation 12:7-9), as he is kicked out of Heaven and cast down to the earth.

Revelation 12:6-9 The woman [Israel] fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days. Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon [Satan], and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down -- that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum states that the 6 abodes of Satan are: (1, past) at the throne of God; (2, past) in the mineral garden of Eden; (3, current) in the atmospheric Heaven; (4, future, at the midpoint of the Tribulation) on the earth; (5, future, after Christ's Second Coming) in the Abyss; and (6, future, after the Millennium) in the Lake of Fire [Fruchtenbaum, 2022]. We could include the earth again, between points (5) and (6), to reflect the fact that Satan will be released for a brief time near the end of the Millennium.

Some authors believe that Satan has already been expelled from Heaven, and that the fall in Revelation 12:7-10 occurred at the cross [Brown, 2015; Neufeld, 2019]. However, other authors think that Satan may still have periodic access to Heaven, and of course “God is not threatened by Satan in any way” [Hamrick, 2020].

Genesis, Job, and Luke are the only books of the Bible where Scripture specifically documents what Satan is saying.

Topic/ Question	How does the fall of mankind, by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, relate to the present condition of the world? How does this relate to eschatology?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>Mankind and indeed all of creation have fallen because of Adam and Eve's decision to disobey God, in the Garden of Eden. Initially, all of God's creation was "very good". However, God gave mankind the freedom to choose between good and evil. There was no death of mankind (or animals) until Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit.</p> <p>God cursed the ground (creation) following their sin. For example, earthquakes, tornados, animals killing each other, the death of animals, the death of man, and even the degeneration of DNA (e.g., errors or mutations in DNA) are all results of the fall of Adam and Eve. In fact, some scientists claim that within each new human generation, at least 100 genetic mutations occur (i.e., nucleotide misspellings)—and this number may be actually be 1,000 or more [Sanford, 2008].</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Here we are today, 6 billion-plus little egos, reaping the awful consequences of our own selfishness. We cannot blame God for today's world but only ourselves. This is not the world God made but the one we have made in our defiance of Him. [Hunt, 2008a, p. 3]</p> <p>Creation will be redeemed following the 1,000-year Millennium period that begins with the establishment of Christ's ministry on Earth following His return. Even under Christ's leadership, there will be those during the Millennium who will choose to reject Christ. This shows that even during an environment of perfect rule, man's heart will still be rebellious and wicked. The rebels will be destroyed following the very last attempt to attack Jerusalem. Following this, Christ will create "new heavens and a new earth"—restoring the universe to perfection. Following this event, there will be no possibility of sin, as the devil and his followers and all unbelievers will spend eternity separated from God.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Genesis 3:17 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you ...</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Revelation 20:2-3 He [an angel] seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Revelation 20:7-21:1 When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth -- Gog and Magog -- to gather them for battle. In number</p>

	<p>they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.</p> <p>Isaiah 65:17 "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.</p> <p>Revelation 22:3a No longer will there be any curse.</p> <p>Isaiah 65:17 takes place at the <i>beginning</i> of the Millennium because other verses following Isaiah 65:17 describe natural man living on the earth under Millennium conditions (e.g., wolf and lamb feeding together, people living to at least 100 years of age—believed to be the upper age of accountability (during the Millennium) before making a decision for Christ) [Hamp, 2014b]. Thus, if the verses of Isaiah 65 are to be taken chronologically, we have an argument for an “early” “new heavens and a new earth”. What about the seemingly parallel passages in Revelation 21-22? Hamp argues that Revelation is not a chronological book, but rather a thematic book. Other authors (e.g., [Johnson, 2004]) emphasize that Revelation presents events in the order in which the Apostle John saw them, and they need not be chronological. A good case in point is Revelation 12:3-6: the symbolic picture of a red dragon standing in front of the woman who was about to give birth to a child who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. These symbols refers to Satan (dragon), Israel (woman), infant (Jesus at His first coming, i.e., as a baby in Bethlehem), and Christ’s rule during the Millennium (still future).</p>
Preterist Position	Similar to the dispensationalist position, but some have different viewpoints about the Millennium.

Topic/ Question	<p>The earliest prophecy about a coming redeemer is given in Genesis 3:</p> <p>Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."</p>
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	Who—or what—does the “seed” refer to?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>The “seed of the woman” is unusual since “seed” usually refers to a man. Thus, we already see a prophecy of Christ’s virgin birth.</p> <p>Whenever “seed” is used singularly, it refers to the Messiah; in the plural, it refers to a group of people [Fruchtenbaum, 1998].</p> <p>It is interesting to see that Eve took the prophecy to heart, and had assumed that her firstborn son, Cain, was the promised deliverer [Fruchtenbaum, 1998]. In Genesis 4:1, when considering the literal Hebrew, Eve said, “I have gotten a man: Jehovah”. Although she was right about there being a future redeemer/deliverer, she didn’t get the timing right. The timing wouldn’t be fulfilled until the advent of Jesus Christ, thousands of years later.</p> <p>Even righteous Enoch, who was raptured, may have thought that the redeemer was to come from his son Methuselah which can mean either, “When he dies it will come”, or because there is no neuter in Hebrew, “When he dies he [Messiah] shall come” [Fruchtenbaum, 1998]. Methuselah died in the same year that the Flood came. According to the Book of Jasher (5:36), he died one week before the Flood, and in particular, on the same day that Noah entered the Ark [Johnson, 2012].</p> <p>Methuselah fathered Lamech, who fathered Noah, whose name means “comfort”. Perhaps Lamech thought that the Messiah would be his son. Arnold Fruchtenbaum remarks that Lamech would have been 56 years old when Adam died; hence, Lamech could have gotten first-hand information about the events in the Garden of Eden and the promise of a Messiah.</p>
Preterist Position	The “seed” is Jesus Christ.

Topic/ Question	What are the parallels between the life of Joseph (circa 1800 BC) and the life of Jesus Christ? In other words, in what ways can Joseph be viewed as a <i>type</i> of Christ, that is, in what ways does Joseph’s life point to, or model, the life of Christ? Is Joseph’s life illustrative of end-times prophecy?				
Dispensationalist Position	<p>The story of Joseph is one of my favorite historical narratives in the Bible. It has some fascinating parallels to the ministry of Christ. It also has eschatological implications—and this is not by accident.</p> <p>In the following table, I itemize and paraphrase some points that have been highlighted by several authors [De Haan, 1966; MacDonald, 2000; Pink, 1950].</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: center;">Joseph</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Jesus</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Joseph was a shepherd (Genesis 37:2).</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Jesus is our great “shepherd” (Matthew 2:6; 26:31)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Joseph	Jesus	Joseph was a shepherd (Genesis 37:2).	Jesus is our great “shepherd” (Matthew 2:6; 26:31)
Joseph	Jesus				
Joseph was a shepherd (Genesis 37:2).	Jesus is our great “shepherd” (Matthew 2:6; 26:31)				

	Joseph exposed evil (Genesis 37:2,18).	Jesus exposed evil (Matthew 9:4).
	Joseph was greatly loved by his father (Genesis 37:3).	Jesus is the beloved of God the Father (Matthew 3:17).
	Joseph dreamed that the sheaves of wheat, sun, moon, and stars would all bow down to him (Genesis 37:7-10).	<i>All</i> will bow before Jesus (Psalm 22:27; Philippians 2:10).
	Joseph was rejected by his brethren: “His brothers said to him, ‘Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?’” (Genesis 37:8)	Jesus was rejected by some of His brethren: “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house.” (Matthew 13:45; see also John 19:15).
	Joseph was hated because of what he said: “And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.” (Genesis 37:8b)	Many in society took offense to Jesus’ message—a message that convicted people of sin, and countered the status quo.
	Joseph was sent on a special mission by his father to check up on his brothers (Genesis 37:13). He was obedient, and willingly accepted the task.	Jesus was sent on a special mission by God the Father (Matthew 21:37-38; 1 John 4:10)—and he willingly accepted (Hebrews 10:7). Jesus came to Earth as a baby, lived among us (i.e., became one of us), and finally died as the only possible, acceptable sacrifice to redeem mankind from sin.
	<p>Joseph went to Shechem which is where his brothers were last seen, but they had moved to Dothan (Genesis 37:12-17).</p> <p>Some authors report that the vale of Hebron, which is where Joseph lived peacefully with his father, means—or implies—“fellowship”. <i>Shechem</i> means “shoulder” or “burden-bearing”; but, the brothers had moved on to <i>Dothan</i> which means “law” or “custom” [De Haan, 1966; C. Knapp and Dr. Haldeman quoted in [Pink, 1950]].</p> <p>Later, Joseph showed grace (unmerited favor) when forgiving his brothers, realizing</p>	Adam and Eve broke <i>fellowship</i> with God in the Garden of Eden. Later, the Israelites lived under the dispensation of <i>law</i> (the Torah, given to Moses). Jesus took us from living under the law (Old Testament) to living under <i>grace</i> (New Testament). Through Jesus Christ, we have been restored to fellowship with God.

<p>that he had been placed in this position to physically save them (Genesis 50:20).</p> <p>Thus, we see a shift from <i>fellowship</i> to <i>law</i> to <i>grace</i>—and ultimately to a restoration of fellowship—and Joseph was finally reunited with his father.</p>	
<p>Joseph’s brethren originally plotted to kill him (Genesis 37:18).</p>	<p>Jesus’ brethren plotted to kill Him (Matthew 26:4).</p>
<p>Joseph was humiliated and stripped of his robe of many colors (Genesis 37:23).</p>	<p>Jesus was humiliated and stripped of His garments at His crucifixion: “... They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.” (John 19:23-24)</p>
<p>Joseph was thrown into a pit or cistern. Later, he was pulled out of the pit, alive (Genesis 37:19-28).</p>	<p>The “pit” is a common term used in Scripture to indicate the abode of the dead (e.g., Sheol, Hades, the pit, hell). Jesus descended to Hades upon His death, and was taken out of Hades, alive (i.e., via resurrection) (Luke 24:46).</p>
<p>Joseph was sold for 20 pieces of silver (Genesis 37:28)—the price of a slave.</p>	<p>Jesus was sold by Judas for 30 pieces of silver (Matthew 26:15)—the price of a slave.</p>
<p>Joseph departed from Israel (Genesis 37:28), and it would be a long time before he returned.</p>	<p>Jesus departed from Israel (John 14:2-3), and it would be a long time before He returns (Hosea 5:15).</p>
<p>Joseph was a man of integrity (Genesis 39:7-12).</p>	<p>Jesus was a man of integrity (i.e., sinless (Hebrews 4:15)).</p>
<p>Joseph became a servant in the household of his master, Potiphar; and his master was pleased with him (Genesis 39:1-6).</p>	<p>Jesus became a servant (Philippians 2:3-8); and the Father was pleased with Him (John 8:29).</p>
<p>Joseph was tempted, yet he did not sin (Genesis 39:6-12).</p>	<p>For 40 days in the wilderness, Jesus was tempted by the devil, yet He did not sin (Matthew 4:1-11).</p>
<p>Joseph was falsely accused (Genesis 39:17-20).</p>	<p>Jesus was falsely accused (Luke 23:10) during the trials prior to His crucifixion.</p>
<p>Joseph was imprisoned with two criminals: Pharaoh’s chief cupbearer and chief baker.</p>	<p>Jesus was on the cross next to two criminals. One criminal would</p>

	Joseph interpreted their dreams and said that the cupbearer would be restored within 3 days, but the baker would die (Genesis 40:1-19).	become saved; the other would perish (Luke 23:39-43).
	The baker and cupbearer represent bread and wine.	At the Last Supper, Jesus instituted communion where the bread and wine are symbols of Christ's broken body and shed blood (on the cross) (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).
	Joseph rose to a high position of honor, after initially encountering resistance (Genesis 41:40-41).	Jesus rose to a high position of honor (Mark 16:19), after initially encountering resistance. Furthermore, He will be honored greatly and universally in the future (Matthew 26:64; Philippians 2:9-11; Revelation 5:13).
	The name <i>Joseph</i> means "he will add" (increase).	It is said of Jesus' coming Kingdom (i.e., the Millennium and beyond): of the <i>increase</i> of His government and peace, there will be no end (Isaiah 9:7, KJV).
	Joseph was named <i>Zaphenath-Paneah</i> ("revealer of secrets") by Pharaoh (Genesis 41:45).	Jesus is <i>the</i> revealer of secrets (Colossians 2:2-3).
	Joseph rose to power at age 30 (Genesis 41:46). From that point on, he travelled throughout Egypt to do his work (Genesis 41:46).	Jesus began His ministry around age 30 (Luke 3:23). He travelled throughout Israel performing His ministry (Matthew 9:35).
	Joseph took a Gentile bride in Egypt before the 7-year famine begins (Genesis 41:50).	Jesus took a Gentile bride (i.e., the Christian church, mentioned in the Bible as the "Bride of Christ" which is comprised of all those Gentiles and Jews who believe in Him)— (Revelation 19:7; 21:9; Ephesians 5:25-33; Luke 5:34-35). This may be symbolic of Christ rapturing the Church before the 7-year Tribulation.
	There were 7 years of plentiful food at the start of Joseph's ministry (Matthew 41:47-49).	Jesus said to his disciples, "The harvest [of souls] is plentiful, but the workers are few" (Matthew 9:37; Luke 10:2). We are living in good times: the Age of Grace.
	There was a 7-year famine throughout the world during the	[Future] There will be a 7-year Tribulation that will affect Israel and

	time of Joseph (Genesis 41:54-56).	the whole world (Daniel 9:27). It will be a time when Satan attempts to control the world through the Antichrist. The Rapture will precede the Tribulation, but some who are left might say, "The harvest is past, the summer has ended and we are not saved." (Jeremiah 8:20)
	Pharaoh sent the people to Joseph to receive food, so that they might live (Genesis 41:55).	Only Jesus provides the means of salvation. "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)
	Joseph provided the world with bread/grain during the 7-year famine (Genesis 41:56-57).	Jesus is the Bread of Life (John 6:51). Jesus is a blessing to the Gentiles, bringing salvation to them (Luke 2:32; Acts 13:46-48).
	Joseph was not recognized by his brothers when, many years after they last saw him, they came to Egypt in search of food during the 7-year famine. (Genesis 42:8)	Jesus was not recognized as the Messiah by Israel (Luke 19:44).
	Joseph waited for his brethren to admit their rejection of him (Genesis 42:19-20).	Jesus is waiting for His brethren (the Jewish people) to admit their rejection of Him (Luke 13:35; Matthew 23:38-39; Hosea 5:15).
	Joseph received a confession of guilt and sin from his brothers (Genesis 42:21-22; 45:5).	Jesus will receive a confession of guilt and sin from His brethren. He regularly receives confessions of guilt and sin from Christians (1 John 1:9).
	Joseph had a great reunion with his brethren, and was finally accepted by them (Genesis 45:1-4).	Jesus will have a great reunion with His brethren, and will finally be accepted by them (Isaiah 63:1-3; Zechariah 12:10; 13:6). "... Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved ..." (Romans 11:25-26).
	Joseph had a "forgive and forget" attitude (Genesis 45:5).	Jesus still has a "forgive and forget" attitude: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us

		our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)
	For many years, Jacob (renamed “Israel”) thought that Joseph was dead. Later, he was shocked to learn that Joseph was alive, and that he could see him again. “They told him, ‘Joseph is still alive! In fact, he is ruler of all Egypt.’ Jacob was stunned; he did not believe them.” (Genesis 45:26)	Many in Israel thought that Christ was dead—and many today still do, thinking of Him as a historical figure but not as God—but later, they will see that He is alive (Zechariah 12:10; 13:6).
	Joseph said to his brethren, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (Genesis 50:20).	The world intended to harm Jesus. He came to die for our sins, so that our souls would be saved, and so that we can enter into eternal life (John 1:29; Mark 15:39; Hebrews 9:22; John 3:16).
Preterist Position	Same as the dispensationalist position, except for the Rapture/Tribulation part. Joseph’s life pointed forward to the greater reality of the <i>antitype</i> (the future, final fulfillment that the <i>type</i> pointed to): Jesus Christ. Significantly, Joseph gained redemption for those held in bondage in Egypt, which pointed to the ultimate redemption from the <i>bondage of sin</i> . Note that the antitype is always more significant than the type. Communion is an antitype of the Passover supper. The land of Israel is a type of Heaven. The Temple is a type of Christ. Also, the city of Jerusalem looked forward to its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus.	

Topic/ Question	Besides Joseph, what are some other <i>types</i> (or patterns) of Christ? In Scripture, are there any <i>types</i> of the Church? Are there any <i>types</i> of Israel?
Dispensationalist Position	Enoch is a type of the church. He was raptured in Genesis 5:24 (see also Hebrews 11:5). He was taken from the earth, alive, before the Flood of Noah’s day came. Thus, Enoch did not have to go through the “tribulation” that was to come upon the whole earth. Noah, his wife, their 3 sons, and their 3 daughters-in-law are types of Israel, and in particular, the Jews who are saved during the 7-year Tribulation. Noah’s family went through the worldwide Flood and were saved [Frag, 2022]. Afterwards, they entered a new world. Similarly, those who successfully make

	<p>it through the future Tribulation will enter a new world: the Millennium here on Earth, followed by the New Heavens and New Earth.</p> <p>Lot is a type of the church. In Genesis 19:12-29, we read that he and his family were taken away—somewhat reluctantly—before judgment fell on Sodom and Gomorrah.</p> <p>Abraham is a type of the Father; Isaac is a type of Christ; and Abraham’s servant, Eleazar, is a type of the Holy Spirit [De Haan, 1966]. Isaac, the beloved son of his father, Abraham, had a miraculous conception. Isaac was about to be sacrificed on Mount Moriah before the Lord stopped Abraham (Genesis 22:1-12). Recall that Abraham and Isaac went on a 3-day journey to Mount Moriah, Isaac carried the wood, and there was no resistance on the part of the son. Abraham comes down from the mountain, but oddly enough, there’s no mention of Isaac coming back down. Isaac is not mentioned again until he goes to meet his (Gentile) bride: Rebekah. Eleazar’s name means “comforter” which is one of the attributes of the Holy Spirit. Eleazar goes on a long journey to find a bride for Isaac. Rebekah agrees to marry Isaac, despite not having met him. The wed at the well of LaHai Roi, which means “the well of the Living One [who] sees me” or “the well of the Living God”. Since Pentecost Sunday, circa 30 AD, the Holy Spirit has gone to the ends of the earth, inviting everyone to become part of the bride of Christ—for a bridegroom that they haven’t seen before.</p> <p>Joseph is a type of Christ. He was described in detail in the previous section. He took a Gentile bride after his rejection by his brethren, doing so before the 7-year famine in Egypt. This is analogous to Christ taking a Gentile bride (the church) prior to the Tribulation.</p> <p>Moses is also a type of Christ. He took a Gentile bride (Exodus 2:21) after his rejection by his brethren, but before the plagues struck in Egypt.</p> <p>Daniel is a type of the church [Frag, 2022]. He was promoted to a high position—probably a government position elsewhere in the kingdom, apart from where his 3 friends were serving, as suggested by Daniel 2:48-49. This is a picture of the Rapture because Daniel was removed from the scene, and was spared a fiery trial in the fiery furnace, as described in Daniel 3. However, his 3 Hebrew friends—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—were thrown into the blazing furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are types of Israel, namely the Jews who make it through the future Tribulation.</p>
Preterist Position	Not applicable, since there is no future 7-year Tribulation, or a pre-tribulational Rapture.

Topic/ Question	What are the parallels between the lives of the prophet Jonah and Jesus Christ? In what ways was Jonah’s ministry prophetic?
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Both Positions	<p>The parallels [Missler, 2005]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 days and 3 nights (Jonah in the big fish, Christ in Hades) • Death and resurrection. (Some scholars think Jonah may have died in the big fish, and was resuscitated.) • Jonah’s ministry was to the Gentiles—a foreshadowing of Christ’s ministry, post-resurrection. • Jonah preached repentance, as did Christ. <p>Unlike Israel during the time of Christ, the king of Nineveh ordered the people to repent. They did at that time, and were spared. Like Israel, Jonah was out of his own land and disobedient to a heavenly commission, yet was still a witness to God.</p> <p>Israel was seeking a sign:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Luke 11:29-30 As the crowds increased, Jesus said, "This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation.</p>
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Topic/Question	Will there be two “Second” Comings of Jesus Christ, or just one?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>There will be two <i>phases</i> to the Second Coming, rather than two physical comings. First, Christ comes <i>in the air</i> to meet the raptured saints (i.e., to take out Christian believers who are alive at the time). This event is called the <i>Rapture</i>. Second, Christ comes to Earth at the Battle of Armageddon, and subsequently sets foot on the Mount of Olives in Israel. Christ’s return will be an event that is seen all over the world likely through telecommunications (e.g., satellite, Internet). This second event is called the “Second Coming” or sometimes the “Glorious Appearing”.</p> <p>Preterists often complain that dispensationalists have two “Second Comings” and that there is a 7+-year separation between them—namely the Rapture and the Second Coming. However, even preterists themselves believe in two phases: one in 70 AD (i.e., a “coming” in judgment upon Israel/Jerusalem) and a future appearance. Thus, preterists have an even wider separation of years (70 AD to now) between the two phases than do dispensationalists [Hitchcock, 2006b]. Mark Hitchcock likes to call the Rapture “the final post-resurrection appearance of Jesus Christ” before His Coming in power and great glory at Armageddon.</p>
Preterist Position	There will just be one “Second Coming” of Jesus Christ: when He returns to the earth in judgment and great glory. Unlike what dispensationalists say,

	Christ does not have a “secret” coming (Rapture) seven or more years prior to His Second Coming.
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Topic/ Question	Did Moses have anything to say about the order of prophetic events in Israel’s far future?
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>Yes, consider one of the oldest books (circa 1450 BC) of the Bible:</p> <p>Deuteronomy 4:25-31 After you have had children and grandchildren and have lived in the land a long time -- if you then become corrupt and make any kind of idol, doing evil in the eyes of the LORD your God and provoking him to anger, I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you this day that you will quickly perish from the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess. You will not live there long but will certainly be destroyed. The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and only a few of you will survive among the nations to which the LORD will drive you. There you will worship man-made gods of wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or eat or smell. But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, then in later days you will return to the LORD your God and obey him. For the LORD your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your forefathers, which he confirmed to them by oath.</p> <p>Thomas Ice interprets the above passage, as follows:</p> <p>In the process of Moses’ exhortation to the nation of Israel, he provides in Deuteronomy 4:25-31 an outline of what will happen to this elect nation once they cross over the Jordan River and settle the promised land. A summary of these events would be as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Israel and her descendants would remain long in the land. 2) Israel would act corruptly and slip into idolatry. 3) Israel would be kicked out of the land. 4) The LORD will scatter them among the nations. 5) Israel would be given over to idolatry during their wanderings. 6) While dispersed among the nations, Israel would seek and find the LORD when they search for Him with all their heart. 7) There would come a time of <i>tribulation</i>, said to occur in the latter days, during which time they would turn to the LORD 8) “For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them” (Deuteronomy 4:31). <p>If the first five events have happened to Israel—and no evangelical interpreter would deny that they have—then it is clear from the text that the final events will also occur to the same people in the same way as the earlier events. This is most clear from the context. The Bible does not “change horses in midstream” so that suddenly Israel, who has received the curses, is dropped out of the picture and the church takes over and receives the</p>

blessings. Despite various systems of the theology, the Bible nowhere teaches that God has forsaken Israel (cf. Rom. 11:1). [Ice, 2000]

David Reagan and J. Dwight Pentecost mention the following details from other passages in Deuteronomy [Reagan, 2005; Pentecost, 1958]:

- Affliction will come upon the Jews while still in the land—because they will not be faithful to God’s covenants. (Deuteronomy 28:15-60)
- Israel will be taken captive. (Deuteronomy 28:32-39,48-57)
- Israel will be few in number. (Deuteronomy 28:62)
- Israel will be dispersed. (Deuteronomy 28:64; Leviticus 26:33)
- Israel will be persecuted by others because of their rebellion. (Deuteronomy 28:65)
- Israel will become desolate—the land and the cities. (Deuteronomy 29:22-23)
- Israel will be preserved—God said He would preserve the Jews as a separate people, even if they rebelled. (Deuteronomy 28:44-45; Isaiah 49:16)
- Israel will repent in the future. (Deuteronomy 28:40-41; 30:1-3)
- The Messiah will return. (Deuteronomy 30:3-6)
- Israel will be converted as a nation. (Deuteronomy 30:4-8)
- The Jews will be restored to the land. (Deuteronomy 30:5)
- Israel’s enemies will be judged. (Deuteronomy 30:7)
- The nation will then be greatly blessed. (Deuteronomy 30:9)

Exodus 23 and Leviticus 26 present similar material to that found above. Leviticus 26 evidences a striking similarity with that of Deuteronomy 28-30, except that Leviticus 26 presents the cursings (26:14-39) within the framework of five progressive stages to the covenantal curse. Each stage was to increase by a factor of seven (26:18, 21, 24, 28), resulting in the fifth stage, which would be devastation and deportation from the land. However, the chapter ends with hope that if the people repented of their sin, while in exile, they would be returned to the land and receive blessing (26:40-46). There are many significant parallels between Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28-30.

Within Deuteronomy 28-30 we see a specific reference to the Tribulation when it says, “And the Lord your God will inflict all these curses [chap. 28] on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you” (30:7). Moses tells us that the Tribulation will include in its purpose is a time of retribution on the Gentiles for their ill treatment of the Jews. This certainly did not take place at all either during the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem or at any time in history yet past. Thus, we are beginning to find that the Bible does not regard the Tribulation as a time of punishment for the Jews, as preterists insist; instead, it is a time of preparation for the Jews leading to their conversion and deliverance.

Interestingly, verses 49-68 record two specific instances of removal from the land. The first reference is clearly to the Babylonian captivity, which takes

	<p>place in the sixth century BC ... This is followed by a second statement of dispersion (v. 64) ... This was undoubtedly fulfilled by the Romans when they destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Luke 21:24, which speaks of the A.D. 70 Roman destruction of Jerusalem, says that the Jewish people “will be led captive into all the nations,” a statement which reflects the language of Deuteronomy 28:64. Thus we see two different instances of the judgment of God’s covenantal curse being worked out in history. But neither of them is the Great Tribulation.</p> <p>However, we have also noted that Deuteronomy 28-30 indicates that the Tribulation will come after Israel has been regathered back into the land and Jerusalem; then God will bring to pass the Tribulation. Thus, since the second covenantal dispersion in A.D. 70 by the Romans led to Israel’s scattering among the nations, that could not have been the Tribulation, which is to take place after a worldwide regathering. This makes the Tribulation a future event. [Ice in [Ice & Gentry, 1999, pp. 78-80]]</p> <p>David Reagan argues that, “God used World War I to prepare the land for the people. He worked through World War II to prepare the people for the land.” [Reagan, 2005, p. 380]</p> <p>Furthermore, there will be the following events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration of the Land <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Isaiah 35:1-7; Joel 2:21-26; Ezekiel 36:35 • Revival of the Language <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Zephaniah 3:9 • Regaining Military Strength <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Zechariah 12:6 • Prediction of Israel as a nation in the end times, with a return of Jews to the land of Israel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Isaiah 11:10-12; 45:5-6; 66:7-8; Jeremiah 16:14-15; 30:3; Ezekiel 36:22-28; Amos 9:13-15; Zechariah 12:3-6
Preterist Position	The preterist position is similar to the dispensationalist position, except for the latter parts about finding the Lord in the distant future (“the latter days”) after a time of tribulation. Many preterists do not believe that God has a separate plan for Israel, and because we are living in the church age, there is no separate plan for Israel.

Topic/ Question	<p>In Daniel 12:4, circa 530 BC, Daniel was told to seal up the book or prophecy “until the time of the end”, when many will go “here and there to increase knowledge”. What does this mean?</p> <p>Daniel 12:4 But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge."</p>
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<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>There are several explanations, and they may all be correct.</p> <p>It can refer to the distant future—when travel and knowledge would greatly increase. This Scripture is being fulfilled in modern times, in numerous ways, including travel, commerce, population, computing, etc. [Reagan, 2014a] For example, consider the use of computers and the Internet—and the amount of information available today (the growth is exponential). Secondly, it’s been estimated that the number of people who died in all the wars from the time of Christ (circa 30 AD) up to the end of the 19th century (1899) was about 40 million; however, in the 20th century alone, about 110 million people were killed in warfare [Reagan, 2014a]. David Reagan gives numerous other examples of exponential growth including weapons, law-breaking, disobedience, natural disasters, and debt.</p> <p>Some scholars believe that the word “knowledge” is better rendered as “the knowledge” or “this knowledge” implying that knowledge about the Scriptures, including Daniel’s prophecies, would increase [Missler, 2004]. In Hebrew, the definite article (English: “the”) is used, implying that the word “knowledge” refers not to general knowledge, but to “the knowledge”—a specific kind of knowledge—likely, prophetic knowledge.</p> <p>As we get closer and closer to the time of Christ’s return, the Holy Spirit reveals more to us through <i>progressive illumination</i> of the Scriptures, that is, we can gain more insight and greater understanding [Woods, 2018d; Woods, 2021b]. For example, compared to people living centuries ago, we can make more sense out of Scriptures such as Revelation 9:9-11 which states that the whole world would be able to see the two witnesses dying in Jerusalem. Christians living hundreds of years ago may not have understood this; but, today we know about the technology that enables us to do this. Similarly, the Jews were largely out of the land of Israel for a long time. Some Christians may have wondered if the prophecies regarding Israel being in the land were to be understood literally. Even the Old Testament prophets, such as Isaiah and Daniel, had difficulty interpreting the prophecies that the Holy Spirit was directing them to write. Today, we have the advantage of looking back on history and understanding the fulfillment of some of those prophecies (e.g., Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection).</p> <p>Clearly, knowledge has increased greatly due to advances in technology. This includes—but is not limited to—Bibles, Bible translations, and Bible study tools on computers and the Internet; archaeological discoveries shedding more light on the past, and confirming what the Bible says; a vast array of published materials about prophecy, including books, sermons, presentations, workshops, debates, etc.; travel of Bible teachers to instruct audiences far and wide; and travel of lay people to hear Bible teachers. And, of course, God may continue to reveal more and more information to us. For example, the Dead Sea Scrolls found in 1947 and beyond have provided a lot of background information from</p>
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	<p>the time of the Second Temple to several centuries after Christ. These documents give us greater insight into the Scriptures, including some very useful information that helps us to better understand prophecy. For example, the Dead Sea Scroll (or Essene) calendar is creating interest in prophecy circles. Discoveries of additional documents are likely to be made, and this is exciting for prophecy scholars.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>Daniel 7:13-14 is a parallel to Jesus coming on the clouds, as described in Matthew 24. Gary DeMar claims that Matthew 24 was fulfilled in 70 AD; therefore, Daniel 7 was fulfilled [Hunt & DeMar, 1998]. Also, Daniel 9 is a fulfillment of the 3½ years before Christ’s death, and the 3½ years after it.</p> <p>The book of Revelation is <i>not</i> to be sealed up because the people of the day needed to hear the message, and take flight before the destruction of both Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD. In fact, Revelation says to the first century audience, “the time is near”. “Near” refers to a time in their lifetimes, not to a time in the far future such as the 21st century.</p>

Topic/ Question	<p>What major events need to take place before the Rapture or the Tribulation? What major events need to take place after the Rapture, but before the Tribulation?</p>
Dispensationalist Position	<p>Bill Salus classifies a number of unfulfilled prophecies as “Now Prophecies” because they could happen “now”, that is, at any time, and in any order [Salus, 2019]. The prophecies that Salus claims are unfulfilled include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disaster in Iran (Jeremiah 49:34-39)—quite possibly a nuclear disaster • Destruction of Damascus (Isaiah 17:1) • Final Arab-Israeli War (Psalm 83)—and possibly the expansion of Israel (Obadiah 1:19-20) • Toppling of Jordan (Jeremiah 49:1-6) • Terrorization of Egypt (Isaiah 19:1-18) • Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52) <p>Not all dispensational scholars agree that these are unfulfilled. For example, some would argue that Isaiah 17:1 was fulfilled by Tiglath-Pileser in 732 AD [LaHaye, <i>et al.</i>, 2021; Woods, 2022e]. Salus disagrees and provides some strong arguments [Salus, 2023]. Some argue that Psalm 83 was either fulfilled in Israel’s War of Independence in 1948 [Tsarfati, 2018] or that it is not a prophecy at all [Woods, 2022d]. Salus argues that the prophecy in Jeremiah 49:34-39 was not fulfilled by King Nebuchadnezzar [Salus, 2023].</p> <p>Salus also provides a list of “Next Prophecies” that are dependent on the fulfillment of one or more of the “Now Prophecies”. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Magog invasion of Ezekiel 38-39

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decline of Islam after the Psalm 83 war and the Magog invasion, in that order • Arrival of the Antichrist • Start of the construction of the third temple • Appearance of the two witnesses of Revelation 11 • Confirmation of the covenant to start the 70th Week of Daniel (Daniel 9:24-27) <p>Salus thinks the “Next Prophecies” will happen during the gap between the Rapture and the start of the Tribulation. If the Rapture occurs before any of the “Now Prophecies”, then the remaining “Now Prophecies” will move into the gap between the Rapture and the Tribulation. The decline of America is likely another pretribulation prophecy.</p> <p>Once the Tribulation starts, numerous unfulfilled prophecies that are listed in the book of Revelation will unfold. These include those mentioned in many other books of the Bible, but especially in the books of Daniel, Zechariah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, and the summary that Jesus provided in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, and Luke 21.</p>
Preterist Position	n/a

Topic/ Question	<p>Flavius Josephus (37-101 AD) is an accurate Jewish historian who served as a general in the Jewish army when they rebelled against Rome in 67-70 AD [Gentry, 1998a]. After the war, and after surrendering to the Roman General Flavius Vespasian, Josephus moved to Rome. He wrote some excellent historical accounts, and gained insight into both sides (Jewish and Roman).</p> <p>How reliable are Josephus’ writings when it comes to interpreting Scripture?</p>
Both Positions	<p>Josephus was a Jewish <i>historian</i> whose works are respected on an international scale; however, as Randy Price reports, he should not be relied upon to interpret Scripture accurately:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The writings of Josephus, while generally considered accurate in most details, such as architectural and cultural descriptions, are famous for their Roman political bias and openly antagonistic attitude to the aspirations of Jewish nationalism. Josephus’s involvement in the Great War was primarily on the side of the Romans, a fact that caused him to be regarded as a traitor by his own Jewish nation. ...</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">In keeping with his rejection of Jewish nationalism, Josephus scorned popular movements, especially messianic movements whose hopes included an earthly kingdom for Israel. ...</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">This lack of eschatological hope evidently influenced Josephus to make unwarranted historical compromises and concessions. For example, despite</p>

	<p>the fact Josephus accepted the Maccabean interpretation that Antiochus IV Epiphanes fulfilled a prophecy of Daniel concerning the “abomination of desolation” in the Temple, when he wrote his history of the Roman conquest of Jerusalem, he abridged this view to “make room” to incorporate Titus and the Romans as “also” fulfilling Daniel’s prophecy. Such an abuse of the historical data, however, since it agrees with the preterists’ position, is hardly scrutinized for eschatological bias. This understanding of Josephus’ anti-eschatological bias must be taken into consideration when preterist R.C. Sproul says that “Josephus’s account of many preliminary events reads like a chronicle of fulfilled biblical prophecy. He refers to the rise of false prophets, a massacre in Jerusalem, the slaughter of Jews in Alexandria, and the invasion of Galilee.” Given that Josephus denied a future national redemption for Israel, the heart of the messianic hope, and recast Jewish prophecies as being fulfilled in the first century through the Romans, is it any wonder that preterists are attracted to Josephus as a moth to a flame? [Price, 2003a, pp. 357-358]</p>
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<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>Given the different views on eschatology, who’s right? Are the other parties presenting heretical views?</p>
<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>Ron Rhodes nicely summarizes the situation from a pretribulationist perspective, using Ezekiel 38-39 as an example:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">When will Russia lead the northern military coalition to invade Israel? Before the tribulation period? During or in the middle of the tribulation period? Toward the end of the tribulation period? After the tribulation period? During the millennial kingdom? This is one of the most controversial questions pertaining to Ezekiel 38-39.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">At the outset, remember that to be dogmatic and unbending on this issue is unwise. ... Many fine scholars have debated this issue back and forth through the centuries, and that fact alone calls for humility in the face of this interpretive difficulty. All of us should examine the issue and come to our own conclusions, but we should show grace to those who hold to different positions.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">This brings to mind something John F. Walvoord once told me. We were talking about the timing of the rapture, and even though he was a thoroughly convinced pretribulationist (who believed the rapture will occur before the tribulation period), he commented, “Anyone who thinks his or her prophetic position has no problems simply hasn’t studied prophecy very carefully.” His point was that even our own position has problems (though, in our humble estimation, our position has fewer problems than the other positions). [Rhodes, 2008, pp. 165-166]</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">To be sure, extremists have taken unhealthy paths as a result of their understanding of prophecy. To avoid such extreme decisions, I’ve always advised people to live their lives as if the rapture could happen today but to plan their lives as if they’ll be here their entire lifetime expectancy. That way they are prepared for time and eternity.</p>

	<p>Scripture says we should seek to be accurate observers of the times. Of course, some people today utterly ignore biblical prophecy. Other people have been misled by anti-prophecy Christians (preterists) who teach that most biblical prophecies were fulfilled in the first century and that we should not look for any future fulfillments of Bible prophecies relating to the tribulation or the rapture. This viewpoint is as unfortunate as it is unbiblical. Scripture indicates that just as biblical prophecies about the first coming of Christ were fulfilled in a quite literal way (see, for example, Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:2; Zechariah 12:10), so the prophecies about the second coming (and related events, like the Ezekiel invasion) will also be literally fulfilled. In view of this, we do well to stay aware of what Scripture teaches about the end times, and to be accurate observers of the times. We shouldn't be sensationalists or alarmists, for such behavior is not becoming of our God (1 Peter 4:7-10). But we should be accurate observers of the times. [Rhodes, 2008, pp. 199-200]</p>
Preterist Position	<p>Hank Hanegraaff frequently comments that “iron sharpens iron”, and that we can choose to disagree on non-essential doctrines within Christianity without dividing over them. Healthy debate and rigorous study is profitable for growth. Salvation issues, including the deity of Christ, however, are non-negotiable issues. Such issues are readily accepted by both dispensationalists and preterists.</p> <p>Like all students of prophecy, Hanegraaff encourages us to continue loving, memorizing, and mining (studying, parsing, and seeking answers in) the Word of God.</p>

Topic/ Question	Have any prophecy teachers switched from dispensationalism to preterism, or vice-versa?
Comment	Both groups claim that the “whole” of Scripture supports their position. In other words, both groups claim that the Bible weaves a tapestry or thread through all of Scripture, and the result is a beautiful explanation of God’s actions in history and His plan for the future.
Dispensa- tionalist Position	The more that dispensationalists learn about prophecy, the more strongly convinced they are about the credibility of dispensationalism. Imminence stresses hope. World events seem to unfold in the light of Scripture. In fact, the very nature of Israel’s existence, its pivotal role in Bible prophecy, and the geopolitical events surrounding it, seem to suggest that we are rapidly advancing towards the time that many of the Bible prophets have spoken about. We should recognize the “signs of the times”, and be living in daily expectation of the return of Christ. The Rapture is “the blessed hope”, not to be confused with the Second Coming of Christ.
Preterist Position	Steve Gregg is an example of someone who used to be a pretribulational dispensationalist teacher, but has now changed his position to that of a partial preterist. Gregg says that his views evolved after considering the whole of Scripture, but adds that he’s not sure that his position is finally fixed. He wants to be a lover of truth, and is prepared to change his viewpoint, as necessary.

	<p>(This is a great goal for all prophecy lovers.) Gregg realizes that as a prophecy teacher, he has a higher level of accountability than Christians who don't teach.</p> <p>It's not a matter of the Church replacing Israel, but rather what the Church is a type of. In every age prior to Christ, there were some believers who are part of "true Israel". During Christ's earthly ministry and thereafter, believers were called Christians (followers of Christ). All Christians are the "seed of Abraham". There is no distinction, at this point, between Israel and the Church. Even during the Exodus from Egypt, it was a mixed group. The covenant that was made with the people that came out of Egypt was for "Israel", and this included the Gentiles that left Egypt. They <i>all</i> became part of "Israel". The "new covenant" spoken of in Scripture includes all people who are faithful to the covenant, that is, people who believe in God, and in particular, those who are followers of Jesus Christ [Steve Gregg, <i>Bible Answer Man</i>, November 8, 2011].</p> <p>Hank Hanegraaff adds that, in the Old Testament, non-Jews became Jews (e.g., Rahab in the book of Joshua; people from many nations, as described in the book of Esther, who became Jews). Why did they become "Jews"? Because they believed in God.</p> <p>Gregg isn't pro-Israel unconditionally. When Israel commits atrocities, he speaks out. Conversely, many dispensationalists are pro-Israel unconditionally because they think that they'll be "cursed" if they don't do so.</p>
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<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>Who is the Antichrist? Is the Antichrist a real person? If not, what is meant by the term "Antichrist"?</p> <p>1 John 2:18 Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.</p> <p>1 John 2:22 Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist - - he denies the Father and the Son.</p> <p>1 John 4:2-3 This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.</p> <p>2 John 1:7 [aka 2 John 7] Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.</p> <p>2 Thessalonians 2:4 He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so</p>
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	<p>that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.</p> <p>Revelation 13:6-7 He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.</p> <p>Note that the Apostle John wrote five New Testament books: John, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Revelation. John 1, 2, and 3 are short books. The word “antichrist” is not used in the book of Revelation. The apostle Paul did not use the word “antichrist”, either.</p>
<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>“The” Antichrist is an actual person that will come about in the end times, but the name Antichrist is <i>also</i> used metaphorically or abstractly to refer to a political or religious system (see the preterist comments below) that denies that the God of the Bible is the one true God, and that Jesus is the Christ (i.e., Messiah, Anointed One, Redeemer, Savior).</p> <p>The first person to declare himself the Messiah/Christ was Jesus Christ. The first false Messiah was probably Simon bar Kokhba in 132 AD [Ice, 2021a]. He led a revolt against the Roman army.</p> <p>Because of the wording in 1 John 2:18 (i.e., “the antichrist is coming”), most evangelical scholars believe the Antichrist had not yet appeared in Paul’s time. Although some scholars equate the Antichrist with “the man of lawlessness” or the beast of Revelation, neither Paul nor John (in Revelation) specifically uses the term “antichrist”.</p> <p>However, one definite conclusion about the term “antichrist” is that “he” denies that Jesus Christ is Lord. Many early Church fathers like Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian and Jerome believed that the term “antichrist” indeed refers to a person [Sproul, 1998]. Furthermore, the Greek prefix <i>anti-</i> can be translated as either “against” or “in place of”:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">It is not necessary to choose between these nuances of the prefix. It is possible, if not probable, that the concept of antichrist contains both elements. At the very least the antichrist is one who stands and works “against” Christ. If, however, he also seeks to be a substitute for Christ, then the link to the man of lawlessness is even more enticing.</p> <p>Again the question of time-frame becomes critical. Was Paul speaking of a first-century person who would soon be made manifest and then be destroyed by the judgment-coming of Christ in A.D. 70? Or was Paul speaking of one who, though already at work in the first century, would not be fully revealed until sometime near the end of history as precursor to the coming of Jesus? [Sproul, 1998, pp. 178,181]</p>

The Antichrist is the personification of Satan. He tries to deceive the whole world, leading the world to the hatred of Jews and Christians, and then leading the world to Armageddon.

Some of the characteristics of the Antichrist are as follows [Hibbs, 2008b]:

- False teacher; master deceiver
- Blasphemer; denies the Trinity
- Global leader; heads 10 political regions
- Somewhat of an unsung hero until he uproots 3 of the leaders of the 10 political regions
- Brings peace to the Middle East
- Brings prosperity to the world
- Anti-Semitic (hatred of the Jewish people—the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob); brings persecution to the Jews
- May be involved in another “Carmel experience” (recall the story of Elijah vs. the prophets of Baal)
- Promotes beheading
- Spoken of in Isaiah 14:9-14

Besides “the Antichrist” mentioned in 1 John 2:18, here are some of the names or titles of the Antichrist [Walvoord & Hitchcock, 2012]:

- “The little horn” in Daniel 7:8—an insignificant ruler, at first
- “A fierce-looking king, a master of intrigue” in Daniel 8:23
- “The prince that shall come” (sometimes translated as “the ruler that shall come”) in Daniel 9:26
- “The king [who] will do as he pleases” in Daniel 11:36-45
- “A foolish shepherd” in Zechariah 11:15
- “The worthless shepherd” in Zechariah 11:17
- “The man of lawlessness” in 2 Thessalonians 2:3
- “The man doomed to destruction” in 2 Thessalonians 2:3
- The first horseman of the Apocalypse (i.e., the rider of the white horse) in Revelation 6:2
- The “beast coming out of the sea” or “the first beast” or “the beast” in Revelation 13:1-10,14-18

Let us contrast some of the titles and attributes of Jesus Christ to those of the Antichrist [LaHaye & Hindson, 2004]:

Christ	Antichrist
Holy One	Lawless one
Son of God	Son of Satan
Good Shepherd	Worthless Shepherd
Exalted on high	Cast down to hell

Humbled Himself	Exalted himself
Cleanses the Temple	Defiles the Temple
Slain for the people	Slays the people
The Lamb	The beast

Who, then, is *the man of lawlessness* of 2 Thessalonians 2? He is “responsible for mounting this threefold attack, physical (persecution), intellectual (false teaching) and moral (temptation to sin). Moreover, this onslaught in its three dimensions will come to a crescendo and climax when Antichrist will be revealed.” [Stott, 1991, p. 174] John Stott summarizes the historical line of thought about whom the man of lawlessness might be:

After the demise of the persecuting emperors and the conversion of Constantine, the Roman emperor no longer seemed a suitable candidate. ... In the Middle Ages, especially at the time of the Crusades, the Western church identified the man of lawlessness as Muhammad, because he had ‘stolen’ the Christian holy places and caused many eastern Christians to commit ‘apostasy’. Towards the end of the Middle Ages some of the Franciscans saw in the corrupt popes and their proud pretensions an expression of the one who would ‘exalt himself’ and ‘set himself up in God’s sanctuary’ ... The early Reformers (Wycliffe in England, the Waldensians in Italy and John Hus in Bohemia) all referred the prophecy to the Pope, or rather to particular popes on account of their corruption, whereas—with greater exegetical insight—the sixteenth-century Reformers, including Luther, Calvin and Zwingli on the Continent, Knox in Scotland and Cranmer in England, believed that the papacy itself was Antichrist. The Roman Catholic leaders of the Counter-Reformation then returned the compliment by identifying Luther as ‘the man of sin’. The identification of the Pope as Antichrist continued at least into the seventeenth century. ...

During the last two centuries political rather than religious leaders have been put forward as possible Antichrists. Candidates have included Napoleon Bonaparte (because of his arrogant absolutism), Napoleon III, Kaiser Wilhelm, Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin, and certainly strong elements of both godlessness and lawlessness have been seen in these men. [Stott, 1991, pp. 165-166]

During WW II, some people thought that Mussolini was the Antichrist because he was from Rome, and he was a dictator [Ice, 2021b].

Preterist Position

The term “antichrist” refers to literal persons or organizations. Anybody, or any institution, that denies that Jesus Christ has “come in the flesh” is *an* antichrist. In other words, anyone who denies that Jesus Christ is God and that He came to earth as a human being to be the sacrifice to reconcile mankind to God is an antichrist. There is no single “Antichrist” who appears during the end times in a manner described by dispensationalists. The book of Revelation does not use the term “Antichrist”.

Hank Hanegraaff argues that Christians today should not be playing the “Pin the Tail on the Antichrist” game [Hanegraaff, 2003+]. It is a waste of time trying to identify *who* the Antichrist is. In any century, there have been

	<p>“antichrists”, that is, people who are against Christ. 1 John 2:18 indicates that many antichrists have come, thus fulfilling Christ’s prophecy that many false Christs have come [Ken Gentry in [Ice & Gentry, 1999]].</p> <p>Nero was the personification of evil: he killed Peter and Paul, and numerous Christians. He’s archetypical of other personifications of evil who stand against the message of Christ, and this includes Hitler, Polpot, Saddam Hussein, etc. He claimed deity (i.e., he claimed to be a god), and expected to be worshiped. Not only was Nero Caesar’s name “666”, but his whole personality was evil. Furthermore, the man to whom “666” applies had to be a contemporary of John.</p> <p>(For more discussion on this subject, search for the phrase “man of sin” in this book.)</p>
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Topic/ Question	What is meant by the terms “last day”, “last days”, “latter days”, and “latter years”? What is meant by the “end times”?
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>The terms “last day” and “last days” refer to the wide band of time between Christ’s first and second comings, inclusive. The last day does not refer to a 24-hour period.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">... the phrase “in the last days” (and “the last hour”) is often assumed to refer to the same era each time it is used. And yet in Hebrews 1:2; 1 Peter 1:20; and 1 John 2:18 the phrase seems to suggest the <i>entire</i> present Church Age, whereas the phrase in 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 3:1; 2 Peter 3:3; and Jude 18 seems to suggest the final days of the Church Age. [Zuck, 1991, p. 109]</p> <p>Preterists view “the last day” as being any time between Christ’s first coming and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. In John 6:44 and John 6:54, Jesus said that he would raise up believers “at the last day”. That doesn’t mean that there is a resurrection of both believers and unbelievers (i.e., Judgment Seat of Christ and White Throne Judgment, respectively) on the same day.</p> <p>The book of Hebrews was written around 64-68 AD, and states:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Hebrews 1:2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.</p> <p>The apostle Paul wrote about the last days:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">2 Timothy 3:1-5 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God -</p>

	<p>- having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.</p> <p>Acts 2:16-21, quoting the prophet Joel, even speaks of the last days, leading us to believe that “the last days” has been occurring since shortly after the time of Christ, that is, since the Day of Pentecost. Most of that prophecy remains unfulfilled [Zuck, 1991].</p> <p>Some dispensationalist scholars think that we are living in “the last of the last days”. Preterists, on the other hand, view “the last day” as being any time between Christ’s first coming and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.</p> <p>The term “latter years” is used only once in the Old Testament—that being in the Magog invasion passage in Ezekiel 38:8. Since verse 16 mentions “latter days” and some other translations use “last days”, we can assume that all of these terms are synonymous [Ice, 2009d].</p> <p>The term “end times” is not used in the Bible, but some prophecy teachers informally call the “end times” the period after Israel became a nation again (1948), or possibly the period after the Rapture (e.g., [Hitchcock, 2013]).</p>
Preterist Position	<p>Are we living in the last days? Yes, <i>any</i> time after Christ is a wide window of time that is typically referred to as “the last days” or “the final hour”. In fact, the coming of the Messiah was the time of “the last days” of that system—the Jewish system—prior to 70 AD. Some preterists think of the last days as the period from 30 AD to 70 AD, that is, the time from the crucifixion of Christ to Christ’s coming in judgment in 70 AD when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed. Thus, 70 AD marks the end of “the last days” [DeMar, 1997; Newton, 2012; Eberle & Trench, 2021]. Contrary to what dispensationalists believe, we are not currently in the “end times”.</p> <p>When Jesus came, He brought in the new Kingdom. He established the new covenant. The Temple was destroyed. The old religious system ended. The end of the old came in the first century. That was the end times. It ended the old. The end times was the period in which God abolished the old by establishing the new. It went from the day Jesus revealed Himself as Messiah to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in AD 70. The apostles were not wrong. They did live in the end times. We live in new times! In a new Kingdom and a new covenant! [Eberle & Trench, 2021, Kindle edition, location 10823]</p> <p>One of the most influential atheists of modern times was a scholar named Bertrand Russell. In his book, entitled, <i>Why I Am Not a Christian</i>, Russell points out how wrong and misled the disciples were by believing that they were living in end times. More importantly, Russell declared that Jesus was a false prophet since the events of Matthew 24 (at least to his understanding) did not happen within a generation. Russell and other influential atheists have ridiculed Christianity, pointing out how wrong Jesus and the disciples were to believe that they were living in the end times. [Eberle & Trench, 2021, Kindle edition, location 10879]</p>

	<p>Some preterists refer to the last days as the time between the birth of Christ (some say the advent of John the Baptist) and 70 AD [Sproul, 1998; Newton, 2012].</p> <p>With the coming [birth] of Jesus, the “<i>last days</i>” arrived. It was the last days of the old covenant, the temple worship and animal sacrifices. We have made a mistake placing the “<i>last days</i>” at the end of the church age, when the Scriptures teach it was the end of the Jewish age.</p> <p>... In the Old Testament, the term “latter days” or “the time of the end” refers to the days of the Messiah. The last days and the arrival of the Messiah must be kept in one generation, the first century. [Newton, 2012, pp. 113-114]</p> <p>Jesus does not physically return in the “<i>last days</i>” (that was his spiritual return in the first century) but comes on the “<i>last day</i>.” At the death of Lazarus, Martha understood that he will “<i>rise again in the resurrection on the last day</i>” (John 11:24). Jesus teaches a two-step process of resurrection: first the spiritual resurrection and then a physical one. [Newton, 2012, p. 217]</p> <p>Regardless, Scriptures that may be used to support these positions include 1 Corinthians 10:11 and 1 John 2:18:</p> <p>1 Corinthians 10:11 These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.</p> <p>1 John 2:18 Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.</p> <p>John (the writer of Revelation, not John the Baptist) was one of the last apostles to die. That timeframe is part of the last days—and it extends to today.</p> <p>Every generation thinks it’s the “last” generation [Hanegraaff, <i>Bible Answer Man</i>, August 25, 2010].</p>
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<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>There are 5 major <i>covenants</i> in the Bible: Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic, New Covenant, and Mosaic. The first four covenants are eternal; the latter covenant is temporal.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3) 2. The Palestinian Covenant (Deuteronomy 30:1-10) 3. The Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7:10-16) 4. The New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-40) 5. The Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 19:5ff, Deuteronomy 28:1-68) made at Mount Sinai during the Exodus from Egypt, in the days of Moses.
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	<p>There are two types of covenants: conditional (Mosaic) and unconditional (the other four), sometimes called unilateral and bilateral, respectively. In the conditional covenant, Israel was to obey God in order to get certain blessings; otherwise, there would be curses. In an unconditional covenant, it doesn't matter what Israel does; God has promised that He will fulfill the promises He made.</p> <p>Explain how these tie in to Bible prophecy.</p>
<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>1. The Abrahamic Covenant</p> <p>The covenant made with Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, and confirmed and enlarged to him in Genesis 12:6-7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-14; 22:15-18, entitled certain basic promises. These have been summarized [by G.N.H. Peters in <i>The Theocratic Kingdom</i>, Volume 1, pp. 293-294]:</p> <p>The things promised by God are the following: 1. That Abraham's name shall be great. 2. That a great nation should come from him. 3. He should be a blessing so great that in him shall all families of the earth be blessed. 4. To him personally ("to thee") and to his seed should be given Palestine forever to inherit. 5. The multitude of his seed should be as the dust of the earth. 6. That whoever blessed him should be blessed, and whosoever cursed him should be cursed. 7. He should be the father of many nations. 8. Kings should proceed from him. 9. The covenant shall be perpetual, "an everlasting covenant." 10. The land of Canaan shall be "an everlasting possession." 11. God will be a God to him and to his seed. 12. His seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. 13. In his seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.</p> <p>In order to reaffirm the covenant to Abraham concerning the <i>seed</i> and the <i>land</i> (Gen. 15:18) Abraham is told by God to prepare animals of sacrifice that together they might enter into a blood covenant. ... When the sacrifice was prepared Abraham must have expected to walk with God through the divided animals, for custom demanded that the two who entered into a blood covenant should walk together between the parts of the sacrifice. He would recognize the solemnity of the occasion, for the ritual meant that the two who were entering into the covenant were bound by blood to fulfill that covenant or the one breaking the covenant would be required to pour out his blood in forfeit, as the blood of the animals that bound them had been poured out. However, when the covenant was to be entered into, Abraham was put to sleep so that he could not be a participant in the covenant, but could only be a recipient of a covenant to which he brought nothing in the way of obligations. [Pentecost, 1958, pp. 72, 77]</p> <p>In summary, in Genesis 15:7-21 we learn that God alone passed through the animal parts while Abraham was asleep; thus, it is an unconditional covenant. Furthermore, Deuteronomy 4:31 states:</p> <p>(for the Lord your God is a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them."</p>

The covenant remains in effect today.

2. The Palestinian Covenant

An analysis of this passage will show that there are seven main features in the program there unfolded: (1) The nation will be plucked off the land for its unfaithfulness (Deut. 28:63-68; 30:1-3); (2) there will be a future repentance of Israel (Deut. 28:63-68; 30:1-3); (3) their Messiah will return (Deut. 30:3-6); (4) Israel will be restored to the land (Deut. 30:5); (5) Israel will be converted as a nation (Deut. 30:4-8; cf. Rom. 11:26-17); (6) Israel's enemies will be judged (Deut. 30:7); (7) the nation will then receive her full blessing (Deut. 30:9). [Pentecost, 1958, p. 97, quoting from Lewis Sperry Chafer's *Systematic Theology*]

The Palestinian (also called the Land or Deuteronomic) covenant establishes Israel's ownership of the land.

3. The Davidic Covenant

The provisions of the Davidic covenant include, then, the following items: (1) David is to have a child, yet to be born, who shall succeed him and establish his kingdom. (2) This son (Solomon) shall build the temple instead of David. (3) The throne of his kingdom shall be established forever. (4) The throne will not be taken away from him (Solomon) even though his sins justify chastisement. (5) David's house, throne, and kingdom shall be established forever. [Pentecost, 1958, pp. 101-102, quoting from John F. Walvoord's "Millennial Series"]

The inference is plain that Christ is seated on the Father's throne, but that this is not at all the same as being seated on the throne of David. [Pentecost, 1958, p. 109, quoting from John F. Walvoord's "Millennial Series"]

4. The New Covenant

(1) Israel to be regathered[;] (2) Israel to be one nation, ruled by one king; (3) Israel no longer to be idolatrous, to be cleansed, forgiven; (4) Israel to dwell 'forever' in the land after regathering; (5) the covenant of peace with them to be everlasting; (6) God's tabernacle to be with them, i.e., He will be present with them in a visible way; (7) Israel to be known among Gentiles as a nation blessed of God. All of these promises are implicit in the basic passage of Jeremiah, but they confirm, enrich, and enlarge the covenant. [Pentecost, 1958, p. 118, quoting from John F. Walvoord's "Millennial Series"]

The "taking out of a people" thus constitutes God's present-age program. This people constitutes the church, the body of which He is the head (Eph. 1:22-23), the bride of which He is the bridegroom (Eph. 5:25-27,32), the branch of which He is the supporting vine (John 15:1), the flock of which He is the Shepherd (John 10:7-27), the temple of which He is the cornerstone

(Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:5), the ministering priests of which He is the high priest (1 Pet. 2:5-9), the new creation of which He is the head and the first fruits (1 Cor. 15:45). [Pentecost, 1958, p. 133]

The restoration of Jerusalem mentioned in Jeremiah 31:38-40 will be fulfilled during the Millennium because of the language used, and the fact that this Scripture has not been fulfilled yet.

5. The Mosaic Covenant

As noted in the introduction to this question/section, this covenant was conditional: If Israel obeyed God, they would gain blessings; however, if they disobeyed God, they would get curses.

The covenants are fulfilled in the Millennial age following the Second Coming of Jesus Christ [Pentecost, 1958]—an age characterized by peace and righteousness:

- The promises in the Abrahamic covenant concerning the land and the blessings will be fulfilled.
- The promises in the Davidic covenant concerning the king, the throne, and the royal house will be fulfilled by the Messiah.
- The promises in the Palestinian covenant concerning the land will be fulfilled.
- The promises of the New Covenant will be fulfilled: a new heart, the forgiveness of sin, and the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Some scholars contend that the Abrahamic covenant was fulfilled during the time of Joshua:

Even as the life ebbed from his body, Joshua reminded the children of Israel that the Lord had been faithful to his promises. ‘You know with all your heart and soul that *not one* of all the good promises the LORD your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; *not one has failed*’ (Joshua 23:14). [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 178]

The context needs to be kept in mind. There were many places, including Jerusalem, which Israel wouldn’t capture until hundreds of years later.

... the extended context indicates that the land promises were not completely satisfied in the days of Joshua (13:1-7; Judges 1:19, 21, 27, 29, 30-36). In addition, the land that Israel attained in the conquests was only a fraction of what was found in the Abrahamic Covenant. Also, the land promises could not have been fulfilled in Joshua’s day since Israel had not yet conquered Jerusalem (Josh. 15:63). The conquest of Jerusalem would have to wait another four hundred years until the Davidic reign (2 Sam. 5).

	<p>Although Solomon gained a large percentage of the land, his empire only extended to the border of Egypt (1 Kgs. 4:21) rather than to the promised river of Egypt (Gen. 15:18) according to what God initially promised Abraham ...</p> <p>Furthermore, if the land promises were satisfied in Joshua’s or Solomon’s day, then why do subsequent prophets treat these promises as if they are yet to be fulfilled (Amos 9:11-15)? Certainly the New Covenant’s promise of God writing His laws upon the hearts of Israel has never been fulfilled. [Woods, 2012b]</p> <p>The Abrahamic Covenant says that Israel would possess the land <i>forever</i>. This has not happened yet [Woods, 2016a]. Amos 9:11 makes reference to the rebuilding of “David’s fallen shelter” or the Tabernacle of David. This was hundreds of years after David had passed away, and many hundreds of years after the time of Joshua.</p> <p>The New Covenant will be fulfilled at the end of the Tribulation (i.e., after the Second Coming of Christ), and through the Millennium.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>The Abrahamic covenant was fulfilled during the time of Joshua (see above [Hanegraaff, 2007]).</p> <p>The Davidic and New Covenants have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. There is no special race of people (e.g., Jews) that God focuses on with favoritism (e.g., land deals). Rather, all believers are “one” in Christ.</p> <p>The bottom line is that there is no future Millennial age of 1,000 years where mortals live with immortals, and where sin exists. After the general resurrection and judgment, God restores all things.</p>

Topic/ Question	<p>What is the “covenant with death” described in Isaiah 28:18?</p> <p>Isaiah 28:18 Your covenant with death will be annulled; your agreement with the grave will not stand. When the overwhelming scourge sweeps by, you will be beaten down by it.</p>
Dispensationalist Position	<p>This is likely the 7-year peace treaty (or the strengthening of an existing agreement) that is made by the Antichrist with the Jews in the 7 years leading up to Armageddon. In other words, it probably refers to the 7-year covenant in Daniel 9:27—the covenant engineered by the Antichrist.</p> <p>It is obvious that the leaders of Israel will go into this covenant in order to obtain some measure of security and to escape the <i>overflowing scourge</i>. The figure of a flood, when used symbolically, is always a symbol of a military invasion. Hence, the leaders of Israel will believe that by entering the covenant, they will be free from any further military invasions. However, God declares that this is not a covenant of life, but a covenant of death. It is not a covenant of Heaven, but a covenant of Hell. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]</p>

Preterist Position	n/a
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Topic/ Question	<p>What is meant by the <i>day of the Lord</i>? Is it the same as “the day of Christ” and “the day of God”?</p> <p>The prophet Joel uses the term “the day of the Lord”. Is the book of Joel historical, spiritual, or does it portray a future time (e.g., Armageddon)?</p>
Dispensationalist Position	<p>The day of the Lord is mentioned in Isaiah 2:12; Isaiah 13:6,9; Ezekiel 13:5; Ezekiel 30:3; Joel 1:15; Joel 2:1,11,31; Joel 3:14; Amos 5:18,20; Obadiah 15; Zephaniah 1:7,14; Zechariah 14:1; Malachi 4:5; Acts 2:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; and 2 Peter 3:10.</p> <p>The <i>day of Christ</i> is mentioned in Philippians 1:6; 1:10; and 2:16.</p> <p>The <i>day of God</i> is mentioned in 2 Peter 3:12 and Revelation 16:14.</p> <p>The day of the Lord is an important concept. As a preview of our discussion below, the day of the Lord usually refers to the time of God’s wrath and judgment in the end times, especially the <i>7-year Tribulation</i>; however, it also includes the 1,000-year Millennium. In other words, it refers to at least a 1,007-year period of time, and it has two phases: (1) a <i>judgment</i> phase called the Tribulation, and (2) a <i>blessing</i> phase called the Millennium [Walvoord & Hitchcock, 2012]. (The day of the Lord has also been used elsewhere in Scripture to describe other major judgments and blessings by God.)</p> <p>Joel 3:18 refers to the day of the Lord, and includes the Millennial kingdom:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">"In that day the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water. A fountain will flow out of the LORD's house and will water the valley of acacias.</p> <p>Almost all scholars believe that the day of the Lord includes the Tribulation, and certainly the latter half of the Tribulation: the Great Tribulation. However, it makes sense to extend this 1,007-year period to include what immediately precedes it, namely, the Rapture and the gap between the Rapture and the start of the Tribulation.</p> <p>Note that some prophecy scholars think there is no gap at all. It is unclear whether the Rapture and the start of the 70th Week of Daniel take place simultaneously. Indeed, there are good arguments that suggest there may be some time—perhaps years—before the signing of the 7-year covenant takes place that marks the start of the Tribulation. The rationale for this is that once the Rapture has occurred, the Restrainer of evil, that is, the Holy Spirit acting</p>

through the church, is removed. During this period of time, the Antichrist is active in the world, establishing a power base, getting people conditioned for upcoming events, coming to a world leadership position, and getting ready to make a 7-year covenant with Israel. Once the Restrainer is removed, evil will grow rapidly; thus, the judgment phase associated with the day of the Lord will already be unfolding.

Note that Satan does not know when the Restrainer will be removed. This is a reason for why he wants to have an antichrist figure available at all times [Missler, 2006].

It's quite possible that the day of the Lord begins with the Rapture *even if* the Rapture precedes the start of the Tribulation by some period of time. Thus, we have support for the day of the Lord being imminent with a “sudden” end to a time of relative peace and safety (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3). This marks the end of the day of grace (i.e., the end of the church era) [Walvoord & Hitchcock, 2012]. Another possibility is that the time of the Rapture occurs sufficiently far away from the Antichrist's signing of the covenant or peace treaty that most people aren't expecting it. In this case too, there may be a “sudden” end to a relative time of peace.

That said, there are various alternative viewpoints [Pentecost, 1958; Elwell, 1984]. The Old Testament (KJV) uses the three terms: “that day”, “the day”, and “the great day” more than 75 times. Almost all authors say that the day of the Lord is not a 24-hour period, and refers to a period of wrath and judgment from the Lord. (Note: Some prophecy teachers refer to the whole 7-year Tribulation as *the Great Tribulation*; however, many others use the latter term to describe the last 3½ years—the most intense part of the 7-year period.)

Just like the early days of Genesis, the “day” includes both “evening” (a dark period) and “morning” (a light period) [Showers, 1995]. By analogy, the day of the Lord includes both: the Tribulation with its many judgments; and the glorious rule and reign of Christ in the subsequent Millennial Kingdom on the earth, which includes a time of great peace and prosperity. Furthermore, the “dark” part includes both a general time of tribulation and a more specific or narrow “great and terrible day of the Lord” (Joel 2:31, KJV; see also Malachi 4:5) when Christ returns at Armageddon. Renald Showers believes that the day of the Lord includes the Tribulation but *excludes* the Rapture of the Christian church—and there is a gap of time between the Rapture and the start of the Tribulation [Showers, 1995].

... it is necessary to find what is meant by “the day of the Lord.” This expression is found often in the Bible (nineteen times in the Old Testament and four times in the New Testament). In a word, it is the period of time predicted in the Scriptures when God will deal *directly* and *dramatically* in judgment or in blessing. It includes the tribulation time preceding the second advent of Christ, when He will deal with human sin directly, and it includes the millennial reign of Christ when He will directly pour out His blessings.

It will culminate in the judgment of the great white throne (Rev. 20:11-15). The day of the Lord is therefore an extended period of time lasting over one thousand years that unfolds in two distinct phases—a seven-year judgment phase and a one-thousand-year blessing phase. [Walvoord & Hitchcock, 2012, p. 120]

Arnold Fruchtenbaum argues:

In every passage of the Scriptures that the term *the Day of Jehovah* or *the Day of the Lord* is found, it is always and without exception a reference to the Tribulation period. ... While the phrase *that day* is used both negatively and positively and therefore many times it does apply to the Millennium, the phrase *Day of Jehovah* or *Day of the Lord* is always used negatively and never included the Millennial Kingdom. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 173]

Amos 5:18 Woe to you who long for the day of the LORD! Why do you long for the day of the LORD? That day will be darkness, not light.

Joel 2:31 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

A strong case for including the new heavens and the new earth—or at least the creation of the new heavens and new earth—within the day of the Lord is found in Peter’s epistle (letter):

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

In Greek, the “day of the Lord” is *hemera kyrios*, the “day of Christ” is *hemera christos*, and the “day of God” is *hemera theos*.

David Levy provides the following definitions:

- Man’s day = The day which now is, when men have control over human government.
- The day of Christ = The day when Christ comes to rapture the Church out of the Earth.
- The day of the Lord = The day when God takes direct control in the affairs of men extending from the Rapture of the Church to the Great White Throne Judgment.
- The day of God = The day when the heavens pass away and the earth is renovated by fire, and a new heaven and earth usher in the eternal state. [Levy, 1987, p. 17]

The day of Christ refers to the *Rapture* of the church, and comes before the *day of the Lord* [LaHaye & Hindson, 2006]. Hindson comments: “Nobody knows

the day or the hour; the Father only. Nobody *knows* the time; so, don't *waste* the time to *guess* the time; be ready *all* the time, because Jesus could come at *any* time." [Hamrick & Hindson, 2021]

Walter Elwell provides some arguments that the *day of Christ* or the *day of the Lord Jesus* is the day of the Second Coming [Elwell, 1984], which would refer to Christ's sudden appearance at the end of the Tribulation when He returns at Armageddon. That definition would be a small subset of what many prophecy teachers define as the day of the Lord. This would explain why different futurists have different viewpoints about the end times' timeline: a separate Rapture and Second Coming versus a combined Rapture and Second Coming.

In Philippians 1:6 and 1:10 and 2:16, the *day of Christ* is inferred as a good thing; however, the *day of the Lord*, is a time of wrath. The prophets Jeremiah and Daniel referred to the Tribulation:

Jeremiah 30:7-9 How awful that day will be! None will be like it. **It will be a time of trouble for Jacob** [Israel], but he will be saved out of it. "'In that day,' declares the LORD Almighty, 'I will break the yoke off their necks and will tear off their bonds; no longer will foreigners enslave them. **Instead,** [after Christ's Second Coming] **they will serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.**

Daniel 12:1 "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be **a time of distress** such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people -- everyone whose name is found written in the book -- will be delivered.

Scripture uses the following synonyms to describe the Tribulation: the time of Jacob's trouble, the 70th Week of Daniel, Jehovah's strange work, Jehovah's strange act, the day of Israel's calamity, the indignation, the overflowing scourge, the day of vengeance, the year of recompense, the time of trouble, the day of wrath, the day of distress, the day of wasteness, the day of desolation, the day of darkness, the day of gloominess, the day of clouds, the day of thick darkness, the day of the trumpet, the day of alarm, the day of the Lord, the wrath of God, the hour of trial, the great day of the wrath of the Lamb of God, the wrath to come, the wrath, the Great Tribulation, and the hour of judgment [Fruchtenbaum, 2004].

A significant part of the book of Joel describes the Armageddon scenario. Clues about the time of its fulfillment are as follows. It will take place in the last days (Joel 3:1-3); after the defeat of the northern army (Joel 2:20); after the land becomes fruitful and the Spirit is poured out upon *all* flesh (Joel 2:28—note that its fulfillment *started* in Acts 2:16-18, at which point it had only been poured out on about 120 people (Acts 1:15)); it will be accompanied by fire,

blood, and smoke (Joel 2:30); and, finally, the sun will be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood (Joel 2:31).

Acts 2:20-21 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood **before** the coming of the great and glorious **day of the Lord**. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the **day of the Lord** has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.

The day of the Lord is mentioned in the book of Joel, and mention is made of an army. Is this Armageddon? Are raptured saints involved in this battle? Some authors think so (e.g., [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008]). Others think that this is leading up to Armageddon, but is not Armageddon (e.g., [Ice, 2001b]). For comparison, note the similarities between Joel 2 and Revelation 9 (the pre-Armageddon scenario), and also Revelation 19 (the Armageddon scenario):

Joel 2:1-11 Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the **day of the LORD is coming**. It is close at hand -- a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains **a large and mighty army comes, such as never was of old nor ever will be in ages to come. Before them fire devours, behind them a flame blazes.** Before them the land is like the garden of Eden, behind them, a desert waste -- nothing escapes them. They have the appearance of horses; they gallop along like cavalry. With a noise like that of chariots **they leap over the mountaintops**, like a crackling fire consuming stubble, like a mighty army drawn up for battle. At the sight of them, nations are in anguish; every face turns pale. **They charge like warriors; they scale walls like soldiers. They all march in line, not swerving from their course. They do not jostle each other; each marches straight ahead. They plunge through defenses without breaking ranks.** They rush upon the city; they run along the wall. They climb into the houses; like thieves they enter through the windows. Before them the earth shakes, the sky trembles, the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine. The LORD thunders at the head of **his army**; his forces are beyond number, and mighty are those who obey his command. The **day of the LORD** is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?

Revelation 9:1-12 The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. **And out of the smoke locusts came down on the earth and were given power**

like that of scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were not allowed to kill them but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes. During those days people will seek death but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them. The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces. Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. They had tails with stingers, like scorpions, and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months. They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek is Apollyon (that is, Destroyer). The first woe is past; two other woes are yet to come.

Both of the above passages seem to refer to supernatural armies during the Tribulation. There are similarities between the two armies; however, what is puzzling is that the first army appears to be led by God (or at least that God is in control of what He allows that army to do), and the second army appears to be demonic in nature. The first army seems to devour and burn the land; the second army doesn't. Yet another possibility is that these may be military drones because the armies are described as not having human-like features, but they march in-line and are not obstructed, and appear to be "programmed" with a purpose. It's possible that they could be used to somehow draw people to repentance during the Tribulation [Ice, 2001b]; but, at this stage, we cannot make any conclusions. It is interesting to note that the second army only seems to attack the unsaved individuals, that is, those who are not sealed by God. The passage in Revelation 9 is clearly stated as referring to the fifth trumpet judgment of the Tribulation, and this occurs near the midpoint of the 7-year Tribulation. We are not sure about the timing of the events of Joel 2:1-11—although the day of the Lord is either near or taking place (i.e., it is in the general timeframe of the Rapture and beyond). It is not clear what happens to the demonic-locust army from the Abyss after the 5-month period ends [Gilbert, 2021].

Next, let us compare the above passages to the saints returning with the Lord at Armageddon:

Revelation 19:6-21 Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. **Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.**" (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) ... I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose

	<p>rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. ... The armies of heaven were following him ... Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. ... The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.</p> <p>Other Scripture passages that seem to draw a parallel to the above verses include:</p> <p>Isaiah 13:1-6 An oracle concerning Babylon that Isaiah son of Amoz saw: Raise a banner on a bare hilltop, shout to them; beckon to them to enter the gates of the nobles. I have commanded my holy ones; I have summoned my warriors to carry out my wrath -- those who rejoice in my triumph. Listen, a noise on the mountains, like that of a great multitude! Listen, an uproar among the kingdoms, like nations massing together! The LORD Almighty is mustering an army for war. They come from faraway lands, from the ends of the heavens -- the LORD and the weapons of his wrath -- to destroy the whole country. Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty.</p> <p>Zechariah 14:1-5 A day of the LORD is coming ... I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it ... Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.</p> <p>Jude 14-15 Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."</p> <p>Daniel 7:10 A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>Joel is written in Old Testament symbolic language which refers to the judgment of God. The Scriptures in Joel were fulfilled on or before 70 AD, through the early church, beginning at the Day of Pentecost:</p> <p>Acts 2:14-21 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "... this is what was</p>

	<p>spoken by the prophet Joel: "'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'</p>
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<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>“The Promised Land”: What is it? Who owns the land: the Israelis? The Palestinians? God?</p> <p>Has Israel ever possessed the full extent of the Promised Land in its history?</p> <p>On a possibly related issue, what is meant by the term “dividing up the land”? This phrase is used in Joel 3:2 where God says that He will judge the nations because they “divided up My land”:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Joel 3:2 I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will enter into judgment against them concerning my inheritance, my people Israel, for they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land.</p>
<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>God owns the land, but He gave it to Israel to manage. Pamela Thomas explains:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">When God made [the] covenant with Abraham, He gave the land of Canaan to Abraham’s descendants as an everlasting possession. ...</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">God promised to bless Isaac according to the oath or covenant He made with Abraham: “Dwell in this Land and I will be with you and bless you: for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your Father” (Gen. 26:3-5). Then the covenant promise was repeated to the next generation when God spoke to Jacob at Bethel and told him that He would bring him back to the Land and would not leave him until He had fulfilled His covenant to him (Gen. 28:13-15). Throughout the prophetic Scriptures, God promised a regathering of the Jewish people to their Land in the latter days from which they would never again be uprooted (Isa. 11:11-14; Jer. 16:14-16; 30:3; Amos 9:14-15).</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The Land of Israel, however, clearly belongs to God. Leviticus 25:23 says, “The land is Mine and you are strangers and sojourners with Me.” We are reminded here that the Land shall not be sold permanently, because it belongs to God. God acknowledges the unique character of this territory by referring to it as “My land” (Ezek. 36:5,20; 38:16; Joel 3:2) and as the Jewish people’s “own land” (Ezek. 36:17, 24; 37:21). ...</p>

If the Israelites obeyed God fully and kept His covenant, then they would be His treasured possession out of all nations, and He would do wonders amongst them previously never seen in any nation (Exod. 34:10). But, in Deuteronomy 28-30, God said if they did not obey Him, He would uproot them from the Land. However, when they repented and turned back to the Lord, He would bring them back. The Land would still remain theirs.

However, history shows that the Jewish people never actually possessed their full inheritance, even during the great leadership of Joshua and Caleb when they took the fertile plains bordering the Mediterranean and the River Jordan. The promised territory extended from the River Euphrates to Egypt ...

History records that the descendants of Abraham, under the leadership of Joshua, entered the Promised Land in about 1422 BC. The Land was then divided among the 12 tribes. God later renewed His covenant with David, Israel's greatest king, who first reigned over the territory of Judah and finally over the entire nation of Israel. The Scriptures record that the reign of David lasted some 40 years, between [approximately] 1011 BC and 971 BC ... God made a covenant with David that promised 3 things: a land forever ... an unending dynasty ... and an everlasting kingdom ... 'At this point in Israel's history, we see a very rare period where God is obeyed, loved, worshipped and appreciated for who He is. As a consequence, David is exalted, Israel is delivered from all its enemies, all its territory is restored, and Israel becomes the great power of the region' [Thomas, 2006]

By definition, the unconditional promises of God are *not* dependent on Israel's faithfulness. The promises include three categories: *land* from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates River (i.e., part of Egypt to Iraq), *seed* (innumerable descendants), and *blessings* [Woods, 2016a].

Furthermore, as per Joel 3:2, God will execute judgment/punishment upon those who "divided up my land".

It is argued that America is great because it has sided with—and blessed—the Jews. Similarly, England greatly increased as a world power when it showed favor to the Jews (1600s); but, the opposite happened when it withdrew support in the second half of the 20th century [Watson, 2015].

... most of the American Evangelical community is pro Israel.

Genesis 12:3 records God's promise to bless those who bless Abraham and his descendants (i.e., Israel). The Abrahamic covenant is directed to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants. It is repeated to them about twenty times in Genesis ... Does this promise still stand or has it been changed? If these biblical promises are to be taken literally and still applies to Israel, and not the church, it should not be surprising to anyone that such a view leads one, such as myself, to Christian Zionism. Zionism is simply the belief that the Jewish people have been given the land of Israel by covenant promise to God and have a current right to occupy that land. Christian Zionists are Christians who agree with this belief. [Ice, 2003i]

William Koenig wrote a book discussing the consequences of attempting to divide Israel [Koenig, 2008]. With respect to Israel's key ally (the United States), he points out that the 10 most expensive insurance claims, the 12 most expensive hurricanes, 3 of the 4 largest tornados, and the 2 largest terrorism events in US history occurred on the same day, or within 24 hours, of events such as the United States: (a) applying pressure to Israel to trade land for peace, (b) supporting or sponsoring meetings to consider doing the same, and (c) calling for a Palestinian state. Koenig wonders if these correlated events are God's warning signs, or if they are just coincidences. He thinks it is the former.

The Valley of Jehoshaphat, sometimes called the Kidron Valley, is in Jerusalem. In particular, it separates the Mount of Olives from the Temple Mount in east Jerusalem. It is believed that this is where Christ will judge people after He returns, and the location is likely to be where part of the Battle of Armageddon takes place. *Jehoshaphat* means "Yahweh judges" (i.e., God/Jehovah judges). This refers to the time when God will judge the Gentile nations who have survived the Tribulation, and this judgment will take place on the earth after the Second Coming of Christ.

What is meant by judgment of the nations? The word "nation" (Greek: *ethnos*) refers to the judgment of individual Gentiles within the country, not the judgment of whole nations. The following reasons bear this out. First, the message of salvation presented in the Tribulation calls for an individual acceptance, not a national one. Second, there is no record in Scripture that whole Gentile nations will accept the preaching of the 144,000 Jewish witnesses. Third, in all the judgments presented in Scripture, it is the individual, not the nation, who is judged. Fourth, the parables on judgment presented by Christ (Matthew 13:30, 47-50) are on individuals. Fifth, the term *nation* is used in other portions of the New Testament with reference to individuals (Matthew 6:31-32; 12:21; 20:19; 28:19; Acts 11:18; 15:3; 26:20). [Levy, 1987]

Joel 3 is similar to the Battle of Armageddon described in Revelation:

Joel 3:9-20 Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare for war! Rouse the warriors! Let all the fighting men draw near and attack. Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears. Let the weakling say, 'I am strong!' Come quickly, all you nations from every side, and assemble there. Bring down your warriors, O LORD! 'Let the nations be roused; let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side. ... Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine. The LORD will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem; the earth and the sky will tremble. But the LORD will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel. ... But Egypt will be desolate, Edom [Jordan] a desert waste, because of violence done to the people of Judah, in whose land they shed innocent blood. Judah will be inhabited forever and Jerusalem through all generations.

Was Joel's prophecy fulfilled at Pentecost?

Joel said that God would pour His Spirit out on [all flesh] ... At Pentecost God did not pour out His Spirit on all flesh, but on a select group of people, and likewise today. God will not pour out His Spirit on all flesh until the Kingdom Age.

Another reason why Joel's prophecy was not fulfilled on the day of Pentecost is clearly seen in Acts 2:17-21. Peter went on to quote, "And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in earth beneath: blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come" (Acts 2:19-20; cp. Joel 2:30-31) ... Scripture very distinctly presents that these prophecies are to be fulfilled in "the great and the terrible day of the Lord" (verse 31) at the end of the Tribulation period. [Levy, 1987, p. 54]

Is "The sun shall be turned into darkness" to be taken literally? Thomas Ice comments:

The question must be raised: Did the sun literally not shine over the land of Egypt and at the same time shine in the land of Goshen during the ninth plague (Exod. 10:29-29)? Of course. Similarly, during the crucifixion of our Lord, did darkness really fall over the whole land of Israel about the sixth hour until the ninth hour (Luke 23:44-45)? Sure it did. It was a pattern of the final darkness that will accompany the final judgment at the end of the world. [Ice & Gentry, 1999, p. 152]

We also note the mention of "beating swords into plowshares" (in Joel's passage above), but also in Isaiah 2:4, which is repeated in Micah 4:3. This passage speaks of the Millennium, which follows the return of Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 2:4 He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

Micah 4:3-4 He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. Everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid, for the LORD Almighty has spoken.

Dave Hunt states that the *United Nations* effectively partitioned the land—God's land—before giving Israel the remainder; therefore, all nations are indirectly responsible. Hunt adds, "The God of the Bible has promised to protect Israel, while Allah of the Qur'an and Islam has sworn to put an end to her. The real battle is not between Arabs and Jews but between Allah and Yahweh [the God of the Bible]." [Hunt, 2006]

May 14, 1948 represents the return of Jews to the land—and more specifically, Israel’s independence—after an absence from the land (due to sin, exile, Roman rule, and barrenness of the land) for a period spanning 2,520 years (when using 360 days as 1 Biblical year, and excluding the 70 years of the “Servitude of the Nation” between approximately 606 BC and 537 BC) [Missler, 2000; Watchman, 2012; Johnson, 2020a]. This is connected to the 430 days when Ezekiel (as per Ezekiel 4:1-8) lay on one side for 390 days, and on the other side for 40 days, and each day represents one year (as per Ezekiel 4:6). Coupled with a penalty of “seven times” for disobedience (as per Leviticus 26:14-18), and after subtracting 70 years for the Babylonian captivity, this yields: $(430 - 70) \times 7 = 360 \times 7 = 2,520$ years.

Cyrus issued his decree freeing the Jews and declaring the state of Israel to exist again on August 3, 537 BC. Multiply 2,520 Jewish years times 360 days per year to get 907,200 days ... we arrive at May 14, AD 1948! [Johnson, 2020a, p. 98]

Ken Johnson also connects Daniel 4-5, and the prophecy of the handwriting on the wall (“MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN” in Daniel 5:24, mapping the respective nouns (not verbs) to 1,000 garahs + 1,000 garahs + 20 garahs + 500 garahs, which equals 2,520 garahs) ... to the control of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem on June 7, 1967—starting with King Darius’ decree on August 25, 518 BC:

Darius’s decree to grant the Jews control of the Temple Mount was August 25, 518 BC. This date plus 907,200 days ... brings us to June 7, 1967. On this exact date the Israelis again gained control of the Temple Mount during the Six Day War! [Johnson, 2020a, p. 100]

In Missler’s book, he also explores other cycles or patterns of 70, 360, 430, and 2,520 years.

There is no agreement among authors as to what, specifically, is the time of the “desolations of Jerusalem”. Some authors argue that the “desolations of Jerusalem” refers to the period from about 605 BC to 539 BC (with 538 BC being the year of the return of the Jews to the land of Israel) [Walvoord, *et al.*, 2012]. Others claim that the “desolations of Jerusalem” began with Nebuchadnezzar’s third and final siege of Jerusalem in 586 BC up to the decree by Darius I in 518 BC to rebuild Jerusalem, with the rededication of the Temple occurring in 515 BC. Yet others claim that both the 70 years of servitude and the 70 years of desolations are the same. Interestingly, while the first return of the Jews to Israel in 538 BC occurred about 70 years from their initial captivity in 606 BC or 605 BC; the rededication of the Temple in 515 BC occurred about 70 years from its destruction in 586 BC.

The Promised Land was not geographically fulfilled in the time of Joshua or at any other time in the Old Testament. Some dispensationalists encourage Jews to return to Israel to hasten the return of Christ; however, fulfillment of the

Promised Land may have to wait until the Millennium—in which case, promotion and acceleration become a non-issue:

Isaiah 19:23-25 In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The LORD Almighty will bless them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance."

Joel 3:18 'In that day the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water. A fountain will flow out of the LORD'S house and will water the valley of acacias.

The reality is that there will be a time of judgment for all the nations (Joel 3:2; Zechariah 12:3,9). This will be followed by the Millennium—a 1,000-year period of time of tremendous blessings and rebuilding on the earth that includes the events depicted in Isaiah 19:23-25 and Joel 3:18.

Ludwig Schneider writes:

The nations often believed that their intention to wipe out the Jews was making a contribution to world peace. Even churches believed that they were carrying out God's commandments by persecuting the Jews. Today, Israel is viewed once again as 'the obstacle to world peace.' [Schneider, 2006]

There was an interesting and ominous parallel between the current geopolitical events in Israel and that of Czechoslovakia prior to World War II [Missler, 2003a]. France, Britain, Russia, and the West "guaranteed" Czechoslovakia's borders. However, via a propaganda campaign, Germany claimed that Czechoslovakia was "occupied territory", and that the Czechs were the obstacle to peace. Britain and France urged Czechoslovakia to turn over land for peace. Hitler accepted the arrangement; but, Czechoslovakia felt badly betrayed. Britain's Neville Chamberlain declared, "I believe it is peace in our time." However, shortly thereafter, Hitler invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia, the West and others did nothing, and World War II broke out.

Dave Hunt says that it is only because of the magnitude of the Holocaust during World War II that the United Nations gave Israel a homeland in the Middle East. Had it not been for the Holocaust, it is doubtful that Israel would have received the favor (pity) of the world. In other words, it is doubtful that the U.N. would have voted to give Israel its ancient homeland. Even so, Hunt points out that the amount of land that Israel received is only a small fraction of the land that it held around 1000 BC.

Genesis 26:2-5 The LORD appeared to **Isaac** and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For **to you and your**

descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because Abraham obeyed me and kept my requirements, my commands, my decrees and my laws."

Genesis 28:10-15 **Jacob** left Beersheba and set out for Haran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give **you and your descendants** the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

Bill Salus writes:

World War I prepared the Promised Land for the Chosen People, and World War II prepared the Chosen People for the Promised Land. [Salus, 2014, p. 141]

Concerning Israel, David Hocking says: 31 times it's called the *Land of Israel*, and 66 times it's called *Canaan*. Furthermore, the land was clearly given to the children of Israel by God Himself. The Old Testament states that Israel's borders will some day encompass half of modern-day Iraq, and stretch all the way to the river of Egypt.

The "river of Egypt" is taken to be the eastern branch of the Nile River in the Nile Delta, and corresponds to where the Suez Canal is today [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. It is not the same as the "brook of Egypt" which, for most of the year, is a dry river bed called the Wadi-el-Arish which runs from south to north in the central Sinai Peninsula. David Hocking also believes that the "river of Egypt" specifically refers to the Nile [Hocking, 2013].

Only a third of the land was claimed by Israel during the time of Joshua [Fruchtenbaum, 2013b]. Judges 1 provides examples of this. Furthermore, Jerusalem belonged to the Jebusites until David conquered the city.

Joshua 21:43-45 So the LORD gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their forefathers, and they took possession of it and settled there. The LORD gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their forefathers. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the LORD handed all their enemies over to them. Not one

of all the LORD'S good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.

Ron Rhodes writes:

First, Joshua 21:43-45 is absolutely true regarding God fulfilling His part in giving the Israelites the promised land. Israel, however, failed to take full possession of what was promised to the nation by God, and they failed to dispossess all the Canaanites. The land was there for the taking. God had faithfully done for Israel what he promised. Israel, by contrast, was not faithful. As prophecy expert John F. Walvoord put it, "The Lord had not failed to keep His promise even though Israel had failed by faith to conquer all the land." [Rhodes, 2008, p. 74]

In the sixth century BC, which is many hundreds of years after Joshua, the prophet Ezekiel stated:

Ezekiel 36:24 "'For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into **your own land**.

Ezekiel 36:28 Then you will live **in the land I gave your ancestors**; you will be my people, and I will be your God.

It is not clear whether the modern-day Palestinians are related ethnically to the Philistines or Phoenicians of old. In 135 AD, the Roman Emperor Hadrian renamed Israel to Palestine, to try to remove the Jewish connection from the land which by that time was a Roman province. Hadrian may have combined the names Philistine, Phoenician, and Syria in doing so. It is interesting to note that the Jews who lived in the land centuries before it was named Israel again (i.e., pre-1948) were called Palestinians. Their newspaper was called the *Palestine Post*. The Palestinian flag in the 1930s was light blue and white, and it had the Star of David.

The name Palestine is derived from the Philistines, a seafaring people that invaded the coast of the land of Canaan from the sea around 1200 B.C.E., shortly after the Jewish conquest overland from the east. The main Philistine dominions never extended much farther than the coastal strip between Gaza and today's Tel Aviv, and the Philistines disappeared as a people under the heel of the Babylonians. ...

Thus, up until the twentieth century, the name Palestine referred exclusively to the ancient land of the Jews ... The Arabs who lived there were called Arabs ... [Netanyahu, 2000, pp. 4-5]

The second temple was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70, although Jews continued to live in the area through the centuries. Modern Zionist resettlement of Palestine began in the 1880s, and Jews had become a political force in Palestine by 1917, when Britain, in the Balfour Declaration, pledged to establish in Palestine, a national home for the Jewish people, "with safeguards for the other, i.e., Arab, inhabitants". [Hersh, 1991, p. 35]

	<p>The scatterings of Jews to the rest of the world in 70 AD and 135 AD is called the <i>diaspora</i>.</p> <p>In his book <i>Innocents Abroad</i>, Mark Twain wrote about a trip to the Holy Land in 1867, and he mentioned that Palestine was a wasteland. It seemed to be largely uninhabited, with few trees and shrubs [Twain, 1869]. There was swampland and Palestine was very sparsely populated.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Deuteronomy 29:23-25 The whole land will be a burning waste of salt and sulfur -- nothing planted, nothing sprouting, no vegetation growing on it. It will be like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboyim, which the LORD overthrew in fierce anger. All the nations will ask: "Why has the LORD done this to this land? Why this fierce, burning anger?" And the answer will be: "It is because this people abandoned the covenant of the LORD, the God of their ancestors, the covenant he made with them when he brought them out of Egypt."</p> <p>The first wave of Zionist immigration occurred in 1880, and more continued thereafter [Netanyahu, 2000]. The land was gradually transformed as farms, roads, schools, hospitals, towns, etc. were built. Today, Israel flourishes in agriculture. The land and its people are productive.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">These early waves of immigrants were known as <i>Olim</i> (Hebrew for "Ascenders"). They were making <i>Aliyah</i> (Hebrew for "going up") to the Holy Land.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">By 1903, the close of the period that has officially been called the First Aliyah, Jewish people had purchased 90,000 acres of land in Israel, and approximately 10,000 new Jewish settlers had immigrated. The Second Aliyah (1904-1914) brought some 40,000 new immigrants. By 1914 the Jewish population in the land had reached 85,000.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">... At that point, no one seemed to care that the Jews were buying land because most of the land made available to them was considered worthless. The owners sold it to the Jewish people at exorbitant prices. They were all too happy to get rid of the wasteland and Malaria-infested swamps that they considered good for nothing—and they were making a hefty profit to boot.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">But the Jews had a vision, and they were willing to work themselves to death if it meant they could be back in their own land ...</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Although there had always been a Jewish presence in Palestine, generations of Jewish people had gone to their graves without realizing the hope of this new day. [McQuaid, 2019, pp. 91-92]</p>
<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>The "Promised Land" is fulfilled in Christ, in a typological sense: By believing in Jesus Christ, you will have access to much more land (physical land, following the resurrection). In other words, Christ's promises surpass anything temporary. When we hear of the "Promised Land", our emphasis should not be on Palestine, but on paradise (Eden) restored—the ultimate fulfillment.</p>

The return to the land (the new “return from exile”) refers to the “rest” we have in Jesus—as per the book of Hebrews. Every believer has entered the rest of the “promised land”. This is the typological fulfillment. The Old Testament specifically referred to the land; but the New Testament did not. Jesus was not referring to a specific border when talking about his kingdom. Recall that the people wanted to make him king, by force. It was typological of a greater scope, where Paradise Lost will become Paradise Restored, says Hank Hanegraaff. “The meek will inherit the earth”.

An argument against dispensationalism is that dispensationalists don’t try to promote peace in the Middle East because they feel that peace is not in line with end time prophecies; so, why even try for peace? This is a depressing prospect.

There is a window of opportunity for both parties to agree to peace, and redraw the map of the Middle East (i.e., Israel being partitioned further). The unconditional promise is that of the land of Israel [and the Israeli people] being a *blessing* for all people of the earth. However, *continued possession* of the land is conditional: God warned the Israelites that He would kick them out of the land if they were disobedient (i.e., God would “vomit” them out, like He did to the previous occupants). God says that “the land is Mine” (Leviticus 25), and He used the word “if” often enough; so, even if He left out the “if” clause for certain cases, it is axiomatic. In other words, the situation is revocable. Steve Gregg, for example, believes that there are no *unconditional* promises in the Bible. In contrast, dispensationalists claim that the Abrahamic covenant is unconditional.

Jesus is the “new” Joshua, that is, Christ Himself fulfilled the notion of the Promised Land. This implies that the anniversary date of Israel’s independence—May 14—is not to be interpreted as being special. Throwing non-Israelis out of the land is not ethical; it is an injustice. Remember, God is a God of justice. We must read everything in the Old Testament through the eyes of Jesus.

Accepting the state of Israel need not have a Biblical or eschatological reason.

The promises made to Israel *were fulfilled*. “Not one promise” failed to be kept (Joshua 21:43-45). The Lord gave the Israelites all the land (Joshua 11). This included what are now Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and parts of Egypt and Iraq.

Some scholars, including Stephen Sizer, argue that the “river of Egypt” is not the Nile, but a river south of Gaza. The vast land that dispensationalists claim was part of the Promised Land, is not really part of the Promised Land.

The boundaries of the Promised Land are described in different ways, and they are not necessarily the same as those given to Joshua. For example, the promise

to Abraham was restated to Isaac in a different form. Also, compare Exodus 23, Deuteronomy 11, and Joshua 1.

Some dispensationalists expect Israel to increase its land holdings to at least 30 times what it is today [Hanegraaff, 2007]. For example, some Zionists claim that Israel needs to capture and control all of the West Bank, Gaza, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, two-thirds of Jordan, and the northwestern part of Saudi Arabia.

Hank Hanegraaff argues that such people simply don't understand the Scriptures, and that "Christ is neither a racist nor a real estate broker". Instead, we should be looking forward to a city with foundations whose architect and builder is God (Hebrews 11:10). Jesus was the temple not built by human hands. He is the substance that fulfills the symbols in the Old Testament. We should not go back to the issues of land and temples. The Lord is the "land". Jesus is "Jerusalem".

In Christ, there is no Jew or Gentile (Romans 10:12). God has always only had *one* people, and they were from *every* tongue and tribe—not just Israel! Indeed, God promised blessings to "Abraham", but in the New Testament, Paul says that Gentiles are included under the umbrella of Abraham, alongside the Jews [Burge & Hanegraaff, 2012]. Recall that Scripture says that Abraham is the father of *many* nations:

Genesis 17:4-5 "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you **a father of many nations**."

Romans 4:17-18 As it is written: "**I have made you a father of many nations.**" He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed -- the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became **the father of many nations**, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

Why have the Jews had possession of their land for such a small portion of time?

As with the Levitical law, the promises concerning the land find ultimate fulfillment in the Lord. There is no biblical precedent for supposing that God favors Jews over Palestinians or vice versa. At the end of the day, our heavenly Father is not pro-Jew—he is pro-justice; he is not pro-Palestinian, he is pro-peace.

... This is made explicit through a vision of unclean food that Peter experienced in Joppa. Only after he encountered the gentile centurion Cornelius did Peter fully comprehend the import of the vision. 'I now realize how true it is' said Peter, 'that God does not show *favoritism* but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 181-182]

God does not want any kind of “ethnic cleansing”. There are many Palestinian Christians, for example, who are undergoing tremendous pressure and difficult treatment from the Israelis, and who long for a peaceful *two-state solution* with Israelis and Palestinians having equal rights, living peacefully together in the land. Gary Burge states that many innocent Palestinian people have been uprooted, and have lost everything [Burge & Hanegraaff, 2012]. He adds that evangelicals need to re-evaluate their position of unconditional support for the Israelis. Many evangelicals are Christian Zionists who are opposed to Israel giving up any part of the land, thinking that those who compel Israel to do so, can expect God’s judgment. They denounce those who criticize the State of Israel, calling them “replacement theologians”.

Burge says that the New Testament turns the reader away from a single-minded focus on Israel and Jerusalem and causes the reader to focus on the entire world. Because of Christ, blessings are offered to all people who practice faithfulness and justice—and not just to a (largely secular) Israel. Covenant faithfulness goes back thousands of years to the time of Abraham. Even if someone believes that we are living in the last days, Burge argues that God’s blessings are dependent on justice and relationships.

In fact, when Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon began dismantling Israeli settlements in Gaza as a step toward peace, he was savagely denounced by Christian Zionists. Pat Robertson went as far as to suggest that the establishment of a Palestinian state was a direct violation of ‘God’s plan.’ His immediate reaction was to attribute the stroke Sharon suffered on January 4, 2006, as divine retribution for dividing God’s land. ‘Woe unto any prime minister of Israel who takes a similar course to appease the United Nations or the United States of America,’ he warned. Robertson went on to link Sharon’s stroke to the 1995 assassination of Israeli leader Yitzhak Rabin who similarly suffered the wrath of God Almighty for signing the Oslo Peace Accords granting limited self-rule to Palestinians.

... When President George W. Bush demanded that ‘Israel should freeze settlement construction, dismantle unauthorized outposts, end the daily humiliation of the Palestinian people, and not prejudice final negotiations with the placements of walls and fences,’ he declared Bush to be under a curse. According to [Christian Zionist Michael] Evans, ‘If America divides Jerusalem, there will be no forgiveness. America will tragically end up on the ash heap of history.’ John Hagee agrees. ‘Any nation, America included, that forces Israel to give up land for peace is going to experience the wrath and the judgment of God,’ says Hagee ... [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 168]

Hanegraaff reminds us that the Canaanite prostitute Rahab is in the lineage of Christ; and so is the Moabitess Ruth. For example, Boaz—the father of Jesse, who in turn was the father of David—married Rahab. Thus, a totally Jewish/Israeli lineage to Jesus Christ is already out of the question.

The cleansing that took place in the Old Testament is *not* ethnic cleansing because the nations inhabiting the lands of Canaan were responsible for wicked acts (e.g., sacrificing infants and children in fire, in the arms of an idol like

Molech). The land of Canaan was at the point of no return, and Israel would be the instrument that God chose to carry out the order for capital punishment [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, December 9, 2011]. God gave the order to destroy the Canaanites, their idols, and their possessions.

Deuteronomy 7:1-8 When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations -- the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you -- and when the LORD your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD'S anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you. This is what you are to do to them: Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles and burn their idols in the fire. For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Later in Scripture, God makes it clear that He wants the Israelites to treat the aliens living among them with *justice* and *mercy*, and this is the model to be followed today. Consider Nineveh: a wicked and unbelieving nation/city in the time of Jonah (circa. 750-800 BC), on the Tigris River. It was known for its extreme cruelty to people [Walvoord, 1990]. Nineveh was founded by Nimrod—the world's first dictator—who also founded Babylon [Walvoord, 1990]. Nineveh was a very large city in those days, with perhaps a population of 150,000. The inner city was surrounded by a wall that had a circumference of 8 miles, was 100 feet high, and was wide enough to allow three chariots to race on it, side by side [Hitchcock, 2010].

For hundreds of years, God warned the Ninevites to *repent*, which they finally did, in the time of Jonah; thus, God withheld judgment from the city for many years. Nineveh finally fell in 612 BC to a Babylon-Media alliance, and its ruins were not discovered until archaeologists uncovered them in 1845. (The prophet Jonah warned about Nineveh's destruction perhaps 150 years before it happened; Isaiah perhaps 100 years in advance; and Nahum perhaps 30-50 years in advance.) Furthermore, God warned the *Israelites*, through Joshua, that He would deal with them in a similar manner (e.g., throw them out of the land), if they did not treat people with justice and mercy. They did not. Therefore, God used both Babylon and Rome as instruments of judgment on

	<p>Israel. The bottom line is that Israel does not have the green light for a “racially exclusive state in the Middle East”, says Hank Hanegraaff.</p> <p>It is interesting to note that the early dispensationalists <i>did not</i> believe that Israel would be blessed by returning to the land in unbelief; thus, Christian Zionism is wrong. Stephen Sizer writes:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The land itself, further, never unconditionally belongs to Israel, but to God. God insists that the land cannot be bought or sold permanently or even given away permanently, let alone annexed and colonized as has occurred since 1967. The land is never at Israel’s disposal for its national purposes; rather, it is Israel who is at God’s disposal. God’s people at best ultimately remain tenants in God’s land (see Lev. 25:23).</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">... The right of Israel to exist as a nation is not in dispute and must be protected; however, it is clear that the promises made to Abraham were given in the context of a covenant relationship that was intended to bless all peoples of the world. To insist, therefore, on an interpretation of those promises that now gives people of Jewish origin born in other parts of the world an exclusive title deed to much of the Middle East in perpetuity, at the expense of the Palestinians born in the land, many of whom are Christians, appears to run as contrary to their Old Testament context as to their New Testament fulfillment.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">... The assertion, therefore, that the founding of the State of Israel in 1948 and the capture of Jerusalem in 1967 indicate that God is once again blessing the Jewish people is without foundation in Scripture. [Sizer, 2006, pp. 37-38]</p> <p>Hank Hanegraaff adds:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“Those who presumptuously appeal to the words of Moses—“I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse” (Genesis 12:3)—as a pretext for unconditionally supporting a secular state that prohibits the advance of the gospel while simultaneously disregarding the plight of the Palestinians should, according to their own hermeneutical standard, heed the words of the prophet Jeremiah:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">... <i>if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your forefathers for ever and ever.</i> [Jeremiah 7:6-7] [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 226]</p>
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Topic/ Question	Should we support Jacob’s descendants more so than Esau’s descendants? In other words, should we support Jews more than Muslims (e.g., Israelis more than Palestinians)?
Dispensa- tionalist Position	A blessing is promised to those who bless the Jews; however, Christ commands us to treat all people well.

	<p>Genesis 12:3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."</p> <p>Matthew 22:36-40 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."</p> <p>In terms of the Promised Land, however, God made it clear that it was land he gave unconditionally to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Hence, we should not divide, give away, or sell the land to others, lest we incur the judgment of God Almighty:</p> <p>Joel 3:2 I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will enter into judgment against them concerning my inheritance, my people Israel, for they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land.</p> <p>(The context of Joel 3:2 is Armageddon.)</p> <p>Many Bible commentators point out that already the land is being “divided up”, and is likely to result in more trouble and terrorism, pushing Israel even closer to Armageddon.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>We should not take sides, especially when it comes to race. “For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile, the same Lord is Lord of all” (Romans 10:12). It is wonderful to see Jewish believers join Gentile believers, together in Christ. This is more likely to build bridges, and to bring peace and justice to both sides in the conflict.</p> <p>While there are about 6,000 Messianic believers in Israel, there are about 145,000 Palestinian Christians. Let us consider the latter a little more seriously than we have been doing so far (i.e., instead of always being on the Israelis’ side, let’s support our brothers in Christ, too).</p> <p>Recall that in the Sermon on the Mount, Christ says, “Blessed are the peacemakers”.</p> <p>When God promises Abraham, ‘I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you’ (Genesis 12:3), such blessings and cursings pertain not simply to the faithful remnant of ethnic Israel, but to true Israel, which consists of every person who through faith has been adopted into the family of God.</p> <p>Just as Joshua is a type of Jesus who leads the true children of Israel into the eternal land of promise, so King David is a type of the ‘King of Kings and Lord of Lords’ who forever rules and reigns from the New Jerusalem in faithfulness and in truth (Revelation 19:16; cf. 19:11). In each case, the</p>

	<p>lesser is fulfilled and rendered obsolete by the greater. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 200-201]</p> <p>The New Testament deals more with the Lord and the people, rather than with the law and the land. “My kingdom is not of this world”, said Christ. The land provided temporal rest for the <i>physical</i> descendants of Abraham; but the Lord provides eternal rest for the <i>spiritual</i> descendants of Abraham. In other words, Christ’s kingdom knows no boundaries. The land was just a <i>type</i> of the promise of the final future [Hanegraaff, <i>Bible Answer Man</i>, December 29, 2011].</p> <p>Hanegraaff says that Israel needs to be fair to the Palestinians, and not throw them out of the land. It’s not about the land. The land belongs to the Lord, and not to Israel.</p> <p>Most Israelis today are secular, and their behaviour with their neighbors leaves much to be desired. There were strict rules in the Old Testament about how the Israelites were to treat the aliens and sojourners. When the Israelites returned from their exile in Babylon, there were already people (including very poor people) living in the land of Israel. A similar analogy applies today with the Palestinians.</p>
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Topic/ Question	Is the return of the Jewish people to Israel (i.e., regathering in unbelief) a fulfillment of Bible prophecy, and especially an indicator of Christ’s soon return? Might this be a fulfillment of Ezekiel 37 (the prophecy of the dry bones)?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>There was a regathering of Jews in the land, most dramatically since May 14, 1948 when Israel became an independent nation—for the first time in thousands of years. The return of Jews to Israel is surely a fulfillment of prophecy, and an indicator of Christ’s soon coming. Prophecy scholars before 1948 (e.g., [Larkin, 1929]) were expecting Jews to return to the land of Israel. Many Jews are moving to Israel, coming out of Russia (especially), Africa, Europe, and numerous nations throughout the world.</p> <p>According to author and historian Joan Peters, the vast majority of Arabs had lived in Israel for less than one generation when Israel was re-established as a state in 1948 [Ice, 2016].</p> <p>Dave Hunt writes:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">One of the most remarkable prophecies in the Bible is found in the many declarations that Jews would be scattered to all nations where they would be hated, persecuted, and killed like no other people. [Hunt, 2006]</p> <p>The Bible speaks of two dispersions of the Jews: one due to Babylon in 606 BC and the years following, and one due to Rome in 70 AD.</p>

In the first dispersion, Babylon was used to discipline Israel. The Jews started returning to Israel 70 years later, in accordance with the writings of Ezra and Nehemiah. The Babylonian exile was not a *worldwide* return; it was basically from one nation. God said, "I will ... gather you from the countries". Furthermore, mostly Judah (the two southern tribes) returned, and not the ten northern tribes.

The second dispersion is a broader one, and occurred via the Romans, in years leading up to, during, and after 70 AD. There are two end-times regatherings associated with the second dispersion. The first regathering of the Jews was in *unbelief*, in preparation for the Tribulation (judgment); and the second will be in *belief* at the end of the Tribulation, shortly before the Messianic Kingdom. The return in unbelief is one that is happening in modern-day times [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007].

Ezekiel 36:22-24 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: **It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name,** which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes. **"For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land.**

Isaiah 43:6 **I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.'** Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth --

Jeremiah 23:3 "I myself will gather the remnant of my flock **out of all the countries where I have driven them** and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number.

Jeremiah 23:7-8 "So then, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when people will no longer say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,' but they will say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the descendants of Israel up **out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.**' Then they will live in their own land."

Ezekiel 20:33-38 As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I will reign over you with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and **with outpoured wrath.** I will bring you from the nations and **gather you from the countries where you have been scattered** -- with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and **with outpoured wrath.** I will bring you into the wilderness of the nations and there, face to face, I will execute judgment upon you. As I judged your ancestors in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will judge you, declares the Sovereign LORD. I will take note of you as you pass under my rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. I

will purge you of those who revolt and rebel against me.
...

Ezekiel 36:19-20 **I dispersed them among the nations, and they were scattered through the countries;** I judged them according to their conduct and their actions. And wherever they went among the nations they profaned my holy name, for it was said of them, 'These are the LORD'S people, and yet they had to leave his land.'

The return during the 1900s was a return from the dispersion all over the world—and is still going on today. While the Israelites were out of the land, and as late as the early- to mid-1900s, the land was largely barren and unproductive. In recent decades, Israel is blooming and productive. In the first regathering, the Jews have largely been returning in *unbelief*. In fact, the majority are atheists or agnostics [Hindson, 2017]. The second regathering will be at the end of the Tribulation when the Jews will return in belief/faith, in preparation for Christ's Millennial kingdom.

Deuteronomy 4:27 **The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and only a few of you will survive among the nations to which the LORD will drive you.**

Deuteronomy 4:30-31 **When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, then in later days you will return to the LORD your God and obey him.** For the LORD your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your ancestors, which he confirmed to them by oath.

Deuteronomy 30:1-3 When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come on you and you take them to heart wherever the LORD your God disperses you among the nations, and when you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, then **the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you.**

The Second World War and Nazi Germany's heinous, despicable treatment of the Jewish people created worldwide sympathy and a favorable environment for the Jewish people. Hitler's atrocities actually provided the greatest momentum for the establishment of a national homeland for the Jews. With United Nations approval, British control of the land ended on May 14, 1948. It was then a nation was reborn. At that time, Israel was given five thousand square miles of territory. It had a population of 650,000 Jews and several hundred thousand Arabs.

Since that historic day, further waves of immigrants have poured into Israel from all over the world, most notably from Ethiopia and the Soviet Union. By 2002, 37 percent of the 12.2 million Jews in the world were back in the land of Israel. [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007, p. 152]

By comparison, the Arab states make up 5,414,000 square miles.

Israel's rescue of Ethiopia's Jews [circa 1990] showed Zionism to be the only movement in history to transport blacks out of Africa not to enslave them but to liberate them.

... tens of thousands ... have followed in their great exodus from Ethiopia. [There was an] accusation of racism against the Zionists by the Arab world—whose contemporary customs include the keeping of indentured black servants in the Gulf states and a prolific history of trading along the slave coast of Africa, as well as the repeated massacres of blacks by the Sudanese Arabs ... [Netanyahu, 2000, pp. 92-93]

As of May 2018, 8.8 million people live in Israel [*Israel Today*, 2018]:

- 75% are Jewish (Israel has about 1/3 of the Jewish people in the world), and of these:
 - 44% are secular Jews
 - 24% are secular/traditional Jews
 - 12% are religious/traditional Jews
 - 11% are religious Jews
 - 9% are Orthodox Jews
 - < 1% are Messianic Jews (about 10,000)
- 19% are Arab Muslims
- 2% are Arab Christians
- 4% are non-Arab Christians
- 1948: 650,000 Jewish people in Israel
 - 2018: 6.6 million
- 1948: 156,000 Arab people in Israel
 - 2018: 1.8 million

Here is a summary of the verses (some of which appear above) that imply *two* end-time gatherings of the Jews to Israel: (a) before the Tribulation, but in unbelief: Isaiah 11:11-12; Ezekiel 20:34-38, 22:17-22, 36:22-24; 38-39; and Zephaniah 2:1-2; and (b) before the Millennium, but in belief: Deuteronomy 4:29-31, 30:1-10; Isaiah 27:12-13, 43:5-7; Jeremiah 16:14-15, 31:7-10; Ezekiel 11:14-18; Amos 9:14-15; Zechariah 10:8-12; and Matthew 24:31 [LaHaye, *et al.*, 2001].

John Walvoord breaks down the return to the land in 4 stages, with only the first stage being fulfilled so far [Walvoord, 1990]:

- Stage 1: A return of Jews during the 20th century
- Stage 2: A return following the covenant with the Antichrist
- Stage 3: A return during the rest of the Tribulation
- Stage 4: A return after the Second Coming of Christ

More generally, God's program for the Jewish people since 70 AD consists of 4 phases: dispersion, preservation, restoration, and reconciliation [McQuaid,

	<p>2019]. Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 are the two chapters in the Bible that summarize the future—and as of today, much of the history—of the Jewish people, right up to the time of their restoration before the return of the Messiah.</p> <p>William Watson lists 21 theologians from the 1500s and 1600s who expected a return of the Jews to their homeland, as per the promises of God to Abraham and his descendants. All of these were well before Darby popularized dispensationalism.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">In 1621, Sir Henry Finch (d. 1625), barrister, member of Parliament, and associate of Sir Francis Bacon, wrote <i>The World's Great Restoration, or Calling of the Jews</i>, a study of biblical passages concerning a spiritual return of the Jews to piety (interpreted as a conversion to Christ) and a physical return of the Jews to Judah and Jerusalem (interpreted as a sign of the impending apocalypse). Finch did not want his readers to confuse the promises God made to the Jews with those made to Christians, so he insisted that these passages referred to physical Israel, not to the Church, as commonly thought ...</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">John Archer (1598-1682), Minister to an English congregation in the Netherlands, also believed in a physical return of the Jews to their homeland ...</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">... Peter Bulkeley (1583-1659) ... confirmed his belief that the Abrahamic covenant to the Jewish people is eternal and unconditional ... [Watson, 2015, pp. 18-22]</p> <p>Finally, we note that Ezekiel 37's image of the dry bones and the graves also have a literal fulfillment after Christ's Second Coming, when the Old Testament saints (believers) will be physically resurrected, be restored to the land, and will enter the Millennial reign of Christ.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>There is no Old Testament prophecy that predicts a return of Jews to the land occurring shorting before the return of Christ. Zechariah is the only possible exception; that book of the Bible speaks of God regathering His people.</p> <p>Ezekiel 37 speaks of a “new heart” in the people. This certainly hasn't happened yet. Today, there may be more Jews in New York City than there are in Israel. There may be more Jews in Russia than in Israel. Some people (in 2004) would even argue that there are more Jews <i>leaving</i> Israel than coming in!</p> <p>Jesus never predicted that the Jews will come back after they were scattered throughout the world.</p> <p>Some scholars do not believe that Israel's presence in the land, or for that matter, any other contemporary events shown in the news, have anything to do with the fulfillment of Bible prophecy.</p>

<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>Every 50 years, the Jews were to observe a Year of Jubilee. At that time, at least 3 things happened: land was returned to its original owner, slaves were freed, and debts were cancelled.</p> <p>What is the significance of the Year of Jubilee with respect to Bible prophecy? What is the role of a kinsman-redeemer, and how does this relate to the events of Revelation?</p> <p>Isaiah 61:1-3 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion -- to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.</p> <p>The “year of the Lord’s favor” is a synonym for the Year of Jubilee [Wagner, 2002]. The KJV uses the term “acceptable year of the Lord”.</p>
<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>The Year of Jubilee has some interesting parallels with Bible prophecy: it is the time when the earth is returned to its rightful owner (Christ), when slaves to sin (i.e., humans) are freed from their bondage, and when all debts are wiped out (and things start out new).</p> <p>Leviticus 25:8-13 "'Count off seven sabbath years -- seven times seven years -- so that the seven sabbath years amount to a period of forty-nine years. Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan. The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines. For it is a jubilee and is to be holy for you; eat only what is taken directly from the fields. "'In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to their own property.</p> <p>The Year of Jubilee represents freedom, restoration, and renewal. It occurs every 50 years (on Yom Kippur, the 10th day of Tishri, which is the Day of Atonement—see Leviticus 25:8-10). At the time of writing (2020), the next Jubilee will be the 40th Jubilee since the birth of Christ. Christ proclaimed a Year of Jubilee when he started his ministry in 27 AD, when He read a passage from the scroll of Isaiah (i.e., Isaiah 61:1-2a) [Jones, 2004]. If we roll the calendars back to the time of Adam and Eve (circa 4000 BC), that would make the next Jubilee the 120th Jubilee in human history; however, we note that the Year of Jubilee was initially documented in Leviticus 25 (approximately 1446-</p>

1406 BC). Numbers such as “40” and “120” form interesting patterns in the Bible.

When Christ read the Isaiah 61 passage, He stopped and put down the scroll just before reading the words: “the day of vengeance of our God”—implying that that part of the Scripture was still in the future (i.e., because it dealt with His Second Coming).

Luke 4:18-21 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, **to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.**" **Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down.** The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, "**Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.**"

Note that when land was sold, its selling price reflected the fact that the land would be redeemed in the Year of Jubilee; therefore, prices tended to be lower closer to the Year of Jubilee. Note also that God commanded that slaves be treated fairly. In fact, a slave could choose to remain with his master. For example, a slave and his family may have been treated particularly well, have been provided for, and have steady employment (“life is good”). If he chose to remain with his master, he would be called a “bondservant”.

To see how the notion of redemption better relates to eschatology, some background is in order. In Old Testament times:

God provided that a wife, a slave and a possession might be redeemed. In the case of a wife, if her husband died before leaving offspring ... the dead husband’s brother was to take the widow as his wife (if he were able) and to perpetuate the name of his departed brother. There was also the law of redemption of a slave. If a man, because of his neglect or misfortune, fell into debt and was legally tried and unable to pay, he was to serve his master to whom he owed this debt as a servant, but the law provided that after six years he could again go free. If in the meantime, however, a near of kin, some close relative, chose to redeem him and were able to meet the payment, he could redeem his poor brother and release him before the six years ended. This marvelous provision is described in Leviticus 25 among the laws of redemption.

Provision was also made for a third redemption: the redemption of land which had been lost by its owner. ... When the Year of Jubilee came, the land was to be returned to the original owner. In the meantime, however, it could be redeemed and returned to him. This could be done in two ways. Either the man himself could pay the redemption price, which was unlikely, for he was now a servant, or it could be purchased back by a near relative, an uncle or a closer kin. The papers ... were written on two scrolls of parchment ... One scroll was left open in the court of the Temple or Tabernacle for all to read, but the other was rolled up, sealed with seven seals and placed in the Temple to be brought out only when a kinsman redeemer gave evidence that he was willing and able to redeem it. ... If this kinsman, this relative, were

able to show that he was able to pay the redemption price and could meet all the conditions of the law, the sealed scroll was produced and he publicly tore open the seals and invalidated the mortgage and the man could return to his purchased possession.

As time passed the practice of using one scroll instead of two was adopted. Instead of two scrolls, one public and the other sealed, these were combined into one. One scroll or parchment was used, and the terms of the redemption of the mortgage was written on both sides, within and without. When the scroll was rolled into a tube and sealed with the seven seals, the inside corresponded to the secret record and the outside containing the terms for the public ... That is the picture in Revelation. [De Haan, 1946, pp. 89-91]

Renald Showers writes:

If, because of mismanagement or other circumstances, an Israelite became so poverty-stricken that he was forced to sell the portion of land that was his tenant possession, he did not sell the ownership of the land. Instead, he sold the tenant possession or administration of the portion of land for a temporary period of time (Lev. 25:15-16,25-27). ...

To prevent the sale of tenant possession of land administration from being permanent, God established the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:28), which was the 50th year ...

If, because of poverty, an Israelite sold his tenant possession or a portion of it, he had the right to redeem it back at any time before the year of Jubilee if his circumstances enabled him to do so. In the meantime, his nearest kinsman also had the right and duty to redeem it before the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:25-26). ...

We should note that although a kinsman paid the redemption price to redeem his relative's lost land, he did not return the land to the relative before the year of Jubilee. Instead, the kinsman-redeemer kept the land to administer it for his own purposes. ...

An example of this practice is found in Jeremiah 32:6-9, where Jeremiah exercised the right of redemption for his cousin's land. ...

First, he had to pay the redemption price for the land and thereby obtain the right of tenant possession. Second, after obtaining that right he had to take actual possession of the land and exercise administrative control over it. In situations where the kinsman-redeemer did not take immediate possession of the land for a long period of time, he had to evict any usurpers before he could take actual possession of the land. Sometimes this eviction required the use of force by the kinsman-redeemer when the usurpers resisted removal from the land. [Showers, 1995, pp. 78-82]

This appears to be the picture in Revelation. Adam lost possession of the stewardship of the earth to Satan. Christ, as a kinsman of Adam, paid the redemption price via His shed blood on the cross. Next, as Christ removes the seven seals from the sealed scroll, he is evicting the usurpers or squatters (i.e., evicting Satan and his forces over a 7-year period), taking possession of the earth, and restoring the earth to its pre-sin state. Christ paid the redemption

price a long time ago, but did not take possession of the earth then. He will do so upon His return.

In Leviticus, God said:

Leviticus 25:23 "'The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants.

The short book of Ruth in the Bible is an interesting story of redemption. In it, Boaz redeemed some land and a bride. In Revelation, Christ redeems the earth and His bride (the Church). Unlike Boaz, and Jeremiah, who both redeemed with silver, Christ purchased redemption via His shed blood.

It is significant that when Christ was crucified on the Cross, He wore a crown of thorns. Applying the law of first mention, we find that the thorns are first mentioned in the Bible in Genesis 3, in connection with the curse of God upon the earth and upon vegetation. ... The curse will be removed. The earth will bring forth her increase and there will be plenty for all. [De Haan, 1946, pp. 113-114]

Revelation 22:3 [KJV] And there shall be no more curse ...

Jewish sources (e.g., Maimonides) state that the Year of Jubilee was last observed during the first temple period until the Babylonian exile (circa 586 BC) [Wagner, 2002]. There is no evidence to suggest that a Year of Jubilee was observed after this time.

Floyd Nolan Jones writes that AD 27 was a Year of Jubilee [Jones, 2004]. It started on Tishri 10 (the Day of Atonement) on the Jewish calendar. This would be Tuesday, September 28, 27 AD on the Gregorian calendar (if it were extended back in time). This date is when Christ started his public ministry [Jones, 2004].

One wonders what effect a Year of Jubilee would have on modern society, throughout the world! At the very least, it would impact us with respect to the acquisition of material wealth.

It is interesting to note that the next Year of Jubilee will be the 40th Jubilee since Christ, and the 120th Jubilee in the young earth creation model, and possibly the 70th Jubilee since Moses received the Law (i.e., approximately 1450 BC to the current time, that is, about 3,470 years). Nevertheless, some prophecy scholars do not believe that a Year of Jubilee has any implications for the fulfillment of Bible prophecy, especially the timing of future events.

The book of Jonah is read in the synagogues on Yom Kippur. The book deals with judgment and repentance, when a disbelieving nation turned to God. Yom Kippur also deals with mourning and atonement for sin; it is a time of national

	atonement for Israel [Fruchtenbaum, 2019]. At Christ’s Second Coming, all of the remaining Jews will be looking for Christ, and will be saved. The book of Jonah is also a picture of Christ’s death, and His resurrection on the third day.
Preterist Position	<p>The Year of Jubilee has little significance post-Christ. Christ is our ultimate source of jubilee and liberation. Like other holy days, festivals, and special events, the Year of Jubilee was fulfilled spiritually by Christ (Colossians 2:16-17). He came to restore things, and to provide practical rules for people to live by that didn’t shackle people with the old laws that they found impossible to obey. Christ freed us from the Law, but gave us many principles to live by (e.g., Matthew 22:36-40).</p> <p>Colossians 2:16-17 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.</p> <p>Matthew 22:36-40 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."</p>

Topic/ Question	With respect to Christ’s return, what is meant by the term “coming on the clouds”?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>It refers to Christ coming <i>physically</i>—because of the Scripture referring to Christ’s ascension:</p> <p>Acts 1:9-11 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."</p> <p>The whole focus of Christ’s cloud coming after this event is defined by the ascension. The next time Christ comes on the clouds, it is clearly said here to be bodily, personal, and coming with clouds. This is what Matthew 24:30 and Revelation 1:9 refers [to]. All of the New Testament, because of this event, looks to Christ’s return in this way. Thus, any future cloud coming from this point on would have to be seen in light of this glorious promise. [Ice, 2000]</p> <p>The disciples were told that Christ would return in the same way that he ascended in Acts 1:9-11—<i>visibly</i>. This hasn’t happened yet.</p>

	<p>Preterists argue that the phrase “coming on the clouds” is written in judgment language, and that the high priest Caiaphas would see Christ coming in judgment (in 70 AD); however, Caiaphas died <i>before</i> 70 AD [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007].</p> <p>Furthermore, any Old Testament passages such as Isaiah 19:1 that preterists claim speak about God coming in judgment do not specifically say that that people would actually <i>see</i> the event, whereas the Second Coming of Christ refers to an event that people will actually see—and that no one can miss. However, most of the early Church missed the “coming” in 70 AD. The <i>Didache</i> is perhaps the oldest extra-biblical Christian document. It is basically a manual for running churches [Woods, 2021a]. It was likely written after 70 AD, or even after 80 AD, and bears testimony to the notion that the early church do not “miss” the “coming”:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">This document proves that those who actually lived through the events of A.D. 70 regarded Matthew 24:29-31—and the entire Olivet Discourse—as yet-unfulfilled prophecy. [MacArthur, 2003b, p. 112]</p>
Preterist Position	<p>One of the key problems is a misunderstanding of words, especially “coming”. Every time we come across the word “coming” or “coming on the clouds”, we cannot read into it either the Rapture or Christ descending to the earth. “Coming on the clouds” is so common in the Old Testament that it’s surprising that Bible teachers miss this.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Isaiah 19:1 An oracle concerning Egypt: See, the LORD rides on a swift cloud and is coming to Egypt. The idols of Egypt tremble before him, and the hearts of the Egyptians melt within them.</p> <p>He is poetically portrayed as coming in clouds in historical judgments upon men (Psa. 18:7-15; 104:3; Isa. 19:1; Joel 2:1,2; Nah. 1:2ff.; Zeph. 1:14,15). Thus, the New Testament speaks of Christ’s coming in clouds of judgment in history at Matthew 24:30 and 26:64, not to mention His Second Coming at the end of world history (Acts 1:11; 1 Thess. 4:13ff.). [Gentry, 1998b, p. 123]</p> <p>“Coming”, in the Old Testament, refers to the imagery of <i>judgment</i> (e.g., Isaiah 19: judgment on Egypt; Daniel 7: the Ancient of Days). Remember, Christ told Caiaphas and the court that they would see Christ coming on the clouds [in judgment].</p> <p style="text-align: center;">...when Jesus told followers that within a ‘generation’ they would see him ‘coming on the clouds of heaven,’ he was using an Old Testament judgment metaphor. ... Far from saying that the end of the world was at hand, Jesus employed the Old Testament symbolism of clouds to warn the council that just as judgment had fallen on Egypt, so too, judgment would fall on Jerusalem (see Matthew 24:34; 26:64; cf. Isaiah 19:1).</p> <p style="text-align: center;">... Christ was not saying Caiaphas would <i>see</i> him riding a cloud-chariot of sorts, but that he would <i>understand</i> that Jesus was indeed who he claimed to</p>

	<p>be. With the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, they would understand that Jesus had indeed ascended to the right hand of power as the Judge of heaven and earth. Thus, ‘seeing’ is an obvious metaphor for comprehension and understanding. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 106-107]</p> <p>Said Jesus, ‘I say to all of <i>you</i>: In the future <i>you</i> will <i>see</i> the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven’ (Matthew 26:64). The generation that crucified Christ would <i>see</i> the day that he was exalted and enthroned at ‘the right hand of the Mighty One.’ John makes this point explicit in Revelation 1:7: ‘Look, he is <i>coming with the clouds</i>, and <i>every eye will see him, even those who pierced him</i>; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.’ ‘The crucifiers would see Him coming in judgment—that is, they would <i>experience</i> and <i>understand</i> that His Coming would mean wrath on the Land. ... In the destruction of their city, their civilization, their Temple, their entire world-order, they would understand that Christ had ascended to His Throne as Lord of heaven and earth.’ [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 230]</p> <p>David Chilton suggests that Revelation 1:7 (mentioned above) best summarizes the overall theme of the book of Revelation. It is “not the Second Coming of Christ, but rather the coming of Christ in judgment upon Israel, in order to establish the Church as the new Kingdom.” [Chilton, quoted in [Gentry, 1998b, p. 127]]. The great tribulation that follows Christ’s coming on the clouds is the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, which occurred in 70 AD. In the Old Testament, prophets like Ezekiel, Joel, and Isaiah use similar language. Ezekiel said that the day of the Lord is near. Joel referred to the day of the Lord as a time of clouds and darkness.</p> <p>In John’s mind the tribulation, the great tribulation, began with the birth, life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth. It began with Pentecost, with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, who is the personal embodiment of the kingdom. The “great tribulation” has been “on” since Jesus came. It was “on” in John’s day. That is why he was in exile on Patmos! It has been “on” all through church history. It is “on” even now. Ask believers in China or Rwanda. [Johnson, 2004, p.181]</p> <p>When the disciples asked Jesus about the end of the age, they were not asking about the end of the world, but rather they were asking about the end of the current corrupt age [Hanegraaff, <i>Bible Answer Man</i>, May 22, 2015].</p>
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Topic/ Question	Should we be using the Bible to help interpret current news events regarding Israel, the Middle East, Europe, the United Nations, America, etc? Should we be connecting some of these events to Bible prophecy?
Dispensationalist Position	The time of Christ’s Second Coming is near; however, we have to be careful—we cannot predict the <i>date</i> or <i>time</i> of Christ’s return. Also, we should not try to identify the Antichrist or the time of the Rapture. Scripture tells us that only God Himself knows those times. Even Christ, when He was on Earth, claimed (in His earthly body) that only God the Father knew the times.

Some news events that strongly suggest that the time of Revelation's fulfillment is drawing closer include:

- The return of national Israel to its homeland in 1948—after an absence of thousands of years.
 - In 1948, only about 6% of the world's Jews lived in Israel [Hitchcock, 2019b]. Today, that figure could be as high as 53% [Ice, 2021f].
- Increased strain in Middle East relations, especially between Israel and its neighbors.
- The prophecy in Revelation 13:16-17 about mankind requiring a mark of some sort (perhaps a digital mark/tattoo or computer chip) on—or in—the right hand or forehead to buy and sell. This could literally be fulfilled in our lifetime, and it may well be used to facilitate the cashless society that the apostle John wrote about over 1900 years ago.
- A general decline in ethics, an increase in godlessness, and an increase in violence, lawlessness, greed, etc.
- Apostasy increasing in churches.
- More government control and surveillance of the population—much of it facilitated by technology and the media.

Consider the mark of the beast:

Revelation 13:16-18 [NIV] He [the False Prophet] also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark **on** his right hand or **on** his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast [Antichrist] or the number of his name.

Revelation 13:16-18 [KJV] And he [the False Prophet] causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark **in** their right hand, or **in** their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast [Antichrist], or the number of his name.

The English word “on” or “in” in the above two passages comes from the Greek word *epi*, and there is some debate about its proper translation. *Epi* gets translated as “on” 196 times in the Bible, and “in” 120 times [Strong, 1996]. Any teaching that claims that a microchip implant in the right hand or forehead is safe and violates no Scripture would be a very dangerous teaching, since there is at least some possibility that a biochip may be used to implement a cashless society. If such a chip actually turns out to be the mark of the beast, with the understanding that they are pledging allegiance to the Antichrist or world leader, then obviously, the mark should be avoided at all costs (to avoid losing one's soul). So, by warning people about this possibility, the good news

	<p>is that some people may refuse to accept such a mark when it is being implemented. We don't know specifically what technology will be used to implement the mark of the beast; however, the mark clearly appears to be some form of discrimination between believers and non-believers, and it will apply to one's right hand or forehead—or possibly both.</p> <p>Surprisingly, in the most recent version of the NIV translation of the Bible, the word “he” (False Prophet) in the above two passages has been translated to “it”.</p> <p>One of the reasons why people are so confused about Revelation is because they're afraid to read the text at face value; thus, they're open to all kinds of conflicting opinions. Time will tell how Revelation unfolds, but until then, it's reasonable to believe that God actually means what He wrote, and that we shouldn't engage in vague guesswork about how a particular prophecy may have been “fulfilled” in the past. The bottom line is that most of Revelation is still in the future—and perhaps in the very near future.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>Reading the Bible in one hand while holding a newspaper in the other hand is called “newspaper eschatology” and this should be avoided. Current events cannot be used to interpret or predict events that are about to be fulfilled in Revelation, especially since much of Revelation has been fulfilled over 1,900 years ago. Instead, we should become familiar with proper biblical interpretation skills in order to avoid such nonsense.</p> <p>Many prophecy enthusiasts have been “prostituting the text”, that is, trying to read current world events into Bible teachings [Hanegraaff, <i>Bible Answer Man</i>, May 25, 2009]. Hanegraaff argues that many such people are Biblically illiterate. For example, he believes that the “mark of the beast” in Revelation 13:16-17 is unlikely to be a computer chip implant, and that a cashless society is unlikely to be realized. These ideas are pure sensationalism, and cause embarrassment to Christianity. “Why drag Christ's name through the mud?”</p> <p>He says that the book of Revelation should not be reduced to a book of riddles. The symbols in Revelation are deeply rooted in Old Testament history. Besides, Greek grammar indicates that the mark is “on” (Greek: <i>epi</i>) the hand and forehead, and not “in” them; therefore, the mark cannot be a microchip implant [Hanegraaff, 2007]. Instead, the mark is an internal “mark”: when we believe in Christ, we are essentially “marked” as belonging to Christ. Thus, the mark is not literal. He says that what we <i>do</i>, and what we <i>say</i>, are more important to our Christian testimony—than the idea of warning against a microchip implant.</p> <p>Furthermore, the mark and number of the beast were mentioned to a first-century audience—at a time when there were no barcodes, computer chips, etc. “No amount of wisdom, no amount of insight would have enabled a first-century audience to calculate the number of a twenty-first-century beast” [Hanegraaff, <i>Bible Answer Man</i>, August 2, 2011]. Revelation was written to a</p>

	<p>first-century audience of churches in the province of Asia. In it, Christ told His readers that <i>they</i> would be able to determine the number of the beast (i.e., Nero). Revelation is still <i>applicable</i> to all of us today—the message is timeless—but the specific prophecy of the mark and number of the beast was first and foremost directed to the audience of the day.</p> <p>Similarly, when God seals the 144,000 in Revelation 14:1 and writes His name on their foreheads, He is not using a “Magic Marker” to do so; rather, this is symbolic language telling readers of the Bible that God has set aside and protected a large group of believers. The Old Testament provides lots of references to symbols such as these.</p>
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Topic/ Question	Y2K: Is it a key part of end time prophecy?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>Before the year 2000, some prophecy teachers warned that Y2K was part of the prophetic scene, perhaps ushering in economic and social chaos, which in turn could lead to the mark of the beast, a cashless society, a one-world government, a one-world currency, etc. Some Bible teachers viewed Y2K as a harvest time for when we can (and should) share our food, water, and other resources with our unsaved neighbors.</p> <p>We should thank the people who warned about—and took action on—Y2K during the late 90s, since the many billions of dollars spent on the problem helped to avoid the undoubtedly catastrophic consequences of an unfixed Y2K problem.</p>
Preterist Position	Y2K was a failed prediction bringing some embarrassment to the Church. Y2K came and went, but some people have short memories about the teachings and the personalities involved. Some Christian leaders were even selling freeze-dried food, and advocating the 4 G’s: God, gold, groceries, and guns.

Topic/ Question	Were the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks prophesied in Scripture?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>No. These are just signs that we are living in increasingly “perilous times” with “wars and rumors of wars”.</p> <p>Indirectly, they point forward to a time when many nearby nations (although, interestingly, not the current immediate neighbors) will move against Israel (Ezekiel 38-39), when all nations will move against Israel at Armageddon (Revelation 16:16), and when the cities of the nations will fall (Revelation 16:19-20). God will eventually rescue Israel from these tribulations.</p> <p>Tim LaHaye [LaHaye, 2007] argues that the security issues we’ve seen will ultimately lead to:</p>

- A single world government (eventually under Antichrist), as implied by Daniel 7 and Revelation 13.
- A common world religion that opposes Israel and the God of the Bible.
- Jerusalem becoming “a burdensome stone” (Zechariah 12:2-3; Joel 3:2). We expect an increase in the number of United Nations resolutions about Israel/Jerusalem, with Israel being blamed for the lack of peace.
- A wake-up call to churches today. Thomas Ice argues that only an understanding of Bible prophecy will give people the background information they need to make sense of September 11th [Ice, 2007].

It is interesting to note that September 11, 1683 was a defeat for Islam in Europe (Vienna). Some prophecy teachers do not think that the choice of date (September 11th) for the attack on the World Trade Center was coincidental.

Dave Hunt argues that the seeds for discontent between Muslims and Jews began in the tents of Abraham [Hunt, 2001; Hunt, 2006]. Jewish-Arab and Jewish-Muslim struggles begin with two children of Abraham: Ishmael and Isaac. God said He would bless the descendants of Ishmael. Today, 5.3 million square miles of land in the Middle East belong to the Arab nations. God’s promises however, will flow through Isaac and his son Jacob (renamed Israel). Today, Israel has 8,000 square miles of land. The struggle continues today with the Jewish-Arab conflict.

Yet there is something uncanny about the world’s capacity to focus on the Arab-Israeli dispute (with total casualties estimated at 70,000 dead over five decades) in the face of the carnage of the other Middle Eastern conflicts, such as the Egyptian invasion of Yemen (250,000 dead), the Algerian civil war (1,000,000 dead), the Lebanese civil war (150,000 dead), the Libyan incursion into Chad (100,000 dead), the Sudanese civil war (at least 500,000 dead), and the Iran-Iraq War (over 1,000,000 dead). ... [Also] the Gulf War (at least 100,000 dead, and possibly many more) ... [Netanyahu, 2000, p. 115]

Note that many Arabs are Muslim, but the largest Muslim nation in the world today is Indonesia and it is not Arab at all. Neither is Iran.

Islam began with Mohammad, circa 700 AD. Someday, however, the nations of Israel, Egypt, and Assyria (modern-day Syria and Iraq) will join together to worship the God of the Bible—in a time of tremendous blessing and peace—probably during the Millennium:

Isaiah 19:23-25 In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The LORD Almighty will bless them, saying, "Blessed be

	<p>Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance."</p> <p>The root of sin, however, goes back to Satan and the fall of man in the Garden of Eden.</p>
Preterist Position	No. Again, these are just signs that we are living in increasingly "perilous times".

Topic/ Question	Does Islam believe in a Messiah-like figure in the Last Days? How does Islamic eschatology relate to Biblical eschatology?
Both Positions	<p>The <i>Hadith</i> is a collection of writings about Mohammad, and is a major source of Islamic eschatology, dating from about the 9th century. The Qur'an (Koran) itself has very few specifics about prophecy.</p> <p>Islam's Antichrist is known as the <i>Dajjal</i>. The Dajjal will come on the scene before the <i>Mahdi</i> (Islamic Messiah, whom many in Islam claim will be a descendant of Mohammad). The Hadith suggests that the Dajjal will be a Jew born in Iran.</p> <p>The six major signs of end-time Islamic prophecy are as follows [Reagan, 2010]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The appearance of the Dajjal • The appearance of the Mahdi after the Dajjal • The return of Jesus (who will, at some point, submit to the Mahdi) • The reign of Jesus (upon the death of the Mahdi) • The day of resurrection called "The Hour". Both the saved and the unsaved will be resurrected together just prior to judgment day. • The day of judgment, when Allah will descend from Heaven, and will weigh the deeds of each person on a scale <p>Islamic eschatology states that the Dajjal will appear before the Mahdi; therefore, if someone claims to be the Mahdi before the appearance of the Dajjal, he would be rejected by much of the Islamic world.</p> <p>In terms of Biblical eschatology, two of the strongest arguments against a Muslim Antichrist are as follows. First, no Muslim would claim to be God, as required by 2 Thessalonians 2:4:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">2 Thessalonians 2:4 He [Antichrist] will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.</p> <p>Secondly, Israel would never leave its security in the hands of a Muslim leader, especially since no Muslim leader would want to be on the line for committing</p>

peace and security to Israel (i.e., he would be rejected by the Muslim world, such as Anwar Sadat of Egypt was).

Mark Hitchcock writes:

According to Islamic teaching, he [the Mahdi] will return near the end of the world. According to their end-time view, when he returns, he will rule the earth for seven years, bringing about the Final Judgment and end of the world. The mention of a seven-year rule for the Mahdi is interesting to me because the Bible predicts that the Antichrist or false messiah will hold sway over the earth for seven years, ruling the entire world for the final half of the seven-year period. Could it be that the Islamic expectation of a messiah who will rule for seven years could set them up to initially accept such a leader who will make a seven-year peace treaty according to Daniel 9:27? [Hitchcock, 2006, p. 77]

Ron Rhodes, quoting Dore Gold author of *The Fight for Jerusalem*, writes:

For [Iranian President Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad, the destruction of Israel is one of the key global developments that will trigger the appearance of the Mahdi." He seeks to "wipe Israel off the map" (a phrase he borrowed from the deceased mullah, Ayatollah Khomeini). ... He boldly and defiantly claims the world will soon be without the Great Satan (America) and the Little Satan (Israel), and this will give rise to the emergence of the Twelfth Imam. [Rhodes, 2008, pp. 31-32]

Other authors write:

Westerners do not understand that when it comes to the Muslim world, even the most "moderate" of Muslims, if they are religious, all believe in the coming of the Mahdi and the establishment of the Caliphate to rule the entire Globe by changing world laws to adapt the Islamic Sharia. The Coming of the Mahdi to religious Muslims is as holy of a belief as the coming of Messiah is to Christians and Jews. [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008, p. 45]

Today, Mt. Moriah, sometimes known as the Temple Mount or in Arabic as *Haram Ash-Sharif*, is the location of two Mosques and is considered to be the third holiest site of Islam. There is endless speculation about the Temple Mount regarding issues such as exactly where the Jewish Temple once was located on the Mount or whether or not there will be a Jewish Temple rebuilt there in the future. Based on the above verse from the Apostle Paul, it certainly seems to indicate that there will indeed be a rebuilt Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. The Apostle Paul says that the Antichrist will "set himself up in God's Temple," or more literally, "he takes his seat in the temple of God". This speaks not so much of a literal sitting down as it does of a taking a position of authority. Thus we see that the Antichrist will make Mt. Moriah, and more specifically, the rebuilt Jewish Temple, the specific location of his rule. Jesus warned of this event two thousand years ago.

... we see that the Mahdi is the leader of a world revolution that will institute a "new world order" that will be based on the religion of Islam. Islam will be the only religion that will be allowed to be practiced. Both the Antichrist and the Mahdi are said to be the unqualified leaders of a global religious

movement that will draw worship away from the God of the Bible and His Son Jesus Christ. [Richardson, 2008]

Finally, here is some background on Islam and its two main divisions: Shiite and Sunni:

Today, the word “Islam,” which also means “peace,” is defined by the derivative word “submission,” and twenty-one percent of the world’s population (1,449,000,000)—making Islam the second largest religion in the world behind Christianity—attempts to practice a life of such submission, primarily in North Africa, the Middle East, South-Central Asia, and Indonesia. ...

On June 8, AD 632, Muhammad died, and immediately following his death, two major traditions emerged, divided over who should succeed the great prophet who had united all the once warring tribes of the broad plains of Arabia, around the city of Mecca, near the banks of the Red Sea in what today is known as the Arabian Peninsula. ...

Shiites agree with Sunnis in most areas of Islamic theology, including Muhammad as the final prophet, the Qur’an as God’s final book replacing what came before it, and Islam as God’s final and perfect religion. ...

Sunnis are by far the largest group, making up approximately ninety percent of Islam, where as the Shiites make up ten percent. ...

Sunni Islam argues that the true successors to Muhammad do not need to be descended from the immediate family of Muhammad. Sunni Islam emphasizes tradition in religious life, the way the Prophet and his followers lived. Thus, the Qur’an is the fundamental authority, along with the Hadith and the consensus of the community. Saudi Arabia, including Mecca, is the center of power for Sunni Islam. ...

Shia Islam argues that the true successors to Muhammad descend directly from Muhammad’s family. ... Although there is disagreement within Shiism on the number of Imams and their exact progression, most Shiites assume that the spiritual power of the Imams works through and guides Shiite leaders. They assume that the last Imam will return to restore true Islam and inaugurate a new age in world history. Most Shiites are found in Iran, Pakistan, and Iraq, with minority Shia groups in most Muslim countries.

All Muslim theology holds to a return of Christ and of Muhammad, when Christ will return, marry, have children, destroy all crosses and pigs, deny His crucifixion, His deity, and the Trinity, and then will die. Iranian Shiites, however, believe that the twelfth Imam, the Mahdi, was removed by God at the age of four or five in AD 873 and is in a miraculous state of hiddenness. Occasionally he appears and speaks with special people. Following much conflict and war he will reappear with Christ. The return of Christ and the return of the Mahdi are very close in concept. As noted above, many believe that Ahmadinejad wants to stir this conflict and bring the Mahdi back sooner. [Cate & Mayhall, 2009]

Here are some additional details concerning Shiite [Shia] vs. Sunni Islam:

	<p>More than 85 percent of the world’s 1.5 billion Muslims are Sunni. They live across the Arab world, as well as in countries like Turkey, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Indonesia. Iran, Iraq, and Bahrain are largely Shiite. The Saudi royal family, which practices an austere and conservative strand of Sunni Islam known as Wahhabism, controls Islam’s holiest shrines, Mecca and Medina. [Harvey, 2016]</p> <p>The present demographic breakdown between the two denominations is difficult to assess and varies by source, but a good approximation is that 85-90% of the world’s Muslims are Sunni and 10-15% are Shia, with most Shias belonging to the Twelver tradition and the rest divided between many groups. Sunnis are a majority in most Muslim communities: in Southeast Asia, China, South Asia, Africa, and most of the Arab world. Shia make up the majority of the citizen population in Iraq, Bahrain, Lebanon, Iran and Azerbaijan, as well as being a politically significant minority in Pakistan, Syria and Yemen. Azerbaijan is predominantly Shia; however, practicing adherents are far fewer. Indonesia has the largest number of Sunni Muslims, while Iran has the largest number of Shia Muslims (Twelver) in the world. Pakistan has the second-largest Sunni population in the world, while India has the second-largest Shia Muslim (Twelver) population. [Wikipedia, 2018]</p> <p>Mainstream Shiites have long believed in the eventual return of the Twelfth Imam, believed to be a direct bloodline descendant of Muhammad’s son-in-law, Ali (whose family, it is believed, constitutes the only legitimate successors to Muhammad). The Twelfth Imam—who allegedly disappeared as a child in AD 941—will allegedly return in the future as the Mahdi (“The rightly guided One”), who will bring about a messianic-like era of global order and justice for Shiites in which Islam will be victorious and reign supreme.</p> <p>It is believed that the time of the appearance of the Twelfth Imam can be hastened through apocalyptic chaos and violence—that is, by unleashing an apocalyptic holy war against Christians and Jews ... [Rhodes, 2019, p. 201]</p> <p>For more information about Islamic eschatology, see [Reagan, 2009a; Reagan, 2010].</p>
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Topic/ Question	What significance in eschatology, if any, does the Holocaust during World War II have?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>Dave Hunt states that the Holocaust and its fallout (i.e., how nations throughout the world refused to help the Jews during a dark time in their history, and continue to do so today) is “sufficient proof that the God of Israel exists and that the Bible is His infallible Word.” [Hunt, 2006] Hunt argues, “The whole world is guilty.” Jeremiah 17:9 states: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”</p> <p>Numerous Scriptures explain how curses would fall upon the Jews because of their unbelief and rebellion; however, Romans 11 indicates that, in the future, Israel will be restored/blessed.</p>

	<p>According to the Bible, there are two reasons for this universal hatred of Jews and Israel. First of all, the Jews, as God’s chosen people, are under His judgment for their rebellion against Him and the rejection of their Messiah. Secondly, anti-Semitism is inspired of Satan—a being whose existence many ‘educated’ people deny. The reason is obvious. It was foretold that the Savior of the world, who would rescue mankind from Satan’s control, would be a Jew. Satan’s only hope to escape eternal doom, therefore, was to destroy those whom God chose ‘to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.’ Had Satan been able to destroy the Jews before the birth of the Messiah, he would have prevented his own defeat.</p> <p>The Bible contains hundreds of prophecies that, although God would severely punish Israel for her sins, He would preserve a remnant and bring the scattered Jews back into their own land. That prophecy, too, is undeniably in the process of being fulfilled in our own day. [Hunt, 2006, pp. 45-46]</p> <p>Hunt summarizes:</p> <p>Nor does God even encourage, much less cause, anyone to seek to destroy Israel. He <i>allows</i> this hatred against Israel to be vented in order for the truth about the human heart to be revealed. He also allows it as part of His judgment upon Israel. That Judgment is clearly spelled out in the prophecies given by Israel’s own inspired prophets. ...</p> <p>The entire history of the Jewish people and of the nation of Israel is foretold by the Hebrew prophets under inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We have been able to look at only a small fraction of those amazing prophecies and the ongoing fulfillment-in-process of some of them today. When He brought the Israelites into their land, God warned that if they forsook Him for pagan gods, He would scatter them to the ends of the earth. They would be hated, persecuted, and killed like no other people. He would not, however, forsake them completely. A remnant would be preserved. In the last days He would bring them back into their own land again. At that time, God would make Jerusalem a cup of trembling to the neighbors surrounding her—and a crushing burden to the whole world. [Hunt, 2006, p. 263]</p>
Preterist Position	<p>There is no connection between the Holocaust and the end times. The Holocaust is just one example, albeit horrific, of how evil man’s heart has become. Society badly needs to embrace Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and repent.</p> <p>God is not a racist, and obviously He does not condone any violence among any people group.</p>
Topic/ Question	<p>A “mystery” (Greek: <i>mysterion</i>) in the Old Testament means something that was hidden in the past—and which God is now revealing (at the time of writing). In particular, it is an event or entity <i>that was not written about in the Old Testament</i>, but was revealed in the New Testament.</p>

	Provide some examples in Scripture of a “mystery”.															
Dispensationalist Position	<p>One such mystery is the Rapture:</p> <p>1 Corinthians 15:51-52 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep [die], but we will all be changed [transformed, raptured] -- in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.</p> <p>When used as a synonym or metaphor for the word “die”, the word “sleep” is only used of believers, and not unbelievers [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. In fact, we get our English word “cemetery” from the early Christian term meaning “sleeping place” [Jeffrey, 1990].</p> <p>The soul continues without the body—and the soul is conscious. Examples of Scripture passages that point to this include Luke 23, Acts 7, 2 Corinthians 5, Philippians 1, and Revelation 6. At the Rapture/resurrection, the soul is reunited with the body—albeit a perfected body. Many of our positive character qualities and interests will probably be retained when we get our resurrected body. These attributes are what make us unique from others. Of course, sinful things will be purged. The same applies to any conditions that afflict our body such as handicaps, medical conditions, tiredness, etc.</p> <p>Another mystery is that of the Church. The Church was hidden or unknown in Old Testament Scriptures, but was revealed in the New Testament. The Church is the “body of Christ” (i.e., Christianity). In the end times, the Church will be taken out of the picture (i.e., raptured) prior to the 70th week of Daniel. Note that the Church is not mentioned in the first 69 weeks, and not even in the 70th week. The Church fits into the large gap of time between weeks 69 and 70 of Daniel’s prophecy of the 70 weeks of years.</p> <p>It was no mystery that God was going to provide salvation for the Jews, nor that Gentiles would be blessed in salvation. The fact that God was going to form Jews and Gentiles alike into one body was never revealed in the Old Testament and forms the mystery of which Paul speaks in Ephesians 3:1-7; Romans 16:25-27; Colossians 1:26-29. This whole mystery program was not revealed until after the rejection of Christ by Israel. [Pentecost, 1958, p. 201]</p> <p>J. Dwight Pentecost contrasts Israel with the Church:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="462 1621 1356 1881"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="462 1621 758 1661">Distinction</th> <th data-bbox="758 1621 1057 1661">Israel</th> <th data-bbox="1057 1621 1356 1661">Church</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="462 1661 758 1734">Extent of Biblical Revelation</td> <td data-bbox="758 1661 1057 1734">4/5 of the Bible</td> <td data-bbox="1057 1661 1356 1734">1/5 of the Bible</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="462 1734 758 1808">Divine purpose</td> <td data-bbox="758 1734 1057 1808">Earthly promises in the covenants</td> <td data-bbox="1057 1734 1356 1808">Heavenly promises in the gospel</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="462 1808 758 1845">Seed of Abraham</td> <td data-bbox="758 1808 1057 1845">Physical seed</td> <td data-bbox="1057 1808 1356 1845">Spiritual seed</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="462 1845 758 1881">Birth</td> <td data-bbox="758 1845 1057 1881">Physical birth</td> <td data-bbox="1057 1845 1356 1881">Spiritual birth</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Distinction	Israel	Church	Extent of Biblical Revelation	4/5 of the Bible	1/5 of the Bible	Divine purpose	Earthly promises in the covenants	Heavenly promises in the gospel	Seed of Abraham	Physical seed	Spiritual seed	Birth	Physical birth	Spiritual birth
Distinction	Israel	Church														
Extent of Biblical Revelation	4/5 of the Bible	1/5 of the Bible														
Divine purpose	Earthly promises in the covenants	Heavenly promises in the gospel														
Seed of Abraham	Physical seed	Spiritual seed														
Birth	Physical birth	Spiritual birth														

Headship	Abraham	Christ
Covenants	Directly related to the Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic, and New Covenants	Indirectly related to the same
Nationality	One nation	From many nations
Divine Dealing	National and individual	Individual only
Dispensations	Seen in all ages from Abraham	Seen only in the present age
Ministry	Israel only; no missionary activity	A commission to fulfill
Death of Christ	Guilty nationally	Perfectly saved by it
Governing Principle	Mosaic law	Grace
Christ's Earthly Reign	Subjects	Co-reigners
Priesthood	Had a priesthood	Is a priesthood
Marriage	Unfaithful wife	Bride of Christ
Judgments	Must face judgment	Delivered from all judgments

Another mystery is that of **Babylon**, especially in the book of Revelation.

The mystery is not Babylon itself, nor is the mystery the fact that Babylon was the originator and center of idolatry; this is already known from the Old Testament. The mystery is the fact that Babylon will develop in to a one-world unified religion, and will rule the world religiously for the first half of the Tribulation. It will be headquartered and based in the city of Babylon; it will be supported by the governments of that day; and it will be the primary persecutor of believers who will not submit to its religious authority. All of this was totally unrevealed in the Old Testament.

... the world government during the first half of the Tribulation is that of ten kings ruling co-equally over ten kingdoms. In the middle of the Tribulation, all the other kings will turn their authority over to the Antichrist, who will then rule the world for the second half of the Tribulation. The Antichrist's rule will terminate with the Second Coming. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 688-689]

Yet another mystery is that of the man of lawlessness: the **Antichrist**.

This revelation will be signaled when the Antichrist assumes control of the Jewish Temple and commits the Abomination of Desolation, an event that will happen in the middle of the Tribulation ... The worship of the Antichrist will replace the worship of Mystery Babylon as the world religious system, and this new world religious system will be the religion of the second half of the Tribulation. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 691]

Posttribulationists include Michael Brown, William Lane Craig, Robert Gundry, Craig Keener, John Piper, and Pat Robertson, among many others. Many posttribulationists are futurists and are premillennial. Posttribulationists who are futurists do not embrace the preterist position because they believe that most of Revelation has yet to be fulfilled. Their understanding is that the Rapture is a posttribulation event that is simultaneous (or nearly simultaneous) with the Second Coming; however, the church will go through the judgments of Revelation. Their understanding of the sequence of events is as follows:

There is one Second Coming, and it has different aspects to it. First, Jesus appears in the clouds for the entire world to see, accompanied by His angelic hosts and with great fanfare. Next, we are caught up to meet Him in the air. Then, we descend to earth together with Him as He defeats His enemies and establishes His Kingdom on the earth. This all happens at the one and only *coming* of the Lord—the Second Coming, which includes both the Rapture and the Lord’s arrival on the earth at the end of the Tribulation period. [Brown & Keener, 2019, p. 107]

If someone were not taught about a pre-Tribulation Rapture, one would simply read the texts about Jesus’ return as if every aspect of Jesus’ return happened essentially at once: Jesus gathers His followers to Himself and judges the world. No one would assume a seven- (or three-and-a-half-) year gap between these events. [Brown & Keener, 2019, p. 141]

Those posttribulationists who are not premillennial believe that when the Rapture occurs, the Lord will take them to Heaven, and this marks the beginning of the Eternal State.

Posttribulationists argue that posttribulationism was the view of the church fathers; however, it should be noted that most of these opinions may have sprung from the works of the Alexandrian church fathers such as Origen, Augustine, and Tyconius, centuries after Christ. They believed that much of prophecy was symbolic, and that there was no Millennium. The teachings of men such as Augustine had many followers, not just from Catholicism but even Protestantism.

While continually appealing to the Bible as their ultimate authority, the Reformers also read the works of Bible teachers and cited them in their work. For example, Luther ranked Augustine’s writings as the best after the Bible. ... [However] Even Augustine, Luther thought, sometimes failed to stick closely enough to [the apostle] Paul. [Barshinger, 2021, p. 6]

Not all of Augustine’s writings were correct. We will see at various points in this book that some of Augustine’s teachings and opinions about prophecy were incorrect. For example, Augustine urged people to interpret prophecy *symbolically* rather than literally, where the Scriptures were really meant to be taken literally. This has misled many people, right up to the present day.

	<p>The imminent coming of Christ started to wane by the end of the second century, and by the fourth century, imminence received minimal interest [Showers, 1995]. By the time of the Reformation in the 1500s, John Calvin and William Tyndale, for example, re-endorsed the notion of imminence.</p> <p>Robert Gundry comments:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Until Augustine in the fourth century, the early Church generally held to the premillennarian understanding of Biblical eschatology ... And it was posttribulational. [Robert H. Gundry, cited in [Woods, 2021a]]</p> <p>However, Andy Woods remarks that this “slight of hand” comment about church history catches Christians off-guard. In actuality, the Rapture is a traditional church doctrine that is now gradually being recovered. The key thing is not when the view became popular, but whether or not it is taught in the Bible. Recall that Martin Luther, during the Protestant Reformation, challenged the long-standing Catholic Church doctrines.</p> <p>Another mystery is that of prophecy. God uses “progressive revelation” (sometimes called “progressive illumination”). For example, for many centuries prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, we did not have the background explaining the events of Genesis 6. But with the acquisition of Jewish writings from the Second Temple period, we now have that background. This gives us a greater understanding of the Flood, the Nephilim, and demons. We also see many of the prophecies in the book of Revelation starting to make more literal sense given the rise in technology, including computers, communication, artificial intelligence, advanced forms of warfare, and what will almost certainly be a future cashless and surveillance-oriented society.</p> <p>Prophecy is easy to confirm in retrospect, but one always wonders how God will implement and fulfill remaining prophecies, especially those in the book of Revelation. We can speculate about such things. Perhaps God doesn’t want to “reveal all His cards”, so that Satan cannot head-off or intercept those prophecies. For example, had Satan known that Christ was heading to the cross to provide our road to redemption, Satan probably would not have wanted Christ to be crucified. But, looking backwards after the fulfillments occur, they will be unmistakable confirmations of Bible prophecy. God’s plan was perfect. Nothing takes Him by surprise.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>The “church” is the classic example of a “mystery”. Since Christ, there is no distinction among Jews and Gentiles—all need to come to faith in the same way: through Jesus Christ. The church is the “true Israel”. God desires that all Jews and Gentiles come to salvation, being gathered together in one spiritual body—united in the name of Jesus Christ.</p> <p>Contrary to what dispensationalists say, the Rapture is not something that is “revealed” in the New Testament. Preterists do not believe in a secret,</p>

pretribulational rapture; they just believe in a rapture that occurs simultaneously with the return of Jesus Christ.

Topic/
Question

Comment on the Hebrew calendar. Was Christ crucified on a Friday? How do Passion Week (the week of Christ’s crucifixion) and other dates map to the Jewish calendar (i.e., the Hebrew calendar of Jewish holy days)?

Leviticus 23:4-43 describes the holy days. Here is a table summarizing them, with the Hebrew name in *italics*:

Holy Day	When?	Themes	Scripture References
Passover (<i>Pesach</i>)	Nisan 14	Passover Supper, Redemption	Exodus 12:1-30 Leviticus 23:5 1 Corinthians 5:7 1 Peter 1:18-19
Feast of Unleavened Bread (celebrated together with <i>Pesach</i> for 8 days)	Nisan 15	Exodus from Egypt, Sanctification	Exodus 12:31-42 Exodus 23:14-15 Leviticus 23:6-8 Deuteronomy 16:16
Feast of Firstfruits (<i>Bikkurim</i>) – not actively celebrated	Nisan 17	Resurrection, New Beginnings	Exodus 23:16,19 Leviticus 23:9-14 1 Corinthians 15:20-23
Feast of Weeks (also called the Feast of Harvest or the Day of Pentecost or <i>Shavuot</i>)	Sivan 6	Giving of the Law, Giving of the Holy Spirit	Leviticus 23:15-22 Exodus 34:22 Deuteronomy 16:16 Acts 2:1-4
Feast of Trumpets (<i>Rosh Hashanah</i>)	Tishri 1	Repentance, Judgment	Leviticus 23:23-25
Day of Atonement (<i>Yom Kippur</i>)	Tishri 10	Atonement	Leviticus 16:1-34 Leviticus 23:26-32
Feast of Tabernacles (also called the Feast of Booths or <i>Sukkot</i>)	Tishri 15	Millennial Kingdom	Leviticus 23:33-43 Deuteronomy 16:16 Isaiah 2:2-3 Zechariah 14:16

In Judaism, the current day actually begins at sundown on the evening before, that is, around 6 PM, and runs for 24 hours. For example, Sunday goes from “our” Saturday night around 6 PM ... to “our” Sunday night around 6 PM.

Here is a summary of the Hebrew calendar:

Hebrew Month	Our Equivalent Month
Nisan	March-April

		Iyar	April-May
		Sivan	May-June
		Tammuz	June-July
		Av	July-August
		Elul	August-September
		Tishrei	September-October
		Cheshvan	October-November
		Kislev	November-December
		Tevet	December-January
		Shevat	January-February
		Adar	February-March
		Adar II	(intercalary month: a 13 th lunar leap month added 7 times every 19 years)
Dispensationalist Position	<p>There is some disagreement over which day of the week it was when Christ was crucified. The most commonly cited day is Friday (i.e., “Good Friday”); however, there are arguments for Thursday and even Wednesday (in particular, search for “Dead Sea Scroll Calendar” in this book).</p> <p>Below, Floyd Nolan Jones summarizes the key events of Passion Week in 30 AD [Jones, 2004], and note that the day of the week listed below actually begins at the start of the prior day’s evening (e.g., “Sunday” begins on Saturday at sundown—about 6 PM):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nisan 10 (Sunday, March 31, 30 AD): The Triumphal Entry. Christ enters Jerusalem on a donkey, allowing Himself—for the very first time—to be declared publicly as the Messiah. This is the day that the Passover lamb was selected. It is when Christ presented Himself as <i>the</i> Passover lamb. Christians call this day “Palm Sunday”. • Nisan 11 (Monday): Jesus curses the fig tree. He cleanses the Temple. • Nisan 12 (Tuesday): The fig tree is dead. The scribes, elders, and chief priests plot to kill Jesus. Satan enters Judas. • Nisan 13 (Wednesday): “The Silent Day”. The disciples make Passover preparations. After 6 PM on Wednesday (this is the start of Thursday (i.e., the next day) for the Jewish people), Jesus and His disciples eat the Passover supper. This is “The Last Supper”. Judas betrays Christ. Jesus is arrested. Jesus is tried that night, and early morning on the next day. • Nisan 14 (Thursday, April 4, 30 AD): <i>On Thursday during the daytime</i>, Jesus was crucified, starting around 9 AM. Jesus died around 3 PM. Between 3 PM and sundown, the Jews prepared Jesus 		

for burial, by putting him in the tomb. Josephus writes that the Passover lambs were slain between 3-5 PM. Walvoord, *et al.*, write that the 3 PM daily sacrifice “consisted of a perfect yearling lamb offered as a whole burnt offering accompanied by meal and drink offerings. All of this typified the future sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross as the spotless Lamb of God (Heb. 9:14).” [Walvoord, *et al.*, 2012, p. 265]

- Nisan 15 (Friday): This is the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the Jewish calendar of holy days. It is considered a special Sabbath day.
- Nisan 16 (Saturday): This is a regular Sabbath day.
- Nisan 17 (Sunday, April 7, 30 AD): This is the day of the Feast of Firstfruits. Jesus rose from the dead on this day. The Feast of Firstfruits deals with the harvest—representative of the future “harvest” of believers given resurrected and perfected bodies. The word “firstfruits” means “the first of more to come” [Fruchtenbaum, 2019]. In agricultural terms, the Feast of Firstfruits represented the firstfruits of the barley harvest.

Note that Jesus was dead for 3 days (part of Thursday afternoon, all of Friday afternoon, and all of Saturday afternoon), and for 3 nights (Thursday night, Friday night, and Saturday night). This echoes the time that Jonah was in the belly of the great fish, that is, 3 days and 3 nights; and it is consistent with Scripture:

Matthew 12:40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

As mentioned earlier, most Bible teachers believe that Jesus Christ died on Friday afternoon. We have the holiday “Good Friday” to mark the day when Christ died for our sins. Some scholars, such as Chuck Missler and Ken Johnson, believe that Christ actually died on the *Wednesday* [Missler, 2005; Johnson, 2021a]. Wednesday would line up with the Essene calendar.

Christmas is the day that most Christians observe for when God took on the form of a human by coming to earth in the form of a baby: Jesus. About 33 years later, the sinless man Jesus became our Passover Lamb—the sacrifice for our sins. Thus, the Creator died for His creation, but was resurrected on Easter Sunday—on the third day. Good Friday commemorates the death of Christ, and Easter Sunday commemorates resurrection day, that is, the day when Christ rose from the dead. Although Christmas is the observed time of Christ’s birth, many Bible scholars believe that Christ was unlikely to have been born in late

December. It may have been our September or October instead—quite possibly on Tishri 15 which is the Feast of Tabernacles.

Leviticus 23 describes the feasts, festivals, holy days, or holy convocations of the Lord. It is not coincidental that many of the anniversary days of the Jewish holy days have a connection with Christ's first coming [Jeffrey, 1988]. For example, the date Nisan 17 in the Jewish calendar is the Feast of Firstfruits, and it represents a theme of resurrection or new life: it is the same day on which Noah's Ark came to rest on Mount Ararat; it is the same day (according to Josephus) on which the Israelites passed through the Red Sea during the Exodus from Egypt; it is the same day that the Israelites ate the firstfruits of the Promised Land (Israel) forty years later; and, it is the same day that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Nisan 14/15 is the Passover—recall that Christ was our "Passover lamb"—the ultimate sacrifice, with the creator of the universe dying in the place of sinful man. Almost two months later, Sivan 6 is the day that the Law (Torah) was given to Moses on Mount Sinai, and it is also the day on which the Holy Spirit was given to the Church following Christ's ascension. This is called the Day of Pentecost in the Christian calendar.

It would be interesting to see if the remaining three holy days (i.e., the ones in the month of Tishri) have significance to Bible prophecy, that is, in terms of future fulfillment. For example, perhaps the final three holy days (which occur in the Fall) have to do with the end of the Tribulation, the Battle of Armageddon, a time of national repentance immediately preceding the Revelation of Jesus Christ, and the start of the Millennial Kingdom.

Some additional thoughts about fulfillments of the Jewish holy days are as follows [Jeffrey, 1988; Tsarfati, 2008; and other sources], but first we consider the 10th day of the first month of the Jewish calendar, *Nisan*, as an introduction to the holy days:

- The Passover lamb was sanctified (set aside for a holy purpose) on Nisan 10 ("Palm Sunday" in the Christian calendar), which is also the day when Jesus Christ rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. This marked the start of Passion Week: the week in which Christ was killed. On Nisan 10, Jesus allowed Himself to be declared Messiah, publicly, for the first time. People waved palm branches, laying them before the donkey, shouting "Hosanna" (meaning "He saves"), as they ushered their King into Jerusalem. Many of the Jewish people had great hope that Jesus was the promised Messiah, who was going to lead them triumphantly over their enemies and establish His kingdom of peace, prosperity, and righteousness. Only 4 days later, however, other Jews demanded his death, and Christ was crucified.
 - In some cultures, when a king entered a foreign city on a majestic horse, he did so to indicate authority over the

residents, in a conquering role. When a king, however, entered on a donkey, he indicated that he was coming in peace.

- Traditionally, the Jewish people selected an unblemished lamb, brought it into their home for 4 days, and then killed the lamb. This is symbolic of Christ, who was innocent, but was killed 4 days later. John the Baptist spoke of Jesus, at the start of Christ's ministry (3½ years beforehand): "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) Indeed, Jesus was our "Passover lamb".
- Arnold Fruchtenbaum believes that the Passover meal with Jesus and the disciples in the upper room would have taken place on the evening of Nisan 14. Then, Jesus was crucified on Nisan 15 (the first day of Passover) at 9 AM, which is when the Passover lamb was offered as a sacrifice in the Temple [Fruchtenbaum, 2021].
- Nisan 10 is not one of the 7 holy days, but it serves as an introduction to the following feasts or festivals:
 - The *Passover Supper* (or *Pesach*) takes place on Nisan 14, and commemorates the event preceding the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt, during the time of Moses. It was called "Passover" because the Hebrews were to sacrifice an unblemished lamb, and sprinkle some of its blood on the doorposts of their homes in Egypt, so as to have the angel of death "pass over" their home; otherwise, the family's firstborn son would die (which was the case for the Egyptians who refused to do participate in the Passover).
 - The *Feast of Unleavened Bread* (or *Hag Hamatzot*) starts on Nisan 15, and lasts for 7 days after Passover night, to commemorate the Jews' exodus from Egypt. In the Bible, yeast (leaven) is a symbol of sin. As our unblemished lamb, Christ was without sin, yet He was "one of us" (humans).
 - The *Feast of Firstfruits* (or *Hag Habikkurim*) starts on Nisan 17, and as mentioned above, it is the day when the Israelites passed through the Red Sea during the Exodus from Egypt. On its anniversary day, many years later, Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Also, it is the anniversary day of when Noah's Ark came to rest on one of the mountains of Ararat, and it was the day when the Israelites (after leaving Egypt and wandering for 40 years in the wilderness) crossed the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land.

There is some variation in the Jewish calendar about when to celebrate the Feast of Firstfruits [Elwell, 1984]. For example, the Sadducees (and Christians) believed that it always occurs on Sunday because it was the 50th day after the sabbath (Saturday) of Passover week. The Pharisees believed it occurred 50 days after the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread because that day is a special sabbath.

- The *Feast of Weeks* (also known as *Shavuot* or the *Feast of Harvest*) takes place on Sivan 6. During the Exodus from Egypt, the Israelites gathered at Mount Sinai and received the Law (*Torah*). The influential Jewish Talmud (oral law or Oral Torah, developed by the Pharisees, and rejected by the Essenes [Peck, 2020; Johnson, 2020b]) says this occurred on Sivan 6, which is 50 days after the Exodus from Egypt began. Furthermore, 50 days after Christ’s resurrection, this same anniversary day marked the formal start of the Christian church, and is called the *Day of Pentecost* in the Christian calendar. Because Easter weekend does not always coincide with Passover, the Day of Pentecost may occur on different days on the Jewish calendar and the Gregorian calendar—the latter of which is used by most nations around the world.

The Feast of Weeks takes place 7 Sabbaths (i.e., Saturdays) plus one day after Passover, which is why it occurs on a Sunday. According to Jewish tradition, the Feast of Weeks occurs 50 days after the second night of Passover. *Pentecost* means “fifty”.

- The *Feast of Trumpets* (or *Rosh Hashanah* or *Yom T’ruah*) takes place on Tishri 1. Silver trumpets were used to gather the people together and to announce something important such as directing their movements in the days of the Tabernacle (Numbers 10:2).

Will there be a future fulfillment of this event in the Christian calendar? That remains to be seen. Some believe that the Rapture will occur on the Feast of Trumpets because of the words “the last trumpet” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52) and “the trumpet call of God” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) [Fruchtenbaum, 2019]. However, this goes against the notion of imminence. However, it is possible that the fulfillment of Matthew 24:31, which describes the gathering of the remnant of (believing) Jews, will take place after Christ’s return, shortly before the start of the Millennium.

Amir Tsarfati conjectures why two trumpets were used [Tsarfati, 2008]. Two trumpets represent two groups of people, or two witnesses, for God: Jews, and Christians—both of whom are responsible for sounding His message on earth. The “last trumpet” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52) may connect these two trumpets with the Rapture, symbolically.

The Feast of Trumpets is the first of the Fall feasts, which appears to tell of Christ's Second Coming.

- The *Day of Atonement* (or *Yom Kippur*) takes place on Tishri 10. It is the holiest day in the Jewish calendar. In the days of the Tabernacle during the Exodus from Egypt, and for some time thereafter, Israel's high priest entered the Holy of Holies (once per year, and only on this day), to make atonement for Israel.

Will there be a future fulfillment of this event in the Christian calendar? That remains to be seen. Some believe this represents the day of Israel's national salvation (i.e., after the physical return of Christ).

- Lastly, the *Feast of Tabernacles* (or *Succoth* or the *Feast of Booths* or the *Feast of Ingathering* or *Hag Hasukkot*) takes place on Tishri 15. This event commemorates the Israelites' days of wandering in the wilderness during the Exodus from Egypt.

Will there be a future fulfillment of this event in the Christian calendar? Again, that remains to be seen. It may refer to a future event that marks the beginning of a time when the Lord will physically dwell ("tabernacle") with us:

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

The Feast of Tabernacles symbolizes that our earthly dwellings and bodies are just temporary abodes, and that the future speaks of both a permanent residence and everlasting life. In the Millennium, people are instructed to continue to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, annually.

In summary, the feasts of the Lord have the following themes [FOI, 2016]:

Feast of	Theme	Fulfilled?
Passover	Redemption	Yes, in Christ
Unleavened Bread	Sanctification	Yes, in Christ
Firstfruits	Resurrection	Yes, in Christ
Weeks	Mystery of the Church (both Jews and Gentiles)	Yes, in Christ and the Church
Trumpets	Regathering	Future
[Day of] Atonement	National salvation	Future

	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Tabernacles</td> <td>Fulfilled kingdom</td> <td>Future</td> </tr> </table> <p>Yom T'ruah [the Feast of Trumpets] will be fulfilled by the rapture of the church. Yom Kippur [the Day of Atonement] will be fulfilled by the tribulation and Israel's national salvation at the end of that period. Sukkot [the Feast of Tabernacles] will be fulfilled by the establishment of the Messianic kingdom. [Fruchtenbaum, 2019, p. 169]</p>	Tabernacles	Fulfilled kingdom	Future
Tabernacles	Fulfilled kingdom	Future		
Preterist Position	(same general idea as above, excluding some of the commentary on the last 3 feasts)			

Topic/ Question	What is the relationship among the Virgin Mary, the Marian apparitions, and the end-times woman of Revelation? What is meant by the prostitute (harlot) in Revelation?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>The Virgin Mary has a special place in Scripture because she is the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ. As a virgin, she conceived Christ through the Holy Spirit; however, she had other children (brothers and sisters of Christ) after Christ (her firstborn). As a sinner, she needed a Savior, just like we do. There is no evidence from Scripture to suggest that she reappears before Jesus Christ's Second Coming.</p> <p>Some evangelical authors express concern about the growing trend of interest in apparitions (appearances, images) of Mary that encourage people to worship or follow Mary. This is wrong. Scripture makes it clear that <i>no one</i> is to be worshiped except Christ (God):</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."</p> <p>The Old Testament is filled with goddess worship, and there appears to be a connection between a woman/goddess and the apostasy ("departure") in the end times.</p> <p>Fatima ("daughter of Mohammed") is one of the visions of Mary that millions around the world claim to see.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and other pilgrims regularly worship at famous Roman Catholic shrines to the Virgin Mary. They drink holy water, light votive candles, and pray fervently to the Madonna. [Tetlow, <i>et al.</i>, 2006, p. 36]</p> <p>Jesus specifically states that only the Lord is to be worshipped—we are to fall down at God's feet alone. Yet we know that Jesus allowed His followers to worship Him (Matthew 14:28-33), thereby establishing that He is God. However, no creature, not even Mary, is to be worshipped. Our Creator, our Owner, our Life, deserves our complete devotion. Of course the true Mary of the Bible would not contradict the Word of God. Therefore these</p>

manifestations of the Queen of Heaven cannot be the Blessed Virgin Mary of Nazareth. [Tetlow, *et al.*, 2006, p. 63]

Not once in the Bible do we find an obedient follower of the Lord making a graven image to venerate or bow or pray to. Not once. At many apparition sites, statues of Mary are carried and venerated in public processions. Marian followers even crawl to the statue of Mary on their knees (often bloody knees)—a show of reverence and worship toward the Queen of Heaven. [Tetlow, *et al.*, 2006, p. 65]

Revelation 17:4-6 The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. This title was written on her forehead: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.

When I saw her, I was greatly astonished.

Many Bible commentators believe that this wicked woman represents the apostate church of the last days. Because the true church is called the bride of Christ, the false church would rightly be called a harlot. The apostle Paul reminds true followers of Christ that they have been espoused to Christ as “a chaste virgin”. [Tetlow, *et al.*, 2006, p. 78]

Revelation 17:1-3 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries." Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries.

This woman, who is called a harlot (whore), has made the inhabitants of the earth intoxicated with the wine of her fornication. What woman, in the last days seduces and lures her followers to commit spiritual fornication? The Greek word for fornication (Gk. porneuo) used here could also be translated idolatry. [Tetlow, *et al.*, 2006, p. 79]

The golden cup may refer to the instrument of the Eucharist [communion]. It is full of abominations **because the Eucharist denies the finished work of Christ on the cross and perpetuates the atonement by re-sacrificing Christ over and over again** during every Mass. This false gospel is an

abomination to God because it denies the finality of Christ's once-for-all atoning work of the cross. The golden cup full of abominations also suggests idolatry, which is often encouraged by the apparition of Mary. Not only does she encourage her followers to bow down to statues of her, but she also requests that they bow before and worship the Eucharist. [Tetlow, *et al.*, 2006, p. 82]

Some “goddesses” that have been worshiped throughout history, in defiance of God Almighty, include the “Queen Mother of the West” (Taoism), and “Our Lady of Fatima” (Roman Catholicism). The “mother and child” legend beginning with Babylon's Semiramis and Tammuz (considered identical to Baal [Walvoord, *et al.*, 2011]) seems to be common among ancient civilizations in the Middle East:

According to tradition, Nimrod, the leader of the rebellion at the Tower of Babel (Gen. 10:8-9), and his wife Semiramis became the founders of the mystery religion known as the Mother-Child Cult. Their son Tammuz born through an alleged miraculous conception was killed by a wild animal and miraculously raised to life. This event led to the worship of the mother (Semiramis) and the child (Tammuz). When God confounded the languages at Babel, consequently ushering in multiple ethnicities (Gen. 11:1-9), this Mother-Child Cult was exported into every culture that followed. Although the names of the mother and the child were changed from culture to culture, these religions still epitomized the same idolatrous religious system that began at Babel. In Assyria, the mother was Ishtar and the child was Tammuz. In Phoenicia, it was Astarte and Baal. In Egypt, it was Isis and Osiris or Horus. In Greece, it was Aphrodite and Eros. In Rome, it was Venus and Cupid. [Woods, 2012a]

G.H. Pember mentions more of these goddesses:

She is the Beltis, or Mylitta, of the Babylonians; the Ishtar of the Assyrians; the Astarte of the Phoenicians; the Queen of Heaven mentioned by Jeremiah [in Jeremiah 7:18; 44:17-19,25]; the Tanata of the Persians; the Isis of the Egyptians; the Shing Moo, or Holy Mother, of the Chinese; the Aphrodite of the Greeks; the Artemis, or Diana, of the Ephesians; the Venus of the Romans ... and the Virgin Mary of the Eastern and Western Catholics. This is the goddess of whom we have so often heard as Our Lady of La Salette, Our Lady of Lourdes—to whom it seems there are temples erected even in China ... [Tetlow, 2006, p. 109]

The Greek word translated fornication is porneuo which can be translated idolatry. As we already noted, God often equates idolatry with spiritual unfaithfulness, because His people are married to Him. [Tetlow, 2006, p. 111]

Jezebel, a Sidonian princess and the wife of King Ahab, is referred to in Scripture as an evil woman, as noted here in Christ's letter to the Church of Thyatira, in the book of Revelation:

Revelation 2:18-29 "To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like

burnished bronze. I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first. Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): Only hold on to what you have until I come. To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations -- 'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery' -- just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Tim LaHaye writes:

Thyatira comes from two words meaning “sacrifice” and “continual”; this introduces the central heresy that has produced other false doctrines. That is, the church of Rome denies the finished work of Christ but believes in a continual sacrifice which produces such things as sacraments and praying for the dead ... a concept that causes man to try to earn his own salvation by works, penance, indulgences, and many other satanically conceived ideas labelled by our Lord in Revelation 2:24 as ‘the depths of Satan.’... The teaching of the false prophetess, Jezebel, took two forms: (1) ‘to seduce (and lead into false teaching) my servants to commit fornication,’ which is a symbol of the idolatry brought in during this period, and (2) ‘to eat things sacrificed to idols’ ... [Tetlow, 2006, p. 114]

Therefore, the lady of kingdoms of Isaiah 47, the wicked woman of Zechariah 5, the harlot queen of Revelation 17 and 18, and the woman of Matthew 13 are obviously wicked, and their actions and intents are sinister.

Also, recall that the woman in Zechariah’s vision is called “Wickedness” (Zechariah 5:7-8); The lady of kingdoms in Isaiah’s prophecy has trusted in her “wickedness” (Isaiah 47:10); And the leaven which the woman hides represents “wickedness” (1 Corinthians 5:8).

Furthermore, the woman in Matthew 13 hides the leaven in “three measures of meal” (v. 33). Three measures equal exactly one ephah—which is what the Zechariah 5 wicked woman is concealed or hiding in—this woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah” (v. 7).

In addition, three measures of meal turns out to be the exact amount customarily used in a meal offering to God (Genesis 18:6; Judges 6:19; 1 Samuel 1:24). Any student of the Old Testament knows that leaven has

	<p>absolutely no place in a meal offering. This fact offers further evidence that the woman is infusing corruption into the pure meal. [Tetlow, 2006, p. 121]</p>
<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>Hank Hanegraaff writes:</p> <p>The application of the historical principle of [exegetical eschatology], however, demonstrates that this is a clear case of mistaken identity. In biblical history only one nation is inextricably linked to the moniker ‘harlot.’ <i>And that nation is Israel!</i> Anyone who has read the Bible even once has flashbacks to the graphic images of apostate Israel when they first encounter the great prostitute of Revelation. From the Pentateuch to the Prophets, the image is repeated endlessly. Perhaps the most gut-wrenching portrayal of Israel as prostitute is found in Hosea.</p> <p>Hosea’s marriage to the prostitute Gomer is a poignant parallel to God’s wedding covenant with Israel. Though Gomer repeatedly whores after other lovers, Hosea doggedly pursues reconciliation and relationship with his bride. Hosea’s love for Gomer is emblematic of God’s love for this prostituted bride. Verse by verse, the painful picture of a people who prostitute themselves with pagan deities emerges. It culminates in Hosea’s lament over a people who ‘love the wages of a prostitute at every threshing floor’ (Hosea 9:1). The image is pregnant with meaning. Not only was the threshing floor a place of intimacy in which the kinsman redeemer spread the corner of his garment over Ruth, but the very temple itself was built on the threshing floor (2 Chronicles 3:1-2). Unlike Ruth, however, the prostituted bride had little interest in seeking intimacy with God in his temple. Instead, she craved intimacy with foreign gods on the threshing floors of perverse temples.</p> <p>As with Hosea, apostate Israel plays the part of a prostitute in Jeremiah. [Jeremiah 2:20-24; 3:2-3] ...</p> <p>The portrayal of Jerusalem as a prostitute is even more brazen in Ezekiel. Indeed, says Ezekiel, the prostitution of Jerusalem made that of her sisters, Samaria and Sodom, look insignificant by comparison. [Ezekiel 23:14-16, 18-20] ...</p> <p>The similarities are striking! In both Ezekiel and Revelation, the prostitute commits adultery with the kings of the earth; she is dressed in splendor and glitters with gold and precious jewels; and she is drunk with the blood of the righteous. And that’s just a glimpse of her unveiling. Throughout the Old Testament, the harlot prostitutes herself with imperial rulers—with kings of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon. Likewise, in Revelation she is in bed with imperial Rome. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 119-123]</p> <p>Hanegraaff adds:</p> <p>The harlotry of Jerusalem resulted in civil war, division of the kingdom, and ultimately the Assyrian exile of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC, as well as the Babylonian exile of the southern kingdom of Judah in 597 BC. [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 193]</p> <p>Israel split into two kingdoms or nations in 931 BC, after the death of King Solomon. The prophet Hosea (circa 750 BC) was to the northern kingdom</p>

	<p>(Israel) what the prophet Jeremiah (circa 600 BC) was to the southern kingdom (Judea)—during the time when Israel and Judea were split. The Northern Kingdom was apostate. Hosea spoke to that condition. In Ezekiel 37, the prophet speaks of a far future time where the two kingdoms would be regathered and reunited—with repentance and regeneration happening around the time of the Second Coming [LaHaye & Hindson, 2006].</p> <p>The closing verse of Zephaniah summarized the promises of God of blessing Israel in the future, including the regathering to their Promised Land, being honored and praised by the nations, and restoration of their good fortunes in being returned to the land. [Walvoord, 1990, p. 313]</p> <p>Although not a preterist, Chuck Missler nicely summarizes the message of Hosea, and argues that its message has parallels to America today [Missler, 2005]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God suffers when His people are unfaithful to Him • God cannot condone sin <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Although a loving and caring God had provided their abundance and prosperity; ○ Their sin, disloyalty and abandonment of Him will force Him to vindicate His justice with judgment. ○ Thus, God is going to <i>use their enemies</i> [the Assyrians] as His instrument of judgment.” • God will never cease to love His own; consequently, He seeks to win back those who have forsaken Him. <p>Hanegraaff believes that dispensationalists are making a mistake when they link Mystery Babylon with the Roman Catholic church. Instead, Hank Hanegraaff says that <i>Jerusalem</i> is Mystery Babylon because of its rejection of traditional biblical values and because its residents embraced foreign gods and philosophies, over its original true love: the God of the Bible.</p>
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<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>What are the “Signs of the Times”, that is, indicators that we are in a unique position (compared to previous generations) that may see the return of Jesus Christ, in our lifetime?</p> <p>How do these signs relate to the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24?</p> <p>Matthew 24:3-8 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this [Temple's destruction] happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah,' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is</p>
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	<p>still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.</p> <p>Matthew 24:9-14 "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.</p>
<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>First of all, as will be demonstrated in numerous places throughout this book, there are no prerequisites to Christ's return. Christ's return is <i>imminent</i>, that is, it can happen at any time. Furthermore, God does not want us to ignore the possibility of Christ's return. There are about 500 prophecies in the Old Testament that refer to Christ's Second Coming; and, one out of every 25 verses in the New Testament deals with the return of Christ [Reagan, 2011].</p> <p>Secondly, God always provided warnings before sending judgment on a place [Reagan, 2011]. For example, in the days of Noah, God warned the people of pending judgment for 120 years. In the days of Sodom and Gomorrah, God gave warnings through Abraham. Similarly, Jonah warned the great city of Nineveh; the people repented, and God relented. Then, 150 years later, the prophet Nahum was sent to warn a future generation of Ninevites. Similarly, God has been warning the world ... and has given many signs that <i>we are in the general timeframe of the return of Jesus Christ</i>.</p> <p>Thirdly, even though we don't know the date of Christ's return, there are <i>signs</i> that suggest His coming is near. For example, there are many prophecies in Scripture which could not have been fulfilled in the past; however, in our modern generation, these prophecies have been realized, or are capable of being realized. The "birth pains" spoken of in Matthew 24 (e.g., wars and rumors of wars, ethnic conflicts, famines, and earthquakes) are sometimes called "the beginning of sorrows". Some people place "the beginning of sorrows" in the gap between the Rapture and the start of the Tribulation.</p> <p>There are many signs about the world getting closer than ever to Christ's imminent return. The fact that these signs are apparent, but Christ hasn't returned yet, suggests that we must be getting close to the time of the Rapture. Consider the following analogy. Christmas decorations already appear in some stores before American Thanksgiving (which is in late November). Suppose that Thanksgiving has not occurred yet. If you are in a store and you already see Christmas decorations, then that's a good sign that Thanksgiving must be getting very close. (We're not sure who the originator of this analogy is; however, some people attribute it to the late John Walvoord.)</p>

These signs are given in no particular order, but are categorized for convenience [Reagan, 2011; Tetlow, *et al.*, 2006, pp. 50-53]:

1. Signs of Israel

a) The fact that Israel is back in the land again is surely a fulfillment of prophecy, and in particular, Ezekiel 36-37.

b) Israel is compared to a fig tree, symbolically, in Scripture. It refers to national Israel [Tsarfati, 2020b]. (Note: A vine and olive tree are *spiritual* or religious symbols for Israel—and as Christians we have been grafted into them (e.g., Romans 11:17-18,23-24). However, the fig tree is symbolic of *national* Israel, something that most Christians are not part of.) Because Christ was largely rejected by Israel at His first coming, judgment came upon Israel; however, Christ said that in the future the once-cursed fig tree would once again blossom. The generation seeing this would be at the door of Christ's Second Coming:

Matthew 21:18-19 Early in the morning, as he [Jesus] was on his way back to the city [Jerusalem], he was hungry. Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, "May you never bear fruit again!" Immediately the tree withered.

Matthew 24:32-34 "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.

... His [Jesus'] parable of the landowner, in which the vineyard represents Israel (compare Isa. 5:1-2). Jesus here castigates Israel's rulers for their longstanding opposition to God's prophets (Matt. 21:33-36), warning that now, since the Son has come and they are rejecting Him (vv. 37-39), God will "rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers" (v. 41). God will withdraw His kingdom from Israel and bestow it upon "a nation producing the fruit of it" (v. 43). The church is that "nation" (1 Peter 2:9). This results in God's crushing judgment upon Israel in A.D. 70 (Matt. 21:44). Interestingly, the curse on the fig tree earlier (v. 19) is due to its not bearing fruit; now the parabolic vineyard owner is also frustrated with a lack of fruit. [Ice in [Ice & Gentry, 1999]]

b) Jerusalem would be the center of international turmoil. In 1967, Jerusalem returned to Israeli hands. Passages such as Daniel 9:27, Matthew 24:15, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, and Revelation 11:1-2 make reference to a future Jewish Temple, which implicitly assumes Israeli control over Jerusalem.

Zechariah 12:3 On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves.

c) There would be hatred between Israel and many other nations. In fact, already many nations blame Israel for the lack of peace in the Middle East, which has spin-off effects throughout the world. The connection between “leaders of Judah” and “flaming torch” consuming “right and left” suggest that the Israeli Defense Forces may play a role during the Tribulation:

Zechariah 12:6-9 "On that day I will make the leaders of Judah like a firepot in a woodpile, like a flaming torch among sheaves. They will consume right and left all the surrounding peoples, but Jerusalem will remain intact in her place. "The LORD will save the dwellings of Judah first, so that the honor of the house of David and of Jerusalem's inhabitants may not be greater than that of Judah. On that day the LORD will shield those who live in Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the Angel of the LORD going before them. On that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem.

2. Signs in Nature

Such signs include: earthquakes, famine, pestilence, and signs in the heavens—which have always occurred, but Jesus described them in terms of *birth pains* or birth pangs—increasing in frequency and intensity. For example, in the first thousand years after Christ, only about 5 major earthquakes were recorded. In the 18th century, there were 640 earthquakes; in the 19th century, there were 2,119 major earthquakes; and in the 20th century, there were about 900,000 earthquakes [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. Recently (2011), tsunamis have been another disaster, albeit related to earthquakes. Floods and tornados are other natural disasters making the news.

Luke 21:11 There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven.

Luke 21:25-28 "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the **roaring and tossing of the sea**. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. **When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.**"

Interestingly, Judaism (e.g., in the teachings of the Talmud) also uses the term “birth pangs of the Messiah” to describe the signs preceding the coming of the Messiah, the generation that is to receive the Son of David [Ice, 2021a]. See also Isaiah 26:17-18 and Jeremiah 30:6.

For preterists to claim that famines and earthquakes occurred in the years leading up to 70 AD, one would expect to hear of severe famines and earthquakes in this time period, to distinguish these events from a general occurrence throughout history. Otherwise, these arguments would not be convincing. We expect famines and earthquakes to occur with severity and increased frequency, perhaps many occurring simultaneously and worldwide, to fulfil prophecy.

3. Signs in Society

There will be love of self; love of money; love of evil; immorality; and materialism. This certainly describes the modern age. Also, consider the propagation of evil relentlessly in our daily lives through television, movies, music, the Internet, and other media.

2 Timothy 3:1-5 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God -- having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

In conjunction with the above, there will be increased lawlessness:

Psalm 11:3-5 When the foundations are being destroyed [e.g., the pillars of society rooted in the Bible], what can the righteous do?" The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD is on his heavenly throne. He observes everyone on earth; his eyes examine them. The LORD examines the righteous, but the wicked, those who love violence, he hates with a passion.

Proverbs 17:15 Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent -- the LORD detests them both.

Isaiah 5:20 Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

4. Spiritual Signs

Such signs include apostasy, cults, persecution of believers, and false Christs. In particular:

a) People would mock the warning signs of the end of the age, saying that these signs have always been around:

2 Peter 3:3-4 First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."

b) The fact that God once flooded the earth (the Flood of Noah's day) would be denied:

2 Peter 3:5-6 But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed.

c) People are to watch for "false messiahs", "false prophets", and "false teachers" (2 Peter 2:1).

Matthew 24:24 For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

There were no false messiahs (false Christs) on—or before—70 AD. Israel had some false prophets. False teachers have appeared throughout history. The final false Christ will be the Antichrist, and the final false prophet will be the Antichrist's colleague: the false prophet of Revelation 13:11-18.

5. Signs of Increases in Knowledge, Travel, Communications, and Technology

Daniel 12:4 But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge."

a) Financial systems would depend on marks and numbers, rather than "cash", in a prophecy that's almost 2,000 years old:

Revelation 13:16-18 He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that **no one could buy or sell** unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name. This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.

This may well be a microchip implant or a visible mark. Certainly, the rise of computers, the Internet, global communications, cell phones, electronic commerce, identity theft, rising lawlessness, and various kinds of electronic fraud come into play here. Clearly, it would not have been possible to implement the “cashless society” concept of Revelation 13:16-17 without these converging factors. Although not explicitly mentioned, surveillance and people-tracking are likely to be part of this system of control by the Antichrist.

b) A prophecy in the book of Zechariah (circa 520 BC) appears to be a description of a neutron bomb: an atomic weapon capable of destroying flesh, but leaving buildings intact. This suggests that the times we are living in (with nuclear technology) may be close to the return of Christ.

Zechariah 14:11-12 It will be inhabited; never again will it be destroyed. Jerusalem will be secure. This is the plague with which the LORD will strike all the nations that fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths.

c) Mankind would be capable of destroying all life. Jesus Christ said:

Matthew 24:21-22 For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now -- and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, **no one would survive**, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.

Recent generations have, for the first time in history, been able to witness weapons of mass destruction. Generally speaking, those nations that have nuclear weapons are hoping they won't have to actually use them. Instead, those nations have them as a strong deterrent against aggression from other nations [Hersh, 1991].

d) Global communications (satellites, fiber optics, television, the Internet, cell phones, Google, YouTube, social media, e-mail, discussion forums, etc.)

Revelation 11:9-10 For three and a half days **men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies** [i.e., two special witnesses] and refuse them burial. **The inhabitants of the earth** will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.

Revelation 13:14-17 Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he [the False Prophet] deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast [Antichrist] who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. He was given power to give breath **to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak** and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.

Revelation 17:8 The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction. The **inhabitants of the earth** whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished **when they see the beast**, because he once was, now is not, and yet will come.

Matthew 24:15-16 "So **when you see** standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel -- let the reader understand -- then let those who are in Judea [the West Bank] flee to the mountains.

6. Geopolitical Signs, Including War

a) The lining up of nations in the Middle East, against Israel, seems to suggest that Ezekiel 38-39's fulfillment is not that far away.

b) There will be more wars and rumors of wars. "Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" (Matthew 24:7).

Such unrest will be accompanied by famines and earthquakes. Arnold Fruchtenbaum analyzed the Old Testament verses that refer to the phrases "nation against nation" and "kingdom against kingdom", and concluded that these phrases refer to a *worldwide* conflict. It is interesting to note that a worldwide conflict did not occur before World War I. (Recall that the Babylonian invasion of Israel, circa 606-586 BC, was a localized event.) Famines and earthquakes followed, including a very large increase in the number of earthquakes of significance [Fruchtenbaum, 2004].

The word "nation" is translated from the Greek word *ethnos* which refers to internal strife—an ethnic group, rather than a country [Reagan, 2005]. In the world today, we see much internal unrest among ethnic groups in individual nations. The term "kingdom" (Greek: *basileia*) implies international conflict. Thomas Ice writes that this is equivalent to a group of nations going against another

nation or group [Ice, 2021]. For example, it would be like NATO countries joining together to fight the Warsaw Pact nations. Note that this does *not* describe Rome versus Jerusalem in 70 AD, like preterists would have people believe.

c) Asia would be capable of deploying a 200 million man army during Earth's final days:

Revelation 9:14-16 It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number.

Revelation 16:12 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East.

Note that no army of this size has been deployed in the history of the world; nor has any army killed "a third of mankind." Therefore, this passage must apply to the future.

That said, we should also point out that the two types of armies described in Revelation 9 and Revelation 16 are probably not the same. Revelation 9 probably describes a *supernatural* army because of the locust-like appearance of the warriors; whereas, the army (or armies) in Revelation 16 appear to be natural armies that are participating in the Battle of Armageddon in Israel. It is possible that these two events may be connected, or be separated by only a small amount of time [Walvoord, *et al.*, 2011]. The 7 trumpet judgments and the 7 bowl judgments occur during the second half of the Tribulation.

As a side note, water is obviously precious in the Middle East, and the Euphrates and Tigris rivers are a major source of water. Water is even more important today because the population of Syria has increased from about 9 million in 1980 to 23 million in 2013, and the population of Iraq has increased from about 14 million in 1980 to 33 million in 2013. Turkey houses the headwaters of these rivers, and since the 1970s, Turkey has been constructing 22 dams on them. These dams are capable of cutting off most of its flow. The Scripture passage above suggests supernatural intervention (and that may well be the case), but might the dams be an avenue of implementation?

Finally, be aware that a lot of end-times prophecy occurs *after* the Rapture. Many Scripture passages especially parts of Revelation, Daniel, Ezekiel, and

	<p>Zechariah have a lot to say about topics such as the Tribulation, the return of Jesus Christ, and the Millennium.</p>
<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>Matthew 24:34 Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.</p> <p>The term “the end of the age” (Matthew 24:3) refers to the end of the Old Covenant (Old Testament) order, which happened in 70 AD with the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple [DeMar, 1997]. We are now living under the New Covenant made by Christ. “This generation” is the generation that was living when Christ spoke His words. They would “see” Christ’s coming in judgment in 70 AD. Thus, preterists claim, Christ’s words literally came true; we don’t need to look for a fulfillment almost 2,000 years in the future. If Christ had meant some future generation, He would have said so (e.g., “<i>that</i> generation”).</p> <p>Earlier in the book of Matthew, Jesus seemed to imply that He would come within one generation:</p> <p>Matthew 10:23 When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.</p> <p>Matthew 16:27-28 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done. "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."</p> <p>Matthew 26:63-64 But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God." "You have said so," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: From now on you [plural; Jewish high council (Sanhedrin)] will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."</p> <p>Hank Hanegraaff believes that many well-known dispensationalists are playing a “semantical game” when it comes to “this generation” not passing away [DeMar & Hanegraaff, 2023]. Sometimes they think that “this generation” refers to a single generation; other times, to a future generation that will see “all these things”; and other times, to a “race” of people (i.e., the Jews will not pass away until all these things are fulfilled). Gary DeMar adds that the last reason is particularly silly because Scripture says there were 14 “generations” (same Greek word <i>genea</i> in Matthew 1:17) from Abraham to David, and from David to the deportation to Babylon, and from the deportation to Babylon to the time of Christ:</p>

Matthew 1:17 Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.

Also, there were tribulations during the post-Christ years, leading up to 70 AD. Some Christians were in fear for their lives because of Roman persecution—not to mention persecution from the Jews [Gentry, 1998b]. Christians were jailed, flogged, and even killed.

Taking into account the way these Jews align themselves with Rome to crucify Jesus (John 19:12-15) and their relentless persecution of the early church (Acts 13:50; 14:1-7), there does not seem to be a more prominent example of apostasy anywhere else in the annals of history. [DeMar, 1997, pp. 278-279]

Matthew 24:7 Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places.

In the years leading up to 70 AD, there were plenty of wars, famines, and earthquakes in the Roman Empire [Newton, 2012]. Many Jews and non-Jews were killed in the wars. This is why some of the events described in the book of Revelation can be connected to those times. (Note that preterists claim that Revelation was written well before 70 AD—possibly 64 AD, whereas dispensationalists claim that Revelation was written in 95 AD.)

Preterists argue that there were false prophets or false Christs during this time. The church had its share of false teachers, and apostasy was creeping into churches.

Acts 20:29-30 I know that after I [Paul] leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.

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

We also note that the gospel message had been proclaimed to the ends of the earth, prior to Jerusalem's destruction [DeMar & Hanegraaff, 2023]:

Matthew 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Romans 10:18 But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."

We should note here that the term "world" in Romans 10 as well as in Matthew means the same as in Luke 2:1, "In those days a decree went out

	<p>from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This “world” is the known world of the Roman Empire. We should not attempt to force this to mean the ancient civilizations of China or South America. For the first-century Jews, their world was the Roman Empire. [Newton, 2012, p. 139]</p> <p>There are no prophecies that need to be fulfilled before Christ’s Second Coming. He could appear at any time.</p> <p>Prophecy “experts” who think that there are many events that will occur prior to Christ’s appearance, are mistaken. Christ will return; however, there are no signs that specifically indicate how close we are to Christ’s Second Coming. Jesus said that His return would be similar in occurrence to the time of judgment (i.e., the Flood) in the days of Noah—when <i>no sign</i> was given. Each day, we’re one day closer to when the Lord physically returns. He could come in the next second; or He might not come for 100 or more years. The point is: we need to be prepared at all times. If we knew what events had to occur before He would return, then we could live carelessly, instead of in eager expectation of His return.</p> <p>As for the “sign” found in the parable of the fig tree, we note that Israel is sometimes compared to a vine or pomegranate—or to a fig tree, olive tree, or palm tree. Jeremiah 24 contrasts first-ripe and rotten figs; but, this describes the fruit of the tree, rather than the tree itself. There appear to be no Old Testament associations between Israel and a fig tree—at least as far as nationhood goes [DeMar, 1997].</p> <p>The cursing of the fig tree and the cleansing of the temple are immediately related. Jerusalem, the temple, the people, and the religious leaders were fruitless. They had the outward appearance of religion (leaves) but produced no works (fruit) ... Jesus was looking for the fruit of repentance from Israel. Finding no fruit, Jesus promised to cut down the fig tree (Israel). [DeMar, 1997, p. 402]</p> <p>Regarding the possibility of Matthew 24 being a double fulfillment prophecy, Stan Newton writes:</p> <p>Did Jesus refer both to the destruction of Jerusalem and the events of his future second coming in the Olivet discourse? I see no biblical evidence that points to a double fulfillment. Scripture and history can explain everything Jesus spoke about, and it points to a complete fulfillment in the coming horrific events of Jerusalem. [Newton, 2012, pp. 178-179]</p>
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Topic/ Question	Is America in Bible prophecy?
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<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>Many scholars have pondered this question. Andy Woods remarks that Zechariah 12:3 and 14:2 state that America <i>is</i> in Bible prophecy—but as part of “all nations” that come against Israel during the Battle of Armageddon [Woods & McGowan, 2018].</p> <p>There really isn’t any Scripture verse that directly supports the argument that America is mentioned in Bible prophecy. This may be surprising given that the United States is probably the most powerful nation in the history of the world. Many scholars are of the opinion that the <i>absence</i> of the US in prophecy implies that America is no longer a world power by the time that the 70th week of Daniel comes about, and therefore America is not a key/direct participant in the end times timeline.</p> <p>The passages that are most frequently quoted in a discussion about whether or not the United States is in prophecy include the following [LaHaye, 2009a]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revelation 17-18—which discusses the judgment of Babylon. Some authors think that there are parallels between America (sometimes New York City is mentioned) and ancient Babylon, especially the parts about Babylon being a center of world trade that would be destroyed “in one hour” (Revelation 18:17-19). America’s economy is arguably the strongest in the world. Its stock markets are a pulse or index of not only America’s wealth, but indirectly the wealth of the rest of the world. For example, any event that affects Asian stock markets while they are open is typically reflected on the US stock exchanges as soon as they open for trading. Furthermore, while the US exchanges are open, any positive or negative economic events, such as a change in US Fed interest rates, political events, oil blockades, war in the Middle East, bad weather forecasts, health events (e.g., flu outbreaks, COVID-19 coronavirus), corporate announcements of weak earnings, etc., are reflected within minutes, or even seconds. With algorithmic or program trading (e.g., a cascade of stock trades that is automatically triggered by computers when certain price thresholds are reached), great wealth can be made or lost very quickly. Thus, a collapse of the stock and bond markets can occur in minutes. This is analogous to a yet <i>future</i> event concerning “Babylon”, which some claim could represent America ... but likely is not. Instead, for consistency with the writings of Genesis 10-11, Isaiah 13-14, Jeremiah 50-51, and Revelation 17-18, it makes the most sense to think of Babylon as being a literal, re-built, Middle Eastern city, north of the Persian Gulf, on the banks of the Euphrates River: <p style="text-align: center;">Revelation 18:17-19 In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!' "Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off. When they see the smoke of her burning, they will exclaim, 'Was there ever a city like this great city?' They will</p>
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throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out: "'Woe! Woe to you, great city, where all who had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth! In one hour she has been brought to ruin!'

- Some authors think that the Antichrist's timeline is too short to build up a Middle Eastern city (Babylon in Iraq), and make it the commercial hub of the world [Tracy, 1969]. The description of Babylon being a "golden cup" in the Lord's hand could refer to the United States' evangelistic efforts over the last 200 years where many missionaries have gone forth to proclaim the gospel in far-off countries. Descriptions of Babylon living in wealth and luxury seem to describe the riches, covetousness, self-indulgence, and pride of America, not to mention its export of idolatry to the rest of the world. Tracy equates the Babylon of Jeremiah 50-51 to be the same as the Babylon (not "Mystery Babylon", which is religious Babylon) of Revelation 18. Jeremiah 51:13 speaks of Babylon as dwelling upon many waters, and this could describe the United States, in fact more so than Babylon, Iraq which is located well inland, but along the Euphrates River. The same verse also describes Babylon as being rich in treasures, which could refer to America's immense wealth of natural resources.
- Ezekiel 38:13-14—which states that "Sheba, Dedan, the merchants of Tarshish, and all their young lions" [ESV] (some translations write "villages" instead of "young lions") will be protesting the invasion of Gog and Magog into Israel. Sheba and Dedan may both be in Saudi Arabia [Woods, 2016b]. Other authors (e.g., [Hitchcock, 2009; Stewart, 2019]) believe that they are Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf States including Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and possibly Kuwait. Bill Salus thinks Sheba is modern-day Yemen [Salus, 2023]. "Tarshish" is either Spain or the British isles. (Jonah wanted to flee to Tarshish on a ship, and about 900 years later, the Apostle Paul wanted to visit Tarshish.) Some scholars believe that the "young lions" refers to the spin-off nations in the British Commonwealth such as the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, etc.

Prophecy students have yet to come up with a good explanation of why the United States is NOT mentioned in end times prophecy. Most assume it is because we will cease to be an end-time player in the game of global politics. It does not guarantee of course that the USA will not still be in existence when our Lord comes to rapture His church, after which the Antichrist will appear as he finalizes his global government. Certainly the sudden removal of ... over forty percent of the population (plus children), could render this country so helpless she could not resist his overtures, rendering the U.S. the non-participant in what seems prophetically to be a European and Middle Eastern event. The sudden removal of forty percent of the population could leave America in such

chaos she could be rendered helpless to the blandishment of the Antichrist, allowing him to make America a colony of Europe. [LaHaye, 2000a]

Elsewhere, LaHaye writes:

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

[American politicians may] turn the control of the United States over to the United Nations, using the vast resources of this country to implement the One World Government that they envision as the only hope for "peace" in this world. [LaHaye, 1999]

Mark Hitchcock writes:

... here are seven general conclusions I've reached about America's future role.

1. America is not mentioned in the Bible.
2. America is Israel's main defender.
3. America must remain strong until the end times to continue her defense of Israel.
4. The Scriptural silence concerning America in the end times indicates that America will fall from her position of world prominence.
5. World power in the end times is centered in the Reunited Roman Empire (Europe) ...
6. European prominence can only be explained in light of U.S. decline.
7. The U.S. will suffer her decline, her fall, at the Rapture of the church.

... But in our troubled, uncertain world, we can rest in the knowledge that the ultimate destiny of America and every nation is in God's hands. [Hitchcock, 2006, pp. 129-130]

When the United States is forced to abandon its role as the most dominant power in the world, the balance of power will shift quickly to Europe and the Middle East, just as the Bible predicts. These parts of the world will not be affected nearly as dramatically by the Rapture. The minimal impact of the Rapture on Europe, where biblical faith has seriously eroded, will leave the European Union poised to lead the Western world. Power will shift dramatically away from the United States.

Could America fall before the Rapture? No one on earth knows the final answer to this question. But it appears to me that America will remain a key player up until the Rapture. Why do I say that? Think about it. America is Israel's key ally. If it weren't for the strong support of the United States, Israel would have been wiped out decades ago. And we know from the Bible that Israel will be a viable nation when the Tribulation begins. [Hitchcock, 2009, pp. 114-115]

... it is probable that the United States will be in some form of alliance with the Roman ruler. ...

If the end-time events include a destruction of Russia and her allies prior to the final period of great tribulation [e.g., Ezekiel 38-39], this may trigger an unbalance in the world situation that will permit the Roman ruler to become a world ruler. In this event, it should be clear that the United States will be in a subordinate role and no longer the great international power that it is today. [Hitchcock, 2009, pp. 156-157]

Ron Rhodes writes:

My assessment is that America is not mentioned in Bible prophecy at all. Using proper Hermeneutics and sound exegesis, I cannot find America in any of the verses so often suggested by prophecy buffs. If I am correct in this belief, the key question becomes, why isn't America mentioned in Bible prophecy?

... the United States is the world's single remaining superpower and also happens to be Israel's principal ally ... So again, why no reference?

America may eventually implode due to ever-escalating moral and spiritual degeneration. Lots of statistics show the trouble this country is in morally and spiritually ...

Perhaps the United States will be destroyed or at least greatly weakened by nuclear weapons and so will play no significant role in the end times. ... The United States could certainly be attacked with nuclear weapons at some point in the future. Harvard professor Graham Allison has written a book titled *Nuclear Terrorism* in which he affirms that a nuclear attack on U.S. soil within the next ten years is "more likely than not."

... Perhaps the United States will become incapacitated due to an EMP attack. One scary but realistic scenario involves a foreign power—such as Iran—launching an electromagnetic pulse (EMP) attack against the United States. This is not a sensationalistic speculation of prophecy fanatics. It is a potential, realistic scenario documented in a report issued in 2004 by a blue-ribbon commission created by Congress—"Commission to Assess the Threat to the United States from Electromagnetic Pulse Attack." Based on this report, U.S. Representative Jim Saxton lamented that the 'technology is now here' to bring America's way of life to an end.

... [Rhodes, quoting Timmerman] In one test, the United States detonated a 1.5-megaton weapon at an altitude of 248 miles over Johnston Island in the Pacific. "Eight hundred miles away in Hawaii, street-lights went out within seconds ... Fuses failed on Oahu, telephone service was disrupted on Kauai, and the power system went down on Hawaii itself. What caused it was the high-powered electromagnetic pulse set off by the nuclear explosion, which hit Hawaii like a lightning bolt."

... Starvation and disease could ultimately result following an EMP attack. Dr. Lowell Wood (of the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, and member of the EMP Threat Commission) warned in testimony before the U.S. Congress that an EMP attack could reduce to a pre-Industrial Age the United States' transportation options and ability to provide vital food and water to the general population. A report published by United Press International makes this warning:

Imagine the only people you could communicate with are those within your visual range or within the sound of your voice. Imagine the only way you could travel was to walk or ride a bike. Imagine no electricity, working telephones or computers; no fuel or cars or airplanes, no running elevators, no heat or light for houses and buildings, no running water and after a few days, no food. Imagine that you had to live under these conditions for weeks, months or even years ... An electromagnetic pulse attack could inflict this catastrophic scenario across the entire United States.

[Rhodes, 2008, pp. 121-125]

One reason for why the US may no longer be a world power is that the Rapture occurs; and following the Rapture, the US has little economic, military, political, or spiritual leadership left. This is a very possible scenario, perhaps in combination with some of the other reasons given in this section.

Besides the Rapture, there are a number of other possible end-times scenarios concerning America: (a) an EMP (electromagnetic pulse) attack against America, rendering it largely powerless in the end times; (b) the neutralization of America through the Magog invasion (e.g., “fire” on the coastlands or on “them that dwell carelessly in the isles”—Ezekiel 39:6 [KJV]); and (c) the weakening of America by a financial and monetary crisis, and America’s subsequent withdrawal from active engagement in the international scene [Missler, 2008a]. The Hebrew word for “carelessly” is *betach* and the expression “dwell carelessly” can mean “living in false confidence”.

Other possibilities that could be added to Chuck Missler’s list include: (d) US public opinion from the media, political lobbying groups, and voters forcing the US government to abandon its support for Israel; (e) the US no longer being the world’s “policeman”, especially when engaging in foreign battles is a no-win situation, not to mention the enormous costs; (f) terrorist activities against the US; (g) civil unrest in the US; and (h) a moral and spiritual decline for which God withdraws His hand of protection and blessing from America. It may well be a combination of several of the above factors.

Missler asks a related question: “Why hasn’t God judged America [yet]?” He then provides some *myths* and answers about America:

- We are the wealthiest nation on Earth. (No, we’re bankrupt.)
- We’re a representative republic. (No, we’re a democracy rather than a republic; and 50% plus one is a majority. We have a manipulated press, and the media is the “prince of the power of the air”.)
- There is freedom of speech in America. (No. Important voices are being silenced; while abrasive voices are being amplified. The Bible isn’t taken seriously by many, and God is being pushed out of schools, workplaces, etc.)

David Reagan comments on the United States from a Biblical perspective [Reagan, 2008]:

- “God establishes nations and defines their boundaries.
- God determines when a nation will cease to exist.
- God has a purpose for each nation, both general and specific.
- God blesses and disciplines nations in accordance with their obedience to Him and their treatment of the Jewish people.
- God holds nations in contempt because of their pride and rebellion and because they serve as idols.
- God forgives and blesses a nation when its people repent.
- God destroys a nation when its rebellion becomes entrenched, reaching a point of no return.”

Reagan also explains how God deals with a rebellious nation:

- “He raises up prophetic voices to call the nation to repentance.
- He places remedial judgments upon the nation.
- He delivers the nation from judgment to destruction.”

God raised up this nation with the purpose of using our great natural resources and technical ingenuity to spread the Gospel all over the earth. As we fulfilled His purpose, He poured out blessings upon us—blessings like unparalleled freedom and prosperity and immense power and worldwide influence. ... Money became our God. Greed became our motivator. We kicked God out of our schools. We legalized abortion. We became the moral polluter of the earth. [Reagan, 2008]

2 Chronicles 36:15-16 The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people **and there was no remedy**.

The Bible makes it clear that the vast majority of humanity will always reject the Gospel (Matthew 7:13-14). And the Bible makes it equally clear that as we approach the end of the Church Age, society will grow increasingly evil rather than increasingly righteous (Matthew 24:9-12,36-39).

... society will disintegrate in the end times (2 Timothy 3:1-5), becoming as immoral and violent as in the days of Noah (Matthew 24:37-39). The Church will be taken out of the world in an event called the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), and then God will begin to pour out His wrath during a seven year period called the Tribulation (Revelation 6-18). [Reagan, 2012]

Chuck Missler adds: “We have become the primary exporters of all that God abhors.” [Missler, 2005]

Mark Hitchcock comments:

	<p>A partial answer [to the question of why America hasn't been judged yet] may be found in the fact that the United States of America, in spite of its failures, has nevertheless been a source of major Christian testimony in the world and has done more to promote the missionary cause in terms of money and men than any other nation. Although the United States numbers only five percent of the total world population, in the last century probably more than fifty percent of the missionaries and money spent has come from America. In view of the fact that it is God's major purpose in this present age to call out Jew and Gentile to faith in Christ and to have the Gospel preached in all nations, the prosperity which has been true of America has made possible this end and may have been permitted by God to accomplish His holy purposes.</p> <p>Another important reason for delay in divine judgment upon America is the Abrahamic promise concerning his seed, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee" (Genesis 12:3, KJV). [Hitchcock, 2009, p. 158]</p> <p>It is claimed that Genesis 12:3 is the focus of much of the book of Genesis; and the promises of Genesis 12:3 remain in effect to this day. Thus, God is a "Zionist" [Ice, 2012a]. Note that some of the promises made in Genesis include promises to Abraham about the land (e.g., Genesis 12:7; 13:14-17; Psalm 105:10-11).</p>
Preterist Position	<p>America is not mentioned in Bible prophecy. We shouldn't try to read something into Scripture that is not there. The Bible gives general descriptions of how society will degenerate without Christ, but this is true all over the world:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">2 Timothy 3:1-5 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God - - having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.</p> <p>The United States, however, is not singled out explicitly in Scripture. Unbelieving society (including America) is implicitly described in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 (above).</p>

Topic/ Question	What role does the economy have in the end times? For example, does <i>inflation</i> come into play in eschatology?
Both Positions	<p>The third horseman of the apocalypse indicates that a day's wages would be required to purchase one person's daily food supply (e.g., 2,000 calories in one quart of wheat)—or, for the same day's wages, three quarts of barley:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Revelation 6:5-6 When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures,</p>

	<p>saying, "A quart of wheat for a day's wages, and three quarts of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!"</p> <p>The latter instruction to not damage the “oil and the wine” may be a reference to indicate that the wealthy will still have access to select foods. But the first part seems to suggest inflation, and that a typical person would have no money to spend on other things, that is, he/she would be working all day just to pay for food.</p> <p>Is this happening around the world today? Over the past few decades, “real-world inflation” (experienced by typical families, which takes into account housing, insurance, food, entertainment, taxation, service charges, etc.; and measured independently by organizations such as John Williams’ Shadow Government Statistics group (http://www.shadowstats.com)) is consistently above the US government’s “official” inflation rate. This leads many to conclude that costs have been rising, while incomes have been falling (in real terms). In fact, the savings rate for many families is already negative: we spend more than we earn.</p>
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Topic/ Question	Do the financial/banking/mortgage/stock market crises in the United States have any bearing on Bible prophecy? How do these crises relate to the Biblical term “dishonest weights and measures”? Is there a tie-in to eschatology?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>The Bible indicates that the borrower is a slave to the lender. Many people in Western cultures (especially) have been living a life of greed and materialism, and this is condemned in Scripture. The amount of financial fraud and deception in the 1990s and 2000s are examples of this (e.g., consider the “dot-com” years during the NASDAQ bubble with its “pro-forma” accounting and questionable stock options, and also the housing/financial/mortgage crisis in the United States). One wonders how long God can bless a nation for practices that violate economic principles laid out Scripture. The Biblical term “dishonest weights and measures” comes to mind in many of these cases.</p> <p>Leviticus 19:35-36 "Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity. Use honest scales and honest weights, an honest ephah and an honest hin. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt.</p> <p>Deuteronomy 25:13-14 Do not have two differing weights in your bag -- one heavy, one light. Do not have two differing measures in your house -- one large, one small.</p> <p>Micah 6:10-13 Am I still to forget, O wicked house, your ill-gotten treasures and the short ephah, which is accursed? Shall I acquit a man with dishonest scales, with a bag of false weights? Her rich men are violent; her people are liars and their tongues speak deceitfully. Therefore, I have begun to destroy you, to ruin you because of your sins.</p>

1 Timothy 6:10 **For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.**

1 Timothy 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.

Matthew 6:21 (also Luke 12:34) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Some researchers believe that the financial crisis is a prelude to the socialization of the world, which paves the way for the Antichrist coming on to the world stage—whereby all nations come experience economic, political, and religious control (global socialism or “practical communism”) under the rule of Antichrist [Franz, 2008]. For example, the Bretton Woods agreement of 1944 is collapsing, largely due to an excessive level of debt (printing of money, easy credit) in the United States and abroad. The financial crisis may be a prelude to the coming judgment of “Commercial Babylon” described in Revelation. Franz notes the following steps in “Babylon’s financial dialectic” that appear to be repeated in failing world powers, including the modern-day United States:

1. Devalued currency (inflation)
2. Artificial rise in investment values
3. Debt bubble that collapses
4. Investment values collapse (deflation)
5. Real wages decrease
6. Debtors default on loans (bankruptcy)
7. Lenders foreclose and confiscate borrowers’ assets (i.e., socialism—the government now owns the assets)

Here are some Scriptures that give at least a weak analogy to the financial crisis in the United States in the year 2008. I say “weak” because some of the principles are worthy of consideration to practical living today, although the verses most likely have application to a future, and more direct, end-times meaning:

Isaiah 1:21-23 See how the faithful city has become a harlot! She once was full of justice; righteousness used to dwell in her -- but now murderers! **Your silver has become dross, your choice wine is diluted with water.** Your rulers are rebels, companions of thieves; **they all**

love bribes and chase after gifts. They do not defend the cause of the fatherless; the widow's case does not come before them.

Revelation 18:10-17 Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry: "'Woe! Woe, O great city, O Babylon, city of power! In one hour your doom has come!' **"The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more -- cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble; cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and bodies and souls of men.** "They will say, **'The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your riches and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered.'** The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will stand far off, terrified at her torment. They will weep and mourn and cry out: "'Woe! Woe, O great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls! In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!' "Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off.

Amos 8:4-6 Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land, saying, "When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat?" -- **skimping the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales,** buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, selling even the sweepings with the wheat.

The word “merchants” used four times in Revelation refers to wholesalers in international commerce, who trade large quantities of items [Morris, 1983]. The 28 items of cargo mentioned may be representative of all trade on the earth since $28 = 7 \times 4$ and, symbolically, 7 is the number of completion and 4 is the number of the expanses of the whole earth (north, east, south, and west).

Numerous financial experts have commented that gold and silver (and certain other “real” or “hard” assets) are commodities that retain their value over time. Gold and silver are frequently referenced in the Bible as items of value; however, there is no explicit claim that these (or other commodities) are the safest and most desirable assets to own. Gold tends to retain its value in terms of purchasing power over time, but note that gold does not pay dividends or interest.

Fractional reserve banking, and a departure from the gold standard, have allowed money to be created “out of nothing” leading to inflation. Inflation means “an increase in the money supply”, and is usually associated with rising prices (or equivalently, a decrease in the value of the currency, since more dollars chase the same goods).

A case can be made that *fractional reserve banking* and a departure from the gold standard are forms of “dishonest weights and measures”. For instance, the Coinage Act of 1792 stated that an American dollar was 412.5 grains of silver or 1/42 of an ounce of gold [Franz, 2001]. Today, there is very little silver or gold backing a US dollar, especially as dollars continue to be printed excessively.

Needless to say, the level of modern-day taxation and the paycheque-to-paycheque status of many of the working poor and middle-class cause us to reflect on these verses, and on what the future might hold as we approach the end-times. This broken financial model was certainly not God’s plan for mankind, but rather is coming about because of :

- the poor choices that we, as a society and as individuals, have made—especially in terms of ethics and other Biblical values
- a departure from God
- our culture’s obsession with consumption (i.e., living beyond one’s means)
- an obsession with money, stock markets, and various forms of financial instruments, including derivatives
- an entitlement culture necessitating excessive taxation
- the lack of a work ethic
- the drug trade and problems with the justice system
- excessive litigation
- excessive debt levels (which are a form of bondage)
- using one’s home as a “three-bedroom ATM” to withdraw cash from “equity” to spend as we see fit
- supernatural elements (e.g., Satan) behind the scenes trying to bring the world into bondage, as the time of Christ approaches

[D]uring the sixteen months prior to the [1929] crash, the Fed increased the money supply by 62%. Investors borrowed money to buy stocks, which pushed stock prices artificially high. During the rise in prices, the financial insiders (Rockefellers, Warburgs, Mellons, Rothschilds, etc.) coaxed small investors into the stock market with the prospects of doubling or even tripling their money in a short period of time. As more and more small investors clamored to buy stocks at the higher prices, the insiders, who owned the low-priced stocks, sold off to them.

Then, the insider-controlled Fed shut the money supply off and the market crashed. ...

The central bank’s increase of money supply to inflate market prices, followed by a decrease in money supply to crash prices is what Thomas Jefferson warned us of when he said:

If the American people ever allow private banks to control the issue of their currency, first by inflation and then by deflation, the banks

	<p>and corporations that will grow up around them, will deprive the people of all property until their children wake up homeless on the continent their father occupied.</p> <p>The Fed kept the money supply tight, which bankrupted the U.S. government and pushed the whole world into the depression of the 1930s. This led to the next and greatest transfer of wealth, when President Roosevelt confiscated privately-owned gold under Executive Order 6102. During this time, the insiders, who had all the money from the 1929 crash, forged new financial empires by buying up real estate, manufacturing plants, and just about everything else. [Franz, 2001, pp. 96-97]</p> <p>Some analysts have commented that excess debt, stock options, greed, and derivatives go hand-in-hand, leaving the economy in bad shape.</p> <p>Simply put the derivatives market is the atomic bomb of the world's debt bubble that will most likely trigger the collapse of the entire world's financial system. When that happens, the globalists plan to roll ownership of the entire world over to themselves in one gigantic debt-for-equity swap. [Franz, 2001, p. 132]</p>
Preterist Position	<p>While it is true that many Biblical principles, including ethics and fair weights and measures, have been abandoned by many people around the world, we are not to read any "prophecy" into these shortcomings. It does not necessarily mean that we are on the verge of Christ's Second Coming. Instead, we should heed the words of 1 Timothy, and not make money our focus:</p> <p>1 Timothy 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.</p> <p>1 Timothy 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.</p>

Topic/ Question	What does the Bible say about the use of drugs in the last days?
Both Positions	<p>Revelation 9:20-21 The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood -- idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts [Greek: <i>pharmakeia</i>], their sexual immorality or their thefts.</p> <p>Revelation 18:23 The light of a lamp will never shine in you [Babylon] again. The voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world's great men. By your magic spell [Greek: <i>pharmakeia</i>] all the nations were led astray.</p>

	<p>“Magic arts” and “magic spell” are translated as “sorceries” in the KJV Bible. Henry Morris writes:</p> <p>Every nation in every age has been contaminated with drunkenness ever since the primeval sin of Noah (Genesis 9:20,21). We can be certain that, in the wicked and terrifying days of the tribulation, ungodly men will turn to intoxicants and drugs far more than ever in history. That drugs are also a major item is evident from the reference to “sorceries” in verse 23. As noted before (Revelation 9:21), this term is a translation of the Greek word from which we transliterate the English word “pharmaceutics.” The great demand for intoxicants and drugs in these coming days will surely be further stimulated by the ungodly and covetous merchants who profit so greatly from them.</p> <p>... the “sorceries” actually involve inducement of religious visions and states of altered consciousness by use of drugs. The Greek word translated “sorcery” and “witchcraft” is <i>pharmakeia</i>, meaning “drug” or “potion” or “medication.” [Morris, 1983, pp. 375-376]</p> <p>Medicines should only be taken on the advice of your physician. Avoid recreational drugs. It appears that there will probably be a large increase in recreational drugs in the days before Christ’s return.</p>
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<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>Regarding acts of terrorism, killing “in the name of God”, acts of brutality committed by God-fearing groups (mentioned in the Bible), etc: Didn’t Christians act savagely during the Crusades? How about the Israelites as they killed or kicked out the Canaanites during the time of Joshua? How are these forms of brutality different than that of modern terrorist groups, who also act in the “name of God”? I mean, shouldn’t we be taking a look in the mirror before judging religious extremists?</p>
<p>Both Positions Share the Same View</p>	<p>Christians should follow Christ’s examples and teaching, as commanded in the Bible:</p> <p>Matthew 22:36-40 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'" This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."</p> <p>Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.</p> <p>Dave Hunt writes:</p> <p>The scriptures and history of any religion are a matter of permanent public record that cannot be disputed, much less reinvented. Both those who attempt to do so (whether with Christianity or Islam) and those who accept and pass on their lies are guilty of the same deceit.</p>

	<p>While [some] terrorists are genuine Muslims who follow Muhammad and the Qur'an, the Crusaders were not biblical Christians. They followed Rome, not Christ and His Word. The popes had their own agenda of world conquest by force. Crusaders waved the Cross but denied Christ by killing His brethren, the Jews, wherever they went. Attempting "in the name of Christ" to retake the "Holy Land" from the atrocity-committing Islamic invaders violated Christ's declaration to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world [or else] would my servants fight" (John 18:36).</p> <p>Yes, Israel was commanded to wipe out the Canaanites, a particular people in a very small part of the world with clearly defined borders—to execute God's judgment upon their unspeakable wickedness and perversion. Israel was not told to "convert" them or anyone else with the sword nor to take over the world by violence—as both the Qur'an and Muhammad (claiming an edict from Allah) declared from the beginning to be Islam's mission. This fundamental teaching of Islam cannot be changed without renouncing Islam. [Hunt, 2007b]</p> <p>The disastrous fact is that the first thing the jihad "martyr" discovers after his suicide is that he is not in heaven but in hell (as his own conscience must have told him) and that instead of being rewarded, he is being punished for the death and destruction caused in this final act of his life. What a tragedy that so many are being deceived in this way. [Hunt, 2006]</p>
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Topic/ Question	Why is there evil in the world? Why doesn't God just wipe out pain and suffering?
Both Positions Share the Same View	<p>Numerous apologists have noted that God does not <i>cause</i> evil to happen; rather, he <i>permits</i> it. It is important to note that consequence is tied to behavior:</p> <p>God may use evil to bring people to Himself. Not only can God use evil in people's lives for their character development, but He also can use it to help them find Him. ...</p> <p>God may use evil to punish wickedness. The Bible is clear that God didn't create evil, but it also seems to indicate that God uses evil events and persons to bring retribution against wickedness. For example, in Jeremiah 25:8-14 the Lord is said to have brought tribes from the north to punish Israel for her wicked idolatry. Babylon did, indeed, "punish" Israel, and God allowed this nation to do so. It's not that He <i>caused</i> evil things to happen to His people, but He can and does <i>allow</i> such things to happen to them. Wickedness does need to be dealt with, and whether sooner or later (or <i>both</i>), one way or another, either in this life or in the next, it will be. [Meister, 2007a]</p> <p>It was this freedom of will that, while a blessed gift from God, nevertheless allowed for evil to arise in the world. ...</p> <p>For people to be morally responsible for an action, they need to be able to choose either to commit the act or not to commit the act. (They need what is</p>

sometimes called “natural freedom of self-determination”—the ability to choose otherwise than they do. This is real “choice.”)

Suppose, for example, I designed and programmed a robot—let’s call him “Bill”—to crush the next person who walked into the robot factory showroom. If Bill crushes the next person who walks in, would he be guilty of murder? Of course not. Why not? Because Bill could not choose to do otherwise—Bill has no free will. It’s the programmer (me) who would be held morally responsible. If the jury traced back the causal series to determine who was guilty of the crime, they would stop at the person who freely caused the evil deed, not the person (or thing) who could not choose otherwise.

If God is the predetermining cause of all events, and people thus are simply acting out His divine program, then God turns out to be the author of evil. The problem here is that there is no qualitative difference between being the author of evil and being evil. [Meister, 2007b]

Most apologists, including Meister, agree that God gave mankind the freedom to choose, that is, freedom to make decisions (good and bad) that affect not only the individual himself, but also others. Without freedom of choice, there is no reciprocal love. God does, however, hold people accountable.

I am appalled by the way people have been treated in life, and I’m sure you are, too. Surely, there must be a God and there must be a judgment. Consequences are tied to behavior. It has been said, “What goes around, comes around.” Indeed, in many instances, people reap the consequences of their evil—perhaps not immediately, but later in life. Barring that, people *will* reap the consequences of their evil (at judgment time), either by being sent to hell for eternity (if unsaved), or by receiving a reduced reward (if saved) in accordance with 1 Corinthians 3:11-15.

Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked.
A man reaps what he sows.

Matthew 22:36-40 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: '**Love your neighbor as yourself.**' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

1 Corinthians 3:11-15 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. **If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.**

Thus, after our salvation status is determined, we will be judged according to the *quality* (1 Corinthians 3:13), *quantity* (Luke 12:48), and *motivation* (1 Corinthians 4:5) of our works [Reagan, 2005]. Judgment will depend on the gifts, resources, health, difficulties, etc. that we have received on Earth, and worked with in our lives. Faith will be rewarded. You may not have led someone to Christ, but you may have been a faithful witness.

It is good to be motivated by rewards, and it appears that these will be everlasting rewards. Everyone will not be “the same” in Heaven.

Another reason why some people are not motivated by rewards is because they have what I would call a Socialist view of Heaven. This is the concept that the rewards will be temporary, and once they are discarded, we’re all just going to be the same, and there will be no distinctions in Heaven for all eternity.

It is certainly correct that there will be no jealousy in Heaven. ... we will all be motivated by perfect love at that point. It will be like one of my children doing something special and becoming very successful in life. I would be exceedingly happy for them, not jealous of them, because I love them.

Likewise, in Heaven, we will love our brothers and sisters, and when we see someone who did devote their life to Christ, we will admire them. We will praise them. We will thank them for their service, and we will love them. We will not be jealous. [Meredith, 2018, p. 5]

Scriptures indicative of rewards for faithful service include the Parable of the Ten Minas (coins) (Luke 19:11-26) and the Parable of the Talents (or bags of gold) (Matthew 25:14-29). “Well done, good and faithful servant.” The rewards involved ruling over a number of cities.

Other Scriptures involving judgment and rewards include:

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we [Christians] must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, **that each one may receive what is due him** for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Romans 14:10-12 "... For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. ... So then, **each of us will give an account** of ourselves to God."

Matthew 5:11-12 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because **great is your reward in heaven**, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Luke 14:12-14 Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be

	<p>blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."</p> <p>We have all seen cases where people seem to escape the consequences of their evil in this life; however, God Almighty holds people to account on judgment day. Scripture (e.g., Luke 10:12-14; Luke 12:47-48; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15) tells us that there are <i>different degrees of punishment</i> for the evil that unrepentant people have done, just as there are different degrees of reward for believers who try to do what is right and make a difference in life. Thus, rather than seeking "revenge" when someone doesn't come to justice in this life, we should turn the problem over to God:</p> <p>Romans 12:19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.</p> <p>Hank Hanegraaff comments on the origin of evil, and on why God permits evil (for the time being):</p> <p>A lot of people think that there are all kinds of answers to that question, but in reality, there are only three basic answers: pantheism, philosophical naturalism, and theism. Here's what I mean. Pantheism denies the existence of good and evil because, in pantheism, God is all, and all is God. Philosophical naturalism (and that's the worldview undergirding evolutionism) supposes that <i>everything</i> is a function of random processes. So, in that worldview, there is no such thing as good and evil. ... Only Christian theism can answer the question [of evil] satisfactorily ... Christian theism acknowledges that God created the <i>potential</i> for evil because God created humans with freedom of choice. We choose to love; we choose to hate; we choose to do good; we choose to do evil; and the record of history demonstrates that what God created as a potential, human beings have actualized. Now, without choice, love would be rendered meaningless. So, if God did not give us the opportunity to sin or to do evil, then there could be no such thing as meaningful love. ... Instead, he grants us the freedom of choice. And without that freedom, we'd be little more than pre-programmed robots. ... and that freedom that God created, will ultimately lead to the best of all possible worlds—a world in which there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain. ... So, only Christian theism gives a satisfactory answer by saying that God creates the <i>potential</i> for evil by giving us freedom of choice. We actualize that evil; and yet God, in His sovereign love, still provides a way for us to be reconciled to Him, and that, in turn, will bring out the best of all possible scenarios, with a new heaven and a new earth, in which we will forever be able to <i>not</i> sin. [Hanegraaff, <i>Bible Answer Man</i>, February 18, 2009]</p>
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<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>Were there false Christs in the years prior to 70 AD?</p> <p>Matthew 24:24 For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect -- if that were possible.</p>
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	<p>Who are “the elect” mentioned in Matthew 24, Mark 11, and a few other places in the New Testament? The angels are seen to be “gathering” the elect from the ends of the earth.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Matthew 24:30-31 "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.</p>
<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>Historical evidence suggests that there were a few false <i>prophets</i> in the years between Christ and 70 AD; however, there were no false <i>Christs</i>, i.e., people who claimed to be the Messiah during that time [LaHaye & Ice, 2003; Ice, 2012b]. The first person who claimed to be Christ was Jesus Himself [Ice, 2021a]. The second person was Simon bar Kochba, in 132 AD, which led to the revolt that was crushed violently by Roman Emperor Hadrian in 135 AD. This refutes preterism’s claim of fulfillment in 70 AD. By 132 AD, over half a million Jews returned to Jerusalem and they even built a makeshift temple [Ice, 2021f]. Hadrian leveled the entire city, and spread salt over it so that nothing could grow there. They even spread human refuse and animal dung on the Temple Mount.</p> <p>The signs of the end of the current age, and the start of the Messianic age, will include the rise of false Christs and the initiation of both local wars and world wars.</p> <p>Matthew 24:30-31 tells of Christ’s Second Coming or Glorious Appearing, that is, His physical return to earth, when all the nations of the earth will see Him. (This is to be contrasted with the Rapture, which occurs at least seven years earlier.) The “elect” are the saved Jewish brethren from all over the world who are being gathered prior to the start of the Millennial Kingdom, although a case could be made for not just the saved Jewish people, but for all who become Christians during the Tribulation [MacArthur, 2006]. This is the final regathering of Israel spoken of in Isaiah 43:5-7, Jeremiah 23:3-4,7-8, and Amos 9:14-15 [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. The emphasis is on permanency and the rebuilding of the land. They will not be uprooted again; but, this occurs only after a time of tribulation (see Amos 9:8-15). Furthermore, note Mark 13:27, which suggests that regathered Israel will include not only the earthly dwellers in their natural bodies, but also the resurrected Jews in their perfected bodies:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Mark 13:27 And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.</p> <p>Abraham was promised the land, yet he never actually possessed it (Genesis 12:7; 13:14-17); therefore, it seems to be a future fulfillment after Abraham’s resurrection.</p>

	<p>The term “elect” refers to “Israel”, the “Church”, or both. The context determines which [Ice, 2016]. The terms “elect”, “saints”, or “chosen” ones are used throughout the Bible to refer to saved individuals—Old Testament (e.g., Deuteronomy 7:7 and Isaiah 65:22) or New Testament; however, the terms “Church”, “Bride”, and “in Christ” refer to New Testament believers (i.e., Christians) only. Once the Church is removed from the earth at the time of the Rapture, the elect are people on the earth who become Christians, post-Rapture.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>There is some evidence (e.g., the writings of Josephus) to suggest that there were both false prophets and false Christs after Christ’s resurrection [Sproul, 1998]. Names of some false Christs include Theudas, Judas of Galilee, Simon (of Acts 8:9-11), and Simon Magus [DeMar, 1997].</p> <p>The gathering of the elect from the four corners of the world refers to the early Christians that were scattered all over the earth preaching the gospel, and it’s a statement indicating that people from all over the world will be saved. Also, wherever the saved go throughout the world, they will be part of the “rapture” at Christ’s Second Coming because the rapture and resurrection take place <i>simultaneously</i>. There are not going to be multiple resurrections.</p>

Topic/ Question	<p>In Matthew 25, the Parable of the Ten Virgins is about 5 foolish virgins and 5 wise virgins—the latter of which had enough oil for their lamps, and were admitted into the Kingdom of God. What does this parable mean?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Matthew 25:1-13 "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' "'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. "Later the others also came. 'Lord, Lord,' they said, 'open the door for us!' "But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I don't know you.' "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.</p>
Dispensationalist Position	<p>The Parable of the 10 Virgins is one of the more difficult parables in the Bible. The theme of the parable seems to be <i>preparedness</i> for the return of Jesus Christ. Does it refer to the Rapture, the Marriage of the Lamb, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, or some other event? It best fits the period of time well</p>

after the Rapture and just before the Second Coming. The last part of Chapter 24 deals with the Tribulation and the return of Christ. Chapter 25 opens with the Parable of the 10 Virgins, but is prefixed with the words, “At that time”.

J. Dwight Pentecost writes:

In Revelation 19:7-16 the wedding supper follows the wedding itself. Luke 12:35-36 seems to suggest that while the marriage is in heaven the marriage feast is on earth. This parable then would describe the coming of the Bridegroom and the bride to the earth for the marriage feast to which the five wise virgins will be admitted and the foolish excluded. [Pentecost, 1958, p. 283]

Arnold Fruchtenbaum writes that the 10 virgins in this parable are not part of the Church because this event does not take place prior to the Rapture; however, the 5 wise virgins are saved. They become saved during the Tribulation. He explains:

When the *bridegroom*, the Messiah, returns to earth with His Bride—the Church—for the marriage feast, the *virgins* will be responsible for both watching for His return, and being ready to light the lamps upon His return. The five *virgins* who were wise will be the ones who are believers; hence, they will be both ready and watching. They are the ones who have the *oil*, a common symbol of the Holy Spirit. Only the wise ones enter the marriage feast, the common symbol for the Messianic Kingdom. Because the Messiah is pictured as already with His Bride, the Church which had been raptured, these who have the *oil* are people who became believers during the Tribulation. They are saved and invited to the wedding feast as guests. The five foolish virgins will be the unbelievers and, therefore, will be neither ready nor watching. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 645]

Some prophecy teachers (e.g., [Missler, 2011; Miller, 2020; Tsarfati, 2020a]) have a different perspective on the Parable of the 10 Virgins. They agree that 5 of the 10 virgins were foolish and unprepared, but they believe that the application is to the Rapture rather than the Second Coming. In particular, the 5 foolish virgins missed the opportunity to accompany the bride to the wedding *ceremony*, not the marriage *supper*. Since the Rapture is an *imminent* event, the emphasis is on *being prepared* to be part of the Rapture. That said, the argument from Fruchtenbaum is stronger. Secondly, because the book of Matthew is specifically directed to a Jewish audience, it makes more sense to rule out the Rapture here (as that applies only to the Church).

The chapter division between Matthew 24 and Matthew 25 was put in there in the 16th or 17th century. Matthew 25 follows directly from Matthew 24. Matthew 24 deals with Israel, not the Church. It deals with the “gospel of the kingdom”, and recall from Matthew 10:5-7 that Jesus told the disciples to preach the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, and they were specifically told not to go to the Gentiles at that time. Matthew 24:20 tells readers to pray that their flight from the Antichrist, after he sets up the Abomination of Desolation in the

	<p>rebuilt Temple, would <i>not</i> be on a Sabbath. Recall that the Sabbath is specific to Jews, but not to the Church.</p> <p>Here are some additional comments worth noting from Andy Woods [Woods & McGowan, 2019a]. The virgins are <i>bridesmaids</i> according to some translations (e.g., New Living Translation). Recall that the Church is called the Bride of Christ (Revelation 19:7; 21:9). The Church did not suddenly change from being the bride to being bridesmaids. The bridesmaids are going to the wedding banquet, and the banquet takes place on earth; however, the Church (“Bride”) meets Christ in the air, at the time of the Rapture—in other words, well before the wedding banquet. Furthermore, Matthew 24-25 deals with the inter-advent period between the first advent of Christ and the second advent (Second Coming); and that includes the Tribulation. (The Church is a subset of the inter-advent period—from Acts 2 (Day of Pentecost, post-crucifixion) to the Rapture. The Old Testament prophets did not envision a Church age. See John 13-17 for Christ’s comments in the gospels about the Church age.)</p>
Preterist Position	The foolish virgins weren’t believers. They weren’t prepared to meet God. Hence, Christ is saying, “I don’t know you.” There does not appear to be an eschatological slant to the parable.

Topic/ Question	<p>What is the significance of Jesus cursing the fig tree (because it wasn’t bearing fruit), and then stating that when we see the blossoming of the “fig tree” that would mean that His coming is near?</p> <p>Matthew 24:32-34 "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.</p> <p>Luke 21:28-32 When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." He told them this parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. "Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.</p>
Dispensationalist Position	<p>The fig tree represents the nation of Israel (e.g., Luke 13:6-7; Hosea 9:10; Jeremiah 24:1-8). (The olive tree represents spiritual Israel.) At the time of Christ’s first coming, He was rejected by Israel; but this will not be the case at His Second Coming. Most dispensationalists believe that the fig tree parable refers to the re-establishment of the nation of Israel, in its own land, in 1948.</p> <p>Let’s examine the analogy. With fig trees, the small buds (fruit) come first and then the leaves [Zuck, 1991; MacArthur, 2018]. In March, in Israel, fig trees</p>

produce buds, followed by green leaves in April. Having seen leaves on the tree, Jesus noted that there was no fruit. For the most part, Israel was spiritually barren, and was about to reject their Messiah. Jesus cursed the fig tree, and it died quickly. That was His only “destructive” miracle. Note also that Rachel, Jacob’s [Israel’s] beloved wife was barren initially; but later bore fruit. Might this be a picture of Israel? Note also that Jacob worked for 7 extra years in order to be united with Rachel as his bride. Might this be a picture of the 7-year Tribulation?

The fig tree passage in Luke includes an extra phrase: “and all the trees”. This suggests the creation of many Gentile nations during the end times.

Trees are symbolic of nations, kingdoms and empires in several places in the Bible (Daniel 4:10-27; Ezekiel 17:22-24,31:1-18; and Judges 9:1-21). ...

Before the 20th century (1900), there were 44 countries that had achieved statehood. The 20th century (1900-2000) saw 147 new sovereign states added, with many splitting off from the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Portugal and the Soviet Union. The first half of the 20th century (1900-1950) saw 38 new states created while the second half (1950-2000) experienced an unprecedented addition of 109 new, sovereign states. Only 5 nations have been recognized as sovereign states in the 21st century (2000 to date). ...

Only independent, sovereign states can become members of the United Nations. There are currently 193 member states in the UN, with the last member, South Sudan, joining on July 14, 2011. [Hile, 2023, pp. 28-29]

Some authors are not convinced that the sign of the budding of a fig tree is symbolic of Israel (e.g., [Walvoord & Dyer, 2013]. Arnold Fruchtenbaum notes that the usual scriptural symbol for Israel is a *vine* rather than a fig tree. The blossoming fig tree is just an indication that Christ’s return is near, much like the blossoming of a fig tree suggests that summer is near. That said, Fruchtenbaum links the fig tree with the generation that will see the clear sign that Christ’s return is very near—namely the Abomination of Desolation (Matthew 24:15-16). It is this very sign that will allow the Jews to count down the 1,260 days (Daniel 12:1-13; Revelation 12:3-6) until Christ’s return.

Luke 21:31 says, “Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God [the Millennium] is near.” What generation “will certainly not pass away” until all these things happen? It is the generation that sees the events unfold, rather than the generation leading up to 70 AD. Some prophecy experts claim that it is not the generation that saw Israel return to the Land in 1948, but rather, the generation that sees the Tribulation and the Abomination of Desolation [Fruchtenbaum, 2004; MacArthur, 2018]. It is interesting to note that, “Every Old Testament prophet, except Jonah, speaks of a permanent return to the land of Israel by the Jews.” [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007, pp. 136-137]

Matthew 12 describes the rejection of Jesus Christ by the Jews, even after He performed miracles that testified that He was the promised Messiah. Not only did they reject Christ as Messiah, but later they condemned Him to death. In what may be the greatest irony of history, they claimed that Jesus was able to perform demon exorcism because He was demon-possessed.

When demons speak they use the vocal chords of the person under their control. However, in the case of the [blind and mute man who was demon-possessed (Matthew 12:22)], Jewish exorcism was to no avail, for communication with that kind of a demon was impossible. But Jewish theology taught that the Messiah, when He came, would even be able to cast out that kind of demon. The Jewish observation that dumb demons were different was validated by Jesus in Mark 9:17-29 (particularly vv. 17, 25, 29).

... However, the people were not willing to come to a decision by themselves, but were looking to their religious leaders, the Pharisees, to reach a verdict for them. ... But if they were to conclude that He was not the Messiah, the Pharisees would also have to explain how Jesus was able to perform His many miracles, especially the miracles that were supposed to be unique to the Messiah only.

Then, in [Matthew 12] verses 30-37, He pronounced a judgment on the Jewish generation of that day. That generation had committed the unpardonable sin: the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. ... The *content* of the unpardonable sin was the national rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus while He was physically present on the grounds that He was demon possessed. This sin was unpardonable, and judgment was set. The judgment came in the year A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and the worldwide dispersion of the Jewish people. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 295-296]

In fact, Christ wept over Jerusalem in His final days because the Jews had rejected Him as Messiah, and He saw the future destruction of Jerusalem, the Temple, and many lives and souls:

Matthew 23:35-39 And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah [i.e., from the beginning to the end of the Jewish/Old Testament Scriptures], whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. **For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'**"

Luke 19:41-44 As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace -- but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against

you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, **because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you.**"

In Matthew 12:38-40, Jesus told the Jews who saw, but rejected, his miracles, that he would only give them the sign of the prophet Jonah—a sign of resurrection:

Matthew 12:38-40 Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you." He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

For that generation there would be no sign but one: the sign of Jonah, which is the sign of resurrection. It is a sign that would come for Israel on three occasions: *first*, at the resurrection of Lazarus; *second*, at Jesus' own resurrection; and *third*, at the resurrection of the Two Witnesses in the Tribulation. The first two were rejected. The third will be accepted, for the resurrection of the Two Witnesses will lead to the salvation of the Jews of Jerusalem. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 297]

Jesus provided another fig tree parable, indicating that Israel had not paid attention to his 3 years' of ministry, but it would have one more year to repent; otherwise, judgment would come upon them:

Luke 13:6-9 Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?' "'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.'"

Leviticus 26 indicates that the Jews would be scattered throughout the world because of their disobedience. In particular, verse 40 speaks of a time in the future when the Israelites would confess their iniquity (sin), and the iniquity of their fathers. The Hebrew word used for iniquity is in the singular. Fruchtenbaum states that that specific sin is the rejection of the Messiah, and that needs to be confessed, before Christ returns. Also, the Jews must *want* Him to come back.

Dispensationalism strongly believes that the Messiah's death was inevitable, for it was absolutely necessary for the atonement. *Yeshua* would have died even if Israel had accepted Him. The nation would have proclaimed *Yeshua* as their king, which would have been viewed by Rome as a rebellion against Caesar. *Yeshua* would then have been arrested, tried, and crucified for treason against Rome, as was the case anyway. Three days later, following

His resurrection, He would have dispensed with Rome and set up the messianic kingdom. His death would have occurred regardless of what Israel did.

However, it was already known, on the basis of Old Testament prophecy, that Israel would reject His messiahship. [Fruchtenbaum, 2011, p.265]

Matthew 23 is the chapter before the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24. It sets the timeframe for “this generation”—namely, it is the generation that says, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”—which did not happen in 70 AD. However, in 70 AD, the temple was left desolate:

Matthew 23:38-39 Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again **until** you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'

Luke 13:35 "Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again **until** you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'

Hosea 5:15 Then I [Christ] **will go back to my place** [Heaven] **until they** [Israel] **admit their guilt**. And they will seek my face; in their misery they will earnestly seek me."

Zechariah 12:10 "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.

Luke 21:24 "... Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles **until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled**."

Although the final fulfillment of Luke 21:24 is in the future, Jerusalem was definitely trampled on by the Gentiles in the period 66-70 AD, and ever since the time of King Nebuchadnezzar. The Jews had the opportunity to heed Jesus' warnings to flee from Jerusalem, and to save their lives. Unfortunately, many did not heed His advice; consequently, 1.1 million Jews were killed, over 100,000 were sent into slavery, and the city and the Temple were destroyed. Note that Israel was not “rescued” after 70 AD. In particular, Zechariah 12 could not have been fulfilled in 70 AD since Jerusalem was left defeated rather than victorious.

We conclude that the prophecies in Revelation were *not* fulfilled in the first century. Take note of the phrase, “until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled”. The word *until* implies that: (a) Gentile rule was taking place over Jerusalem at the time, and (b) Gentile rule over Jerusalem will end at some point (not just temporarily, but permanently) [Fruchtenbaum, 2019]. The world's last Gentile ruler will be Antichrist. Following that, the King of Kings, Jesus Christ, will return and inaugurate a kingdom that will never end, as per Isaiah 9:6-7.

	<p>After Jerusalem was destroyed, there were no more prophecies that had to be fulfilled before the Rapture [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]; and therefore, the Rapture is imminent.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>The fig tree that Christ cursed in Matthew 21:19, and which quickly withered, is <i>not</i> a sign of the restoration of Israel. Christ used the fig tree and the other trees as an analogy to talk about the nations in the last day. It was not the time for figs. He was using the analogy as a way of explaining that judgment is coming to those who have an “appearance” of fruit, but are otherwise empty in terms of their faith [Hanegraaff, <i>Bible Answer Man</i>, January 15, 2015].</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Matthew 23:38-39 Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">These were Jesus' parting words as He left the temple ... When Jesus left the temple for the last time, He was leaving it empty and desolate, just as when the shekinah glory departed from the temple in Ezekiel 8-11. ... What was spiritually true in A.D. 30 became visibly true in A.D. 70: The temple and the city were made desolate. Jesus told His disciples that all these things would come upon “this generation.” [DeMar, 1997, p. 119]</p>

Topic/ Question	<p>What is the significance of the passage in Luke 21 that speaks of men's hearts failing them for fear in the days before Christ's return?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Luke 21:25-28 "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."</p> <p>Has this prophecy been fulfilled? Also, what is meant by “your redemption is drawing near”?</p>
Dispensationalist Position	<p>In general terms, the Scripture above speaks of a time when persecution will be great, and the Second Coming of Christ is very close.</p> <p>Note that there will be signs in the sky, suggesting that this is more than just a metaphor.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Here is another powerful reason to reject the preterist interpretation of the Olivet Discourse: No great cosmic signs like this ever occurred in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. [MacArthur, 2003b, p. 110]</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The oldest extra-biblical Christian document known to exist is <i>The Didache</i>, which is a simple distillation of Bible doctrine from the early church. Most</p>

	<p>scholars believe it was written near the close of the first century, most likely after A.D. 80. It was certainly used and cited in the early centuries by many church fathers (as well as by the historian Eusebius). So its early existence is well documented. The full text of <i>The Didache</i> was rediscovered little more than a hundred years ago, in a codex found in Constantinople in 1873. This document proves that those who actually lived through the events of A.D. 70 regarded Matthew 24:29-31—and the entire Olivet Discourse—as yet-unfulfilled prophecy. [MacArthur, 2003b, p. 112]</p> <p>For the first time in history, modern man is able to destroy the entire human race. For example, suitcase-sized nuclear bombs in the hands of terrorists can destroy a city. Surely, we need Christ to return to save and judge mankind—both of which He will surely do, as indicated by Scripture.</p> <p>As Christians, we should be going about doing the Master’s business, while looking for the return of Jesus Christ.</p> <p>As for preterists’ claims:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">If Christ had returned in A.D. 70, then why didn’t the nations see the sea and the waves in physical upheaval? And, why didn’t the whole world see Him coming in His messianic power and glory? How was Christ’s great glory manifested if He simply returned to earth <i>spiritually</i> as some preterists say? What’s more, in Luke 21:35, Jesus makes it clear He is speaking about a terrible <i>global</i> tribulation that is going to take place: He says it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of the earth.”</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">In Luke 21:28, Jesus said, “When these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption <i>is</i> drawing near” (verse 28). What redemption took place in A.D. 70? Can anyone honestly say this really happened in the sense of people <i>truly</i> experiencing redemption, as preterists argue? [Couch, 2003, p. 287]</p>
Preterist Position	<p>There have always been difficult times when “men’s hearts [were] failing them for fear” (e.g., 70 AD, wars, the Holocaust, and even the persecuted church); however, shortly before Christ returns, there will be especially difficult times. As Christians, we should be prepared for such times of persecution, to strengthen and evangelize people, with the hope of winning as many souls to Christ as possible. It is wrong to assume that we will be taken to Heaven before such times occur.</p>

Topic/ Question	<p>How does our understanding of earthquakes, famines, plagues, etc., tie into Revelation? Is it true that these events are occurring with increasing frequency in the world today, and therefore, these are signs of Christ’s soon appearing?</p> <p>Are the earthquakes mentioned in Revelation symbolic, or literal?</p>
Dispensationalist Position	<p>In recent decades, the number of earthquakes seems to be increasing, and seismology seems to confirm this. Little tremors may have gone unnoticed many years ago, but major tremors would not.</p>

	<p>There are many plagues and famines throughout the world, and probably many more to come, given the rapidly increasing population throughout the world.</p> <p>The earthquakes mentioned are literal earthquakes because specific numbers are given about the number of people killed in some of the earthquakes. For example, Revelation 11 says that 7,000 people were killed in one specific earthquake, and that one-tenth of the city fell.</p> <p>Furthermore, historians like Josephus (writing about events circa 70 AD) did not write about earthquakes such as those described in Revelation—probably because they didn’t occur. Earthquakes occurred in Jerusalem or at the Temple in: 30 AD (at Christ’s death), 33 AD, and 48 AD. There were no earthquakes to report in 70 AD.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>There have always been earthquakes, famines, plagues, etc. In the last century, for example, there hasn’t been a year when a war of some sort <i>wasn’t</i> going on, somewhere in the world. Similarly, weather patterns have been changing. The dispensationalists’ argument about the increasing frequency of earthquakes is not really an issue. Keep in mind that during the plague years in Europe, hundreds of years ago, people may have thought the same thing, that is, that the world was coming to an end. Probably every generation has thought that theirs was the last generation!</p> <p>It is not clear whether the earthquakes are literal or symbolic, but as all these signs continue, we’ll certainly see who is for Christ, and who is not.</p> <p>How about persecution? The church has always been persecuted in some parts of the world since the days of Christ. North Americans have been fortunate in not having been persecuted, but in many nations of the world, persecution of Christians is occurring. Christ warned that persecution would increase before His return.</p>

Topic/ Question	<p>An <i>equidistant letter sequence</i> (ELS) is an embedding of a text message (sequence of letters) into the body of a larger text, where the letters in the sequence appear every k letters in the body of the text (i.e., the Bible), where k is a positive or negative integer (other than 0 or 1). (See [Witztum, 1994] for the original, scientific paper.) In other words, for some sets of Bible verses in the original Hebrew, every k-th letter in the body of that text spells out some word, name, or phrase. For example, consider the ELS “<i>Read the code</i>” that is found embedded in the following quotation at skip sequence $k=4$: “[Dr. Eliyahu] <u>R</u>ips <u>e</u>xplained that each <u>c</u>ode is a <u>c</u>ase of adding <u>e</u>very fourth [or twelfth or fiftieth] letter to form a word.” [Missler, 2005; quoting Michael Drosdin]</p>
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	<p>Some people call ELSs “hidden Bible codes” that give evidence of supernatural authorship, especially non-trivial ELSs. Other people think that the appearance of these “codes” is coincidental and can be found in any large body of text; therefore, we should just ignore them.</p> <p>Are the “Bible Codes” for real? Why are they of prophetic interest?</p>
<p>Both Positions (various opinions)</p>	<p>The significance of equidistant letter sequences in Scripture is controversial. There seems to be some evidence that numerous ELSs are not random occurrences in the Bible. If this is the case, and assuming the ELSs were not placed in the text after the fact, then one may argue that the Bible has God’s “fingerprints” or “signature” all over it [Jeffrey, 1996]. This would provide additional evidence for the supernatural authorship of the Bible.</p> <p>Although it is true that many ELSs are found embedded by chance in any large body of text such as a book, magazine, or newspaper, there are many non-trivial ELSs in the Bible, and—this is the important part—they seem to be <i>clustered</i> in both proximity and correlated meaning. So, even if the words that are embedded in the text are accounted for by random chance, the fact that they are clustered together semantically in strategic portions of the text is surely not a coincidence [Missler, 1999; Missler, 2005].</p> <p>For examples of some ELSs clustered in Scripture, and why this has prophetic interest, consider Isaiah 53:1-12 <i>written around 700 BC</i>. Intersecting or embedded in this passage, in Hebrew, for various values of <i>k</i>, are at least 27 phrases including the following [Missler, 2005]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yeshua is my name • Messiah • Caiaphas • Let Him be crucified • From the Atonement Lamb • Disciples mourn <p>Also, embedded in these same 12 verses are the names of 40 people who were believers and accompanied Christ (e.g., disciples, those at the foot of the cross) including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The disciples Peter, Matthew, John, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Simon, Thaddaeus, Matthias, Salome, Joseph <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Note, however, the <i>absence</i> of the only other disciple of Jesus: Judas (who betrayed Jesus). • James (two occurrences; there was a third—the brother of Jesus—but he didn’t become a believer until later on) • Mary (three occurrences; there were three Marys)

In the creation account in Genesis 2, there are 27 names of trees encoded at various skip sequences in that text [Missler, 2005].

It is only in the last few decades because of computers that we have reached the stage where we can efficiently search large quantities of text for ELSs. (This is too tedious to do by hand.) Although we cannot dogmatically assert it, might the advent of computers be a fulfillment of Daniel 12:4?

Daniel 12:4 But you, Daniel, close up and **seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end.** Many will go here and there to increase knowledge."

Deuteronomy 29:29 The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.

Author authors argue that Equidistant Letter Sequences are a form of “magic apologetics”, and should be avoided [e.g., Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, 2000+]. There is sufficient information in the surface Scripture without having to go “deeper” into the text. Some people think that many of the “hidden codes” are there purely by chance, and therefore you shouldn’t waste your time. Nevertheless, some of the mathematical patterns are interesting.

I believe that the Bible, in its original autographs, constitutes an underlying mathematical masterpiece that greatly exceeds the complexity of DNA.

Topic/ Question	Aside from the issue of equidistant letter sequences (above), are there any messages in the plain, surface text that hide a deeper meaning, and which might be suggestive of supernatural authorship? Are there any mathematical structures or numerical patterns in the Bible that might be suggestive of divine authorship? What is <i>gematria</i> ? Is it worth studying?														
Dispensationalist Position	<p>The Bible appears to be a distributed message system, with embedded redundancy to prevent “hostile jamming”—in the words of Chuck Missler. There also appear to be some very cleverly designed passages whose surface reading hides a deeper meaning. Examples are found in [Missler, 1999; Missler, 2005]—one of which is the genealogy in Genesis 4-5, namely the ancestral line between Adam and Noah, which is also repeated in 1 Chronicles 1:1-4 and Luke 3:36-38 due to its importance:</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: center;">Name</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Meaning of Name</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Adam</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Man (is)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Seth</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Appointed</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Enosh</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Mortal</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Kenan</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Sorrow; (but)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Mahalalel</td> <td style="text-align: center;">The Blessed God</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Jared</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Shall come down</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Name	Meaning of Name	Adam	Man (is)	Seth	Appointed	Enosh	Mortal	Kenan	Sorrow; (but)	Mahalalel	The Blessed God	Jared	Shall come down
Name	Meaning of Name														
Adam	Man (is)														
Seth	Appointed														
Enosh	Mortal														
Kenan	Sorrow; (but)														
Mahalalel	The Blessed God														
Jared	Shall come down														

Enoch	Teaching
Methuselah	(that) His death shall bring
Lamech	(the) Despairing
Noah	Comfort, Rest

Note that the right hand column can be read as a sentence, describing the gospel message of Jesus Christ. Thus, the message of the gospel goes back to Adam. (Note that some Bible dictionaries have alternate meanings for some of these names.) For those who think that the ancestral line skips generations, note that Jude verse 14 confirms that Enoch was the “seventh from Adam”.

As another example, Bill Salus reports a literal interpretation of the names of the twelve tribes listed in Revelation 7:5-8 [Salus, 2008]. The ordering in Revelation is unusual because the names of the leaders of the twelve tribes are not listed in order of their birth. Perhaps God did this to encode a message, conjectures Salus. The ordering of the tribes in Revelation is: Judah, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin.

The tribe of Judah is listed first in Revelation 7:5, however, in birth order, Judah was the fourth son. Similarly, the Bible lists the other tribes out of order in Revelation 7:5-8. An astute student of the Word watches for these abnormalities within the scriptures and, as such, is always encouraged to dig deeper in order to discover what the Holy Spirit intends for him or her to understand relative to the text.

THE MEANINGS OF THE NAMES:

Judah (Praise God), *Reuben* (behold a son), *Gad* (good fortune), *Asher* (happiness), *Naphtali* (my wrestling), *Manasseh* (God has caused me to forget), *Simeon* (hearing), *Levi* (joining or adhesion), *Issachar* (God hath given me my hire, or man for hire), *Zebulun* (elevated or elevated dwelling), *Joseph* (adding or increaser), *Benjamin* (son of the right hand).

THE MESSAGE OF THE NAMES:

Praise God! Behold! a son of good fortune and happiness. My wrestling God has caused me to forget. Hearing of our joining, God hath given me my hire and elevated dwelling increased by the son of the right hand. [Salus, 2008, pp. 76-77]

In terms of numerical patterns, this is a sensitive and debatable area; but it is interesting, and may bear more fruit with research in years to come. Although I won’t say too much about the numerical patterns in Scripture, or the significance of any mathematical structure, it is important to note that God is a God of order and perfection. Jesus Christ said that His words (the Bible) will never pass away (Matthew 24:35). The fact that He said that not one “jot or tittle” will *ever* disappear from the Word of God suggests that it is perfectly written in its original form. Given that God designed DNA, which itself is a digital code, it would not surprise me to see that the Bible—in its original

autographs—is a highly complex and wonderful mathematical document. We may not see and understand many of the divine patterns until we reach eternity. Then, I think we’ll be absolutely amazed at the work of our Creator.

Also, it is important to note that there are so many important messages in the surface text (without ever needing to turn to mathematics), that there is no reason for most people to go beyond the plain reading of Scripture.

Unlike English, the Hebrew and Greek alphabets attach numbers to each of the letters. For example, the Hebrew alphabet has 22 letters, and the number attached to each letter, in order, is: 1, 2, ..., 9, 10, 20, ..., 90, 100, 200, 300, and 400. For example, the letter *aleph* has value 1, *bet* has value 2, ..., and *taw* has value 400. Furthermore, five of the intermediate letters have dual values (i.e., *kaph* can be 20 or 500, *mem* can be 40 or 600, *nun* can be 50 or 700, *pe* can be 80 or 800, and *tsadik* can be 90 or 900)—see Wikipedia. A person can sum the values of the letters in a word, phrase, sentence, etc., and come up with a number that is associated with the word(s). This field of study is called *gematria*.

“Numbers in the bible have a definite meaning” [De Haan, 1946, p. 173]:

- 1 is the number of sovereignty and represents unity (e.g., the Godhead)
- 2 is the number of division and trouble
- 3 is the number of divine completeness
- 4 is the number of the earth
- 5 is the number of grace
- 6 is the number of man, created on the 6th day
- 7 is the number of divine perfection
- 8 is the number of new beginnings
- 9 is the number of judgment
- 10 is the number of testimony
- 11 is the number of apostasy
- 12 is the number of the nation of Israel, and may refer to a form of administrative completeness as well (e.g., tribes of Israel; disciples; spies staking out Canaan; gates, foundations, and scale of measure in the New Jerusalem)
- 13 is the number of rebellion

Let’s take a look at a few other numbers from Scripture that have numerical significance. These examples are taken from [Harrison, 1994]:

- “7” appears frequently in the Bible. It speaks of completeness or perfection:
 - 7 days of creation

- Jacob worked 7 years for his wives
- 7th day is the Sabbath day
- 7th year is a Sabbath year
- 7 Biblical feast days or holy-days
- 7 times around the walls of Jericho
- 7-year Tribulation
- 7 seals, 7 trumpets, and 7 bowls—judgments in Revelation
- 7 churches, 7 spirits, 7 candlesticks, 7 stars, 7 lamps, 7 horns, 7 angels, 7 thunders, 7 heads, 7 crowns, 7 plagues, 7 mountains, and 7 kings—all in the book of Revelation

- “70” is another number that comes up often in the Bible:

- 70 original nations (Genesis 10)
- 70 Hebrews moved to Egypt (Exodus 1:5)
- 70 years of servitude, desolation, and exile in Babylon (Jeremiah 25:11-12; Daniel 9:2)
- 70 weeks of years (Daniel 9:24-27)

- 153 is the number of fish caught by the disciples, when they met the resurrected Christ at the Sea of Galilee. The fishermen had caught nothing all night, but when Christ instructed them to cast their nets on the opposite side of the boat, they caught 153 fish. Is this number significant? If not, why did the Holy Spirit mention it?

Harrison remarks that the integer 153 has interesting numerical properties:

- It is equal to the sum of the cubes of its digits: $C(153) = 1^3 + 5^3 + 3^3 = 1 + 125 + 27 = 153$.
- 153 is the sum of these five factorial numbers: $1! + 2! + 3! + 4! + 5!$
- 153 is the sum of the first 17 positive integers, that is, it is what mathematicians call a “triangle number” or “triangular number”: $T(17) = 1 + 2 + \dots + 17 = 153$.

- The 17th day of the Jewish month Nisan is the anniversary date of these major “resurrection” or “firstfruits” events in history. It is the day that: (a) Noah’s Ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat, (b) the Israelites passed through the Red Sea on dry land during the Exodus from Egypt, (c) the Israelites ate the firstfruits upon entering the Promised Land, and (d) Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

Some people conjecture that the number of fish represents the number of nations that will exist at the time of Christ’s return—especially since Christ told the disciples, at the start of His ministry, that they

should leave their occupation (fishing) and follow Him to become His disciples (i.e., to learn and spread His teachings) and therefore become “fishers of men” (Matthew 4:18-22 and Mark 1:16-20).

Matthew 4:18-22 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

- The name “Jesus” in the Greek has the sum of its letters as the numeric value 888.
- The word “antichrist” in the Greek has the numeric value 666. Recall that “6” is “man’s number”.
- 666 is also a triangular number: $T(36) = 1 + 2 + \dots + 36 = 666$. Darrell Johnson states that, in the ancient world, triangular numbers held great significance: “[S]ix is one less than seven, and seven is the number of completeness. Six is one less than complete ... Why then three sixes, 666? Because three is also the number of completeness. Three sixes imply that the beast is *completely incomplete*. ... Always falling short of the glory of God. The purpose of the number is not to identify the beast but to ‘characterize’ the beast.” [Johnson, 2004, pp. 248-250].

Other numbers that frequently appear in Scripture include (but are not limited to) 50 (e.g., Jubilee years), 120, 1000, 1260, 2300, and 2520.

The ages of death of the patriarchs in the family line: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph are as follows [Byl, 2016]:

- Abraham = 175 = 7×5^2
- Isaac = 180 = 5×6^2
- Jacob = 147 = 3×7^2
- Joseph = 110 = $1 \times (5^2 + 6^2 + 7^2)$

Certain numbers frequently come up in Scripture, and they seem to tie into prophecy, and are at least worthy of serious reflection [Van Vliet, 2023]. For example, the Messiah 2030 project provides some insight into numerical patterns in Scripture [Messiah2030, 2023]:

- The notion of 6 days paralleling 6,000 years has some support from 2 Peter 3:8 and Hosea 6:1-2:

2 Peter 3:8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: **With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.**

Hosea 6:1-2 "Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. **After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence.**

- It has been about “2 days” or 2,000 years since Christ’s earthly ministry. It has been about “6 days” or 6,000 years since Adam. Might Christ be returning at the end of the “6th day”? The “7th day” would represent the Millennium—another period of 1,000 years.
- The Dead Sea Scroll calendar, sometimes called the Essene calendar or the Zadok calendar, is interesting. The Essenes claim that this is the original calendar that was used by the priests and prophets in ancient Israel. All temple sacrifices and holy days were to be observed using this calendar. It is different than the Pharisee calendar (circa 200 BC), which is what the modern-day Jewish calendar is based on [Johnson, 2020a].
- The School of the Prophets in Qumran, before the time of Christ, stated that there would be 4 *ages*, as follows [Johnson, 2020a]:
 - 2,000 years for the Age of Creation (or Age of Chaos)
 - Adam to Abraham
 - 2,000 years for the Age of Torah
 - Abraham to Jesus
 - 2,000 years for the Age of Grace
 - Jesus to the Second Coming
 - 1,000 years for the Age of the Kingdom
 - Jesus’ Millennial Kingdom on Earth

Furthermore, in each age, there is a new covenant.

- The Dead Sea Scrolls state that there are 14 *Onahs*, that is, 14 periods of 500 years each in human history—and therefore, 7,000 years in all [Johnson, 2020a; Johnson, 2021b]:
 - Onahs 1-4 = the Age of Creation
 - Onahs 5-8 = the Age of Torah
 - Onahs 9-12 = the Age of Grace
 - Onahs 13-14 = the Age of the Kingdom

Equivalently, there are 140 *Jubilees* of 50 years each—120 of which occur before the Millennium. There are 10 Jubilee periods in each Onah.

There are 7 *Shemittahs*, that is, 7 periods of 7 years each within a Jubilee, followed by the “Jubilee year” (the 50th year) by itself. We are currently in the 119th Jubilee of 50 years, with Nisan 1 in March 2024 marking the start of a Jubilee year (the 50th year) in the second last Jubilee cycle of this Age and Onah. Then, starting on Nisan 1 in March 2025, we will enter the 120th Jubilee cycle—the last 50-year Jubilee period in the Age of Grace.

The last Jubilee of the Age of Torah started in 25 AD, and the Age of Torah ended in 75 AD. Note that during that Jubilee, several major events occurred, and note that it was front-loaded. We estimate that Christ’s ministry began in 29 AD, His crucifixion occurred in 32 AD, and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (and the beginning of the church) was in 32 AD. Towards the end of the Age of Torah, that is, in 70 AD, Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed.

Dead Sea Scroll 11Q13 (or 11QMelchizedek) states that the fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1 (the Messiah) would occur “in the first week of the jubilee that occurs after the ninth Jubilee” [Johnson, 2021a, p. 227]. In other words, it would take place in the first “week” (first Shemittah or seven years) *after* the ninth Jubilee (of the Age of Torah, which would be during the eighth Onah since Creation). So, that would be 25-32 AD according to our calendar. Another way of calculating this is: the tenth or final 50-year Jubilee of the Age of Torah would *start* in 25 AD; therefore, the Shemittah after this starting point would include the years 25-32 AD.

- Creation was described as being 6 days long: Day 1, Day 2, ..., Day 6. Day 7 was a day of rest. Interestingly, during the Millennium (1,000 years), believers will be given resurrected bodies and will experience God’s rest. This could parallel Day 7 of Creation week.
- A year of Jubilee (detailed elsewhere in this book) occurs every 50 years. By analogy, we can sometimes use a “day” or a “year” in parallel with a “Jubilee” to represent a block of 50 years. This is called *The Jubilee Principle* [Messiah2030, 2023]. For example:
 - Moses died at age 120. If we use each of his years to represent a Jubilee, then this equals 120 Jubilees or 6,000 years.
 - If extended back to the time of Adam/Creation, the completion of the 120th Jubilee will mark 6,000 years.

- The Millennium will be 1,000 years of rule and reign under the just rule of Jesus Christ from Jerusalem. This would represent “Day 7”.
- 7,000 years is equal to 140 Jubilees.
 - Interestingly, Job lived for 140 years.

- The Israelites wandered for 40 years in the wilderness after Moses’ ministry. 40 Jubilees = 2,000 years. Might this represent the time that Christ turned to the Gentiles after his death and resurrection (i.e., the current 2,000 years)? Metaphorically, the Jews have wandered in the “wilderness” for almost 2,000 years. Recall that Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed 40 years after Christ’s death and resurrection.
- Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness, fasting. 40 Jubilees = 2,000 years. Might this be representative of the 2,000 years since Christ?

Matthew 9:14-15 Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?" Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? **The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.**

- When Jesus heard that his friend Lazarus was sick, Jesus stayed where He was for 2 days. Lazarus died. Then after 2 days, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Might this be a picture of the Rapture or of the resurrection when Christ returns at the end of Day 6 (i.e., 6,000 years)? Furthermore, when Jesus arrived, Lazarus’ sister Mary “got up quickly” and “went to Him” (Jesus). Again, might this be a picture of the Rapture, or the resurrection at the return of Christ?

John 11:28-29 After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you." When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him.

- Jesus first ministered to the Jewish people. Upon His rejection, the message of salvation was extended to the Gentiles. In the book of John, when Jesus met the Samaritan (non-Jewish) woman at the well, Jesus stayed in Gentile territory for 2 more days. Might this mirror the 2,000-year period in which the gospel has been delivered to the Gentiles since the time of Christ?

John 4:39-40,43-54 Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. ... After the two days he left for Galilee. (Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country.)

When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him.

- At Mount Sinai (Exodus 19), we may have another picture of the Rapture. Note the words, “brought you to myself”, “third day”, “thick cloud”, “trumpet blast”, and “meet with God” in the following passage:

Exodus 19:4-5,16-17,19 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. ... On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. ... As the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.

- In Luke 10, in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, the Good Samaritan (a non-Jew) gave the innkeeper 2 denarii to take care of the injured Jewish man, and the Good Samaritan indicated that, upon his return, he would reimburse the innkeeper for any extra expenses he encountered. Might this be representative of the 2 days since Christ's death and resurrection? After the Rapture, Christ will reward Christians at the Bema Judgment of Christ.
- In Exodus 25-27, the pattern of the tabernacle in the wilderness was given by God to Moses. The tabernacle had very specific dimensions:
 - The outer courtyard was a rectangle of size 100 cubits by 50 cubits. The walls of the courtyard were 5 cubits high. The area of the walls was therefore $(100 \text{ cubits} + 50 \text{ cubits} + 100 \text{ cubits} + 50 \text{ cubits}) \times 5 \text{ cubits} = 1,500 \text{ square cubits}$.
 - Interestingly, from the time that Moses got the pattern of the tabernacle to the time of Christ's death and resurrection was about 1,500 years (circa 1450 BC to 30 AD, but these dates are estimates).
 - The Holy Place had a volume of $20 \text{ cubits} \times 10 \text{ cubits} \times 10 \text{ cubits} = 2,000 \text{ cubic cubits}$.
 - Might this be representative of the 2,000 years since Christ's death and resurrection?
 - The Most Holy Place (containing the Ark of the Covenant) had a volume of $10 \text{ cubits} \times 10 \text{ cubits} \times 10 \text{ cubits} = 1,000 \text{ cubic cubits}$.
 - Might this be representative of the 1,000-year Millennium that starts shortly after Christ's return at the end of the Tribulation?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The book of Jonah is read in synagogues on Yom Kippur—the holiest day of the year. It is the story of how Jonah did not want to preach to the Gentiles in the wicked city of Ninevah. So, Jonah fled from God by boarding a ship to Tarshish (possibly modern-day Spain), was thrown overboard, and was swallowed by a big fish (probably a whale) where he resided for 3 days and 3 nights before being spat out onto the seashore. After this, Jonah went to Ninevah where he warned the Gentiles that it would be 40 days before Ninevah would be destroyed. But, the Ninevites used this period of 40 days to repent, turn to God, and be spared. It is an wonderful message of God’s compassion, forgiveness, and salvation. ○ We know that the 3 days and 3 nights are representative of Christ’s 3 days and 3 nights in the grave following His crucifixion because He said so: <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Jonah 1:17 Now the LORD provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Matthew 12:40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man [Jesus] will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Jonah 3:3-5 Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. Jonah began by going a day's journey into the city, proclaiming, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown." The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.</p> ○ Might the 40 days represent 40 Jubilees, and hence the 2,000-years of ministry and grace shown to the Gentiles ... for the salvation of many? <p>Mathematical and word patterns in Scripture are interesting. It wouldn’t surprise me if many more patterns will be discovered, further confirming that the Scriptures were authored by supernatural inspiration.</p>
Preterist Position	Numbers can be symbolic, but there is no point in looking for numeric patterns, hidden messages, or “codes” in the Bible. Rather, read the Bible in an ordinary and common sense manner. Study it carefully, paying attention to its genres—and especially to the words of Jesus Christ.

Topic/ Question	Is there a “God gene”? Are some people “higher on the spirituality curve” than others? What are their genetic make-ups? Some scientists think there’s a particular gene that affects people’s brain chemistry (e.g., very small changes in brain chemistry can be detected in people in intense prayer, using a brain scan). Some scientists think that spirituality may have been passed down through genetics. Would this mean that only some people can be saved?
Both Positions	Hank Hanegraaff calls the notion of a “God gene” nonsense. “Everything in the world cannot be reduced to genetic make-up and brain chemistry. If that is true, then ... choices are not free; they are fatalistically determined on the basis of genetic factors.” It would contradict the teachings of Scripture about free choice.

Topic/ Question	<p>What is the Septa-Millennial theory? What is the tie-in to a young earth and to 2 Peter 3:8:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2 Peter 3:8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.</p>
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Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>Dispensationalists often make reference to a young earth, with the Flood of Noah occurring around 2345 BC when using the timeline implied by the Masoretic Text; but more recent scholarship using the Septuagint (LXX), Samaritan Pentateuch, Paul’s writings, and Josephus’ writings imply a date of around 3000 BC [Hoffman, 2018], with others arguing it might even be around 3300 BC. The latter dates would better explain the construction of the Egyptian pyramids (post-Flood), the Tower of Babel and the dispersion of the people, and the great increase in the population. Furthermore, the arrival of the Israelites in Egypt would be around 1665 BC, and the Exodus would take place around 1450 BC [Hoffman, 2016]. In other words, the Israelites were in Egypt for 215 years, but this includes the first 71 years under Joseph, then a 64-year gap until the birth of Moses, and then 80 years for Moses. If we include the range of time from when Abraham received the promise (upon entering Canaan) up to the time when all of Israel arrived in Egypt, then that is another 215 years, making 430 years in all.</p> <p>The Septa-Millennial Theory is an interesting partitioning of the Biblical timeline. It refers to the existence of seven blocks of 1,000 years of time. In other words, it represents a “1,000 years per <i>day</i>” view of history, divided up as follows [House & Price, 2003]:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: center;">Block # (in 1,000- Year Increments)</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Biblical Character near Start of Block</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Dispensation</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Major Covenant(s) Made during Block</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td>Adam (circa 4000 BC)</td> <td>(1) Innocence (from Eden to Adam & Eve’s Fall)</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Block # (in 1,000- Year Increments)	Biblical Character near Start of Block	Dispensation	Major Covenant(s) Made during Block	1	Adam (circa 4000 BC)	(1) Innocence (from Eden to Adam & Eve’s Fall)	
Block # (in 1,000- Year Increments)	Biblical Character near Start of Block	Dispensation	Major Covenant(s) Made during Block						
1	Adam (circa 4000 BC)	(1) Innocence (from Eden to Adam & Eve’s Fall)							

		(2) Conscience (from the Fall to Noah's Flood)	
2	Noah (circa 3000 BC)	(3) Human Government (from the Flood to Abraham)	
3	Abraham (circa 2000 BC)	(4) Promise (from Abraham to Moses) (5) Law (from Moses to the Day of Pentecost, i.e., shortly after Christ's ascension)	Abrahamic (unconditional), Palestinian (unconditional), Mosaic (conditional)
4	David (circa 1000 BC)		Davidic (unconditional)
5	Jesus Christ (circa 1 BC/AD)	(6) Grace (from Pentecost to the Rapture or Christ's Second Coming)	New Covenant or "New Testament" (unconditional)
6	(current)	Grace, continued	New Covenant, continued
7	(future)	(7) Kingdom (from Christ's Second Coming to end of the Millennium)	Fulfillment of all covenants
	Eternity	(future)	

Early church fathers that held to the Septa-Millennia Theory include Clement of Rome (30-100 AD), Ignatius (30-110), Polycarp (69-155), Papias (70-155), Justin Martyr (100-165), Irenaeus (130-200), Tertullian (150-220), Africanus (160-240), Hippolytus (170-236), and Augustine (354-430).

Preterist Position "A day is like a thousand years" simply indicates that God is outside of time, and to Him, a thousand years of time is not long. God is not limited by time. There is not necessarily a future Millennium of 1,000 literal years. After all, when we say that God owns the cattle on a thousand hills, we are not limiting God to 1,000 hills.

Topic/ Question	Comment on the notion of <i>imminence</i> , that is, the expectation that Christ could come <i>at any time</i> . Does this refer to the Rapture—or the Second Coming?
Dispensationalist Position	Many dispensationalists assume imminence. But, what is meant by <i>imminence</i> ? Christ could come at any moment. Other things <i>may</i> happen before His coming, but nothing else <i>must</i> happen before it takes place. If something else must happen before Christ's coming can take place, then Christ's coming is not imminent. The necessity of something else taking place first

destroys the concept of the imminent coming of Christ. We cannot count on a certain amount of time transpiring before Christ's coming.

In light of the concept of the imminent coming of Christ and the fact that the New Testament does teach His imminent coming, we can conclude that the Pretribulation Rapture view is the only view of the Rapture of the church that comfortably fits the New Testament teaching of the imminent return at any moment, because it alone teaches that Christ will come to rapture the church ... [Showers, 1995, p. 149]

Of course, as more and more end-times events become fulfilled, the closer we get to the Rapture simply because we would be approaching the general time of Christ's Second Coming. Therefore, Christians need to be alert and ready for the Rapture. In fact, some Christians wonder why the Rapture hasn't *already* occurred, given how rapidly some other prophecies are being fulfilled. We're reminded of two Scripture passages:

2 Peter 3:3-4 First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."

2 Peter 3:8-9 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Imminence also implies that there is no point in trying to set dates for the Rapture. By setting dates, we would be implying that the Rapture cannot occur before that time, and that would contradict the notion of imminence. Furthermore, "imminent" does not necessarily mean "soon".

In the Parable of the Ten Minas in Luke 19:11-13, Jesus spoke of a king going away to a "distant country". Jesus gave them this parable because the disciples thought that the Kingdom of God would appear very shortly. The parable has an analogy to Christ returning to Heaven, and coming back at a future time—possibly many decades or centuries away.

The Rapture is distinct from the Second Coming, and precedes the Second Coming by at least 7 years. Secondly, the Rapture need not be simultaneous with the start of the Tribulation (i.e., the start of the 70th Week of Daniel). That said, some pretribulationists believe that the Rapture and the start of the Tribulation will be nearly simultaneous events (e.g., the Rapture followed immediately by the start of the Tribulation)—or they will be same-day events. Other pretribulationists believe that there could be years between the Rapture and the start of the Tribulation.

Jesus wanted every generation to think His return (Rapture) was imminent. The Second Coming of Christ is *not* imminent because many specific events have to take place before it occurs. For example, we know that there will be 3½ years between the abomination that causes desolation and the return of Christ.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, the apostle Paul included himself as looking forward to Christ's return (via the Rapture): "... we who are still alive and are left will be caught up ...". In 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, Paul mentioned, "... we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed ...".

The question about whether the Rapture is simultaneous with the start of the Tribulation is an interesting one. *Imminence* seems to imply a gap between the Rapture and the start of the Tribulation—of unknown duration, perhaps years. We don't know when the Rapture will take place; but, the closer we get to the start of the Tribulation (because of the convergent "signs of the times" that suggest the Tribulation is near), then that implies that the Rapture must be near. Regardless, Christians should always be prepared to meet the Lord—either through the Rapture or a sudden/unexpected death.

The early church believed in imminence, and it is possible that they could have been raptured back then, with the world carrying on afterwards. The rationale for a gap is that the Antichrist needs to establish a power base first, and this will take some time. Recall that Christians will not know who the Antichrist is because he will not be revealed until the start of the Tribulation.

However, some pretribulationists, such as F. Kenton Beshore, do *not* believe that the Rapture is imminent [Beshore, 2013]. They believe that certain signs must take place first because they claim that the Rapture and the start of the Tribulation take place simultaneously—or at worst, they occur *on the same day*. These pretribulationists point to Scriptures about the time of Noah and the time of Sodom and Gomorrah—when judgment took place on the same day that the Lord preserved Noah and his family, and Lot and his family, respectively (Luke 17:26-30, KJV). Secondly, even in the first century, there were some events that had to take place before the Rapture could occur; consequently, the Rapture was not "imminent" for the early church, either.

Beshore believes that the following events [Beshore, 2013] need to take place in the months or years before the Rapture because it is unlikely that these events could all take place during the hectic time of the Tribulation. Even in the first 3½ years of the Tribulation, there will be massive global unrest:

- The Antichrist will rise to power, and be revealed, as per 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3.
- There will be a time of worldwide "peace and safety", as per 1 Thessalonians 5:3.

- A world government in the form of a revived Roman Empire will be established, in which there are 10 kingdoms, three of which are displaced by the Antichrist, who forms an 8th kingdom.
- A world economy will form, including a cashless society.
- A world church will form, and this would include the False Prophet (i.e., the “beast” from the land, mentioned in the book of Revelation).
- The Magog invasion of Ezekiel 38-39 would take place, quite possibly *before* the Tribulation; however, note that Israel will need 7 months to bury the dead, and 7 years to use the weapons of the invading armies for fuel. Both of these lengthy events will be difficult to fit into the perilous Tribulation timeframe. It is possible that the 7 years may include part of the Millennium, in which case the Magog Invasion would occur sometime during the Tribulation.
 - Side note: Ezekiel 29:9-11 says that parts of Egypt will be uninhabited for 40 years, and this may well extend into the Millennium.
- The city of Babylon will be rebuilt.
- The temple in Jerusalem will be rebuilt.

Beshore argues that the early church did *not* believe in imminence, but they had an *expectation* of Christ’s return. They were looking for the “warning signs” of Christ’s soon return—as we should continue to do today. Once these signs tend to take place, we’ll see some “convergence”, and this is an indicator that Christ’s return is near:

Luke 21:28 When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

John 14:29 I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.

The first-century church knew that certain events had to take place first, and these events or signs included:

- The Temple of Jesus’ day would be destroyed, as per the words of Christ in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:2). The Temple was destroyed in 70 AD.
- The 11 disciples (12 minus Judas) would be Christ’s witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:7-8). Thus, the Rapture would not occur until the disciples evangelize people located a vast distance away.
- Peter would grow old and die (John 21:18-19). (He probably died between 64-68 AD.)
- Christ would probably be gone a long time (Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 17:22; Luke 19:12-27).
- (Especially) The rise of Antichrist will occur. This is the sign that the early church fathers (e.g., 100-400 AD) were expecting before the

Rapture would occur. These men included Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Victorinus, and Cyril of Jerusalem.

- Joel 2:30-31 states that signs in the sky or solar system will appear *before* the Tribulation:

Joel 2:30-31 I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood **before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.**

Beshore's thesis is that the early church was looking for Antichrist, and this would be the *primary sign* that the Rapture was soon to follow. Thus, Antichrist had to appear and be revealed *before* the Rapture.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness [Antichrist] is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.

Furthermore, the Antichrist would persecute Christians. Beshore thinks the early Christians were most likely midtribulationists or posttribulationists.

The Reformers (e.g., Martin Luther, Hugh Latimer, John Calvin, and John Knox) were also expecting Christ's return, and they did so by looking for the warning signs. However, in their day, another sign that had to be fulfilled was the return of the Jews to the land of Israel because the Antichrist would make a covenant with them, as per Daniel 9:24-27. Israel became a nation again in 1948. Beshore argues that the Rapture could not have taken place before then; therefore, the Rapture was never an imminent event. Scientist Isaac Newton (1642-1727) also believed that the Jews had to return to their land before the Rapture could occur [Beshore, 2013]. John Walvoord agrees.

Could there be a gap of time between the Rapture and the Tribulation?

Beshore and some other pretribulationists, such as John Nelson Darby, Tom Hughes, David Jeremiah, J. Vernon McGee, J. Dwight Pentecost, Don Stewart, Robert Thomas, and Amir Tsarfati believe that the Rapture and the start of the Tribulation take place simultaneously (i.e., no gap), or at least on the same day.

However, others such as E.W. Bullinger, J.D. Farag, Arnold Fruchtenbaum, Mondo Gonzales, Mark Hitchcock, Thomas Ice, James Kaddis, Tim LaHaye, Clarence Larkin, Hal Lindsey, Chuck Missler, Bill Salus, Chuck Smith, John Walvoord, Andy Woods, and this author, believe there could be a gap between the Rapture and the Tribulation—a gap of years or even decades. In 1909,

E.W. Bullinger argued that there may be a gap of 30 or more years between the Rapture and the start of the Tribulation; and in 1919, Clarence Larkin wrote that there may be a 25-50 year gap [Woods, 2021d]. Tim LaHaye stated there could be 25 or more years between the Rapture and the Second Coming [LaHaye, 2009b].

Some judgments from God could occur during the gap. For example, consider the first seal judgment of the release of the Antichrist upon the world. It would probably need to occur before the 7-year covenant is confirmed, to start the Tribulation. And, before that happens, we need to have “10 kings” ruling in the Revived Roman Empire, because the Antichrist will displace 3 of them. In summary, a gap would allow the Antichrist to establish a power base before being officially revealed. Remember, the Antichrist won’t be known before the Rapture because the Rapture is what causes the removal of the “restrainer”, that is, *the Holy Spirit acting through the Church*. Note that many millions of people could come to Christ following the Rapture and before the start of the 7-year Tribulation.

What else could happen during this possible multi-year gap? It’s quite possible that the Magog Invasion of Ezekiel 38-39 will take place during the gap, and that Babylon will be rebuilt during this time.

The presence of a gap means that the Rapture would have been imminent since the early days of the church, perhaps since 70 AD. However, if there is no gap, then the Rapture was not—and is not—imminent since so many events need to take place beforehand. For example, without a gap, the Rapture could not have been imminent prior to 1948, as Israel was not restored to its homeland. Keep in mind that modern technology, such as television and satellites, and possibly the Internet, would have been needed to fulfill some of the events in Revelation, which means the Rapture could not have taken place until those technological innovations were about to be implemented. A gap would also allow Babylon to be rebuilt and become a major commercial city. In general, a gap would permit more stage-setting for the 7-year Tribulation before the physical return of Jesus Christ to earth. It might also explain that the world “recovers” after the Rapture, but at some point in the future, the world is caught by surprise again during a time of peace and safety. The fact that we are already seeing the stage being set for the Tribulation suggests that we must be getting close to the time of the Rapture.

In conclusion: historically, we see that not all pretribulationists believed in imminence. Today, most pretribulationists do believe in imminence; and our generation has the privilege of having certain prophetic events becoming fulfilled (especially the reestablishment of Israel in 1948). An open question remains: Is there a gap between the Rapture and the Tribulation? If there can be a gap, then we can safely assume imminence today. On the other hand, if there is no gap, then we expect to see many more signs and prophetic

	<p>fulfillments before all of these events take place simultaneously: the Rapture, the revealing of Antichrist, the 7-year peace treaty, and the start of the Tribulation.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>Preterists do not believe in a pretribulational rapture; therefore, the expectation of imminence refers to Christ’s Second Coming.</p> <p>Partial preterists explain their position of a simultaneous Rapture and Second Coming:</p> <p>[Partial preterists] do not see two parts to the Second Coming, separated by seven years. Rather, they see Jesus’ coming happening in one grand event. Partial preterists understand that Jesus will continue to build His Church ... This progressive building will continue until the “last day,” a day that only God knows. On that day, without any warning signs, Jesus Christ will return in the clouds and every eye will see Him. All believers—living and dead—will be “caught up” to meet Him in the air.</p> <p>In that “catching up,” Christians will not be taken away to heaven for seven years. They will be “caught up,” much as a hen would gather her chicks under her wings. Jesus will protect His people while He purges Earth of evil, then bring the believers down to Earth with Him. For this reason, we earlier stated that the Greek word <i>harpazo</i> is accurately translated “caught up” rather than “caught away.” Christians will not be taken away into heaven, but they will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and then continue with Him as He descends back to Earth to rule and reign.</p> <p>Teachers of the partial preterist view will compare this catching up with people going to meet a friend who just arrived at the local airport. When their friend arrives, they may come to meet him. They will not fly away with him in another airplane, but they will accompany him as he comes to their home. In a similar fashion, Jesus is returning, not to take believers away, but to be with them on Earth. Christians will meet Him in the air, and they will hesitate in that place only for as long as it takes for Jesus to purge the Earth of evil—a process that will be instantaneous, or almost so, because His glorious appearing will transform everything.</p> <p>[Eberle & Trench, 2021, Kindle edition, location 10270]</p>

Topic/ Question	<p>What are the strongest arguments in favor of—and against—the dispensational position, and especially arguments against the pretribulational Rapture? What are the hardest questions to answer by dispensationalists? With respect to the tough questions from preterists (about the dispensationalist position), how do dispensationalists address them?</p>
Dispensationalist Position	<p>The dispensational position involves much more than just the pretribulational Rapture. It includes the restoration of Israel, the Magog invasion of Ezekiel 38-39, the 7-year Tribulation, the Antichrist, the Second Coming, various judgments, a literal Millennium over which Christ physically reigns on Earth with resurrected believers (from throughout history—from both Old and New Testament times), and, of course, the literal new heavens and new earth.</p>

It is one of the theses of this book that some important eschatological prophecies have both a *primary* (main) fulfillment, and a *secondary* fulfillment. Thus, sometimes dispensationalists and preterists *both* have a case. For example, some secondary fulfillments have Old Testament *symbolic* references. In fact, some of the prophecies quoted by preterists involving events taking place during—or before—70 AD are secondary fulfillments; but, it is the opinion of this author that many of the prophecies in the books of Daniel, Zechariah, and Revelation (and accompanying passages in Isaiah, Ezekiel, Matthew, 2 Thessalonians, etc.) await a *future* fulfillment. Preterists often argue that a future fulfillment will *not* take place.

There is strong evidence that the book of Revelation was written circa 95 AD [Hitchcock, 2005]. This places it *well after* the events of 70 AD. If Revelation were *not* written in the years prior to 70 AD (some preterists argue for 64 AD [DeMar, 1997]), then this effectively rules out the preterist position because many of the prophecies found in Revelation have to come *after* the writing of Revelation.

The strongest arguments *against* the pretribulational Rapture are mentioned in the “Preterist Position” section below. The strongest arguments *in favour of* the pretribulational Rapture include:

- *Imminence.* No other eschatological option (e.g., preterism) seems to come close in this regard. Even a simultaneous rapture/resurrection fails to explain away the test of imminence, because of all the events in Revelation (and elsewhere in the Bible) that have not been fulfilled yet, but must be fulfilled before Jesus Christ physically returns. Recall that the prophecies of Christ’s first coming were fulfilled literally; there is no reason to believe the same won’t happen at Christ’s Second Coming!
- *Synergy.* The dispensational model is an excellent fit of the whole of Scripture, including a future 7-year Tribulation. The model is described by many passages from the Old and New Testaments.
- The fact that the “Church” is not explicitly mentioned in Revelation after Chapter 3 suggests that it is not present on Earth at that time. However, many people will come to Christ during Daniel’s 70th week—or during the time between the Rapture and the start of Daniel’s 70th week.
- Revelation 19 clearly describes the Second Coming of Christ; however, if the posttribulational view is correct, then why is there no mention of a rapture at this point in time? Note that Christ is accompanied by people who have *already* been raptured, judged, and rewarded—presumably much earlier.
- Note 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, and in particular the words in bold:

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and **the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.** And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.

Note the last part of 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 above (clearly a rapture passage), which offers encouragement to the Thessalonian believers. These words would hardly be a comfort or encouragement to them if the church had to go through the Tribulation. Only the judgments in Revelation 9:4 and 16:2 spare the believers. All of the other judgments apply to everyone [Hindson & Hitchcock, 2017].

Secondly, although this passage does not explicitly say that the Rapture occurs 7 or more years prior to the Tribulation, it makes two things clear. First, there is a gap of at least some length (perhaps tiny, but perhaps substantial) between the raising up of Christians who have already died and those who are still alive; otherwise, why did God order them? Second, we will be “caught up” in the air. (The “caught up” part is where the word “rapture” comes from, via the Latin translation.) Third, we will be with the Lord forever after this point in time.

John 14:2-3 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house [Heaven] are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

Note that John 14:1 has the words “Do not let your hearts be troubled” which supports a pretribulation rapture.

Here are some Scripture verses that speak of the Rapture preceding the Tribulation:

1 Thessalonians 1:10 and to wait [Greek: *anameno*] for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead -- **Jesus, who rescues** [*rhyomai*] **us from** [*ek*] **the coming wrath** [*orge*, Tribulation].

1 Thessalonians 5:9-10 **For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath** [*orge*] but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep [alive or dead], we may live together with him.

Revelation 3:10 Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also **keep** [*tereo*] **you from** [*ek*] the hour

of trial [*peirasmos*, Tribulation] that is going to come upon the whole world to test [*peirazo*] those who live on the earth.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:10, the Greek word *anameno* means “wait”, and it is in the present tense, implying imminence. In fact, it has a prefix that means “wait up” such as would describe a parent anxiously waiting for a teenager to come home late at night [Walvoord & Hitchcock, 2012]. This is consistent with the notion of the Rapture taking place at any time. Also, the Greek word *rhyomai* is used. It means “to draw to one’s self, to rescue, to deliver” or “the deliverer” [Strong, 1996; Showers, 1995; Woods, 2018b].

Furthermore, the Greek noun for wrath is *orge*, and it has the definite article (English: “the”) in front of it, meaning “the wrath”. This suggests that the time of wrath is an event, namely the Tribulation, also known as the 70th Week of Daniel or the time of Jacob’s trouble.

Interestingly, in Revelation 3:10, the phrase “Since [Because] you have kept my command to endure patiently” could belong to the previous verse because there are no punctuation marks in Greek [Woods, 2021e]. *If* that is the case, then verses 9 and 10 would read:

Revelation 3:9-10 [9] I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars -- I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you since you have kept my command to endure patiently. [10] I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.

The translators chose to put the phrase with the rest of verse 10. Some Greek experts point out that it is most unusual to start a sentence in Greek with “because”. Furthermore, the chapter divisions and verse numbers were a later invention (beginning with the 1599 Geneva translation [Pitterson, 2021]), for our indexing convenience. If the phrase belongs to the previous verse, then that means that there are no conditions that apply to Christians participating in the Rapture. In other words, there is no “partial Rapture” where only the most-prepared Christians will be raptured. Thus, Christ will rapture the whole church.

The Greek word for “test” in the above passage is *peirazo*. This word means “the testing or trying of people to determine, demonstrate, or expose the kind of people they are” [Showers, 1995, p. 215]. It refers to exposing someone’s true character, typically with negative intent, to demonstrate a failure [Woods, 2020f]. In the Tribulation, God is exposing the unbelievers for what is really in their heart. We see several times in Revelation that people would not repent of their sins and turn to the God of the Bible. Thus, the majority of people around the world will not become saved during the Tribulation. That said, we

know that many people will become saved during the Tribulation, and will even help the Jews, as per the sheep and goats judgment of Matthew 25.

The difference between the verbs *tempt* and *test* is that testing hopes the subject will pass, or is interested to see *whether* the subject will pass; tempting hopes the subject will fail. [Walton & Walton, 2019, p. 230]

Interestingly, in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3, Paul uses the word “you” (Paul is writing to Christians), and later in that same passage when talking about “destruction”, he uses the word “they”. The distinction between “you” and “they” is the distinction between believers who escape the Tribulation, and non-believers who are left to face God’s wrath [Hindson & Hitchcock, 2017].

The Rapture is implied by the following Greek words: *apokalypsis* (1 Corinthians 1:7), *rhyomai* (1 Thessalonians 1:10), *harpazo* (1 Thessalonians 4:17), *parousia* (2 Thessalonians 2:1), *episynagoge* (2 Thessalonians 2:1), and *epiphaneia* (Titus 2:13) [Woods, 2018a]. We can possibly add to this mix of words, the term *apostasia* (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

1 Corinthians 1:7 Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed [*apokalypsis*].

1 Thessalonians 1:10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead -- Jesus, who rescues [*rhyomai*] us from [*ek*] the coming wrath [Tribulation].

1 Thessalonians 4:17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up [*harpazo*] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

2 Thessalonians 2:1 Concerning the coming [*parousia*] of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered [*episynagoge*] to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters,

Titus 2:13 while we wait for the blessed hope -- the appearing [*epiphaneia*] of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,

2 Thessalonians 2:3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy [*apostasia*] comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

Furthermore, the Greek word *anabaino* (meaning “come up” or “came up” or “went up”) is also connected with the Rapture. The following examples are taken from [Woods, 2020g]:

The passage about the two witnesses in Revelation:

Revelation 11:12 Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up [*anabaino*] here." And they went

up [*anabaino*] to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on.

The passage about the Apostle John being taken to Heaven in a vision in Revelation:

Revelation 4:1 After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up [*anabaino*] here, and I will show you what must take place after this."

Compare this to the passage about the apostle Paul being taken to Heaven in a vision:

2 Corinthians 12:2,4 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up [*harpazo*] to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know -- God knows. ... was caught up [*harpazo*] to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell.

The passage about the evangelist Philip ministering to the Ethiopian eunuch:

Acts 8:39 When they came up out [*anabaino*] of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away [*harpazo*], and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

Comments about Christ's ascension after His post-resurrection appearance to the disciples: (Greek: *analambano*: "raise up" or "take up" or "has been taken [up]"):

Acts 1:11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who *has been taken* [*analambano*] from you into heaven, will come back [*erchomai*] in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

Revelation 12:5 She gave birth to a son, a male child [Jesus], who "will rule all the nations with an iron scepter." And her child was snatched up [*harpazo*] to God and to his throne.

And, from the Old Testament, passages about Elijah and Enoch, who were both raptured. Note that the Hebrew word *alah* means "went up", and the Hebrew word *laqach* means "took":

2 Kings 2:11 As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up [*alah*] to heaven in a whirlwind.

Genesis 5:24 Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took [*laqach*] him away.

Robert Thomas writes:

Far and away the largest theological contribution of the [Thessalonian] Epistles lies in what they say about eschatology. Perhaps the best way to summarize this is to survey Paul's use in the Epistles of various terms and themes relating to the end time. "Coming" or "presence" (*parousia*) is the most frequent term, sometimes referring to an examination of Christians before the Father and Christ (1 [Thessalonians], 2:19; 3:13; 5:23), sometimes to the moment of the Lord's meeting Christians in the air (1, 4:15; 2, 2:1), and sometimes to Christ's triumphant conquest of "the lawless one" (2, 2:8). From all this the dead in Christ will not be excluded (1, 4:13-18). "Revelation" (*apokalypsis*) occurs only once (2, 1:7) and spans the entire period beginning with the Lord's coming from heaven for the saints till his appearance on earth to put down those who do not know God and those who do not obey the gospel of Christ. Between these two points is a time of God's "wrath" (*orge*) on earth (1, 1:10; 2:16; 5:9). This outworking of God's "vengeance" (*ekdikesis*) against earth's rebels (2, 1:8) is the initial phase of the day of the Lord and may come at any moment (1, 5:2,3). It will mean "tribulation" (*thlipsis*) to the unrepentant (2, 1:6)—a "sudden destruction," comparable to a pregnant woman's labor pains, that will culminate in "eternal destruction" or separation from the returning Lord and his glory (1, 5:3; 2, 1:9).

... Hence, they have every reason to persevere because they anticipate a deliverer who at any moment may summon them to meet him in the air (1, 1:10; 4:15-17; 5:4,9; 2, 1:4-10). Anticipating that the Lord will return soon does not, however, release Christians from their usual everyday responsibilities. On the contrary, they must continue working and providing for their own support (1, 4:11,12; 5:14; 2, 3:6-15). [Thomas, 1978a, p. 233-234]

Jerome translated the Greek New Testament into Latin in the fourth century. The Latin Vulgate was the main Bible used in Western civilization for 1,200 years. Jerome used the Latin word *discessio*, which means "departure", when he translated 2 Thessalonians 2:3 [Woods, 2018a]. The earliest English translations also translated the Greek noun *apostasia* as "departure" or "departing". Later, the King James Version decided to translate the word as "falling away".

In 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and Revelation 3:10, the Greek word *ek* is used. It means to be kept "from" or "out of" that period of time called the Tribulation [Hindson & Hitchcock, 2017]. The word *tereo* means "keep, preserve, protect". In John 17:15, the only other place in the New Testament using the words *tereo* and *ek* together, Jesus prays that his followers would be kept from the evil one:

John 17:15 [NIV] My prayer is not that you take them out of [*ek*] the world but that you protect [*tereo*] them from [*ek*] the evil one.

	<p>John 17:15 [KJV] I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of [ek] the world, but that thou shouldest keep [tereo] them from [ek] the evil.</p> <p>Thus, the implication is that God would keep believers <i>from</i> the Tribulation, or <i>out of</i> the Tribulation—not <i>through</i> the Tribulation (in which case the Greek word <i>en</i> or <i>dia</i> would have been used). Note that Revelation describes a lot of martyrdom and destruction for Christians and Jews; therefore, if the phrase meant “protection through the Tribulation”, this does not seem to be consistent with what we read in Revelation. Thus, “out of” makes more sense.</p> <p>If they [Thessalonians] had been taught that the Great Tribulation, in whole or in part, must first run its course, it is difficult to see how they could be described as expectantly awaiting Christ’s return. Then they should rather have been described as bracing themselves for the Great Tribulation and the painful events connected with it. [D. Edmond Hiebert quoted in [Showers, 1995, p. 193]]</p> <p>More discussion of the Rapture is found in Chapter 4: “The Rapture”.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>The strongest arguments <i>against</i> the dispensational position, including a pretribulation rapture, include the following (e.g., [DeMar, 1997; Hanegraaff, 2007; Hanegraaff, 2020]):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If Revelation were written well after 70 AD (e.g., 95 AD), then why was no mention was made, in Revelation, of the destruction of the second temple in 70 AD? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partial answer from dispensationalists: John was instructed to write about the <i>things to come</i> (Revelation 1:1). By 95 AD, it would be well-accepted and implicit that the second temple was destroyed. John was describing a future third temple. He was specifically writing down information about the future Tribulation period. 2. As part of the Olivet Discourse, why did Jesus use the term “this generation” to describe major prophetic events commonly associated with Revelation? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partial answer: Multiple questions were asked by the disciples, and perhaps Jesus implicitly used a generic “you” (future Jewish people) when describing events far in the future. • Partial answer: Jesus specifically said, in Matthew 24:15-16: “... let the reader understand ...”, suggesting that His words would be written down and be read by others in the future. • Partial answer: The generation that sees <i>all the signs</i> mentioned in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 would be “this generation”. That is the generation that will not pass away before the return of Christ.

3. Christ seems to indicate that He would return in the near future:

Matthew 10:23 When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, **you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.**

Matthew 16:28 "Truly I tell you, **some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.**"

- Preterists are divided on this. They claim that these passages either refer to Christ *coming in judgment* in 70 AD; or they refer to his death, resurrection, and ascension circa 30 AD. Preterists insist that Matthew 24 was fulfilled. If it were not so, critics of the Bible, such as Bertrand Russell, would understandably claim that the Bible is not trustworthy [DeMar, 1997].
- Partial answer: Dispensationalists find Matthew 10:23 difficult to explain. It is possible that this is a reference to the Transfiguration, which occurred about 6 days later.
- Partial answer: But perhaps the best explanation is due to the use of the term “the Son of Man”, and more specifically about the coming of the Son of Man [Secord, 2020]. This term was used in Daniel 7. It refers to the future Messiah coming to the Father and being anointed with power and authority over all the nations. A few verses prior to Matthew 10:23, Jesus told his disciples (Matthew 10:5) *not* to go to the Samaritans or the Gentiles (yet). After His death and resurrection, Jesus came to the Father, and got that authority. Later, in Matthew 28, He tells His disciples after His resurrection and before His ascension, that “all authority ... has been given to me”, and now they should go and preach to all the nations.

Matthew 10:5-7 These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.'

Matthew 28:18-20 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

- Note that this same argument could apply to Matthew 16:28 (above).

- Partial answer: Two other comments are worth noting: The Apostle John was still alive in 95 AD and he saw Jesus in His glory multiple times when writing the book of Revelation. Secondly, Stephen in Acts 7:55-56 also saw Christ in His glory.

4. Similarly, why did Jesus, in the book of Revelation, use the term “soon” to describe the events that would take place?

- This is also a difficult question for *preterists* to answer.
- Revelation 1:3 and 22:10 use the Greek word for “near” or “at hand” to encompass the timeframe of the events in the book of Revelation. Note that Revelation 22:10 comes *after* the following major unfulfilled prophecies are described: the return of Christ, the Millennium, the Great White Throne Judgment, and the new heavens and earth. In fact, Revelation 22 describes the eternal state, yet verse 10 states that “the time is near”. We’re well over 1,900 years past the time of writing of Revelation, and those events are *still* in the future. This is why the word “soon” is also a difficult word for preterists.
- In Romans 15, Paul writes that the Lord will “soon” crush Satan. In Philippians 4:5, Paul writes that the Lord is “near”. In Deuteronomy 4:26, Moses warned the Israelites that they would “quickly” perish from the land they are about to enter; but, they didn’t perish from the land for a thousand years, and that generation didn’t even enter the Promised Land right away [Hunt & DeMar, 1998].
- Partial answer: The word translated “soon” in Revelation 1 is better translated “quickly” or “fast”—referring to the speed with which events unfold as they begin to take place [Kelley, 2017a]. The Greek word for “soon” is *tachos/tachus*, from which we get the English word “tachometer”. The Greek word occurs 8 times in Revelation (Revelation 1:1; 2:16; 3:11; 11:14; 22:6,7,12,20) [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007].
- Partial answer: “Soon” is a relative term, and Jesus wanted every generation to think that the Rapture was imminent.

5. Why do the “Millennial sacrifices” mentioned in Ezekiel 40-48 appear to be efficacious for the removal of sin?

- The Old Testament sacrifices pointed *forward* to the ultimate and sufficient sacrifice, that is, the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross. The millennial sacrifices are a memorial, looking *backwards*.

- Note that animal sacrifices *were not* efficacious for the removal of sin in the Old Testament either; instead, they *pointed to* Christ who, as the Lamb of God, would remove sin.

Hebrews 10:4 It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

- John Whitcomb argues that the sacrifices are for the cleansing of the priests [Ice, 2021b]. In particular, the cleansing is a ceremonial cleansing of both the temple and the priests because there will be non-resurrected human beings on the earth during the Millennium.
- The Millennial sacrifices will serve as a reminder of the awfulness of sin, and of the incredibly high price that Jesus paid on the Cross.
- Children born during the Millennium have the freedom to choose. They are sinners, and they need to understand that Christ died for their sins, and that sin has a costly price.

One may ask why God would return to an Old testament-type dispensation during the Millennial Kingdom with renewed animal sacrifices. No one knows for certain. All we know is that God will commission a temple to be built during a literal Millennial Kingdom, and He will command the people to offer animal sacrifices. We do not have to know every reason for the actions of God to accept them. We must accept Him at His word rather than allegorize His infallible word because it does not make sense to us or because it is not politically correct. [Beshore, 2013, p. 343]

- However, in the *eternal state* (“Heaven”), there will be no sacrifices and not even a Temple because there is no sin.

6. There is no single verse in Scripture that, on its own, specifically states a pretribulational rapture.

- Answer: When taken together, many Scriptures support the pretribulational Rapture (e.g., John 14:1-3, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Search for “What is the Rapture?” (start of Chapter 4) in this book.

7. There is only *one* day of resurrection and judgment, and it involves both the saved and the unsaved.

John 5:28-29 "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out -- those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.

- Answer: See elsewhere in this book for the many references to resurrection. Scripture specifically says that some of the dead will come to life before the start of the 1,000-year Millennium, and that “the rest of the dead” will not come to life until the Millennium has ended (Revelation 20:4-5). This latter event is the Great White Throne Judgment, and it is the final resurrection and judgment: it is only for the unsaved dead (Revelation 20:11-15). There is not a *single* resurrection.

8. There is no warrant for a future, rebuilt temple. The Shekinah Glory will never enter it. Christians will not be building it. There is no need for a temple anymore.

- Answer: The prophet Daniel, writing circa 530 BC, stated that during the 70th Week of Daniel, there will be a temple, and sacrifices will be offered in it. It will be desecrated by the Antichrist (see Daniel 9:24-27 and Daniel 11:36-45) in the middle of the Tribulation. Jesus confirmed this, circa 30 AD, in Matthew 24:15-16. The destruction of the second temple in 70 AD did not match the parameters given by either Daniel or Jesus. Therefore, a temple will be rebuilt. This will be the temple that is described in the book of Revelation. Note that the book of Revelation was written in 95 AD—well after the 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Many parts of Revelation remain unfulfilled to this day. Note also that the temple to be desecrated by the Antichrist will not be built with the blessing of God. However, the temple after that—the Millennial temple—will be built by the Messiah (see Ezekiel 40-48). That will be the fourth temple. So, very clearly, there will be a future temple—in fact, two. The first one will not be authorized by God; the second one will be.

9. Following the Second Coming, no one will be saved.

- Answer: Following the Second Coming, no unbelievers will enter the Millennium. In other words, those who did *not* become believers before the Second Coming will not get a second chance. (Note: People before the age of accountability, such as children and handicapped people who cannot make a decision, are most likely included with the believers). Of the *believers* who are alive at Christ’s Second Coming, they will *all* enter the Millennium in their natural bodies. The earth’s population will soar after that. The children born during the Millennium will need to make a decision for Christ before they die, or before the end of the Millennium, whichever comes first. See Revelation 20.

	<p>10. The notion of a Millennium where mortals live with people in their glorified bodies is unbiblical.</p>
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- Answer: It is clearly supported by Scripture. See Revelation 20, and the Chapter on “The Millennium” in this book.

Chapter 2: Supernatural Beings and the Days of Noah

Jesus Christ warned us that the time leading up to His return would be “as it was in the days of Noah” (Matthew 24:37; Luke 17:26). There was a lot of evil supernatural activity during the days of Noah—not to mention general evil, lawlessness, violence, apathy, and unpreparedness among the people; so, we can expect similar activity and conditions as Christ’s return approaches. The book of Revelation makes this clear. There was also a lot of demonic activity during the time of Christ’s ministry, circa 30 AD.

Let us examine some of the Scripture passages about supernatural beings in the Old Testament, including passages about false gods, idols, demons, the Nephilim, etc. It will also make us aware of the spiritual battle that rages behind the scenes, which impacts so much of the world. This will give us greater insight into future prophecy.

Topic/ Question	Are there other beings in the heavenly realm (unseen world) besides God and angels? Who is, or are, the <i>elohim</i> ? Are angels and demons real, and do they have bodies?
Generally Both Positions (but with a dispensational focus on prophecy)	<p style="text-align: center;">Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.</p> <p>There are other rational <i>personal beings</i> in the universe besides God, angels, and humans. These created beings are numerous (e.g., Daniel 7:10; Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 5:11). They’re immortal. As spirit beings, they are normally invisible to humans. In the Bible, they are sometimes called “heavenly ones”, “the heavenly host”, “host”, “sons of God”, “holy ones”, “gods” (Hebrew: <i>elohim</i>), “powers in the heavens above”, “princes”, “demons”, “divine beings”, “mighty ones”, or even “stars” [Page, 1995; Heiser, 2018]. For example, in Job 38:5-7, we read that God’s heavenly host, described as the “morning stars”, watched with joy at the creation of the earth. Job 1:6; 2:1; and 38:7 all mention “the sons of God” as being supernatural/angelic beings. According to Psalm 148:5, God created the heavenly beings as having the ability to choose, and the choices they make are permanent. They do not procreate; however, there is an incident in Genesis 6 that we will explore shortly.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">When God laid the foundations of the earth, the “sons of God” were there, shouting for joy. But who are the sons of God? Obviously, they aren’t humans. This is <i>before</i> the creation of the world. We might think of them as angels, but that wouldn’t be quite correct.</p> <p>The unseen world has a hierarchy, something reflected in such terms as <i>archangel</i> versus <i>angel</i>. That hierarchy is sometimes difficult for us to discern in the Old Testament, since we aren’t accustomed to viewing the unseen world like a dynastic household ... [but] an Israelite would have</p>

processed certain terms used to describe the hierarchy. In the ancient Semitic world, *sons of God* (Hebrew: *beney elohim*) is a phrase used to identify divine beings with higher-level responsibilities or jurisdictions. [Heiser, 2015, pp. 23-24]

Whenever the actual phrase “sons of God” occurs in the OT, it can *always* be read as a reference to heavenly beings. [Van Dorn, 2023, p. 36]

The Hebrew words *elohim* and *Yahweh* (equivalently transliterated as *Jehovah*) appear numerous times throughout the Old Testament: *elohim* (2,606 times in the KJV) and *Yahweh* [*Jehovah*] (6,519 times in the KJV). *Elohim* is a name for God; as is *Yahweh*—the proper name of the one true God: the *self-existent* (non-created), eternal God—the Most High. *Yahweh* is the covenant name often translated LORD (in capital letters) in many Bibles. Surprising to many Christians, *elohim* is a general term or title referring to gods (plural) or any supernatural being:

... the Hebrew Bible uses the term *elohim* to speak of any inhabitant of the spiritual world. The word itself provides no differentiation among beings within that realm, though hierarchy is certainly present. *Yahweh*, for example, is an *elohim*, but no other *elohim* is *Yahweh*. [Heiser, 2015, p. 323]

The term *elohim* simply means “divine beings”—residents of the supernatural world. ... *Yahweh* was, of course, unique in that he was the uncreated Creator of these other spiritual beings and superior to them in his attributes. [Heiser, 2020a, p. 8]

Psalm 89:5-7 The heavens praise your wonders, LORD [*Yahweh*], your faithfulness too, in the assembly of the holy ones. For who in the skies above can compare with the LORD [*Yahweh*]? Who is like the LORD [*Yahweh*] among the heavenly beings? In the council of the holy ones God [*el*] is greatly feared; he is more awesome than all who surround him.

Psalm 82:1-8 A psalm of Asaph. God [*elohim*] presides in the great assembly; he renders judgment among the "gods" [*elohim*]: "How long will you [plural] defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked. The 'gods' [they] know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken. I said, 'You are "gods" [*elohim*]; you are all sons of the Most High [*elyon*].' But you will die like mere mortals; you will fall like every other ruler." Rise up, O God [*elohim*], judge the earth, for all the nations are your inheritance.

Psalm 82:1 is especially interesting since *elohim* occurs twice in that single verse. In Psalm 82:1, the first *elohim* must be singular, since the Hebrew grammar has the word as the subject of a single verbal form (“stands” [or “presides”]). The second *elohim* must be plural, since the preposition in front

of it (“in the midst of” [or “among”]) requires more than one. You can’t be “in the *midst* of” *one*. The preposition calls for a group—as does the earlier noun, *assembly*. The meaning of the verse is inescapable: The singular *elohim* of Israel presides over an assembly of *elohim*.

The ESV translation of the Bible translates the words for “great assembly” as “divine council”. The latter is probably more accurate since Hebrew actually has different words for “great assembly”.

Psalm 82:1 [ESV] A Psalm of Asaph. God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment:

A quick read of Psalm 82 informs us that God has called this council meeting to judge the *elohim* for corrupt rule of the nations. Verse 6 of the psalm declares that these *elohim* are sons of God. ...

To a biblical writer, the Most High (*elyon*) was the God of Israel. The Old Testament refers to him as Most High in several places ... The sons of God/the Most High here are clearly called *elohim*, as the pronoun “you” in verse 6 is a plural form in the Hebrew.

The text is not clear whether all of the *elohim* are under judgment or just some. The idea of *elohim* ruling the nations under God’s authority is a biblical concept ... the sons of God are divine beings under the authority of the God of Israel. [Heiser, 2015, pp. 26-27]

1 Kings 22:19-21 Micaiah continued, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the multitudes of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left. And the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?' "One suggested this, and another that. Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.'

Daniel 7:9-10 "As I looked, "thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. ... Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.

Job 1:6 One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them.

Deuteronomy 32:8-9 When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, **when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel** [Dead Sea Scrolls: *sons of God*]. For the **LORD's portion is his people, Jacob** [Israel] his allotted inheritance.

Deuteronomy 4:19 And when you look up to the sky and see the sun, the moon and the stars -- all the heavenly array -- do not be enticed into bowing down to them and worshiping things **the LORD your God has apportioned to all the nations under heaven.**

Let us assume that God assigned some of the Sons of God to rule the nations around the time of the Tower of Babel (i.e., when He divided the nations) [Brown, 2015]. Based on the Table of Nations in Genesis 10, some authors conjecture that 70 of the “sons of God” were assigned to administer the nations, and that 70 may also be the number of non-Trinity members of the divine council [Chaffey, 2019].

The number 70 frequently appears in the Bible, but there are some interesting similarities between ancient Israel and the divine council’s 70 members. At the advice of his father-in-law, Jethro, Moses selected 70 elders to assist them in leading the fledgling nation after it left Egypt. The Grand Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, likely following Moses’ example, consisted of 70 members plus the high priest who led the assembly. It is certainly plausible that these two earthly assemblies follow the example of the heavenly divine council. The Septuagint is named for the Latin word meaning seventy, which is why it is often abbreviated as LXX. This name comes from the Jewish tradition that 70 scholars (some versions have 72) worked on the translation requested by the Greek ruler of Egypt Ptolemy II Philadelphus in the third century BC. ... the Jews apparently placed great value in having 70 people involved in important matters. [Chaffey, 2019, p. 99]

Job 1:6 states that the Sons of God, and Satan, presented themselves before the Lord. Since the book of Job may have been written around 2000 BC, this suggests the following timeline starting (earlier) at the Tower of Babel: God divided the nations, God set the Sons of God to rule over the nations (except Israel which God reserved for Himself); but the Sons of God ruled unjustly and corruptly. Yet Satan and the Sons of God still appeared before God in Heaven to discuss the case of Job. This suggests that, up to at least the time of Job, Satan still had access to Heaven—at least to present himself before God. Some scholars believe that Satan lost access to Heaven (e.g., Revelation 12:3-6) in early Genesis, that is, at the Flood or sooner; others think he was kicked out at Christ’s first coming; and others believe that Satan will lose access to Heaven during the Tribulation. Note that Psalm 82 is dated to about 1000 BC. Many of the Psalms were written by David, Solomon, Asaph, etc.

Dr. Heiser has postulated that the angels in Deuteronomy 4:19 and 32:8-9 were part of a *divine council* and that God will eventually judge them for leading men away from God and perverting justice. [Lake, 2014, p. 159]

The divine council, also called the divine assembly, is the term we use to describe meetings that God holds, or at least used to hold, with select heavenly beings. We often think of these entities as angels, since in Christian theology we generally classify all heavenly beings other than God as angels. This designation has led to some confusion since there is great variety among the heavenly creatures, and it is unlikely that all of the angelic beings are part of this council. ... Psalm 82 tells us that God charged members of His council to govern the affairs of the nations, and they failed to fulfill their duties. [Chaffey, 2019, p. 53]

... Yahweh is the only god worthy of worship by anyone, anywhere. That in turn would mean that the role of the lesser *elohim* was administration of the nations. ...

At some point, the sons of God transgressed Yahweh's desire for earthly order and just rule of his human imagers, sowing chaos in the nations. ...

The concept is straightforward: when there is disorder in the divine realm, when the members of Yahweh's council are not in harmony with his will, misery, chaos, injustice, and death on earth are the result. Yahweh rules justly and expects the same from those who rule the nations. But what we read in the Old Testament makes it clear that this is not the reality among the nations. Worse, their gods seek to spread chaos to Yahweh's portion, Israel, by seducing his people to worship them instead of the Most High. [Heiser, 2020a, pp. 151-154]

Deuteronomy 8:19 If you ever forget the LORD [Yahweh] your God [elohim] and follow other gods [elohim] and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed.

Deuteronomy 10:17 For the LORD [Yahweh] your God [elohim] is God [elohim] of gods [elohim] and Lord [adonay] of lords [adon], the great God [el], mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes.

1 Samuel 2:2 "There is no one holy like the LORD [Yahweh]; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God [elohim].

1 Kings 8:23 and said: "LORD [Yahweh], the God [elohim] of Israel, there is no God [elohim] like you in heaven above or on earth below -- you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way.

1 Kings 18:24 Then you [prophets of Baal] call on the name of your god [elohim], and I [Elijah] will call on the name of the LORD [Yahweh]. The god [elohim] who answers by fire -- he is God [elohim]." Then all the people said, "What you say is good."

Psalms 96:4-5 For great is the LORD [Yahweh] and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods [elohim]. For all the gods [elohim] of the nations are idols, but the LORD [Yahweh] made the heavens.

Psalms 97:9 For you, LORD [Yahweh], are the Most High [elyon] over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods [elohim].

Psalms 136:2 Give thanks to the God [elohim] of gods [elohim]. His love endures forever.

Yahweh is all-powerful (Jer 32:17,27; Pss 72:18; 115:3), the sovereign king over the other *elohim* (Psa 95:3; Dan 4:35; 1 Kgs 22:19), the creator of the other members of his host-council (Psa 148:1-5; Neh 9:6; cf. Job 38:7; Deut 4:19-20; 17:3; 29:25-26; 32:17; Jas 1:17) and the lone *elohim* who deserves

worship from the other *elohim* (Psa 29:1). In fact, Nehemiah 9:6 explicitly declares that Yahweh is unique—there is only *one* Yahweh (“You alone are Yahweh”). [Heiser, 2015, p. 31]

Who makes up the divine council or divine assembly? Michael Heiser argues that all spiritual beings make up the council, and within it, members are distinguished by their role such as the *malakim* (i.e., messengers or angels) [Heiser, 2015]. Heiser includes all of the following in the divine council: cherubim; seraphim; archangels such as Michael and Gabriel; the Sons of God (“Watchers” of Daniel 4); Princes (Daniel 10)—who may be synonymous with the Sons of God; the Chief Princes (possibly equivalent to archangels); and finally the attendants or lower-class angels (Daniel 7:10) [Gonzales, 2020d]. Furthermore, although fallen angels (fallen beings) remain as members of the heavenly host, they are no longer members of the divine council [Heiser, 2020b]. The divine council assists God in governance, but the fallen angels are now in opposition.

John and Harvey Walton, however, think that the divine council contains only a relatively small subset of supernatural beings (because the number of angels is very large, perhaps innumerable (as per Revelation 5:11 [Jeremiah, 2016])):

... the divine council are lesser divine beings whose presence demonstrates the power of the high god and who are delegated to manage the governance of the cosmos. The council is in session in Job 1-2 and Psalm 82, and the “council of the holy ones” is mentioned in Psalm 89:7, which supports this identification. This classification differentiates them from the beings designed “angels” (Heb. *malakim*), since the *malakim* have a messenger function while the *bene elohim* have a governing function. [Walton & Walton, 2019, pp. 177-178]

Job 1:6-12 and 2:1-6 describe two scenes in which Satan, along with other supernatural beings, presents himself before Yahweh. The setting is that of a heavenly council or divine assembly, a familiar feature of ancient Near Eastern religion. In Israel, however, the concept differs significantly from that found in the mythology of her polytheistic neighbors, since the members of Yahweh’s court are represented as subordinate beings who simply carry out his will. The New International Version refers to them in 1:6 and 2:1 as “angels,” though the Hebrew expression is literally “sons of God.” Clearly the phrase refers to celestial beings who are subservient to God. [Page, 1995, p. 25]

It was common in many ancient cultures to worship false gods and goddesses in the “high places” (i.e., shrines built on or near the top of hills or mountains). We have already seen that a common part of many mythologies was that a particular god or council of gods convened at these places. For example, the Greeks worshipped the gods and goddesses of Mt. Olympus and the Canaanites worshipped Baal of Mt. Zaphon. [Chaffey, 2019, p. 383]

Isaiah 14:13 You [Satan] said in your heart, "I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly [divine council], on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon.

Psalm 89:7 In the council of the holy ones God is greatly feared; he is more awesome than all who surround him

Daniel 7:10 A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.

Some of these passages have the divine council, the heavenly host, present. ... For example, in the throne room scene of Daniel 7 we read:

As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; ... the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened (vv. 9-10 ESV).

This is one of the more explicit divine council texts in the Old Testament. There are *multiple thrones* in this heavenly scene, along with the single throne occupied by the Ancient of Days, the God of Israel. There is a clear reference to the council—the word translated “court” here refers to a judicial body. [Heiser, 2015, pp. 161-162]

The hierarchy of the Old and New Testaments suggests that Yahweh is at the top (including the Trinity), then comes the divine council, then come the rest of the *elohim* (e.g., angels), and finally there are humans.

... Psalm 82. It is unique among the psalms in its portrayal of God as presiding over the divine assembly and accusing the gods of failing to exercise their duties with regards to the protection of the poor and powerless. Because the gods have not promoted social justice as they should, God condemns them to death.

... They were to be the guardians of social justice, but verse 2 indicates that the gods had become collaborators with the unjust and wicked. Instead of upholding justice, these angels were perverting it and not acting in obedience to God. The text is silent about the circumstances of their fall from innocence, but obviously **these are fallen beings whose sin had a devastating impact on human society**. [Page, 1995, pp. 54-58, my emphasis]

Page also comments on the “lying spirit” mentioned in 1 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 18, that is, about the vision that the prophet Micaiah had, and which was told to evil King Ahab of Israel. Like a prior event that was described in the book of Job, this reflects a conversation in the divine council that resulted in a decision that was to be carried out by a subordinate power, namely “a member of the divine council over which Yahweh presides” [Page, 1995, p. 79]. In this case, the spirit was a lying spirit who swayed 400 of King Ahab’s false prophets to state that King Ahab would be victorious in a battle that eventually cost him his life. It appears that God likes to involve others in (at least some) decision-making. God can quickly evaluate a suggestion, know its outcome, and see if it is consistent with His will. If so, He can approve it.

John and Harvey Walton contrast false gods with demons:

The term *demons* has had a checkered history; in today's theological usage the term denotes beings, often fallen angels, who are intrinsically evil and who do the bidding of their master, Satan. This definition, however, only became commonplace long after the Hebrew Bible (i.e., Old Testament) was complete. ...

Using empirical data found in the ancient literature, we can discern a taxonomy of [evil] spirit beings in three classes: gods (class I), defined as those who receive sacrifices, at one extreme; and at the other extreme, ghosts (class III), defined as those who were formally human [and have much more limited power than class I or class II beings]. Class II is made up of all that remain [e.g., demons] and is a large and diverse group.

[False gods] were believed to have needs for food, drink, clothing, and housing. People had been created with the explicit purpose of providing for these needs. At the same time, when the gods were properly provided for, they would in turn provide care and protection for the people. This symbiosis between humans and gods provides the parameters for the Mesopotamian religious system. ... [The gods] were authority figures who demanded attention and offered benefits. ...

Class II spirits ... do not have temples, priests, or sacred space of any kind. They do not receive sacrifices. They are said to need neither food nor drink, so they have no needs to be provided. They can do harm or provide benefits to humans just as the gods can, but the harm they bring is either as the agents of the gods, or as opportunists when the gods have not been properly cared for and are therefore inattentive to human subjects. ... Class II spirit beings exercise power in the human realm by terrorizing or protecting, and are resisted or enlisted by means of power (incantations, exorcism). ...

People could overcome attacks by class II spirits in a number of ways: (1) regain the favor of their god; (2) call on specialists to exorcise the spirit; or (3) use incantations, figurines, amulets [ornaments], or other magical means to enlist the help of guardian spirits ...

Class II spirits are thought responsible for disease, plague, and all sorts of disasters in the cosmos. [Walton & Walton, 2019, pp. 56-59]

Demons are usually considered to be invisible ... Sometimes demons manifest [themselves] by possession and indicate their presence by the mania of the demoniac ... demons that compose or indwell a soul manifest their presence by the behaviors they instigate [Walton & Walton, 2019, pp. 76-77]

... demons are real. They are personal beings who are active in the world today. Demons look for opportunities to gain access to human beings, where they will do what they can to disrupt our lives. [Richards, 2016, p. 57]

We know that a tremendous amount of supernatural (including demonic) activity will take place during the Tribulation. Christ warned us that some of the conditions during the Tribulation would be "as it was in the days of Noah".

With that in mind, and as a preview of the upcoming section called “Who were the Nephilim?” let us make some comments about demons, here.

The Nephilim are the *offspring* of the (fallen) angelic-human union of Genesis 6:1-4, and the offspring have both a supernatural nature and a human nature. The Septuagint translates the word “Nephilim” from Hebrew into Greek using the Greek word for “giants” (i.e., *gigantes* in Genesis 6:4 and *gigantas* in Numbers 13:33). The word for “giants” is consistently used in Hebrew lexicons (dictionaries), and by ancient Jews and Christians [Chaffey, 2019]. This implies that we should be thinking of giants when encountering the word “Nephilim” instead of a term such as “fallen ones” (especially since the “fallen one” would have been a parent rather than the offspring). Jewish writers during the Second Temple Period (between 516 BC and 70 AD) believed that the “New Testament demons were disembodied Watcher spirits released from the bodies of Nephilim giants” [Heiser, 2017, p. 156]. Although the *bodies* of the Nephilim were destroyed during Noah’s Flood, the demonic *spirits* of the Nephilim were released after their death.

One must not confuse the rebellious angels with the Nephilim. The rebellious angels were the parents. They represent the sons of God. The Nephilim were the offspring. [Lindsay, 2018, p. 61]

The giants mentioned in the Scripture, including Repha’im, Emim, Anakim, Zuzim and the Nephilim may have been a remnant of a once expansive, human giant race, beginning before the great Flood of Noah’s day, but also reappearing after the Flood. Anthropologists have found evidence of giants existing in the far distant past from various civilizations. [Lindsay, 2018, p. 29]

Obviously, Josephus believed and recorded that “the sons of God” mentioned in Genesis, chapter 6, were fallen angels. This belief was considered the standard view in the ancient world—that fallen angels were the fathers of the giants. These giants were known for their abusive and contemptuous ways. Notice that wherever giants are mentioned, it is in connection with wickedness. [Lindsay, 2018, pp. 122-123]

Jude 6 [NASB, 2020] And angels who did not keep their own domain but abandoned their proper dwelling place, [these] He has kept in eternal restraints under darkness for the judgment of the great day,

Dennis Lindsay provides a very readable survey of giants [Lindsay, 2018]. The ancient extra-biblical book of 1 Enoch states that 200 fallen angels took an oath, descended to Mount Hermon in the days of Jared (see Genesis 5), and produced the giants/Nephilim by violating human women (see Genesis 6) [Johnson, 2012]. The name “Mount Hermon” can be translated as “sacred mountain” or “devoted to destruction”. Mount Hermon is located near the border of Israel and Syria. We know that King Og ruled over Mount Hermon (Joshua 12:5). He may have been 13½ feet tall (Deuteronomy 3:11).

Watchers are supernatural beings, equivalent to “the sons of God”. In general, Watchers could be either good beings (e.g., Daniel 4:13,23 (KJV)) or evil/fallen beings; however, in the context of the Nephilim narrative of Genesis 6:1-4, they are evil. The book of 1 Enoch refers to some Watchers as “both the fully divine sons of God who cohabited with human women in Genesis 6:1-4 and the spirits of the giant offspring produced by the forbidden union (1 Enoch 6-7)” [Heiser, 2017, p. 43]. The spirits of the dead Nephilim became the demons.

... the interpretation of Genesis 6:1-4 in Judaism and early Christianity. The idea that this passage refers to angels having relations with women and producing giant offspring was the *universal* interpretation among the Jews *at the time these two letters* [2 Peter and Jude] *were written* ... [Van Dorn, 2023, p. 265]

Regarding the origin of demons, Walter Elwell bridges the views of Walton & Walton and Heiser, indicating that demons could be either fallen angels or the spirits of the dead Nephilim:

Basically, there are two major theories for the origin of such beings. One theory holds that a multitude of angels fell into sin prompted by Lucifer’s original rebellion against God (Matt. 25:41; II Pet. 2:4; Rev. 12:7-9). Another theory speculates that demons are the unnatural offspring of angels and antediluvian women (Gen. 6:2; Jude 6). These beings (giants), the theory states, issued forth evil spirits from their bodies once they were destroyed either in battle or in the flood.

... It is the understanding of both Paul and the author of Revelation that the activity of demons will be on the increase in the latter days and that many men will be seduced to follow after them (1 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 16:13-14). [Elwell, 1984, pp. 306-307]

Other than these two theories, *no other theories about the origin of demons seem to exist* [Richards, 2016]. Larry Richards and some other authors (e.g., [Chaffey, 2019; Walton & Walton, 2019]) prefer the definition that demons (also known as “evil spirits” or “unclean spirits”) are those angels who sided with Satan before the fall of Adam and Eve (and who are not currently chained for judgment). However, as mentioned, others believe that demons are really the spirits of the dead Nephilim [Heiser, 2017; Pitterson, 2017; Lindsay, 2018; Gilbert, 2021; Van Dorn, 2023]:

Christian theologians for the first four hundred years after the Resurrection were almost universally agreed that demons are the spirits of the Nephilim destroyed in the Flood, and that the Nephilim were the children born from the infernal unions of rebellious Watchers and human women. [Gilbert, 2021, p. 25]

Satan is referred to as “the prince of demons” in Matthew 12:24-28. Recall that demons are one category of *elohim*. They seek to harm humans, but also to negatively influence nations and peoples by affecting culture and the course

of national history within those nations [Richards, 2016]. This has major implications as we head towards the time of Christ's return.

Demons are never referred to as anything other than evil supernatural beings. ... the clear biblical interpretation in meaning and context is that **there are powerful, malignant spirit-beings bent on the destruction of human beings**. [Martin, *et al.*, 2008, p. 50, my emphasis]

It is obvious, from multiple historical accounts of séances (recorded by credible sources), that demons keep track of details. All aspects of individual human lives are noted by the enemy and preserved for the time when they are needed to deceive. [Martin, *et al.*, 2008, p. 537]

Demons love to inhabit or possess. This is not true of angels, because angels are heavenly beings that already have a kind of flesh (cf. 1 Cor 15:40-41) and can take on the appearance of human flesh without possessing a host. This alone ought to tell you that angels and demons are different kinds of beings. If demons were the giants who lost their bodies, it makes sense that they would seek to regain some kind of physical existence, even if it is by proxy. [Van Dorn, 2023, p. 196]

Demons asked Jesus, in the narrative in Matthew 12:27-34, “Have you come to torture us before the appointed time?” This was probably a reference to their potential expulsion to either the Abyss or Tartarus—places in Hades where certain evil angels were confined since the days of Noah. This prospect frightened the demons. They urged Jesus to send them into a herd of pigs that was nearby, possibly because they needed to reside in a human or animal; and if they were being exorcised from a human, they would be satisfied to go into unclean animals and continue their existence on earth, instead of immediately experiencing a worse fate. Note that some authors equate the Abyss and Tartarus (e.g., [Lindsay, 2018; Gilbert, 2021; Pitterson, 2021]). However, there is likely a distinction between the two locations: supernatural beings can be released from the Abyss (Revelation 9), but not from Tartarus (2 Peter 2:4). It may well be that demons went to the Abyss, and the fallen Sons of God who violated human women in the Genesis 6:1-4 narrative by crossing the species barrier have been incarcerated in Tartarus. In both cases, the occupants' final destination is Gehenna—the Lake of Fire—at the time of the Great White Throne Judgment following the Millennium.

The greatest authority on demon possession and exorcism is Jesus Christ. Though His ministry lasted only three years and was recorded in just four New Testament books, these eyewitness gospels include twenty-seven passages detailing Jesus' teaching on demons, demon possession, and exorcism. The number of passages discussing the same incidents emphasizes Jesus' interaction with demons: an interaction that was both frequent and confrontational. [Martin, *et al.*, 2008, p. 541]

During the Upper Room Discourse, the night before He went to the cross, Jesus said that He was sending the Holy Spirit—sometimes called the Advocate, Helper, Comforter, or Restrainer. Furthermore, unlike the temporary residence of the Holy Spirit in Old Testament times (when the Holy Spirit came *upon*

people—often for a specific task), the Holy Spirit now *permanently indwells* all believers, as He has done since the Day of Pentecost, circa 30 AD. At the Rapture, however, Christians will be removed; and accompanying them, the indwelling Holy Spirit or Restrainer will also be removed from the earth (2 Thessalonians 2:1-8). The omnipresent Holy Spirit will then resume His pre-Pentecost work (on the earth), just like in Old Testament times.

John 14:16-17 And I [Jesus] will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever -- the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you **and will be in you.**

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that **God's Spirit lives in you?** If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.

Christians are the temple of God. If you are a Christian, God's Spirit dwells in you. You are possessed by the Holy Spirit, and you can never become the temple of idols or the temple of demons. [Martin, *et al.*, 2008, p. 547]

There is a place inside a human being that is meant to be filled with something outside of him—something *supernatural*. Anyone who accepts Christ into his or her heart is immediately filled or indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and anyone rejecting God remains *vacant*, prey for malignant supernatural beings known as demons. It follows then that if you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit—God Himself—you cannot also be possessed by a demon. ... Demons live in utter terror of Jesus Christ, and with a few simple words, will *always* submit to Him. There is no room for cohabitation. [Martin, *et al.*, 2008, p. 545]

Throughout Scripture, we read of other nations' gods and idols, some of whom were introduced to ancient Israel despite God's stern warnings to avoid these false gods at all costs. Even if people thought they were going to gain some kind of short-term benefit from worshiping them and sacrificing to them—perhaps because of peer pressure, or threats of harm from their neighbours by not complying—these false gods pulled people away from the one true God and brought harm, evil, death, and quite possibly eternal separation from God (unless the people repented of their deeds). A consistent message that we learn from the Bible is that false gods and demons cannot be trusted in the long run, even if there is some temporary appeal.

The gods that were worshiped in the ancient Near East were based in areas where their temples were since that is where they were worshiped and had their needs met; however, they could extend their territory [Walton, 2018]. Some of their attributes or divine features were: they had sexual needs and desires; they made mistakes and poor decisions; they drew their identity from their social relationships, roles, and the community that welcomed them; and, they experienced emotions such as joy, pride, sorrow, anger, shame, and fear. However, they were not omniscient, omnipresent, or omnipotent.

... we find little evidence in the ancient Near Eastern literature that the ancients consider their gods to be just, wise, good, faithful, gracious, and so on ... [Walton, 2018, p. 66]

Conversely, Yahweh's attributes include justice, wisdom, goodness, faithfulness, mercy, compassion, holiness, omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience [Walton, 2018]. Yahweh is the uncaused first-cause: the Creator of the heavens and the earth. He has no needs that humans need to provide for Him. He is above all gods. He makes unconditional covenants that He will keep. One of these covenants involved the Promised Land (Israel). This quickly caught the attention of Satan, and the enemies of God soon disrupted the land that God was claiming specifically as His own. There was something special about the geography of the Promised Land. This was recognized by Naaman the Syrian who was healed of his leprosy by the prophet Elisha. Naaman requested that he be able to take two mule loads of dirt (Yahweh's land) back to Syria because he wanted to sacrifice to the Lord, and not to other gods (2 Kings 5:17) [Heiser, 2020a].

Ancient Mesopotamia, especially Babylon, had many evil supernatural beings. This may be a significant reason for why God told Abraham to leave that region and head west to what would become the Promised Land [Otis, 1991]. Babylon still has a role to play the end times. Two chapters in the book of Revelation deal with Babylon. We will discuss Babylon in detail later in this book.

To the Babylonians, the supernatural world was fully alive. Gods, ghosts and demons were everywhere. The latter, equal in power with the gods but far less rational, were especially feared. [Otis, 1991, p. 108]

History shows a pattern of influence that spread from country to country, people to people. The Egyptian gods have much in common with the gods worshiped by Greece and Rome. [Martin, *et al.*, 2008, p. 92]

Polytheism dominated the civilizations of Greece and Rome, where the public and private worship of many different gods was an intrinsic part of everyday life. When Rome conquered Greece, it assimilated many of the Greek gods into its pantheon of gods. [Martin, *et al.*, 2008, p. 83]

Rome's tolerance in openly welcoming most foreign gods led to the growth of the Mystery religions and the empire's fascination with them. Multiple altars to various deities filled ancient temples as people sought to appease all the gods.

... Individuals appropriated gods from one land and introduced them into another; transplanting them from one locale to the next in the course of everyday life. Sometimes the names remained the same; sometimes they did not. [Martin, *et al.*, 2008, p. 100]

In some of the passages which follow, we note that translators sometimes equate *demons* with *false gods*. Furthermore, Psalm 96:4-5 equates false gods with *idols*.

Deuteronomy 32:17 They sacrificed to **false gods** [Hebrew: *sed*; Greek Septuagint: *daimonion* (demons)], which are not God -- gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods your ancestors did not fear.

1 Corinthians 10:19-20 Do I mean then that food sacrificed to an **idol** is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to **demons** [*daimonion*], not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons [*daimonion*].

1 Thessalonians 1:9 for they [Gentiles] themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from **idols** to serve the living and true God,

Psalm 96:4-5 For great is the LORD [*Yahweh*] and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods [*elohim*]. For all the **gods** [*elohim*] of the nations are **idols**, but the LORD [*Yahweh*] made the heavens.

Psalm 106:35-38 but they [Israelites] mingled with the nations and adopted their customs. They worshiped their **idols** [Hebrew: *asab* or *asabim*], which became a snare to them. They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to **false gods** [Hebrew: *sed*, *sedim*, *shedim*, or *shedhim*; Greek Septuagint: *daimonion* (demons)]. They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the **idols** [*asab* or *asabim*] of Canaan, and the land was desecrated by their blood.

Perhaps the most notable term is *sedim*, which occurs in Deuteronomy 32:17 and Psalm 106:37 (NIV “false gods”) and which is translated by the LXX [Septuagint] as *daimonia*, “demons.” This translation is the basis for Paul’s argument in 1 Corinthians 10:20 ... What the word *sedim* originally referred to we do not know, although context indicates that they would not have been understood as class II spirits (that is, “demons”), since they receive offerings ... and instead should be classified as more or less parallel to foreign gods. [Walton & Walton, 2019, pp. 61-62]

It is clear that the *shedhim* are not only identified with idolatrous images, who are denied all reality as gods, but at the same time are separated from them, as being real spiritual existences behind them, energizing their worship. ... The “idols of Canaan” are the inanimate idolatrous representations, the visible means of deception. The “demons” (*shedhim*) are the real spiritual entities inspiring the perverted worship.

... the idols are “mere nothings,” non-realities. The demons behind them are the real existences. [Unger, 1952, pp. 59-61]

People did not think that physical idols that were made of wood, stone, or metal actually had any creative power. After creating the idol, they went through a ceremony to invite their deity in. If the idol was destroyed, it did not mean the entity behind the idol ceased to exist; instead, they simply created another idol [Heiser, 2020b]. They wanted to placate their god(s) to supposedly win the favor of that deity and hopefully gain themselves some contentment in life, including protection, good crops, freedom from “bad luck”, etc.

But ancient people did not believe that their gods were actually images of stone or wood. We misread the biblical writers if we think that.

What ancient idol worshippers believed was that the objects they made were *inhabited* by their gods. This is why they performed ceremonies to “open the mouth” of the statue. The mouth (and nostrils) had to be ritually opened for the spirit of the deity to move in and occupy, a notion inspired by the idea that one needs to breathe to live. ...

[In] Paul’s warning in 1 Corinthians 10:18-22 ... he clarifies that he also knows that sacrifices to idols are actually sacrifices to demons—evil members of the spiritual world. [Heiser, 2015, pp. 35-36]

Septuagint scholars used the Greek word *daimonion* when translating the Old Testament Hebrew word *sedim* into Greek. In classical Greek, the word *daimonion* could have either a good or an evil connotation. It was similar to the Hebrew word *elohim* [Gonzales, 2020b]. The context would tell us about the connotation. It likely does not mean “demon” since a demon would be a lesser spiritual being in the hierarchy of *elohim*, and sacrifices would not be offered to lesser beings.

Mondo Gonzales argues that the word *sed* (singular) or *sedim* (plural) really means “territorial spirit” rather than “evil spirit” or “demon”. Although evil spirits and demons are the same in the New Testament, when the term “evil spirit” is mentioned in the Old Testament, the Hebrew word used is not *sedim* nor is the Greek word *daimonion* used to translate it from Hebrew to Greek. Instead, the Hebrew word *ruah* is used which is translated “spirit”, and the context determines whether the spirit is good or evil:

1 Samuel 16:14 Now the Spirit [*ruah*] of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit [*ruah*] from the LORD tormented him.

This suggests that *sedim* refers to a higher level in the hierarchy of *elohim* than demons. So, perhaps “false god” is the right interpretation. Note that Psalm 106:37 states that *sedim* received child sacrifices.

Idols are representations of the entity behind them. John MacArthur thinks that demons may have been *impersonating* their false gods, taking actions to provide enough “incentives” for the worshipers to continue worshipping the idols:

People worship an idol. ... But if a person wants to believe there's a god there, you know what Satan will do? He'll send one of his demons to impersonate the god the people think is there, and that demon will do enough supernatural works to keep the people worshipping that idol. [MacArthur, 2022b]

[Satan's] demons move around and impersonate all the religious systems of the world. His demons fill and maintain all of the evil systems of this world ... [MacArthur, 2022b]

Idolatry is the most serious and contaminating of all the sins because it strikes directly at the character of God. That's why, out of the Ten Commandments, the first three of them are directly related to idolatry. [MacArthur, 2022a]

Sydney Page comments on coordinated attacks from demons:

Outside the Bible, demons are usually conceived as powers of harm and destruction that act rather capriciously, not as forces organized into a hierarchy of evil under the control of a single leader and with a common task. Even in the Old Testament, the notion that Satan is the head of a kingdom of fallen spirits is not clearly expressed. Jesus, however, develops the intimations of the Old Testament and represents the demons, not as independent agents of misfortune, but as a body of wicked spirits operating in league with Satan. From this understanding of the realm of evil, we may draw two major conclusions. First, the activities of the demons take on a more sinister character than would otherwise be the case, for they are viewed as part of a coordinated attack rather than haphazard occurrences. Second, Jesus' encounters with the demonic must also be understood as encounters with Satan. Even though Satan may not be mentioned explicitly in the exorcism narratives, we must not lose sight of the fact that the demons act as his agents. [Page, 1995, pp. 102-103]

Jesus saw Satan and the demons as composing a unified force of evil. So closely were Satan and the demons identified with each other in his thinking that Jesus regarded those who were possessed by demons as also being victims of Satan. Furthermore, Jesus believed that, when he expelled a demon from an individual, he was dealing a blow not only to the demon but also to his master. [Page, 1995, p. 108]

Let us briefly consider some of the "false gods" mentioned in the Bible. Baal deserves special attention in our study. Zeus is the Greek form of Baal, Jupiter is the Roman form of Baal, Bel is the Babylonian form of Baal, and Baal is another name for Satan [Gilbert, 2021; Hamp, 2021].

He was called *Baal*, chief god of the Canaanite pantheon. ... Nations, regions, and cities each had their own *Baals*. ... Even families had their own personal *Baals*, clay figurine idols of the omnipresent deity. ...

Baal promised the Israelites fertility, fruitfulness, increase, gain, and prosperity. Thus as they began cultivating the land, the temptation to invoke his powers proved more and more compelling. Many Israelites turned away from God to follow him.

He was so prominent that when the Bible mentions his name along with those of other foreign gods, he is almost always mentioned first. ...

In the ninth century BC the worship of Baal had made such inroads into Israel's culture and state that those who refused to join it were persecuted, hunted down, and killed. It was over the worship of Baal that the prophet Elijah rose up against the apostate king Ahab and his co-regent, Jezebel.

... To the nation of Israel, Baal was the embodiment of paganism and of all pagan gods. He was the epitome of all that was not God and all that warred against Him. Baal was the *other god*, the *substitute god*, the *instead of God*. He was Israel's *anti-God*. He was the god that Israel turned to when it turned away from God. He was the god who separated Israel from its God, who drew it away, who made it forget the God of its foundation. [Cahn, 2022, pp. 39-41]

Chemosh was the god of the Moabites (Numbers 21:29; Judges 11:24; 1 Kings 11:7,33; Jeremiah 48:7,46) [van der Toorn, *et al.*, 1999]. Molech (sometimes spelled Molek) was the main god of the Ammonites (1 Kings 11:7). Child sacrifice by fire—a detestable practice in the eyes of God—was offered to Molech by their parents (Leviticus 18:21; 20:2-4; 2 Kings 23:10; Jeremiah 32:35). Milcom was also a god of the Ammonites (1 Kings 11:5,33; 2 Kings 23:13; Zephaniah 1:5). Note that some translations of the Bible use the name Molech (e.g., NIV) in place of Milcom; but, Milcom is not the same as Molech because they were worshiped separately [van der Toorn, *et al.*, 1999]. In fact, the NASB has references to both Molech and Milcom. Ashtoreth was the goddess of the Sidonians. She was the goddess of sexuality, including sexual promiscuity and prostitution [Cahn, 2022]. She was sometimes known as the *Queen of Heaven*. In much of Mesopotamia (including Assyria and Babylon), she was known as Ishtar; in ancient Greece: Aphrodite; and in Rome: Venus. We get the term “Asherah pole” from Ashtoreth. Tammuz was the lover of Ashtoreth.

Specific references to the religion of the Canaanites in the Old Testament generally represent it very unfavorably. There are many references to the god Baal (*ba'al* means “master, owner, lord”) ... Worship of Baal was practiced with the burning of incense (2 Kings 23:5), upon occasion by the prophets' outcry and the cutting of themselves with swords and lances (1 Kings 18:26), and by the burning of children in fire as burnt offerings to Baal (Jer. 19:5).

The word *Asherah* (masculine plural, Asherim; feminine plural, Asheroth) is both the name of a goddess and also the term for a cult object by which the goddess was represented. As a cult object the Asherah was normally made of wood and accordingly could be cut down and burned (Judg. 6:25-26). A tree could be planted as an Asherah (Deut. 16:21), or a graven image of Asherah could be made (2 Kings 21:7). Mention can therefore be made of both Asherah (plainly meaning the goddess) and “her image” (2 Chron. 15:16). As a cult object the Asherah could well stand beside the altar of Baal (Judg. 6:25). Like Baal, Asherah also had prophets and upon occasion they appear in almost as great numbers (four hundred) as the prophets of Baal (450, 1 Kings 18:19). Cult prostitutes—both male and female (1 Kings

14:23-24; Deut. 23:17)—were also associated with Asherah (2 Kings 23:7), and their practices were presumably considered efficacious in the promotion of fertility in family, herds, and fields. [Finegan, 1989, pp. 132-133]

1 Kings 11:1-9 [NKJV] But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, [and] Hittites -- from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, "You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as [was] the heart of his father David. For Solomon went after **Ashtoreth** the goddess of the Sidonians, and after **Milcom** the abomination of the Ammonites. Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as [did] his father David. Then Solomon built a high place for **Chemosh** the abomination of Moab, on the hill that [is] east of Jerusalem, and for **Molech** the abomination of the people of Ammon. And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. So the LORD became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the LORD God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the LORD had commanded.

2 Chronicles 33:1-6 Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-five years. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, following the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. He rebuilt the high places his father Hezekiah had demolished; he also erected altars to the **Baals** and made **Asherah** poles. He bowed down to all the starry hosts and worshiped them. He built altars in the temple of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "My Name will remain in Jerusalem forever." In both courts of the temple of the LORD, he built altars to all the starry hosts. He sacrificed his children in the fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, practiced divination and witchcraft, sought omens, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the LORD, arousing his anger.

... the gods of ancient Canaan and Phoenicia to which the Israelites sacrificed were not simply the figments of pagan imagination but actual spiritual entities. Likewise, the gods that the Gentiles worshipped and sacrificed to in the first-century Roman Empire, gods with such names as Jupiter, Apollo, Vesta, and Bacchus were not simply the imagined or invented characters of pagan mythology—but were connected to spiritual entities, the daimonia, demonic spirits. From the Old Testament Hebrew to the New Testament Greek, the revelation is clear and consistent—behind the gods of the pagan world were the shedim, the daimonia, the spirits. [Cahn, 2022, p. 13]

The nominal head of the Canaanite pantheon was El, a “remote, high god,” who interfered little in the affairs of the world.

... El, in the Canaanite mythology, presided over the assembly of the gods who gathered in the farthest reaches of the north. ...

When not the name of a goddess, the term Asherah, and its plural, Asherim, denote the wooden poles which stood at Canaanite places of worship. ... The Asherah is thought to have been the trunk of a tree with the branches chopped off. It was erected beside the altar of Baal (Judg. 6:25,28) in the fertility cult which was scathingly denounced by the Israelite prophets.

El and his wife Asherah produced a family of seventy Elim, gods and goddesses, best known of whom was Baal (meaning “master,” “lord”), who was identified with the storm god, Hadad. Baal was the god of fertility responsible for the germination and growth of crops, the increase of flocks and herds, and the fecundity [many children] of human families.

Baal worship was the most degrading aspect of Canaanite civilizations. Devotees brought wine, oil, first fruits, and firstlings of the flocks to the “high places.” Near the rock altar was a *mazzebah* or sacred pillar which represented the male element in the fertility cult, corresponding to the Asherah, or female element. Chambers were maintained for sacred prostitution by *kedeshim* (“male prostitutes”) and *kedeshoth* (“sacred harlots”) (cf. I Kings 14:23,24; II Kings 23:7).

... The gods of the heathen were regarded as evil spirits by the Biblical writers, and Beel-zebub or Beel-zebul became a name for Satan. ...

Dagon of the Old Testament finds his counterpart in the Ugaritic Dagan, the god of grain and the genius of the crops. He was worshiped by the Philistines who built temples to him at Gaza and Ashdod (Judg. 16:23-30; I Sam. 5:1-7).

... The nether world and the barren places of earth were the realm of Mot (the Canaanite god of death) [e.g., Job 28:22; Psalm 88:10]. Mot is the particular enemy of Baal, and the fertility cult in general, as death is the enemy of life. [Pfeiffer, 1973, pp. 70-74]

Only the God of the Bible is uncreated; all other beings are created entities, and this includes other supernatural beings such as false gods, demons, angels, etc. Those beings were created with choice. Some chose to follow and worship God; others did not. Note that God alone deserves worship. Created beings (supernatural or human), created objects or entities (e.g., sun, moon, stars, birds, reptiles, animals, idols, images, nations, governments, or organizations), and created/man-made attributes (e.g., money/wealth; power; military strength; or social, sporting, political, or celebrity status) do not deserve worship. Thus, based on the word “created” alone, we can easily determine who can be worshiped versus who/what cannot be worshiped [Wright, 2020].

On the one hand it is true as we have seen, that God battles with idolatry because it diminishes the glory that is rightfully God's own. God's jealousy for God's own self is a powerful dynamic throughout Scripture. But on the other hand, God's battle against the gods of human hands (and all they represent) can be seen as a function of his *loving benevolence toward us* and indeed toward his whole creation. Divine jealousy is in fact an essential function of divine love. It is precisely because God wills our good that he hates the self-inflicted harm that our idolatry generates. God's conflict with the gods is ultimately for our own good, as well as for God's glory.

... The battle to rid the nations of their false gods is a battle of divine love.

... the idols, gods, demons, and spiritual powers, against which we declare war in the name of the gospel of Christ and his cross, are things that oppress and ravage human existence. False gods destroy and devour lives, health, and resources; they distort and diminish our humanity; they preside over injustice, greed, perversion, cruelty, lust, and violence. It is possibly the most satanic dimension of their deceptive power that, in spite of all this, they still persuade people that they are beneficent protectors of their worshipers' identity, dignity, and prosperity; and must therefore be defended at all costs. Only the gospel can unmask these claims. [Wright, 2020, pp. 50-52]

God is literally infuriated when He sees what was designed for His glory being switched to, specifically, humans, birds, animals, and reptiles. When such visible objects are intentionally crafted to represent supernatural powers, they release the wrath of God.

If we trace references to the wrath of God through the Bible, it is clear that nothing even comes close to upsetting God as much as "serving the creature rather than the Creator" (see Rom. 1:25). God especially hates it when human beings use the visible to glorify Satan and other evil demonic beings. [Wagner, 2015, p. 53]

As we approach the time of Christ's Second Coming, dark spiritual forces will continue and accelerate their attack, and will attempt to destroy the plans of God, especially if we lay out the "welcome mat". George Otis, Jr. insists that *something is out there*: territorial strongholds and dark spiritual entities that we cannot see, but whose work we can observe:

Although demonic entrenchment is hardly unique—the Hebrews encountered it in both Egypt and Babylon, and the apostle Paul found it in Ephesus ... demonic pacts have been serviced continually since postdiluvian times [i.e., after Noah's Flood] and spiritual light is nearly imperceptible.

... the vast majority of today's international pastors, missionaries, evangelists, and intercessors have no need to be convinced that something is out there, and this "something" is manifesting itself in our material world. ... Based on the feedback I have been getting from concerned believers around the world, here are three primary observations:

1. Spiritual darkness is increasing and is becoming more sophisticated.
2. There is a geographical pattern to evil and spiritual oppression.

3. They do not understand the spiritual dimension as well as they thought.

... [In various parts of the world] elaborate hierarchies of deities and spirits are regarded as commonplace. These incorporeal beings are perceived to rule over homes, villages, cities, valleys, provinces, and nations, and they exercise extraordinary power over the behavior of local peoples. ...

Almost everyone has had the experience of entering another city, neighborhood, or country only to sense an intangible unease or oppression descend upon their spirits. ...

Regardless of their theology, any honest and moderately traveled Christian will acknowledge that there are certain areas of the world today where spiritual darkness is more pronounced. ... Why are some areas more oppressive, more idolatrous, more spiritually barren than others? Why does darkness seem to linger where it does? [George Otis, Jr. in [Wagner, 2015, pp. 35-39]]

In one of Jesus' parables (Matthew 12:43-45 and Luke 11:24-26), He states that when a demon has been cast out of a person, and the person does not replace the spiritual void with God, the demon can return, but this time with more demons (i.e., evil spirits that are even more wicked)—leaving a person in a worse state than before [Martin, *et al.*, 2008].

Matthew 12:43-45 [ESV] "When the **unclean spirit** has gone out of a person, it passes through **waterless places** seeking rest, but finds none. Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation."

It is interesting to note that the unclean spirits (demons) seek arid or "waterless places". This may be a reference to their hosts—the Nephilim—who perished in the Flood [Van Dorn, 2023]. Furthermore:

If Jesus was baptized in Bashan on the east side of the Jordan, north and east of [the] Sea of Galilee, then he symbolically came out of the same water in which the [Nephilim drowned]. Even earlier symbolism would be apparent, that he came out of the water ordeal *alive*, whereas the original Nephilim *perished* in the Flood. [Van Dorn, 2023, p. 201]

Similarly, in *The Return of the Gods*, Jonathan Cahn warns western civilization that when it starts throwing God out of the public schools, universities, government, courts, arts, music, media, culture, and overall society, then that creates a void, and that void serves as a welcome mat for other gods and spirits including the ancient ones such as Baal, Asherah, and Molech [Cahn, 2022]. He argues that this is already happening in the culture and institutions of America (and many other countries)—and the same forms of wickedness that those gods promoted in ancient times appear to be what is happening today. In

particular, much of the downhill slide has happened in the past 50 years. We all have a spiritual component that needs to be filled by someone—or something—to worship. After the time of Christ, over a period of hundreds of years, many of the false gods were displaced by Jesus and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. However, we have started to kick Jesus and Christianity out of many of our institutions, and that opens the door to other gods *who are very eager to return*.

So in order to achieve dominion, the gods had to separate nations, cultures, and civilizations from God—and also individuals. If one is separated from God, one is subject to the gods, to the powers of darkness. ...

The gods lead to hell. They are bent on death and destruction. They are the spirits of hell.

But the other God is bent on heaven and eternal life. The message of salvation is that Yeshua, Jesus, bore your judgment [on the cross] so that you would never have to. And by that salvation, you are set free from all darkness, all sin, all judgment, and all hell and given life, here and now and forever—heaven. ...

There is no life so far from God that His mercy cannot reach it. There is no sin one has committed that is so great that His forgiveness is not greater still ...

It is as simple as making Him who is the only Lord the true Lord of your life, and Him who is the only true God, the true God of your life. [Cahn, 2022, pp. 234-235]

Once the Restrainer (the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit) is removed at time of the Rapture (2 Thessalonians 2), it is likely that evil supernatural activity will kick into overdrive. This has *major* implications for the world during the Tribulation.

In summary, supernatural beings include:

- The one God [*Yahweh, Elohim*] of the Bible, revealed in three persons (“the Trinity”): Father, Son (Jesus Christ), and Holy Spirit—co-equal and co-eternal. Some supporting references are: Genesis 1:1-2,26; 11:7; Deuteronomy 5:7; 6:4; Matthew 3:16-17; 16:16; 28:19; John 8:58; 10:30; 14-16; 20:28; and 2 Corinthians 13:14 [Elwell, 1984].
- Satan, who goes by a number of names or designations including—but not limited to—the devil, adversary, slanderer, accuser, enemy, evil one, serpent, dragon, Lucifer, Beelzebul, Belial, son of perdition, prince of demons, prince of darkness, and prince of this world
- False gods [*sedim*] or “foreign gods”. Some authors (e.g., [Gilbert, 2021]) use this term to include both fallen angels and demons. Others (e.g., [Walton & Walton, 2019]) argue that false gods receive

sacrifices, whereas demons act as their intermediaries [MacArthur, 2022b]. Thus, false gods have higher rank or authority.

- Angels (good). An angel (Hebrew: *malak* or (plural) *malakim*; Greek: *aggelos*) is a *messenger*—a spirit being sent by God to send or receive a message [Heiser, 2018]. The term “angel” is essentially a job description or function. More details are below.
- Archangels (a New Testament term) like Michael or Gabriel. These are higher ranking angels, and they may be the same as (good) chief princes in Daniel 10. Thus, the counterpart of an archangel, on the dark side, may be chief princes like the Prince of Persia and the Prince of Greece. It’s possible that archangels are part of the divine council [Gonzales, 2020b]. The Book of Enoch mentions three other archangels: Raphael, Phanuel, and Uriel [Johnson, 2012]. Note that all the names end with the letters “el”.
- Angels (evil), including supernatural kings and princes (see Daniel 10). They are also called *fallen angels*, *evil spirits*, *unclean spirits*, (evil) *Watchers*, and sometimes *demons*. In some of the Second Temple Period Jewish literature, the term “Watchers” is commonly used to describe the fallen sons of God in Genesis 6:1-4 [Heiser, 2018].
 - These fallen angels sided with Satan. Some are more wicked than others. Although some of them are already chained for judgment (2 Peter 2:4), most seem to be free as they are actively engaged in the world’s affairs (Ephesians 6:12).
 - We think that one-third of the original angels fell with Satan because of the reference in Revelation 12:4 that says the Dragon’s (Satan’s) tail swept a third of the stars out of heaven and cast them to the earth. A star is sometimes used in Scripture as a symbol for an angel. More importantly, a few verses later, we read the explanation:

Revelation 12:9 The great dragon was hurled down -- that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.
- *Cherubim*. They are 4-winged creatures. Note that angels are never mentioned as having wings [Stewart, 2016a]. Unlike angels, they are *not* messengers for God.
 - Satan was a *cherub*, and he led some of the angels to rebel.
 - In the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24), *cherubim* guarded the Tree of Life to prevent Adam and Eve from accessing it after their fall, lest they live forever in their fallen state.

- Cherubim guard sacred spaces (e.g., the interiors of the Tabernacle and temples) [Walton & Walton, 2019]. For example, figures of the *cherubim* are present above the Ark of the Covenant (e.g., Exodus 25:18-22; 1 Kings 6:23-35) in the Tabernacle and the first temple (Solomon’s Temple). The atonement cover (lid), or mercy seat, was part of the Ark of the Covenant. The first temple had two fifteen-foot tall, carved, olive wood, *cherubim*.
- The Lord is said to ride on cherubim (Psalm 18:10; 2 Samuel 22:11).
- Their images will also be present in the future Millennial temple (e.g., Ezekiel 41:18).

- *Seraphim* are the 6-winged creatures mentioned in Isaiah 6:2-7. Like cherubim, they do not deliver messages from God; that function belongs to angels [Heiser, 2018]. Two of their wings covered their faces (they may have 4 faces), and 2 of their wings covered their feet. They spoke to Isaiah, who viewed them with awe; and they worshiped the Lord and acknowledged His holy nature.

[Friedhelm] Hartenstein’s point is that cherubim and seraphim would be viewed as a blessing (protection) by those welcome in the sacred space they guarded, but as a terror to those unwelcome. [Heiser, 2018, p. 25]

- The *Living Creatures* mentioned in Revelation 4-5. Some Bible teachers (e.g., [Woods, 2023a]) believe that these living creatures are seraphim because they have 6 wings (like the seraphim described in Isaiah 6:2-7, albeit without the numerous eyes) and because they continuously bring praise and worship to the Lord.

No female angels are mentioned in Scripture. Every word-reference to angels is in the masculine gender. Angels were created possibly on Day 1 or 2 of creation week (Exodus 20:8-11; Job 38:4-7); and, because God said that all of His creation was “very good” after Day 6, it’s possible that the angels fell sometime on or after Day 7 [Stewart, 2016b].

Job 38 says the “sons of God” were present at the creation of the heavens and earth. This may have been all the angels, if the fall of the angels hadn’t occurred yet; or, if the fall had occurred, then it would have been only the elect (good) angels since those angels were praising God because of His creation [Stewart, 2016a]. Genesis 2:1-2 confirms that angels were created *before* Day 7 of creation week. We know that angels were created before Day 7 because the angels expressed joy at God’s creative work, and God said that He completed all of His creation in Heaven and on Earth within 6 days.

Angels are sometimes called the host, heavenly host, holy ones, spirits, sons of God, sons of the Mighty, Watchers, flames of fire, morning stars, rulers,

authorities, and powers. However, these terms also include other heavenly beings.

Angels are God's messengers. We get the English word "angel" from the Greek word *angelos*. Hebrews 1:14 says that angels are "ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation". They are intelligent beings. It is possible that no one knows us better than certain angels and, of course, God; and if that is the case, shouldn't our day-to-day choices reflect this audience [Alcorn, 2004]? The angels themselves are observing and learning about us and the choices we make.

It's possible that many angels may be looking after each believer; but, we should be reminded that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to indwell in each believer (John 14:16). Each individual church probably has a number of angels watching over that church [Stewart, 2016a].

Occasionally, in the Bible, we find that angels manifest themselves temporarily in the form of a human body, and even eat (e.g., Genesis 18:8). They are not subject to natural laws. The appearance of an angel is called an *angelophany*. In all cases, the appearance is that of a male human (e.g., Genesis 19:1; Luke 24:4). Two of the elect angels are named: Michael and Gabriel. They are from a high class of angels. Michael is called an archangel. Gabriel isn't explicitly called an archangel; however, he might be one.

In the unseen spiritual battle with the prince of the Persian kingdom, an angel (possibly Gabriel) receives help from the archangel Michael who is called "one of the chief princes"; hence, there must be other chief princes, and a hierarchy:

Daniel 10:12-14 But **the prince of the Persian kingdom** resisted me twenty-one days. Then **Michael, one of the chief princes**, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. Now I have come to explain to you [Daniel] what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come."

Daniel 10:20-21 Then he [the angel] said, "Do you understand why I came to you? But I shall now return to fight against **the prince of Persia**; so I am leaving, and behold, **the prince of Greece** is about to come. "However, I will tell you what is recorded in the writing of truth. Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these [forces] except **Michael your prince**.

The name "Michael" means "Who is like God?" The name "Daniel" means "God is my judge." Michael is a defender of Israel and the Jews, even when the Jews are out of the land. Daniel found this out while he was in Babylon, and was informed about some details concerning Israel in the Tribulation:

Daniel 12:1-2 "At that time **Michael, the great prince** who protects your people [the Jews], will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from

the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people -- everyone whose name is found written in the book -- will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt."

We also know that Michael and his angels will be at war with Satan and his fallen angels (Revelation 12:7-9). Also, in Jude 9, we learn that Michael was respectfully arguing with Satan about the body of Moses.

The name "Gabriel" means "God is my strength" or "mighty one". Gabriel explained to Daniel the kingdoms that were represented in Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the large statue (Daniel 8). Around 550 BC, he told Daniel about the future rule of the Medes & Persians and the Greeks, including the premature death of the Greek ruler (who would be Alexander the Great) [Stewart, 2016a]. Gabriel mentioned the famous prophecy of the 70 Weeks in Daniel 9. He announced the birth of John the Baptist, and the birth of Christ (both in Luke 1).

Here are some of the appearances of angels that we know about [Stewart, 2016a; Lindsay, 2018]:

- Appearing to Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 16:7; 21:17)
- Visiting, and eating with, Abraham (Genesis 18:1-2,8)
- Rescuing Lot's family from Sodom (Genesis 19:16)
- Appearing to Jacob (who was renamed "Israel") (Genesis 28:12; 31:11; 32:1-2)
- The Passover angel (Exodus 12)
- Appearing to Balaam and his donkey (Numbers 22:23,31)
- Visiting David on the Temple Mount, at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite (equivalently, Hebrew: *Ornan* the Jebusite), which is where the first and second temples were to be located (2 Samuel 24:16; 2 Chronicles 3:1)
- Strengthening the discouraged Elijah and providing food for him (1 Kings 19:5-7)
- Revealing the angelic realm, after the prophet Elisha prayed that his servant would see the angels around them (2 Kings 6:17)
- Killing 185,000 members of the Assyrian army who were about to attack Israel including Jerusalem (2 Kings 19:35-36; Isaiah 37:36-37)
- Visiting Ezekiel when he received the vision of the millennial temple (Ezekiel 40:3)
- Providing information throughout the book of Daniel, and answering prayers
- Protecting Daniel in the lions' den (Daniel 10:18-19)
- Visiting Zechariah (Zechariah 2:1)
- Warning Joseph to take Mary and the infant Jesus to Egypt to escape from King Herod's attempt to kill Jesus (Matthew 2:13)

- Telling Joseph to return from Egypt because Herod was dead (Matthew 2:19-20)
- Attending to Jesus after he was tempted by the devil for 40 days (Matthew 4:11)
- Watching over children (Matthew 18:10)
- Appearing at the tomb of Jesus (Matthew 28:2; Luke 24:4; Mark 16:4-5)
- The angel Gabriel, visiting Zechariah who would become the father of John the Baptist (Luke 1:11-12)
- The angel Gabriel, visiting Mary who would become the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:26-29)
- Being present at—and announcing—the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem (Luke 2:8-15)
- Caring for believers at the moment of death, and carrying away their spirit (Luke 16:22). We also read about numerous cases in the Old Testament when a believer was “gathered to his people” upon death.
- Strengthening Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, before His arrest (Luke 22:43)
- Appearing during Christ’s ascension to Heaven (Acts 1:10)
- Freeing the apostles from prison (Acts 5:18-19)
- Delivering the Law to Moses (Acts 7:53)
- Appearing to Philip before he visited the Ethiopian eunuch on the road to Gaza (Acts 8:26)
- Appearing to Cornelius (Acts 10:1-3)
- Instructing Peter and freeing him from prison (Acts 12:6-10)
- Killing King Herod (Acts 12:23)
- Encouraging Paul while in a storm on the Mediterranean, before the shipwreck (Acts 27:23-26)
- Serving the seven churches in Revelation 2-3
- Pouring out judgments on the earth during the Tribulation (various places in Revelation)
- Preaching the gospel, and warning the inhabitants of the earth about the upcoming judgments during the Tribulation (Revelation 14:6-7)
- Making announcements during the Tribulation (various places in Revelation)
- Chaining and imprisoning Satan at the end of the Tribulation (Revelation 20:1-3)
- Measuring the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:15-17)

Angels and humans are similar in several ways: (1) both are servants of God, (2) both are immortal—that is, they will live forever, and (3) both have personality (mind, will, and emotions). Even with these similarities, the Bible makes it clear that angels are angels, and humans are humans. We are two totally different orders of beings. While humans possess a spirit, we are also creatures of flesh and bone. Angels are not. While they can assume human flesh and carry out human functions such as eating and drinking

(Genesis 18:1-8), still, people do not become angels in heaven. [Hitchcock, 2019a, pp. 155-156].

The unseen world is real. We are observed by angels, and angels learn. The decisions we make are observed by the unseen world. One might say that Earth is the “theater of the universe”. Angels may have locality because we learn in Jude 6 that some of the angels left their *estate*, during the days of Noah. Christ warned us that the End Times would be “as is was in the days of Noah”; and because there was a lot of dark supernatural or demonic activity in those days, we can expect such activity to increase as we approach the time of Christ’s return.

Itemized above are angelic appearances; but on some occasions, it was “the angel of the Lord” that appeared to the individuals, namely:

- Hagar, with whom Abraham had the son Ishmael (Genesis 16:7-13). He appeared to her in the desert.
- Abraham and Sarah, prior to Isaac and to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18)
- Abraham on Mount Moriah, when Abraham was going to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, and in the promises to Abraham afterwards (both in Genesis 22)
- Jacob, when he wrestled with God (Genesis 31:11), and in the promises afterwards (e.g., Genesis 48:16)
- Moses, in the burning bush incident (Exodus 3)
- Joshua, confronted by the Commander of the Lord’s army (Joshua 5)
- Israelites at Gilgal (Judges 2)
- Gideon, prior to his battle with the Midianites (Judges 6)
- Samson’s parents (Judges 13:21-22)
- Stephen, who was martyred (Acts 7)
- Peter, when he was in prison (Acts 12)

However, there are also occurrences where the Lord gave instructions to “the angel of the Lord”, suggesting that they are not the same [Stewart, 2016a]. These occurrences are:

- To the prophet Zechariah, regarding Jerusalem and Judah (Zechariah 1:11-13)
- At the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite (2 Samuel 24:16-18) on what was later to become the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. It is interesting to note that King David bought the site *in what is perhaps the world’s most important real estate transaction*:

2 Samuel 24:21-24 Araunah said, “Why has my lord the king come to his servant?” “To buy your threshing floor,” David answered, “so I can build an altar to the LORD, that the plague on the people may be stopped.” Araunah said

to David, "Let my lord the king take whatever he wishes and offer it up. Here are oxen for the burnt offering, and here are threshing sledges and ox yokes for the wood. Your Majesty, Araunah gives all this to the king." Araunah also said to him, "May the LORD your God accept you." But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen and paid fifty shekels of silver for them. David built an altar to the LORD there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then the LORD answered his prayer in behalf of the land, and the plague on Israel was stopped.

In a similar passage in 1 Chronicles 21:18-28, David also paid 600 shekels (about 15 pounds) of gold, presumably for the entire site or mount [Ritmeyer, 2015].

It is possible that "the angel of the Lord" might be two different people. For example, perhaps one of them was the preincarnate Christ, and the other was Gabriel. In Luke 1, Gabriel is called "an angel of the Lord", but there are no articles ("a", "an", or "the") present in some of those passages in the Greek. Note that Jesus is *the fullness of the deity in bodily form* (Colossians 2:9). God the Father is a *spirit* being.

Hank Hanegraaff states, "Virtually every theological heresy begins with a misconception of the nature of God." The Bible reveals to us that there is only one God, and that He is revealed in three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), and that these three persons are eternally distinct.

A side note: the high priest "Melchizedek" in the Bible is very likely Jesus Christ, preincarnate [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, August 23, 2011; Hamrick, 2020]. Recall that Abraham offered tithes to Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18). The Hebrew name for Melchizedek is made up of two parts: a word meaning "king" and a word meaning "righteousness" [Hamrick, 2020]. Thus, his name means "king of righteousness". Melchizedek had no genealogy (Hebrews 7:3). Jesus said that Abraham saw him, suggesting an Old Testament appearance of Christ:

John 8:56-58 Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad." "You are not yet fifty years old," they said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!" "Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"

The Law of Moses forbids anyone not of the lineage of Levi to be made a Levitical priest. God the Father swears an oath that cannot be broken, the Messiah will be a priest of the order of Melchizedek, not of the Order of Levi. ...

Jesus was from the tribe of Judah, not Levi, so it was illegal for Him to be ordained as a Levitical priest. So, Paul immediately reminds them that the

prophecy in Psalm 110 dictated that the Messiah was to be a priest of a different order. He was to be a Melchizedekian priest. [Johnson, 2021a, pp. 276-279]

Psalm 110:4 The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

The Levite must start apprenticing at the age of twenty, start actually performing his duties as priest by the age of twenty-five, and there was a mandatory retirement at the age of fifty.

... A Melchizedekian priest starts performing his duties as a priest whenever the last high priest, or God, ordains him. Unlike the Levitical priesthood, the Melchizedekian priesthood is only stopped by death. There is no mandatory retirement.

... why would God send the Messiah to be a priest but not of the Order of Aaron? The only answer could be that the Order of Aaron was not good enough. That order of priests, with its laws, cannot save. But the Messiah can.

... and since the Messiah will never die, His priesthood is now eternal! [Johnson, 2021a, pp. 285-287]

Besides King David's purchase of land on the Temple Mount, another famous real estate transaction in the Bible, which has modern-day implications, is found in Chapter 23 of Genesis. Abraham purchased the cave of Machpelah (in Hebron) from Ephron the Hittite for 400 shekels of silver circa 2000 BC. There he buried his wife Sarah. Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Leah were also buried there. After the Exodus from Egypt, Hebron was a center of Nephilim (giant) activity: the location where Anak, Arba (the father of Anak), and the Anakim lived. It is in today's West Bank (Judea and Samaria).

Genesis 23:7-20 Then Abraham rose and bowed down before the people of the land, the Hittites. He said to them, "If you are willing to let me bury my dead, then listen to me and intercede with Ephron son of Zohar on my behalf so he will sell me the cave of Machpelah, which belongs to him and is at the end of his field. Ask him to sell it to me for the full price as a burial site among you." Ephron the Hittite was sitting among his people and he replied to Abraham in the hearing of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of his city. "No, my lord," he said. "Listen to me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. I give it to you in the presence of my people. Bury your dead." Again Abraham bowed down before the people of the land and he said to Ephron in their hearing, "Listen to me, if you will. I will pay the price of the field. Accept it from me so I can bury my dead there." Ephron answered Abraham, "Listen to me, my lord; the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver, but what is that between me and you? Bury your dead." **Abraham agreed to Ephron's terms and weighed out for him**

the price he had named in the hearing of the Hittites: four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weight current among the merchants. So Ephron's field in Machpelah near Mamre -- both the field and the cave in it, and all the trees within the borders of the field -- was deeded to Abraham as his property in the presence of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of the city. Afterward **Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave in the field of Machpelah near Mamre (which is at Hebron)** in the land of Canaan. So the field and the cave in it were deeded to Abraham by the Hittites as a burial site.

Angels are *created beings*, and they are not in any way equal to God. The devil is not the equal and opposite power of God. The devil is a creation that the Creator created. Fallen angels and demons cannot repent or be saved. Their fate is sealed. At this point in history, the “good” supernatural beings cannot fall.

Our culture pictures the devil as a guy dressed in red, with horns and a pitchfork ... and the angels as having wings and white robes. A demonic spirit can harm people by influencing them through their minds. Hanegraaff states that demons can *tempt* you to lie (but cannot *make* you lie); a demon cannot bite you; a demon cannot cause you to levitate; and a demon cannot write messages on your fogged-up bathroom mirror. He adds that angels cannot have sexual intercourse, contrary to what some theologians believe about Genesis 6.

Regarding the story about Saul and the witch of Endor, and the appearance of a “ghost”, this is not normative. Hanegraaff believes that the image of Samuel that was brought up by the witch was not actually brought up *by her*, but rather, *in spite of her*. In other words, God may have brought up the image. Note that the witch herself was surprised!

What about the four living creatures in Revelation? Are they angels?

Revelation 4:6-7 Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were **four living creatures**, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a **lion**, the second was like an **ox**, the third had a face like a **man**, the fourth was like a flying **eagle**. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying: “‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,’ who was, and is, and is to come.” Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

Henry Morris compares these six-winged living creatures to the four-winged creatures in Ezekiel 1 and the six-winged *seraphim* in Isaiah 6. Each of the living creatures in Ezekiel had 4 faces, pointed in different directions; but, the faces were that of a man, lion, ox, and eagle. In Ezekiel 10, these creatures may have been called *cherubim*; but, we're not sure if the Ezekiel 1 creatures were *cherubim*, or if they are the same creatures as in Revelation 4-5 [Stewart, 2016a].

The translation "creature" is quite inaccurate. The Greek word is *zoon*, which means "living ones."

... Some interpret the four living creatures as representative of the attributes or qualities of God. This is probably the best interpretation. Just as the Holy Spirit is represented by seven torches, the attributes of God are represented by the four living ones. The fact that the creatures are full of eyes can signify the omniscience and omnipresence of God who knows all and sees all.

In a similar way the four creatures' depictions are respectively a lion, a calf, a man, and an eagle, which are considered different aspects of divine majesty. All of these are supreme in their respective categories. The lion is the king of beasts and represents majesty and omnipotence. The calf or ox, representing the most important of domestic animals, signifies patience and continuous labor. Man is the greatest of all God's creatures, especially in intelligence and rational power. The eagle is the greatest among birds and is symbolic of sovereignty and supremacy.

Comparison has also been made of the four living creatures to the four Gospels, which present Christ in four major aspects of His person. As the lion, He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, represented as the King of Matthew. As the calf or ox, He is the Servant of Jehovah, the faithful One of Mark. As man, He is the human Jesus, presented in the Gospel of Luke. As the eagle, He is the divine Son of God presented in the Gospel of John. [Walvoord, *et al.*, 2011, pp. 104-105]

The *cherubim* and *seraphim* are mentioned in conjunction with creatures that we know about on earth. Morris states that the greatest of the wild animals is the lion, the greatest of the domestic animals is the ox, the greatest of all creatures is man, and the greatest of the birds is the eagle.

"Though these *cherubim/seraphim* are no doubt the most gloriously beautiful of all God's creatures (the fallen *cherub*, evidently Satan, of Ezekiel 28:11-19 was said to have been originally 'full of wisdom and perfect in beauty'), they give all glory to God" [Morris, 1983]. Satan was said to be "blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you" (Ezekiel 28:15).

Arnold Fruchtenbaum comments on the rank of some of the supernatural beings:

In the celestial sphere, there are three orders of beings. The lowest rank is the angels, over whom is Michael the Archangel. Above the angels are the seraphim, noted for having six wings. They are mentioned in Isaiah 6 and Revelation 4. The highest rank of created beings are the *cherubim*, and Satan, in his original creation, was one among many cherubs. He was of the highest order, but one among many equals. Ezekiel 1 points out that the cherubim were the bearers of the Shechinah glory and the closest to the throne of God. The angels are before the throne, and the seraphim surround the throne; but the cherubim are under it and are responsible for carrying the throne of God. The closer a being is to the throne, the higher his rank. The cherubim are the closest to the throne of God, and Satan is a cherub. However, at some point in eternity past, God took this one cherub and anointed or “messiahed” him, which made him the arch-cherub, and elevated him over the other cherubs in power and authority. Hence, Satan became the highest of all created beings, not only in wisdom and beauty, but also in power and authority. [Fruchtenbaum, 2022, p. 38]

Some characteristics of Satan are given in Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14, and many of these details are hard for us to comprehend, in part because they seem to involve a spiritual, rather than a physical dimension. Even though there was a human ruler of Tyre in Ezekiel 28, there was also a Satanic king that provided the power and spiritual dimension behind the human ruler [Walvoord, *et al.*, 2012].

The 24 elders in Revelation 4:4; 5:11,14; 7:11-16; 14:3; and 19:4 always seem to be present with the four living creatures. Like angels, the 24 elders wear white clothing; however, they do not appear to be angels because they reside on thrones in Heaven, rather than being dispatched to serve or minister to believers. Revelation 5:8 says that the living creatures and the elders hold golden bowls of incense, which are the prayers of the believers. Revelation 5:11 says that angels encircled the throne, the living creatures, and the elders. Also, it is not clear whether the elders are part of the Bride of Christ that returns with Christ to the earth at the Second Coming in Revelation 19, or whether they remain in Heaven [Stewart, 2016a]. It is quite possible that the 24 elders in Revelation 4-5 are believers who were raptured *before* the start of the Tribulation because the Tribulation is not described in Revelation until the following chapters (i.e., Chapters 6-19).

A summary of arguments for the 24 elders being members of the Church are that these individuals are: crowned, clothed in white, redeemed, enthroned, elders, kingdom of priests, and 24 in number [Woods & McGowan, 2019a]. Those are all characteristics of members of the Church. The fact that they are wearing crowns and robes implies that they have bodies. Thus, they appear to be resurrected individuals. Note that the Old Testament saints, however, are *not* resurrected during or before the Tribulation; they don’t get their resurrected bodies until *after* the Tribulation (Daniel 12:1-2,11-13; Isaiah 26:19-21).

What about fallen angels and demons? Here, we will use the term “demon” to describe a disembodied spirit of a Nephilim that seeks a host, although demons are sometimes said to be fallen supernatural/angelic beings. Here are some of the characteristics of demons:

- They tempt humans; but, humans have to choose to give in to sin.
- They are lying and deceiving spirits; they spread false doctrine. For example, they plan to deceive all nations into going into war against Israel (Revelation 16:14) and eventually against Christ (Revelation 19:19).
- They are messengers of Satan. Some translations have translated the Greek word for demons as “devils”. Demons is the more appropriate choice of word.
- They can afflict people in a physical way, but only with God’s permission. Demons have caused some people to be:
 - Mute (Matthew 9:32-33)
 - Blind (Matthew 12:22)
 - Crippled (Luke 13:11)
 - Mentally tormented (Mark 5:1-5)
- They seek to inhabit or possess a host.
- They have superhuman knowledge and strength, and can give some of this strength to the host that they possess (e.g., Mark 5:1-5).
- They are not omnipresent, which means that they can only be in one place at a time.
- “Demons possess great knowledge and the ability to teach that knowledge to human beings, generally through human beings whom they inspire or possess.” [Van Dorn, 2023, p. 197]
- They, and fallen angels, are at war with the good angels of God.
- They may be territorial spirits working behind the scenes to influence governments and peoples, such as “the prince of Greece” and the “prince of Persia” mentioned in the book of Daniel.
- Christians likely cannot be possessed by a demon because Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13), and the Holy Spirit and demons are incompatible. When a problem exists within the Church, it’s usually attributed to sin, and not to demons. Thus, a Christian might be “demonized” (tormented or troubled) but not be *possessed* by Satan or an evil spirit [Heiser, 2020a].

In New Testament theology, believers are holy ground, the place where the presence of God resides. This is reflected in New Testament statements referring to believers (corporately and individually) as the “temple of God” (1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 6:14-18; cp. 1 Pet 2:4-5) or “a temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 6:19; Eph 2:19-22). Paul’s insistence that an unrepentant believer be expelled from the Corinthian church and that the people “are to deliver this man to Satan” (1 Cor 5:5) illustrates an application for the idea. The church, the visible body of Christ, removes sin “outside the camp” into the world.

Sin belongs outside holy ground in the world, the dominion of Satan. [Heiser, 2020a, p. 215]

A Christian Cannot Be Demon Possessed ... But the biblical record teaches that demons exist, and the threat to an individual who is not a Christian remains a dangerous reality. [Martin, *et al.*, 2008, p. 545]

- God’s people are to have nothing to do with the occult, witchcraft, divination, fortune-telling, black arts, magic arts, sorcery, communication with the dead, etc. In the Old Testament, it was capital punishment for those who engaged in these things (e.g., Exodus 22:18).
- Demons submit to Christ’s commands and authority (Matthew 8:31-32).
- The disciples were empowered to drive out demons in the name and authority of Jesus (Luke 10:17), but not in the disciples’ own strength.

It is possible for a demon to return to a person once it has been cast out. Unless a person trusts Jesus Christ, as their Savior, the possibility exists that the demon may return. If this happens, then that person can be in a worse situation than when they were previously demon-possessed. [Stewart, 2016b, p.130]

Truly born-again believers cannot be demon-possessed, although they can be demon-*oppressed* (e.g., through temptation, unchecked anger, general sin, and our day-to-day struggles) [Martin, *et al.*, 2008; Neufeld, 2019]. We are clearly in a spiritual war, and the devil prowls like a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8); however, we are told to resist the devil and he will flee from us (James 4:7).

The Christian cannot be possessed, but he or she can be *oppressed* by the powers of darkness. The difference is that possession manifests from *within*, and oppression manifests from *without*. [Martin, *et al.*, 2008, p. 548]

The Bible documents 4 specific exorcisms by Jesus; however, we can assume that many more took place during His ministry, and they may even have been part of a typical day for Jesus [Page, 1995]. Jesus Christ is the ultimate exorcist.

In the book of Revelation, there are 4 references to demonic beings [Page, 1995]:

- Revelation 9 – the fifth and sixth trumpet judgments, when demonic beings or “locusts” come out of the Abyss to cause destruction on the earth. The sixth trumpet judgment releases 4 demons who were bound for many, many years at the Euphrates River. This activates an evil “army” of 200 million individuals/beings. The army causes the death of one-third of mankind.
- Revelation 12:7-9 – the war in heaven in which Satan is cast down to the earth during the Tribulation. Until that time, it is believed that

	<p>Satan still has access to Heaven; but, at that time (the midpoint of the Tribulation), he loses even that access.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revelation 16:12-16 – the sixth bowl judgment when demons gather the human leaders throughout the world to come to Israel for the Battle of Armageddon—the final battle of the world, centered around Jerusalem, prior to Christ’s return. • Revelation 18:1-3 – ancient Babylon is revived, and it is a home of demons. The demons influence the political and commercial environment throughout the world during the final years before Christ’s return. <p>In particular, Revelation 9 speaks of locust-like creatures that appear to have demonic control, and Revelation 16 speaks of unclean spirits like frogs. We do not have enough information to determine if these are symbols, materialized demons, or actual creatures that are possessed by demons. Given that the unclean spirits come out of the mouths of the Antichrist, False Prophet, and Satan, it is likely that it is propaganda that deceives the world, advances evil, and leads many to destruction [Mounce, 1998]. These unclean spirits perform lying signs and wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:9).</p> <p>During the Tribulation, many demons will be released from the Abyss, also called the bottomless pit (Revelation 9:1-2) or “the deep” in Hebrew [Elwell, 1984]. It may not be the same place as Tartarus, which is mentioned in 2 Peter 2:4, because Tartarus seems to be a place where evil beings <i>cannot</i> emerge, other than into the Lake of Fire at the final judgment. The Abyss is a prison for Satan and some of his demons, and the place from which the Antichrist arises (Revelation 11:7; 17:8).</p> <p>In conclusion, one of the reasons for why we spent so much time discussing supernatural beings is because Christ warned that the End Times would be “as it was in the days of Noah”. Since there was a lot of supernatural and demonic activity in those days, we can expect such activity to increase substantially as the Tribulation unfolds.</p>
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<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>Regarding “spiritual warfare”, Scripture says that there are battles in the heavens about our lives on Earth and the destiny of our souls. Comment on the spiritual battles behind the scenes (e.g., Ephesians 6, Daniel 10, 2 Kings 6), and how these battles are going on without many of us even recognizing the warfare.</p> <p>Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.</p>
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Both Positions	<p>There is a lot of spiritual activity going on behind the scenes—activities that we know little about, but about which we would probably have a different attitude in our day-to-day lives, if we were to know the details.</p> <p>Prayers are being listened to, and answered, albeit in ways we may not fully appreciate and understand until we get to Heaven.</p> <p>The lessons of Daniel 10, for example, provide several lessons for us:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daniel carefully searched the Scriptures and realized that the Babylonian captivity of the Israelites (i.e., the 70 years of exile) was coming to an end, and he approached the Lord about it via <i>prayer</i> and <i>fasting</i>. This was circa 538 BC; so, it was almost 70 years after Daniel (and the first set of exiles) had been taken to Babylon. Daniel also realized that the temple wasn't destroyed until 586 BC; so, it was quite possible that there were another 20 years to go. • There was a delay in the answer to Daniel's prayer. Similarly, there may be a delay in the answer to our own prayers, and this delay may be due to spiritual warfare, as it was in Daniel's case. An interesting thought is: "the situation on earth reflects the situation in heaven" [Page, 1995, p. 64]. • There are real spiritual forces acting behind the cities and countries in the world. Examples include the "Prince of Persia" (Daniel 10:13,20), the "Prince of Greece" (Daniel 10:20), and the "Prince of Meshech and Tubal" (Ezekiel 38:2-3; 39:1). <p>I'm reminded of the "reveal codes" example that I heard Chuck Missler give in the 1990s. In a word processing program, there are all kinds of embedded, invisible tags: font names, font styles, font sizes, underlining options, spacing, margins, justification (centering), etc. These tags are typically hidden in the underlying source file document, but they are necessary in order to format/render the document in precisely the way the user wants. On some word processors, like WordPerfect, you can press a key like F11 to "reveal codes" or "show codes" ... and then you can see all the tags surrounding your typed text. Your actual words are sandwiched between those tags. If the tags were displayed all the time, they would be annoying and distracting to the author who is composing the document. Thus, we rarely want to see the special codes for the tags; we're happy if they are in the background doing their job, and we don't think too much of them.</p> <p>A similar abstraction is that of Web-page display tags used by browser markup languages such as HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) and XML (Extensible Markup Language). Most users of Web pages are not interested in the markup/rendering tags behind the Web pages. When one chooses the "View</p>
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	<p>Source” option available in browsers such as Internet Explorer, Firefox, and Chrome, the HTML tags that format that Web page are revealed.</p> <p>The context of Chuck’s “reveal codes” analogy is a story about Elisha and his servant Gehazi:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">2 Kings 6:15-17 When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" the servant asked. "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.</p> <p>In Acts 7, shortly before the martyr Stephen was stoned to death, the Lord opened the eyes of Stephen to see the supernatural world. He got a glimpse of Heaven, and saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God.</p> <p>What is the application to our own lives? Well, as in Daniel 10’s narrative about the Prince of Persia, there is a lot of “action” going on behind the scenes—and it has significance. Our spiritual lives are at stake, and God is actively interested in our well-being. Frank Peretti, a popular Christian fiction author, bases some of his books on spiritual battles between angels and demons that go on behind the scenes in the lives of human beings (e.g., [Peretti, 1986]).</p>
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<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>Who were the Nephilim? Were they a special class of fallen supernatural beings that had sexual relations with humans? Were they the <i>offspring</i> of a human-demon relationship? Were they giants? This section deals with the <i>Nephilim</i>, which some Bible interpreters render as “fallen ones”, “giants”, “men of renown” or “heroes of old”.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Genesis 6:1-4 When men began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those days -- and also afterward -- when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Numbers 13:32-33 And they [Hebrew spies] spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them."</p>
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	<p>Jude 6 And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home -- these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.</p> <p>2 Peter 2:4-5 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others;</p>
<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>The following comments are not necessarily part of the generally-accepted dispensationalist position, but they help to highlight some activities in “the invisible war” behind the scenes (e.g., spiritual warfare). This is a long, but interesting, section that connects eschatology with “the days of Noah”, and fills in some missing pieces of history. During the Tribulation, we expect an incredible amount of supernatural activity—including demonic activity—unparalleled since “the days of Noah”.</p> <p>As a preview of what we will discuss: some <i>fallen angels</i> had children by human women, as per Genesis 6:1-4, and the offspring of those unions are <i>giants</i>—also called <i>Nephilim</i>. They, in turn, had children; and so on. The original fallen angels who crossed this boundary line are now imprisoned in Tartarus—a partition or region of Hades (hell), for future judgment.</p> <p>All Jewish traditions before the New Testament era took a supernatural view of Genesis 6:1-4. In other words, they were in line with 2 Peter and Jude. The interpretation of the passage, at least with respect to its supernatural orientation, was not an issue until the late fourth century AD, when it fell out of favor with some influential church fathers, especially Augustine. [Heiser, 2015, p. 99]</p> <p>A major reason for why God sent Noah’s Flood was because of the Nephilim. The spirits of the dead Nephilim are called <i>Rephaim</i> or <i>demons</i>. They are the spirits of the “inhuman dead” [Gilbert, 2021]. Some of these demons possessed people during the time of Jesus. For some of His miracles, Jesus exorcised these demons and set the tormented people free—thus showing the power of God, and confirming Jesus’ status as the promised Messiah.</p> <p>There are different viewpoints about the giants/Nephilim and, in particular, the events described in Genesis 6 [Unger, 1952; Page, 1995; Missler, 1997; Hitchcock, 2013a; Hanegraaff, 2013+; Sarfati, 2015; Stewart, 2016b; Heiser, 2017; Pitterson, 2017; Chaffey, 2019]. The KJV and NKJV use the term “giants” (as does the Septuagint), whereas the NIV and ESV use the term “Nephilim”. In the latter translations, the word “Nephilim” is used in only two places: Genesis 6:4 and Numbers 13:33.</p> <p>Genesis 6:4 [KJV] There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that ...</p>

The New English Translation translates the opening verses of Genesis 6 as follows:

Genesis 6:1-4 [NET] When humankind began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, **the sons of God** saw that the daughters of humankind were beautiful. Thus they took wives for themselves from any they chose. So the LORD said, "My spirit will not remain in humankind indefinitely, since they are mortal. They will remain for 120 more years."

The Nephilim were on the earth in those days (and also after this) when [whenever] the sons of God were having sexual relations with the daughters of humankind, who gave birth to their children. They were the mighty heroes [Hebrew: *gibborim*] of old, the famous men.

To add to the puzzle, Genesis 6:3 states that the Nephilim were on the earth "in those days—and also afterward" [NIV, 2002]—but it is not clear what "those days" specifically refer to. For example, "in those days" may simply refer to the days when the fallen angels had children with human women. As mentioned, this may have been a major reason for why God sent the global Flood. In other words, the story of the Nephilim was about a Satanic scheme to thwart the *genetic* line of the future Messiah, and to corrupt humanity. So, the Flood was an act of mercy *to save the human race*, in addition to being an act of judgment [Hitchcock, 2013c].

In Genesis 6:4, the Hebrew word *gibborim* refers to "warriors or men known for their strength and vigor ... it is found throughout the Old Testament to describe the best soldiers and other strong men" [Chaffey, 2019, p. 240]. "However, while it appears that all Nephilim were *gibborim*, not all *gibborim* were Nephilim. That is, all of the giants were mighty men, but not all mighty men in Scripture were giants." [Chaffey, 2019, p. 251]

Noah's first son was born to him around age 500, which would be 20 years after God announced a 120-year grace period that would end with God pouring out judgment [Pitterson, 2017]. This implies that much of the world was already genetically corrupted. We note that Noah was said to be "blameless" (Hebrew: *tamim*) among the population; and this same Hebrew word is the word for "without defect" or "without blemish" which is used to describe the animal sacrifices in numerous places in the Old Testament. In particular, the animals needed to be unblemished to qualify as acceptable sacrifices. These animal sacrifices were *looking forward* to the time when Jesus Himself (the perfect "Lamb of God") would die for His creation, to rescue humanity from their sins.

Genesis 6:9-10 This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, blameless [*tamim*] among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth.

Exodus 12:5 The [Passover] animals you choose must be year-old males without defect [*tamim*], and you may take them from the sheep or the goats.

Leviticus 1:10 "'If the offering is a burnt offering from the flock, from either the sheep or the goats, you are to offer a male without defect [*tamim*].

Thus, by corrupting human DNA (“seed”), Satan wanted to prevent Jesus from being born. (Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary; he did not have a biological father or a sin nature, but Mary’s ancestry can be traced all the way back to Adam and Eve, through Noah and his wife.)

Genesis 3:15 [NASB95] And I [God] will put enmity Between you [Satan] and the woman [Eve], **And between your seed and her seed;** He [Jesus Christ] shall bruise you on the head [for eternity], And you shall bruise him on the heel [at the cross]."

We know from Genesis that angels can take on human form, such as when angels visited Abraham and then Lot. Incidentally, Abraham would have been 58 years old in the year when Noah died [Morris, 2002]. As noted, some Bible scholars (not all) believe that a certain class of fallen angels was involved in sexual sin with human women before the Genesis Flood. These fallen angels crossed a boundary line set by God; therefore, God intervened, and those supernatural beings are now being held for judgment—and are no longer permitted to interfere with, or influence, mankind. Other fallen angels and demons, however, still factor into the affairs of mankind.

Some people identify the Nephilim as those fallen angels. More often, however, the Nephilim are identified as the *offspring* of those human-demonic relationships. The Nephilim would have had both human DNA and (fallen) angelic DNA; thus, they would inherit traits of both.

It becomes easy to understand how a demon-possessed person can rip off metal chains with their bare hands and throw grown people across a room (Mark 5:1-20). Such things are possible when there is an evil, giant spirit that possesses an individual. If this theory is true, it helps to explain the evil giants after the Flood that warred against Israel. [Lindsay, 2018, p. 144]

Yet other scholars believe that the Nephilim have no demonic connection, were 100% human, but were giants, that is, larger-than-normal human beings—perhaps more than 9 feet tall. Historical accounts—including extra-biblical accounts—imply that Goliath may have been 9 feet tall, and King Og of Bashan may have been even taller.

The term Nephilim does not mean “fallen ones.” Jewish writers and translators (e.g., the Septuagint) habitually think “giants” when they use or translate the term. There are good reasons for that.

... [This will account for] the original Mesopotamian context, the Second Temple Jewish recognition of that context, the connection of the term to Anakim giants (Numbers 13:33; Deuteronomy 2-3), and the fact that the Septuagint translators translated the word as “giants,” not “fallen ones.” [Heiser, 2017, pp. 16-17]

The term “sons of God” in Hebrew is *bene elohim*. That is also the case in the extra-biblical, but non-inspired, Book of Enoch (also called 1 Enoch or the Ethiopic version of Enoch [Johnson, 2012], dated approximately 350-200 BC—fragments of which are also found in the Dead Sea Scrolls in both Hebrew and Greek) and the Book of Jubilees (dated approximately 100-200 BC); as well as the Septuagint, that is, the Greek translation of the Old Testament (approximately 250 BC). The sons of God are a direct physical creation of God; they did not descend from human parents [Schmutzer, 2018]. Adam is considered a son of God (Luke 3:38), but that’s because God created him directly. His sons would not be “sons of God” in the sense of *bene elohim*.

The writings of Josephus and Baruch are extra-biblical references, and these men, too, believed that there was a race of unnatural giants in the land. Many—if not all—of the Ante-Nicene church fathers and the Qumran scholars believed that the *bene elohim* were angels, and that their offspring were unnatural [Hamp, 2014]. Ancient writers, such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Cyprian, Lactantius, and Ambrose also believed in this fallen angel view [Stewart, 2016b; Chaffey, 2019]. “The consistent teaching of the ancient rabbis and ancient church fathers has always been the sons of God were angels.” [Johnson, 2012, p. 179]

There is a quotation from some of the Israelites in Numbers 13:33—long after the Flood—that mentions the Nephilim again (the only other time in Scripture): “We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.” It’s not clear if those who are making the comment are simply exaggerating when giving a negative and fearful report about the land and its inhabitants to Moses, or if there really were giants in the land in those days. It is likely the latter because of the phrase “and also afterward” in Genesis 6:4. Nevertheless, Numbers 14:36-37 indicates that God was not happy about the negative report from the spies.

When Moses and the Israelites first approached the Promised Land, it was filled with Nephilim who were large and intimidating (Num 13:32-33). He taught the Israelites the true history of the stories they heard concerning the mingling of angelic beings and mankind producing hybrid offspring (Nephilim). In Genesis 6:2-4 he is reminding them that this intermingling happened before the flood and also afterward. As they were spying out the land and observed these Nephilim offspring, they were looking at proof that what occurred before the flood had occurred again.

... Now, Moses begins to explain to them the connection between the Nephilim they saw in the land and the Nephilim that existed before the flood which they also would have known about through the various cultural and religious histories.

... Moses writes concerning the Nephilim and the various tribes that are often used synonymously. The main Nephilim tribe is connected specifically with the Anakim and the Rephaim (cf. Deut 2:11; Num 13:32-33). As we have noted, the first mention of the Nephilim and related tribes occurs in Genesis 6:4, but the text describes all of them being killed in the flood (Gen 7:21-22). However, Moses reintroduces the Rephaim tribes in Genesis 14:5 as living east of the Jordan river during the time of Abraham.

... One of the goals and standards of success in the [Israelites'] conquest of the land is specifically tied to the extermination of the offspring of the fallen angelic sons of God known as the Nephilim/Rephaim tribes ... [Gonzales, 2021, pp. 18-33]

The Anakim (Numbers 13:33), Rephaim (Deuteronomy 2:10-11,20-21), Emim (Deuteronomy 2:10-11), and Zamzummim (Deuteronomy 2:20-21) are all identified with the Nephilim (giants), and may just be names for the Nephilim that correspond to different geographical or cultural locations. For example, both the Anakim and the Emim (perhaps a Moabite designation for the Anakim) were the early inhabitants of Moab; and were considered to be Rephaim as confirmed by Deuteronomy 2:10-11. The Zamzummim were Rephaim (Deuteronomy 2:20-21) that occupied much of Transjordan, and in particular, the land of the Ammonites [van der Toorn, *et al.*, 1999]. The Zamzummim and Emim were said to be as tall as the Anakim. The Rephaim inhabited southern Syria and Transjordan, prior to the Ammonites and Moabites. Interestingly, all of the above groups are considered Rephaim.

Even King Og of Bashan (Deuteronomy 3:11,13) and of the Amorites (Joshua 2:10), King Sihon of the Amorites (Numbers 21:26), and Goliath (1 Chronicles 20:5-6,8) were giants and therefore were connected with the Nephilim [Hamp, 2014; Chaffey, 2019]. Goliath was one of the last of the Nephilim, and the very last of the Nephilim may have been the giant that one of David's men, Benaiah, killed [Pitterson, 2017]. After this, and in particular after the books of 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles, there are no more explicit references to the Nephilim, Rephaim, etc. Thus, it appears that all of the Nephilim had been eradicated by that time.

Many studies on the Nephilim describe the Anakim, Zuzims, Emims, and other giant groups as if they were all separate races with no relation to each other. On the contrary, these giants were descendants of the same stock—Rephaim. Because of the forced division of nations and tongues after the Babel incident, the various Nephilim remnants were called by different ethnic titles based on where they settled and the language or dialect of that particular area. Those still called Rephaim proper represented the most ethnically pure of the giants born after the Flood through Canaan, and their demise is specifically noted in Scripture (Deuteronomy 3). [Pitterson, 2017, p. 277]

LXX [Septuagint] translators clearly associated *rephaim* both with giants and supernatural inhabitants of the realm of the dead. [Heiser, 2020a, p. 47]

A concrete definition of the Rephaim is difficult to find. Some authors (e.g., [Chaffey, 2019]) think that “Rephaim” is a generic term for “giants” or that it may refer to a specific group of giants. Other authors (e.g., [Hamp, 2022]) think that it may be a generic term for any human-supernatural hybrid including future hybrids who take the mark of the beast (and the speculation here is that the mark involves some sort of genetic transformation). Scripture appears to refer to the Rephaim in two ways. The Rephaim are: (a) at least some of the Nephilim (giants) and their descendants (i.e., they were *real historical beings* on the earth); and (b) the *spirits* of the dead Nephilim—and especially of those Nephilim who were leaders in the world [Stearman, 2018]. “The Rephaim are something like a ruling class in the world of the dead” [Rouillard, 1999, p. 692]. With respect to (a), some authors (e.g., [Stearman, 2018]) think that their bodies will never be resurrected. This is in contrast to the unsaved throughout history who will be resurrected on judgment day, that is, at the Great White Throne Judgment at the end of the Millennium (as per Revelation 20), just before their resurrected bodies are thrown into Gehenna (the lake of fire). Thus, the original bodies of the Rephaim must not be human; otherwise, they would be resurrected (bodies and souls coming together), if only to face judgment.

Isaiah 26:14 They are now dead, they live no more; **their spirits** [*Rephaim*] **do not rise**. You punished them and brought them to ruin; you wiped out all memory of them.

Isaiah 14:9-18 The realm of the dead below is all astir to meet you [Satan, or the Antichrist indwelt by Satan] at your coming; **it rouses the spirits of the departed** [*Rephaim*] **to greet you -- all those who were leaders in the world; it makes them rise from their thrones -- all those who were kings over the nations**. They will all respond, they will say to you, "You also have become weak, as we are; you have become like us." ... But you are brought down to the realm of the dead, to the depths of the pit. Those who see you stare at you, they ponder your fate: "Is this the man who shook the earth and made kingdoms tremble, the man who made the world a wilderness, who overthrew its cities and would not let his captives go home?" All the kings of the nations lie in state, each in his own tomb.

It is remarkable that the Rephaim are also mentioned in the Bible as real, living, historical beings. They were residents in the territory of modern Jordan and Syria, east of the Sea of Galilee ... including the Golan Heights region of modern Israel. They lived in proximity with other groups of giants, called “*Emim*” and “*Zamzummim*,” or “*Zuzim*.” In the ancient world, all of them were referred to generically as “giants.” [Stearman, 2018, p. 7]

Genesis 14:5 [NASB95] In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him, came and defeated the **Rephaim** in Ashteroth-karnaim and the Zuzim in Ham and the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim,

2 Samuel 5:22 Once more the Philistines came up and spread out in the Valley of **Rephaim**;

It is noteworthy that, unlike the material from Ugarit [Canaanite literature], the Old Testament at times uses the term *rephaim* [Rephaim] for the giant clans of the days of Moses and Joshua. Og, king of Bashan, was said to be the last vestige of the Rephaim (Deut 3:11,13; Josh 12:4; 13:12). The Rephaim are linked to the Anakim in Deuteronomy 2:10-11: “The Emim formerly lived there, a people great and many, and tall as the Anakim. Like the Anakim, they are also counted as Rephaim.” According to Numbers 13:33, the Anakim were “from the Nephilim.” ... biblical writers saw the origin of the Nephilim as extending from the rebellion of divine “sons of God” (Gen 6:1-4) before the flood. This became the basis for the Jewish theology of the origin of demons in the Second Temple era. Consequently there is a dark, sinister element to the Israelite conception of the Rephaim as inhabitants of the underworld. The literature and religion of ancient Ugarit lacked a divine rebellion story comparable to Genesis 6:1-4. That element is at the heart of the divergence between Ugarit and the Old Testament with respect to the Rephaim. [Heiser, 2020a, pp. 11-12]

Christians during the first few centuries after the Resurrection knew that the gods of their pagan neighbors were fallen angels and demons. Paul, for one, was explicit on that point. Further, the early Church Fathers identified the heroes and demigods of Greece and Rome as the Rephaim of Canaan, who were understood to be the demonic spirits of the Nephilim destroyed in the Flood. [Gilbert, 2021, p. 5]

The evil supernatural beings (i.e., the fallen “sons of God”) who were responsible for producing the Nephilim are imprisoned in Tartarus to this day; however, that is probably not the case for the demonic spirits of their offspring. Secondly, it is possible that some of the evil supernatural beings who did *not* violate women in the Genesis 6 narrative, may have done so *after* the Flood since the Bible tells us that the Nephilim also appeared post-Flood (e.g., the Anakim, Rephaim, Emim, and Zamzummim).

There is a second major sin of the fallen “sons of God”. The extra-biblical Book of Enoch mentions that fallen angels with their superior intellect taught humans forbidden knowledge such as sin-promoting temptations, occult practices, drugs, cross-breeding of animals, metallurgy, weapons, tools, bracelets, ornaments, and various arts [Pitterson, 2017; Heiser, 2020a]. Jude 6 and 14 in the Bible seem to reference the Book of Enoch. The extra-biblical Book of Jasher states in Jasher 4.18 that the fallen angels “taught the mixture of the animals of one species with another” [Johnson, 2012, p. 181].

But the transgression of the Watchers was more than just violating a taboo against interspecies sex and burdening mankind with the threat of destruction at the hands of their monstrous offspring. The text of Enoch, which influenced Jewish thought about the rebellious Watchers down to the time of Jesus and the apostles, makes clear that the other half of their plot was the

dissemination of forbidden knowledge—deadly secrets that humanity was not meant to know. [Gilbert, 2021, p. 15]

Circa 400 AD, Augustine was trying to get the church to reject the supernatural view of the “sons of God” which up to that time was the consensus view. In fact, “there is no record of any Jew or Christian holding this view prior to the late second or early third century” [Chaffey, 2019, p. 21]. Mark Hitchcock reports that some other scholars (e.g., John Calvin and Martin Luther) believed that the “sons of God” refers to the “sons of Seth” (the so-called “godly” line), and that the “daughters of men” refers to the so-called “ungodly” line of Cain—and that there was a mixing of the two lines [Hitchcock, 2013c]. In this theory, it is claimed that the descendants of Seth were also ungodly except for one line of people: Noah’s line. There are many errors in the Sethite viewpoint; so, it should be rejected [Heiser, 2017]. Furthermore, if this human-only explanation is the real meaning of the “sons of God”, then Hitchcock wonders why the text would not say so, directly.

The earliest *unambiguous* Christian reference to the “human view” of the sons of God can be found in the writings of Julius Africanus (AD 160-240). A century later Augustine became the champion of this approach. His influence is still felt today.

... Augustine has no awareness of the original Mesopotamian context of Gen 6:1-4. But it is difficult to fault him for that oversight, as the material was largely lost and could not have been translated anyway. Rather, he is to be faulted for imposing his own city of God hermeneutic on a biblical text, and he offers only a subject opinion on how evil a divine being could have been. ... 2 Pet 2:5 includes a reference to Noah and the flood. The only group of divine beings (angels) who sinned to which Peter could be referring is in Gen 6:1-4. Augustine’s view is, frankly, contrived. [Heiser, 2020a, pp. 109-110]

In the Old Testament, in Hebrew, the term “sons of God” always refers to supernatural beings; however, there actually are several cases where God calls humans “sons” (or “children”): Deuteronomy 14:1 and Isaiah 43:6 [Stewart, 2016b]. In the New Testament, the phrase “sons of God” in the Greek language is used in several places to specifically refer to (saved) humans: Matthew 5:9, Luke 20:34-36, and Romans 8:14.

The Nephilim were also on the earth *after* the Flood. Regarding the phrase “and also afterward”, Ryan Pitterson connects this with Genesis 9, and he conjectures as follows:

Genesis 9:18,24-25 The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) ... When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son [Ham] had done to him, he said, "Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers."

One of the greater mysteries of the Bible was why Noah cursed Canaan for Ham’s sin. Canaan was the father of all the postdiluvian [post-Flood] giants

... From a literal reading of Scripture, it is clear that Ham’s wife must have carried the corrupted DNA that passed through the Flood. The presence of the Nephilim gene may have caused Canaan to appear different from his siblings and cousins to the point that Noah knew some trace of the antediluvian genetic corruption was in him—something the Bible noted with respect to other siblings who were descendants of giants (2 Samuel 21:20). This would explain both the special reference to Canaan and the curse placed upon him rather than upon his father, Ham. [Pitterson, 2017, pp. 246-247]

The Lord was specifically and personally involved in destroying the remaining Nephilim giants off the face of the earth, fulfilling the Genesis 3:15 prophecy of enmity between the divine and satanic seeds. [Pitterson, 2017, p. 333]

Pitterson notes that the Nephilim are descendants of *Canaan*. Surprisingly, we do not have more details about Canaan himself; however, the name “Canaan” is mentioned 86 times in the NIV, and the word “Canaanite” is mentioned another 17 times in the NIV.

With respect to the post-Flood Nephilim, some authors disagree with the theory that Ham’s wife carried the Nephilim gene [Chaffey, 2019; Marzulli, 2020; Van Dorn, 2023]. If God used the Flood to wipe out the Nephilim and their corrupted DNA, this begs the question of why He would permit corrupted DNA on the ark [Chaffey, 2019]. These authors think there was *another* incursion of fallen angelic beings. Recall that only *some* of the fallen angels impregnated women before the Flood. But why would another group of supernatural beings do the same thing, if the first group was imprisoned in Tartarus with a total loss of freedom and no hope of escape? Marzulli and Van Dorn argue that it is precisely the same reason why the first group committed their rebellious act—namely, those fallen angels believed that they had no other choice. They knew that they would eventually wind up in hell anyway; so, they took a chance on trying to thwart the birth of the Messiah by corrupting His genetic ancestry. If they could successfully do so, they would prevent the Messiah from being born, from offering salvation to humans, and from ruling and reigning. It would negate God’s master plan for humanity. Their reasoning seems to be that if Satan’s side wins, then the rebellious fallen angels will be released from Tartarus, and will be greatly rewarded. The bottom line here is that there could be multiple incursions post-Flood—even today. Furthermore, we know that there will be a lot of dark supernatural activity during the Tribulation. Once again, we are reminded that it will be “as it was in the days of Noah”.

The presence of the fallen angels on earth and the subsequent hybrid offspring, known as the Nephilim, almost wiped out the promise of the coming messiah. Had the plan been successful, the goal being the contamination of the human bloodline, there would have been no messiah possible; thus negating the prophecy, proving the Most High God a liar, and making the Fallen One the winner of the cosmic chess match. In short, the planet would have been his forever and mankind most likely would have ceased to exist. [Marzulli, 2020, p. 151]

Marzulli uses three Scripture verses to explain his reasoning:

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between you [Satan] and the woman [Eve], **and between your offspring** and hers; he [the Messiah, Jesus Christ] will crush your head, and you will strike his heel [at the cross]."

Genesis 6:4 The Nephilim were on the earth in those days -- **and also afterward -- when** [whenever] **the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them.** They were the heroes of old, men of renown.

Daniel 2:43 [KJV] And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, **they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men:** but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

Genesis 3:15 refers to Satan's offspring. The grammar in Genesis 6:4 seems to imply that fallen supernatural beings directly impregnated women before the Flood, but also after the Flood. The Hebrew grammar doesn't seem to allow for Ham's wife as being responsible for passing down corrupted DNA to fulfill Genesis 6:4. Finally, the word "they" in Daniel 2:43 may be a reference to non-human beings, and "the seed of men" would refer to humans. Marzulli believes that the hybrid offspring produced by this unnatural mingling of species are soulless.

Genesis 6:4 pointedly informs readers that the Nephilim were on earth before the Flood "and also afterwards." The phrase looks forward to Numbers 13:33, which says with equal clarity that the oversized descendants of Anak "came from the *nephilim*." The sons of Anak, the Anakim, were one of the giant clans described in the conquest narrative (e.g., Deuteronomy 2:10-11,21; Joshua 11:21-22; 14:12,15). The text clearly links them to the Nephilim ...

[There is] a possibility deriving from Hebrew grammar. Genesis 6:4 tells us there were Nephilim on earth before the Flood "and also afterward, when the sons of God went into the daughters of humankind." The "when" in the verse could be translated "whenever," thereby suggesting a repetition of these pre-Flood events after the Flood. In other words, since Genesis 6:4 points forward to the later giant clans, the phrasing could suggest that other sons of God fathered more Nephilim after the Flood. [Heiser, 2017, pp. 20-21]

The world's first dictator, Nimrod, was a grandson of Ham, and had the family lineage: Noah, Ham, Cush, and Nimrod. The sons of Ham were Cush, Mizraim (Egypt), Put, and Canaan. Canaan would be an uncle of Nimrod. Some studies suggest that Nimrod is also connected to the Nephilim [Walton & Walton, 2019]. The Tower of Babel incident is where the diverse languages of the world originated. Some scholars believe that the Tower of Babel itself may have been a way to communicate with evil supernatural beings, and may have been built by giants.

Nimrod was the first murderer and conqueror in the post-Flood world. He was the founder of the city of Babylon, which became a center of pagan,

satanic idolatry, many versions of which featured Nimrod himself being worshiped as a god. His name, which means “to rebel” or “let us rebel,” indicated his disposition. He was an enemy of God and Satan’s main servant on Earth at that time. He is credited with leading the effort to build the Tower of Babel, a religious temple of worship for false gods and the first attempt to form a global government. The ancient king aspired for man to reach the spiritual realm and “godhood” without the Lord (to which God swiftly responded by destroying the tower, confusing the languages of all the people of the world, and scattering them all over the earth). [Pitterson, 2017, p. 250]

The Nephilim may have tried to “thwart the plan of God”—and more specifically, to “interrupt God’s plan of redemption” at various times in history: before the Flood, in the days of Abraham, and in the time of Joshua [Missler, 1997]. The latter case may explain why God commanded the Israelites not to intermarry with the Canaanites, but to destroy them. (It is believed that the Nephilim carried on through the line of Canaan—Ham’s son.) In Genesis 24:3, for example, Abraham explicitly stated that his son Isaac was not to marry a Canaanite woman. Similarly, in Genesis 28:1, Isaac insisted that his son Jacob must not take a Canaanite wife. Interestingly, the last words in the book of Zechariah—a book of the Bible that is heavily oriented to eschatology—describe the Millennial period. In particular, after describing the Second Coming of Christ and providing an introduction to Christ’s future rule on the earth, the book has an unusual or abrupt end:

Zechariah 14:21b And on that day there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD Almighty.

In Jude 6 (below), the phrase “on the great Day” is significant. It places the *judgment* of these fallen angels at the end of the Millennium, but *before* the Great White Throne Judgment (because of the word “then” in Revelation 20:11) and *after* the judgment of Satan. It is possible that these occupants of Tartarus (a current partition or holding area of Hades (hell)) will never be released until they are thrown into the Lake of Fire at the future Great White Throne Judgment. In this way, Tartarus differs from other possible locations in Hades. However, some authors (e.g., [Morris, 1983; Heiser, 2017]) hold open the possibility that these fallen beings might be the ones that are released temporarily in the end times, only to be recaptured and sent to the Lake of Fire later.

... though all others perished in the waters of the cleansing Flood, the line of the promised Seed was preserved. The bodies of the demon-possessed men and women perished in the waters of the great sea which received the Flood waters, and their lost souls were imprisoned in Sheol, or Hades. The angels who participated in this further act of rebellion received a special judgment, however. ‘The angels which kept not their first estate [same word as “principality”], but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day” (Jude 6). ‘God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell [Greek: *Tartarus*, the lowest hell], and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment’ (2 Peter 2:4). ...

It seems clear that there are a number of different prisons in Hades. Tartarus, where the twice-fallen angels are confined, is one of these. Before the cross, the spirits of the lost and the spirits of the saved, were separated by ‘a great gulf’ (Luke 16:26). The ‘pit of the abyss’ is possibly still another compartment of Hades, in which have been stored a hoard of fearsome creatures waiting to be unleashed. The legion of demons allowed by Christ to enter the herd of swine had urged Him not to send them to the abyss (Luke 8:31). ...

And so the judgment of the fifth angel [Revelation 9:1-11], more fearsome than all before it, will involve giving these demons [currently in the pit of the abyss] their freedom to torture those men who are still on the earth. ...

The word “abyss” comes from roots meaning “without depth” and so is properly translated “bottomless.” ... The pit of this abyss of Hades is apparently one of its imprisoning cells, and it is only this one to which Satan actually receives the key. [Morris, 1983, pp. 155-157]

This particular host of fallen angels is under the command of one mighty angel named Abaddon or Apollyon (both the Hebrew and Greek names meaning “the destroyer”). Many have thought he was Satan himself, but it must be remembered that Satan commands a hierarchy of “principalities” and “powers” (Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 2:15). Satan’s present domain is not in Hades, but in the heavenly places. He is the “prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2).

Abaddon, on the other hand, with all the bevy of wicked spirits under his command, has apparently been incarcerated with them in their abyssal prison ever since their presumptuous attempt to destroy mankind in the days of Noah [Morris, 1983, p. 164].

Ryan Pitterson writes about the fallen angels before the Flood:

That is why 5,000 years ago, Satan instigated a fallen angelic rebellion in which a group of angels broke off their allegiance to the Lord and entered the earthly realm. These fallen angels (“sons of God”) took human wives (“daughters of men”) and had children with them. Their offspring—hybrid half-human, half-angel beings known as the Nephilim—were superhuman giants who waged war against humanity and corrupted the human gene pool. The Devil knew that the Messiah would be human and would specifically redeem humanity. Thus, if he could taint human DNA with angelic DNA, the bloodline leading to the prophesied Messiah would be corrupted leaving humanity with no chance of salvation.

The Nephilim and their fallen angel fathers were the original “gods” of mythology. Their kingdoms before the Flood would later be known through myriad legends such as Atlantis, Lumeria, and many others. They ruled the planet, spawned genetic hybrid monstrosities, and led the population into sinful rebellion against God. Non-believers often wonder why a loving God would destroy humanity with a cataclysmic global flood. The answer is, because He *is* a loving God, for it was the only way the Lord could save us. [Pitterson, 2017, pp. 1-2]

... the corruption of the human bloodline was one of the worst, most abominable acts committed in human history. It threatened the very plan of salvation for all people. Satan knew that if he could corrupt human genetics and disrupt the intended nature of God's creation, he could potentially thwart the Lord's plan of redemption—ensuring all human beings would burn in Hell and the Lake of Fire. With this understanding, God's reaction to the Devil's Nephilim armies will make much more sense. [Pitterson, 2017, p. 124]

We note that accounts from Roman mythology and Greek mythology—even though different names of supernatural entities are involved—start to make sense in the light of Genesis 6 and the Nephilim.

Many cultures contain myths of ancient races of giants. Some of the themes we find in Greek mythology and the legends of ancient cultures include gods' taking human women as wives, giant offspring, and a global flood. All of this mythology was a spin on the account of sons of God, daughters of men, and the birth of the Nephilim. [Pitterson, 2017, p. 138]

Pitterson argues that both the original fallen angels, that is, the angelic fathers of the pre-Flood Nephilim, and the Nephilim descendants, are in the “lowest hell”, chained until the Great White Throne Judgment:

The Bible refers to the giants of the antediluvian world with one designation—Rephaim. This was the racial identity of the original Nephilim, direct offspring of the sinning sons of God and the daughters of men, their human wives. ...

[The “lowest hell”] refers to the place of the souls of the wicked. It is their temporary prison until the Great White Throne judgment. And it is to this lowest Hell that the souls of the pre-Flood Nephilim were sentenced after God's great flood judgment. ...

Rapha is the Hebrew singular form of Rephaim. ... the Rephaim are identified as inhabiting Sheol and specifically in “the depths of hell [*Sheol*]” or, as David called it, “the lowest hell.” [Pitterson, 2017, pp. 159-162]

The angelic fathers of the antediluvian [pre-Flood] Nephilim were of course *bound with chains* in the abyss where they remain today until the judgment of the great day. [Pitterson, 2017, p. 433]

However, in several other locations in his book, Pitterson mentions that the angels that sinned in Genesis 6 are bound only until the Tribulation period, during which at least some of them will be released from the Abyss and be able to return to the earth. It is not clear whether the fallen angels who were sent to Tartarus will be released and be permitted to return to the earth—or whether they will only be released from Tartarus to go directly into the Lake of Fire at the end of the Millennium, that is, after the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20. There is a debate: is Tartarus the same as the Abyss—or are they distinct locations within Hades? Is Tartarus a place of non-release (2 Peter 2:4) compared to the Abyss where supernatural beings will be released

(Revelation 11:7)? Note that the New Testament uses the terms *Tartarus* and *Abyss*, separately. Some authors think that Tartarus and the Abyss are separate locations in Hades [Morris, 1983; Fruchtenbaum, 2005; Walvoord, *et al.*, 2011]. Others think they are the same location [Brown, 2015; Lindsay, 2018; Gilbert, 2021; Pitterson, 2021].

As for the spirits (demons) of the dead Nephilim, at least some of them were present during Jesus' ministry when He encountered—and drove out—demons [Pitterson, 2017]. Driving out demons was a sign of Christ's deity. The demons knew who Jesus was, and they wondered if Jesus was going to send them to the Abyss "before the appointed time" (Matthew 8:29).

If demons are the disembodied spirits of the dead Nephilim, no doubt they would have known about Tartarus and the bottomless pit. They would not have been part of the original judgment imposed upon their parents, the fallen angels, who were cast into the bottomless pit as we read in Jude. Their judgment is reserved for a later time. [Lindsay, 2018, p. 178]

Ryan Pitterson also believes that, "The Antichrist will be the seed of Satan [Genesis 3:15] and a hybrid being himself." [Pitterson, 2021, p. 129]

Regarding the puzzle of ancient man's engineering capabilities (e.g., pyramids, Stonehenge, other megalithic monuments, and temples) [Lindsay, 2018], and the size and power of the Rephaim, we read:

These revelations shed light on the many ancient monoliths that still exist today that contain individual bricks and slabs that weigh hundreds of tons. Were giants involved in their construction? In describing the giants' superhuman construction abilities, the Bible seems to confirm it was well within their power. [Pitterson, 2017, p. 337]

Angels have superhuman strength, and if fallen angels passed on some of their DNA to humans, this would explain the giants' strength.

In summary, we note that Genesis 6:1-9, 2 Peter 2:4, and Jude 6 appear to draw reference to a single, grievous sin. Why did God draw attention to this specific sin? Was this the reason that He sent a worldwide flood? Might Satan have planned to wipe out the human race at that time? Recall that only 8 people on Earth were found "righteous" (plus Enoch, who was raptured well before the Flood). Furthermore, consider the reference to blamelessness or "purity" of Noah, in Genesis 6:9. Might this indicate that much of the human race had been corrupted by demons having taken on human form (i.e., because "the sons of God" went to the daughters of men and had children by them)? It would certainly account for sending that class of fallen angels to Tartarus. It would also give interesting insight into why God brought about Noah's Flood.

If almost all of humanity were genetically contaminated in the days of Noah, would this be a major reason—or *the* reason—for bringing the Flood—when only 8 people were saved [Hamp, 2014]? Perhaps the changes in people's

DNA made them non-human, and therefore incapable of being saved/redeemed, because of a form of genetic engineering by fallen angels.

Some authors believe that a strange phrase in Daniel 2:43 refers to the changes in DNA that could take place around the time of “the mark of the beast” at approximately the midpoint of the Tribulation. It refers to “the seed of men”—a possible reference to DNA:

Daniel 2:43 [KJV] And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, **they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men:** but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

This [the midpoint of the Tribulation] is when the “mingling with the seed of men” of Daniel 2:43 will be initiated. By taking on the DNA of the Antichrist, humanity will finally achieve earthly immortality, but it will come at a most severe and devastating price: People will corrupt themselves to the point that they will no longer be fully human, thus they will no longer be image-bearers of Yahweh. The ensuing corruption will disqualify them from salvation, and this is precisely what brought human civilization to the brink of extinction in the days of Noah [Pitterson, 2021, p. 335]

What about God’s command to wipe out the inhabitants of Canaan—an area where the Nephilim or giants were believed to be present? Would such a command have been justified? Furthermore, it may have been Satan’s intent to destroy “the image of God”, to corrupt the line of the Messiah, and to make sure that the promised Messiah couldn’t be born. These are interesting questions to ponder.

Then from the time of God’s promise to Abraham until Moses, Satan had 400 years to thwart God’s plan, so he populated Canaan with a “minefield” of the remnants of the Nephilim. (Genesis 15:13-21).

It seemed successful when Moses sent his 12 spies to survey the land of Canaan, only to discover the huge Nephilim living in the land (Numbers 13:33). Ten of Moses’ spies feared those terrifying creatures, which resulted in Israel’s wandering in the desert for four decades. ... These Repha’im, Anakim, and Nephilim seemed to have been a ploy by Satan to stand as a guard to obstruct Israel’s possession of the Promised Land.

However, Satan’s plan was aborted when the Israelites, under Moses and later Joshua, conquered the inhabitants of the land and destroyed [most of] the remaining giants. Unless we comprehend the gravity of the situation, we will not understand why God gave Joshua the command to wipe out certain tribes of every man, woman and child. There was a gene pool problem. They were contaminated, both spiritually and genetically. [Lindsay, 2018, p. 187]

The possibility of genetic engineering in the days of Noah, along with genetic engineering today, gives an interesting interpretation to Christ’s warning in Matthew 24:37 about the time shortly before His return: “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man”. Thus, mankind can expect a tremendous amount of demonic activity during the Tribulation.

Some might argue that angels and demons are spirit beings and cannot take on human form—and in particular—cannot create life [Hanegraaff, 2003+].

Luke 20:34-36 Jesus replied, "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are considered worthy of taking part **in the age to come and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels.** They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection.

However, this focuses on our resurrected state in the future, and the current state of angels. In particular, it doesn't address the issue of embodiment that we have seen in Scripture [Missler, 1997]. Demons are immaterial beings that seek embodiment in a host, and this was true even in the days of Christ (e.g., Christ casting out demonic spirits when healing people, as per Matthew 8:28-34; 9:32-33; 12:22; 15:22-28; 17:14-18; Mark 1:32-34; etc.) Furthermore, even angels sometimes take on human form, and have even been mistaken as humans, as evidenced in the narratives of Abraham (Genesis 18), Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19), and the early church:

Hebrews 13:2 Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing **some people have entertained angels without knowing it.**

It is also worth pointing out that God puts limits on what Satan can or cannot do (e.g., Job 1); so, Satan could never have masqueraded as the risen Christ [Chaffey, 2019].

While the Flood wiped out the material beings, it did not necessarily wipe out the spirit beings. Jude 6 and 2 Peter 2:4-5 seem to suggest that those fallen angels from the time of Noah who were involved in the events of Genesis 6:1-4 are now confined and can never again take on human form. However, is it possible that some of the fallen angels who were not involved in the Genesis 6 incident, and therefore did not experience judgment and confinement in the days of Noah, became active in similar forms of embodiment and misconduct post-Flood? Or has God established new boundaries which cannot be crossed by supernatural beings even today? On the other hand, Christ did say, "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at coming of the Son of Man." (Matthew 24:37) [Use your computer to search for other references to the "days of Noah" in this book.]

In summary, there might have been multiple reasons for why the Nephilim giants came about: (a) to prevent the birth of the Messiah by corrupting the genetic line; (b) to prevent the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob from populating and dwelling in "God's Land"; and (c) to wipe out the "image of God" from the human race, by corrupting the genetic line and thereby preventing salvation.

	<p>The identity of the Nephilim and the corresponding relationship between material and immaterial beings remain as interesting, controversial, and open questions among Bible scholars. Nevertheless, the proposed answers to some of these questions cause a lot of pieces of history (and future prophecy) to snap into place.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>The Scriptures in Genesis 6 and Jude 6 are not about sexual sin. Angels could not have sex, or pass on DNA. Humans, animals, plants, etc. reproduce according to their own kind. Angels cannot take physical form. For example, after Christ’s resurrection, some people thought He might be a spirit being, but He said, “a ghost [or <i>spirit</i>, in some translations] does not have flesh and bones” (Luke 24:39).</p> <p>Augustine of Hippo argues that they could not be angels. He argues that the “sons of God” are really the sons of Seth, and the “daughters of men” came from the race of Cain [Hamp, 2014].</p> <p>The idea that the offspring of such a union could be part human, and part supernatural, is taken from Greek mythology. Furthermore, if the angels could have taken on human form, then “they could have masqueraded as the resurrected Christ” [Hanegraaff, 2003+]. Angels do not have creative power; but, God does.</p> <p>In Greek mythology, angels/gods were having sex with women. However, the daughters of men and the Sons of God (Genesis 6:1-4) refer to <i>mankind</i>, argues Hanegraaff. Specifically, the Scripture passage refers to the sinfulness of mankind and not angels. This sinfulness resulted in judgment on humanity via Noah’s Flood.</p> <p>Could fallen angels today produce offspring that are part demon, part human? No. The Biblical worldview does not allow that, argues Hanegraaff. Evangelical Bible teacher John Neufeld concurs [Neufeld, 2019].</p>

Topic/ Question	How do UFOs fit into the end-times? Are “aliens” demons? Might there be an eschatological connection?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>Gary Bates created a well-done, well-documented, investigative, and evangelistic video about UFOs called <i>Alien Intrusion</i> [Bates, 2018].</p> <p>The term UFO simply means “unidentified flying object”. It does not mean “flying saucers” or “aliens” from outer space (although there is an increasing trend to connect them); rather, it is just an unidentified object that appears in the sky—and some (but not all) of these objects have good explanations.</p> <p>In 2019 and 2020, the <i>History Channel</i> ran a very interesting series of programs on the UFO phenomena, called <i>Unidentified: Inside America’s UFO</i></p>

Investigation. They including interesting interviews, video footage, and documentation, including US military declassified material, and testimonies from military pilots, commercial pilots, and air traffic controllers.

An objection to the existence of alien or demonic beings is that they cannot travel in excess of the speed of light, and therefore it would take an enormous amount of time to reach the earth from an arbitrary location in outer space. However, this fails to take into account the issue of other dimensions. For example, consider 2-D vs. 3-D. One might argue that it would take a long time for someone or something to traverse the entire 2-D landscape and make an appearance. However, if there is a third dimension, then that being could appear in 2-D space instantly.

Some prophecy teachers such as the late Chuck Missler believed that when the Antichrist appears on the scene, he will have some kind of an alien connection. Missler conjectured that it might be some form of demonic deception—perhaps as a way of explaining the Rapture and as a prelude to alien intervention on Earth. When the Rapture does occur, a lot of people who are left behind will want an explanation of what happened. It is an open question of how Satan will explain away the Rapture, but one explanation might be that “bad” people were taken away, “good” people were left behind, and “the world is now a better place”. This would also be consistent with New Age philosophy including greater “global consciousness”, “evolutionary” progress, and the removal of those who would otherwise hold up “progress” in society.

The controlled media will be used to effectively coerce the world into adopting this new leader [Antichrist] as the man of the hour. Ongoing efforts to discredit the Bible and other prophetic books that foretold the rapture and the rise of the Antichrist will be a top priority of the new world government. Every attempt will be made to convince the confused populace that those who have been left behind are, in fact, the lucky ones, even though nothing could be further from the truth. [Hindson, 2021, p. 204]

In late 2021, NASA announced that it was hiring and/or consulting some religious leaders to help explain alien life, should such discoveries be made. Tom Hughes believes this could be tied in to a future explanation of the Rapture. Hughes comments: “I believe that people are seeing aliens, but I believe they’re demons. I don’t believe there are aliens on other planets. These are demonic creatures that are being manifested to certain people.” [Hughes, 2021]

Recall from the Bible that there are unseen powers behind the scenes. The apostle Paul writes about the spiritual dimension and the deception that is taking place:

Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

	<p>Except for the fallen angels who are permanently confined and imprisoned in Tartarus since the days of Noah, and except for those evil spirits in the Abyss (described in the book of Revelation) who will be released during the Tribulation, most evil supernatural beings are free to roam [Unger, 1952]. Because they are spirit beings, they try to embody people or animals. For example, in some of His miracles, Jesus cast out demons from people (e.g., Matthew 4:24; 8:16,28,33; 9:32-33; 12:22; 17:18). Post-Jesus, there is the incident about the seven sons of Sceva (Acts 19:13-17).</p> <p>The prophet Elisha helped his servant to see the unseen spiritual battle in 2 Kings 6:15-17. See also 2 Kings 19:35-36 and the repeated narrative in Isaiah 37:36-37.</p> <p>There are great spiritual battles behind the scenes in some government circles (e.g., Daniel 10:12-14; Daniel 12:1-2; Ezekiel 38:2-3; 39:1). In particular, there is a great war between angels and demons—between the forces of good (God) and the forces of evil (Satan), as described in Ephesians 6:12.</p> <p>In the secular world, aliens are sometimes called “interdimensional beings”. In cases of real sightings or encounters, Gary Bates and his team conclude that aliens are <i>not</i> here to save our planet, and they are <i>not</i> life forms from a distant planetary system. Rather, they are deceptive evil spirits. Their goal seems to be a deceptive religion attempting to steer people away from the Bible, Jesus Christ, and salvation. We know that in Noah’s day, there was a great deal of dark supernatural or demonic activity. Jesus warned us that His Second Coming would be preceded by supernatural experiences and conditions “as it was in the days of Noah” (Matthew 24:37; Luke 17:26; 1 Peter 3:19-20).</p> <p>Interestingly, there are many testimonies from abductees in alien encounters, whereby their frightening experiences came to an end as soon as they cried out to Jesus [Chaffey, 2019, p. 398].</p> <p>Most of the comments by Gary DeMar in the Preterist Position section immediately below resonate with some dispensationalists.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>Hank Hanegraaff states that fallen angels cannot take on <i>form</i>, since they don’t have creative power. During Bible times, [good] angels have taken on human form, but since the completion of the Bible, no such events have been documented anywhere with hard evidence—which is not to say that they cannot occur.</p> <p>There is no evidence from science or the Bible that there are other living forms in the universe, or that there are other “universes”. Some people claim that 80% or more of UFO “facts” are attributable to natural causes. Furthermore, the “messages” that the “aliens” appear to give to “witnesses” (e.g., regarding humanity, the future of humanity, origins) are inconsistent with the Bible.</p>

Gary DeMar comments on the secular religion of UFOlogy, and how there is a temptation to explain Biblical miracles using this paradigm:

The visiting alien in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, Klaatu ... was an interplanetary benefactor who “came in peace” to warn Earth of its headlong rush to nuclear oblivion. If earthlings did not get their collective act together, he warned that a planetary council might unleash a giant robot... who had the power and autonomy to wipe out all aggressors.

Messiahism hit the silver screen when Klaatu landed in Central Park. ... The resurrection takes place after a fearful military establishment kills Klaatu for being a “threat” to the nation. Does any of this sound familiar?

Similar to Klaatu, *E.T., The Extra-Terrestrial* (1983) personified the alien as savior. A baby alien is left on Earth where he is taken in by a family in turmoil. He heals a broken family with his presence. After being pursued by scientists and government officials, E.T. dies. All the elements of religion are present, even a resurrection and ascension.

The parallels with Christianity are unmistakable. The underlying premise is that there are aliens in our universe who can perform “miracles” in the same way that Jesus did. There is no need for God. [DeMar, 1997, pp. 471-473]

Hoping to hold on to the Bible as a special book, some have gone so far as to turn it into a pre-technological UFO manual. Elijah, for example, is said to have ascended into the atmosphere in a “chariot of fire” (spaceship) caught in a whirlwind (exhaust). Jacob’s vision of angels ascending and descending on a ladder is interpreted as a UFO event. The pillar of fire that preceded the Israelites as they passed through the Red Sea and led them into the wilderness is thought to be an alien encounter.

... Ezekiel’s vision of “wheels within wheels” is claimed by the UFO enthusiasts. All the necessary spaceship “nuts and bolts” are present: “fire flashing forth,” “glowing metal,” a description of a spaceship that had passed through the Earth’s atmosphere (1:4); “living beings” with alien characteristics (1:5-6,10-11); “burnished bronze” for spaceship landing legs (1:7); the ability to hover (1:12); and a propulsion mechanism “that looks like burning coals of fire, like torches darting back and forth among living beings” (1:13). [DeMar, 1997, pp. 476-477]

The Bible describes reality in a multidimensional format. God is near. In fact, Jesus called “Emmanuel, which translated means, ‘God with us’” (Matthew 1:23). We are told that where “two or three have gathered together” in Jesus’ name, He is “in their midst” (Matthew 18:20). Angels appear and disappear at will (Luke 1:11,26). After His resurrection Jesus appeared out of thin air: “When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst” (John 20:19). Paul was taken up into the “third heaven.” Whether “in the body” or “out of the body” he did not know (2 Corinthians 12:2). ...

The Bible is forthright about the realities of the spiritual world beyond our physical world. That world does not seem to be separated by distance. The

	<p>most popular Christian explanation for alien encounters is that they are demonic.</p> <p>... Those who have been struck by “last days madness” see the demonic explanation for UFO sightings [as] the missing key.</p> <p>... Belief in UFOs represents “help from above” because it “offers a pseudo-spiritual hope within an atheistic, scientific materialistic framework.” That means that we can believe in “something out there” that is bigger and better than us without having to acknowledge that it’s our god. Such a belief gets us off the judicial hook by removing any notion of final judgment. [DeMar, 1997, pp. 481-483]</p>
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<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>Jesus said, “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man” (i.e., at the return of Jesus Christ). So, what were the days of Noah like?</p> <p>Matthew 24:37-39 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away.</p> <p>Luke 17:26-30 "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed.</p> <p>Genesis 6:11-13 Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth.</p>
<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>“The days of Noah” were characterized by conditions such as: (a) unpreparedness, indifference, complacency, and apathy; (b) violence and lawlessness; (c) continually evil thoughts; and (d) dark supernatural or demonic activity. Some scholars conjecture that there could have been 7 billion or more people on the earth in those days, due to long lifespans and the exponential growth of the global population.</p> <p>First, the people of Noah’s day were <i>unprepared</i>. They had been warned repeatedly about the Flood (Noah spent over 100 years building the ark), but</p>

failed to pay attention to God’s salvation message issued through Noah, who was a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5, KJV). In fact, judgment was preached by Noah for 120 years, yet only 8 people heeded the call. For most people, it was “business as usual”, that is, life went on as normal, until the Flood came. By comparison, note that the message of the gospel includes the notion of *imminence*, that is, of always being ready for the return of the Lord. Unfortunately, complacency has also entered the church.

Second, the days of Noah were marked with lawlessness. God said that the earth was “full of violence”. It is interesting to note that the Antichrist is described as “the lawless one” in 2 Thessalonians 2:8-9.

Third, very few people were righteous—just 8 people in all: Noah, his wife, his sons, and his daughters-in-law. There was a lack of sexual integrity, and no shame—a clear parallel to today’s culture, as revealed through television, movies, music, and the Internet. Mankind’s thoughts were constantly evil. Evil is “entertainment” today; we laugh at wickedness instead of being appalled by it.

Genesis 6:5 The LORD saw how great the **wickedness** of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only **evil all the time**.

Fourth, it was a time of dark supernatural or demonic activity. If only 8 people were righteous, then that small number alone should indicate the extent to which the evil spiritual powers had dominated the world. Furthermore, although this is an area of debate among evangelical scholars, and it is discussed in detail in this book, one of the reasons for the Flood may well have been to wipe out the Nephilim referred to in Genesis 6:1-13, Jude 6, and 2 Peter 2:4-9.

Recall that neither Noah nor (later on, in a post-Flood event) Abraham’s nephew Lot went through the “trial”; rather, they were spared from a time of destruction. Both were taken to a physical place of safety *before* judgment arrived. This pattern is suggestive of a pretribulational rapture.

What made the “days of Noah” so unique? It was an era in which fallen angels openly interacted with humanity—many of them taking wives and giving birth to the Nephilim. This corruption of human morality and genetics pushed humanity to the brink of destruction and almost thwarted God’s plan of redemption. However, the Lord, in love, sent the Flood judgment to destroy the angelic invaders, their giant offspring, restarting the human population through faithful Noah. [Pitterson, 2021, pp. 1-2]

The book of Second Peter has eschatological overtones. Peter was undoubtedly familiar with Paul’s writings. Like Jesus and Paul, Peter mentions that the day of the Lord will come as a “thief in the night”. This analogy of a thief is not present in the Old Testament or in other Jewish literature. This suggests that

Paul and Peter probably drew from Christ’s words [Hart, 2011]. 1 Thessalonians 5:2-4 (written by Paul) and 2 Peter 3:10 (written by Peter) both speak of “the day of the Lord” as coming like a thief in the night. This imagery supports a pretribulation argument in two ways. First, it can refer to the Rapture itself. This would certainly take people by surprise. Second, it can refer to the sudden coming of Daniel’s “70th week”, that is, the *onset* of the day of the Lord, which might occur some time after the Rapture. Third, it can refer to a time later in the Tribulation when faithful Jews will be awaiting the Messiah, whereas others will not be.

Like the days of Noah and Lot, the words of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:3-4 relate to imminency and unpreparedness:

1 Thessalonians 5:3-4 While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief.

A few verses later, Paul adds:

1 Thessalonians 5:9-10 For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.

Pretribulationists appropriately recognize that Paul’s teaching of a peaceful and secure world that precedes the day of the Lord cannot easily be harmonized with John’s portrait of the end of the tribulation when the world will gather its armies in war against the coming Christ (Rev. 16:13-16; 19:19). [Hart, 2011, p. 21]

Since the apostle Paul declared that the church is delivered by rapture before the tribulation wrath (1 Thess. 5:9-10; cf. Rev. 3:10), and in Peter’s typology the ark represents the church (i.e., everyone who is joined to Christ by Spirit baptism), then the deliverance of Noah and his family in the ark logically typify the pretribulation rapture of the church and deliverance from the coming day of the Lord. [Hart, 2011, pp. 21, 23]

Interestingly, Luke 12:40-42 implies that it is Christians—those who want to part of the “faithful and wise manager” crowd—who should not be taken by surprise; and the way to do this is by being ready at all times for Christ’s return.

Note the parallelism among John 14:1-3, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, and 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11 [Showers, 1995]:

John 14	1 Thessalonians 4	1 Thessalonians 5
v. 3a: And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back ...	v. 16: For the Lord himself will come down from heaven , with a loud command, with the voice of	v. 9: For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

		the archangel and with the trumpet call of God,	
	v. 3b: ... and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.	v. 16b, 17: and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.	v. 10: He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.
	v. 1a: “Do not let your hearts be troubled.	v. 18: Therefore encourage one another with these words.	v. 11: Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.
	<p>Finally, we note that the day of the Lord is probably not just a single day. Like the days of Noah and Lot, the day of the Lord may include the time leading up to the key event (e.g., the Flood, fire and brimstone, and the Tribulation), the event itself, and the aftermath.</p> <p>Was life mostly “normal” when the Flood occurred? Yes. Was life mostly “normal” when the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah occurred? Yes. Will life be mostly “normal” when the Tribulation is going on? Hardly. [Gonzales, 2022]. People will not be planning weddings or other special events at that time. In fact, some people will be longing to die (Revelation 9:6). Over half of the world’s population will be wiped out. Those who survive the Tribulation will be lucky. Armageddon is taking place towards the end of the Tribulation just before—and at—Christ’s return.</p> <p>Lastly, in Revelation 3:10, Christ is stating that He will “keep you <i>from</i>” the hour of trial (judgment) that is going to come upon the whole world.</p>		
Preterist Position	<p>The “days of Noah” were characterized by lawlessness and unpreparedness—a state that will describe much of the world upon Christ’s return. One might argue that it also describes much of human history, post-Noah. However, it is <i>not</i> meant to describe a time of “tribulation” that occurs after a pretribulation “Rapture”.</p>		

Chapter 3: Heaven and Hell

This chapter addresses the questions: “Is there life after death?” “Does Heaven exist?” “What is Heaven going to be like?” “Does hell exist?”

The Barna Research Group (2003) reports that 81% of Americans polled believe in an afterlife of some sort; about 9% are not sure; and 10% do not believe that there is an afterlife. About 76% of those polled believe that Heaven exists, either as a state of eternal existence in God’s presence (46%) or as a real place of rest and reward (30%). About 71% of those surveyed believe that Hell exists, either as a state of eternal separation from God’s presence (39%) or as an actual place of torment and suffering (32%) [Missler, 2003b].

Of those people who believe they’re going to Heaven, the Barna Research Group reports that 43% say they are going to Heaven because they confessed their sins and accepted Christ as their Savior [this is the Biblical view]. Some other reasons are that they have tried to obey the Ten Commandments, they are basically a good person, and God loves all people and will not let them perish.

Chuck Missler points to the confusion, even among born-again Christians: 10% believe that people are reincarnated after death [the Biblical view says “no” to reincarnation], 29% claim it is possible to communicate with the dead [the Biblical view says “no” to communication with the dead]; 50% say that a person can earn salvation because of “good works” [again, this is contrary to the Biblical view]; and many believe that there are “multiple ways” of getting to Heaven [the Biblical view says there is only one way].

Theologians have long wrestled with the very concept of being made in God’s image. What does it even mean? ... However, many scholars believe the best way to explain the image of God is to think of it as a verb. Because we are made in God’s image, we are called to “image” God. In other words, human beings were made to reflect God’s glory—to show the world what God is like—through who we are and what we do. This concept is very helpful and it incorporates all of the others—intelligence, communication, worship, dominion, and eternal soul. What an absolute honor we have as human beings to be made in the image of the Creator and to be called to demonstrate who He is and what He is like. This is why Christians generally believe that all human life is precious. The unborn child, the mentally handicapped, the elderly, and even our worst enemies—all are made in the image of God. [Chaffey, 2019, p. 72]

On earth others may not value our differences or uniqueness, as other people just look at them from a human perspective. But each one of us was made uniquely in His image to glorify Him, and there is something inside each of us—in our personalities, hearts, and minds—that does not correspond exactly to anyone else. We each add a different tone and hue to the praise we offer Him. None is better; each is unique. [Schaeffer, 2008, p. 114]

Missler comments on the fact that the Bible says we are created in God’s image, and that we have a purposeful existence. There are only two worldviews: (a) we’re an accident of random chance, with no destiny; and (b) we’re the result of a deliberate and purposeful Creation ... with a purposeful destiny. He adds that your worldview will determine the answer to questions like:

- Where did I come from?
- Where am I going to?
- To whom am I accountable?

The end result of a believer's life is to enjoy Heaven, forever, with God. Anyone who believes in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior will be in Heaven.

Romans 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Even for those people who have had a particularly hard life (and this includes many Christians living in countries with religious persecution), we are reminded:

Romans 8:18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

In *The Case for Heaven*, Lee Strobel investigated whether reincarnation or the law of karma could possibly be embraced by Christianity [Strobel, 2021]. The conclusion was “no”. The Bible clearly says that we die *once*, and then (later) comes the judgment. We do not go through life again and again. (Of course, we will have eternal life upon gaining our resurrected body; and for Christians, this is at the time of the Rapture.) The law of karma, for example, is quickly ruled out because Christ paid the *entire* penalty for our sins, on the cross. Anyone who believes in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior has had all their past, present, and future sins forgiven. There are no sins that still need to be purged or “worked out” after death. If there were, then Christ’s sacrifice wasn’t sufficient. The Bible clearly teaches that Christ paid it all—and it was 100% sufficient.

Chad Meister was interviewed in *The Case for Heaven* by Lee Strobel about what “forever” will be like, with the understanding that some people may have had a difficult life. Chad said:

Imagine walking down the beach, picking up a handful of sand, and then picking out one grain. That single grain would seem insignificant compared to all the sand in your hand. Now compare it to all the sand on that beach. Then compare it to all the sand on every beach and in every desert on the whole planet.

Imagine that one grain of sand represents your entire lifetime in this world. All the mountains upon mountains of sand on the planet—all the lifetimes that those grains represent—would just be the beginning of eternity.

But now imagine you lived the worst possible life in this world—a lifetime of hardship and difficulties. I don’t want to diminish the suffering some people go through, but if that one grain of sand represents an entire lifetime of struggle, it would pale in comparison to the mind-boggling bounty of sand in the entire world. [Chad Meister in [Strobel, 2021, p. 225]]

Pew Research results from 2015 reveal that 72% of Americans believe in heaven, but only 58% believe in hell [Jeremiah, 2017]. For people who have no religious affiliation or

identifiable religion, including atheists and agnostics, 37% believe in heaven, and 27% believe in hell; about which David Jeremiah comments:

I'm unsure how a secularist can hold a belief in the afterlife with intellectual honesty. When a person rejects the reality of a Creator-God and claims instead that humans are nothing more than molecular mutations with no divine origin, existing randomly in a strictly materialistic cosmos, there can be nothing beyond the grave. ...

Modern and postmodern humanity, in embracing the hypothesis of evolution, has created a psychologically unsustainable dilemma for itself. [Jeremiah, 2017, pp. 30-31].

By the way, the New Testament contains more about hell than Heaven [Jeremiah, 2017].

In *The Case for Heaven*, Strobel, an investigative journalist, studied cases of near-death experiences (NDEs):

The more I investigated NDEs, the greater the number of documented cases of corroboration I found ...

I'm not surprised that NDE researcher Jeffrey Long, a seasoned radiation oncologist, concluded, "NDEs provide such powerful scientific evidence that it is reasonable to accept the existence of an afterlife." [Strobel, 2021, pp. 68-69]

<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>What will Heaven be like? Is Heaven a <i>literal</i> place? Are believers <i>physically</i> resurrected, that is, will they have real bodies? Will there be animals in Heaven? Is there an <i>intermediate</i>, physical state between death and the resurrection?</p> <p>1 Corinthians 2:9-10 However, as it is written: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived" -- the things God has prepared for those who love him -- these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit ...</p>
<p>Both Positions</p>	<p>Dispensationalists and preterists share many of the same understandings about Heaven. Both assume a literal Heaven. John 14:2-3 states several times that heaven is an actual <i>place</i> (i.e., having a location)—<i>topos</i> in the Greek.</p> <p>God revealed information about what Heaven is going to be like, in numerous places in the Bible, including the books of Revelation, Isaiah, and Ezekiel. For those who think we are "speculating", recall that the Apostle John wrote down what God commanded him to write in the book of Revelation. The apostle Paul got a glimpse of Heaven himself, and he wrote:</p> <p>Colossians 3:1-2 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.</p> <p>Where dispensationalism differs from preterism is in the timing. Dispensationalists believe that Heaven begins for Christians with the</p>

resurrection at the time of the Rapture. Also, dispensationalism assumes the existence of a literal Millennium. Nevertheless, the characteristics of Heaven are the same to both positions.

Heaven is a real place with real people doing real things. For example, Scripture tells us that there will be food and drink in Heaven; but, we will not need these things to survive. We will not be purely spiritual (as opposed to physical). Resurrection is literal: our *physical* bodies will rise from the dead some day. In fact, the oldest book (circa 2000 BC) in the Bible—Job—very clearly speaks of a physical resurrection:

Job 19:25-27 I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. **And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes** -- I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

The prophets Isaiah (circa 700 BC) and Daniel (circa 530 BC) also wrote about physical resurrection:

Isaiah 26:19 **But your dead will live, LORD; their bodies will rise -- let those who dwell in the dust wake up and shout for joy** -- your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead.

Daniel 12:2 **Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.**

We will also have a spirit, of course, since the spirit is non-physical and is eternal. In fact, when a Christian dies, his/her spirit goes to be with the Lord. When an unbeliever dies, his/her spirit goes to Hades, which is essentially a holding tank for the dead, awaiting judgment.

Note that after Job's trials, God restored to him double what he lost, with a notable exception. Compare the numbers before Satan afflicted Job and thus before Job "lost it all"; and then at the very end, when God rewarded him:

Job 1:2-3 He had seven sons and three daughters, and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East.

Job 42:12-13 The LORD blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. And he also had seven sons and three daughters.

The reason that God only gave him 7 sons and 3 daughters, rather than double that number (like He did for the animals), is because the others are in Heaven

and they will experience a physical resurrection someday. Then, Job—in his flesh—will be with all 14 sons and 6 daughters.

Jesus had a real body following His resurrection. In Scriptures like Luke 24 and John 20-21, Jesus was able to see, hear, talk, interact, stand, walk, hug, cook, eat, etc. He had flesh, skin, and bones. His body was recognizable, as was His voice. Jesus even resumed existing relationships, demonstrating “continuity between our current lives and our resurrected lives, with [at least some of] the same memories and relational histories” [Alcorn, 2004, p. 117]. He invited doubting Thomas to touch Him to confirm that it really was Him, and not a ghost that Thomas was seeing:

John 20:27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

Scripture says that we will have bodies like Jesus’ upon our resurrection, and this means we will have real, physical bodies ... and we will resume existing relationships, albeit in a better world:

1 John 3:2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. **But we know that when he** [Jesus] **appears, we shall be like him**, for we shall see him as he is.

1 Corinthians 15:49 And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.

Philippians 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, **will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.**

The apostle Paul got a glimpse of Heaven, and convinced of the reality, he wrote:

Philippians 1:23-24 I am torn between the two [Heaven and Earth]: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

Besides the clear teaching in Isaiah 26:19-21 and Daniel 12:1-2, Old Testament inferences about resurrection include Genesis 22:5 (Abraham’s belief in Isaac’s resurrection), Hosea 13:14, and Psalm 16:9-10 [Walvoord, *et al.*, 2012].

Will animals be in Heaven? Probably. After all, God will renew this planet to the state it was in before sin entered the world. If plants will be there, then it makes sense that animals will be there. Furthermore, we know that animals will be on Earth during the Millennium:

Isaiah 65:25 The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the LORD.

Although the souls of animals are qualitatively different from the souls of humans (e.g., the human soul can exist by itself without the body), some scholars such as Peter Kreeft believe that the same animals that were here on earth (e.g., pets) will also be in Heaven [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, 2011].

Randy Alcorn provides some thought-provoking comments about the likelihood of animals, including extinct ones, and pets, being in Heaven. "By resurrecting his original creation, God will show the totality of his victory over sin and death" [Alcorn, 2004, p. 385]. Some of Alcorn's comments are below. The interested reader is encouraged to explore his excellent book *Heaven* for more details.

Animals were important in Eden; therefore, unless there's revelation to the contrary, the principle of continuity suggests that they'll be important on the New Earth.

... When God breathed a spirit into Adam's body, made from the earth, Adam became *nephesh*, a "living being" or "soul" (Genesis 2:7). Remarkably, the same Hebrew word, *nephesh*, is used for animals and for people. We are specifically told that not only people, but animals have "the breath of life" in them (Genesis 1:30; 2:7; 6:17; 7:15,22). God hand-made animals, linking them to both the earth and humanity.

Am I suggesting animals have souls? Certainly they do not have *human* souls. Animals aren't created in God's image, and they aren't equal to humans in any sense. Nonetheless, there is a strong biblical case for animals having non-human souls.

... If the rescue of mankind in the ark is a picture of redemption, doesn't the rescue of the animals in the ark also anticipate their restoration as part of God's redemptive purposes?

... Selected humans, animals, vegetation, and geographical features (including mountains) were preserved by God in his judgment by water. Shouldn't we expect the same in his judgment by fire?

... When God sent Jonah to rescue Nineveh, God expressed his concern not only for the people in Nineveh but for its "many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?" (Jonah 4:11) [Alcorn, 2004, pp. 374-376]

Psalm 148 commands all of creation to praise the Lord, including the animals: "Wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds ... Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his splendor is above the earth and the heavens" (vv. 10-13). If in some sense fallen animals, shadows of what they once were, can praise God on this fallen Earth, how much more should we expect them to do so on the New Earth?

“Let everything that has breath praise the Lord” (Psalm 150:6). Since animals are said to have breath, they are included among those directed to praise God. [Alcorn, 2004, pp. 378]

Adam, Noah, and Jesus are the three heads of the three Earths. When Adam was created, God surrounded him with animals. When Noah was delivered from the Flood, God surrounded him with animals. When Jesus was born, God surrounded him with animals. When Jesus establishes the renewed earth, with renewed men and women, don't you think he'll surround himself with renewed animals? [Alcorn, 2004, pp. 381]

Hank Hanegraaff comments, “We will not be Casper the Ghost strumming a harp on a cloud.” Spirits are non-physical. Reincarnation is “escape from the body”. Resurrection has continuity: there's continuity between the body you now have, and the body you will have, even though the atoms may not be the same. In terms of DNA uniqueness and transformation, your current DNA (minus imperfections) is re-connected with your resurrection body. Hanegraaff argues that your DNA will be perfect, and your body will flourish, as if sin had never entered the world. However, you are still “you” in the sense of continuity. To use an analogy, we use a name like “Mississippi River” to describe the river, even though the water in it changes continuously (inflow and outflow), just like the cells and atoms in our body don't remain fixed.

While alive, you are a body-spirit entity (or equivalently, a body-soul entity): your spirit is where your body is. When you die, the spirit separates from the body; thus, the body dies, but the spirit *continues to exist* (i.e., for Christians, we say that the spirit “is present with the Lord”). The abode of the dead is where everyone's spirit goes upon death, awaiting resurrection. In the case of believers, the spirit goes to be with God (this is called Abraham's Bosom or Paradise); in the case of unbelievers, it is Hades. In both cases, the body will be resurrected in the future: believers to Heaven, and unbelievers to hell.

When a Christian dies today, his or her soul goes to paradise immediately; however, the body remains in the grave, awaiting a future resurrection. This is the intermediate or temporary state: the state between one's body in the grave here on Earth and the resurrected body that the believer will receive later on. A resurrected body will eat and drink on the new earth.

The earthly sanctuary [Tabernacle] was a copy of the true one in Heaven. In fact, the New Jerusalem that will be brought down to the New Earth is presently in the intermediate Heaven (Hebrews 12:22). If we know that the New Jerusalem will be physically on the New Earth, and we know that it is currently in the intermediate Heaven, *does that not suggest the New Jerusalem is currently physical?* Why wouldn't it be?

... The same physical tree of life that was in the Garden of Eden will one day be in the New Jerusalem on the New Earth (Revelation 22:2). Now it *is* (present tense) in the intermediate heaven. Shouldn't we assume it has the

same physical properties it had in the Garden of Eden and will have in the New Jerusalem? If it doesn't, could it be called the tree of life?

... If Christ's body in the intermediate Heaven has physical properties, it stands to reason that others in Heaven might have physical forms as well, even if only temporary ones. It also makes sense that other aspects of the intermediate Heaven would have physical properties—so that, for example, when Christ is seen standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56), he is actually standing on something. Otherwise we would have to conclude that the resurrected (and thus, embodied) Christ has been floating for two thousand years in a realm without material substance. (He *could*, of course, but *does* he?) If we know there is physical substance in Heaven (namely, Christ's body), can we not also assume that other references to physical objects in Heaven, including physical forms and clothing, are literal rather than figurative?

Enoch and Elijah appear to have been taken to Heaven in their physical bodies.

... If that is the case, they may even now be living in pre-resurrected bodies in Heaven, just as Christ is living there in his resurrected body.

... [Also] Moses and Elijah appeared physically with Christ at the Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36). [Alcorn, 2004, pp. 54-60]

Yet another thing that must be physical in the current Heaven is the New Jerusalem which is to be the home of the resurrected believers, and will ultimately come down from Heaven to Earth:

John 14:2-3 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

Revelation 21:1-4 Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

In fact, the apostle Paul suggests that the building of this city (New Jerusalem) has already been completed, and one wonders if the New Jerusalem currently has occupants in their intermediate bodies (after death, and before the Rapture) [Alcorn, 2004]:

Hebrews 11:16 Instead, they were longing for a better country -- a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed

to be called their God, for **he has prepared a city** for them.

For those who believe that heavenly objects are merely symbolic, consider the Ark of the Covenant. God told Moses to pattern it after the Ark in Heaven. Yes, it was symbolic in several ways; but, it was also *physical* [Alcorn, 2004]. Furthermore, in Revelation 10:8-10 when the apostle John visited Heaven, he touched, held, and tasted things:

Revelation 10:8-10 Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: "Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land." So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but 'in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.'" I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour.

Regarding saved individuals, Nathan Jones comments on the state of the body between the time of death and the Rapture:

Right after death your spirit will go right to Jesus. Immediately upon death you are ushered into the presence of Jesus by His angels in Heaven. You can find that in Luke 16:22.

When you get to Heaven, you will be given what is called an "intermediate body." It's a real body. You are not a ghost. ...

Your intermediate body will also be recognizable. The people who are up there with you will be able to recognize you. We can see examples of that from the Bible, like Samuel when he came back and King Saul immediately recognized him. Lazarus and the Rich Man in Luke 16 recognized each other. Moses and Elijah when they came with Jesus to the Transfiguration [in Matthew 18], what did Peter say? "Hey, let me build a tent for you guys." We don't build tents for spirits. They were clearly in recognizable, physical bodies. And, look at the Tribulation Martyrs. When the people who will die in the Tribulation are up in Heaven, what are they wearing? They are wearing white robes. They've got physical bodies. So, you too will receive an intermediate body when you die.

You will next experience the Rapture of the Church. If you live in Heaven with Jesus up until the time of the Rapture—that time when Jesus comes for His Church to glorify their bodies and take them to Heaven to be with Him forever—you will be part of that, too. [Jones, 2011]

It is interesting to note that the rich man in Luke 16 made reference to bodily features: "... dip the tip of your [Lazarus's] finger in water and cool my tongue", suggesting that there may be an intermediate body between the time of death and the time of the resurrection (still future), although it is possible that this is a metaphor. Parables generally do not have names listed; however, this narrative does, suggesting that it is more than just a parable.

There does not appear to be anything in the Bible called “soul sleep” where the dead are in a state of unawareness [Woods, 2018b]. Instead, when someone dies, that person is consciously aware, in their intermediate state, prior to their physical resurrection.

2 Corinthians 5:8 We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

Secondly, since the Tribulation martyrs are given white robes in Revelation 6:11, and since they are seen standing in Revelation 7:9, this implies they have some kind of a body; otherwise, they wouldn't need clothes, and they wouldn't be able to stand [Walvoord, 1990]. Recall that their souls are under the altar, and they call out to God. They have memories of their martyred life on Earth and they seem to be aware of time. They are “rational, communicative, and emotional—even passionate—beings, like people on Earth” [Alcorn, 2004, pp. 66]. They still learn, because God answers their question about “how long” until they are avenged. Furthermore, Scripture says that they will rule and reign with Christ for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:4); therefore, the Millennium must *follow* the Tribulation. In other words, we can't be in the Millennium now, as some preterists, amillennialists, and postmillennialists believe.

No mention is made about whether Lazarus was buried or cremated—probably the latter in a burning dump in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, yet Lazarus was “carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom” (Luke 16:22) [Jeremiah, 2017]. Conversely, the same passage says that the rich man was “buried”.

David Jeremiah reminds us that there are two men called Lazarus in the Bible—the other Lazarus is the one whom Jesus raised from the dead during Jesus' earthly ministry—and the most interesting part of both Lazarus' life stories occurred after each had died.

At least eight people besides Jesus were raised from the dead in Scripture: Elijah raised the widow's son (1 Kings 17:21-22), Elisha raised a young boy in 2 Kings 4, and a man came back to life after contacting the bones of Elisha (2 Kings 13:20-21). Jesus raised the widow's son at Nain (Luke 7:11-15), Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:49-56), and Lazarus (John 11). God used Peter to bring Tabitha back to life (Acts 9:40) and Paul to raise Eutychus (Acts 20:7-12). [Chaffey, 2019, p. 221]

Can believers who have died see what is happening on earth? Revelation 19:1-3 implies that those in Heaven “know” that Babylon has fallen, and they rejoice because of it. This suggests that those in Heaven are at least aware of some things on Earth. It's not clear how much more they know.

Angels saw Christ on Earth (1 Timothy 3:16). There are clear indications that the angels know what is happening on Earth (1 Corinthians 4:9; 1 Timothy 5:21). If angels, why not saints? It seems the people of God in

Heaven would have as much of a vested interest in the spiritual events happening on earth as angels do. ...

Christ said, “There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent” (Luke 15:7). ... Who is doing this rejoicing in Heaven? I believe it logically includes not only God but also the saints in Heaven, who would so deeply appreciate the wonder of human conversion—especially the conversion of those they knew and loved on Earth. [Alcorn, 2004, pp. 70-71]

Mark Hitchcock thinks that it is likely that those who have died are disembodied (i.e., without a physical body) in Heaven—until the Rapture or the Second Coming of Christ [Hitchcock, 2014a].

At resurrection time—be it at the Rapture, or during the gap between the Second Coming and the Millennium, or at the end of the Millennium—the spirit is reunited with the body, but this time (in the case of believers), it’s a *perfected* or *glorified* body.

Paradise is the term used to describe the eternal state (i.e., the new heavens and the new earth), but it is also used to a lesser degree to describe the intermediate state between the time we die and the time we get our resurrected bodies [Alcorn, 2004]. Alcorn states that death can be viewed as the relocation of a person from one place to another.

By the way, the word “paradise” has Persian roots, meaning “pleasure park”. In terms of a Garden of Eden scenario, “paradise lost” becomes “paradise restored”. Heaven is the restored universe; it is the way the universe was before sin entered the world.

The apostle Paul refers to the “third heaven” (2 Corinthians 12:1-4). The first heaven refers to the atmosphere (e.g., dew (described in Deuteronomy), frost and wind (described in Job), and clouds (described in Psalms)). The second heaven refers to the Celestial heaven (e.g., the realm of the sun, moon, and stars—described in early Genesis). The third heaven refers to the dwelling place of God (e.g., “Our Father Who Art in Heaven”); it is where believers’ souls go upon death. The body “sleeps” in the grave, until the time of resurrection. Often, Heaven refers collectively to the whole universe in its perfected state.

Like dispensationalists, Hank Hanegraaff believes that there will be food, animals, plants, trees, flowers, etc. in Heaven. Animals are among God’s most wonderful creations, and we expect that they’ll be there. Many authors stress the literal nature of Heaven. Grant Jeffrey, for example, wrote about Heaven in one of his first books—to highlight the modern church’s lack of emphasis on a literal heaven [Jeffrey, 1990]. Jeffrey makes the following comments about Heaven:

- We will do real things—purposeful, interesting activity.
- We will recognize others and build relationships. It will be a place of community.
- The character we have developed in our individual lives will be expressed.
- It lasts forever.
- There will be no pain, fear, crying, emotional disorders, etc.
- Misunderstandings will be taken away. Families will reconnect.
- We will understand life, as God understands life.
- Fellowship with friends and family will be restored and richly deepened.

Heaven is also a place of worship. I believe that we'll be able to see history, and find out why things have happened in our lives at certain times. We'll wish we had done more for the Lord while we were living in our current bodies. In fact, 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 notes that rewards in Heaven are based on what we have built on the foundation (salvation) provided by Jesus Christ. Perhaps there will be biographies of fellow human beings to read—possibly minus any inappropriate parts.

Memory is a wonderful thing, but memory is also a haunting thing. There are some things—I'm sure we could all agree—that we wish we could forget ... even in this lifetime. Stuff we've done. Scenes that you've had to look at, or things that you've encountered in your life that you wish you'd never heard that, learned that, seen that; and so sometimes memory can be a tormenting thing. And so I think God in His grace will not allow us to remember things. That part will be erased that might be painful. ... We'll be too caught up in the wonder, and the beauty, and the glory of God ... [Hamrick, 2021]

Heaven is a place of rest, but it is also a place of service, and I believe that it is a place of continuous learning. Anders Ericsson reports that it can take a lifetime to become an expert in any one (narrow) field: 10,000 hours of deliberate (effortful) practice [Ericsson and Pool, 2016]. Almost any career or interest on Earth falls into that category, including athletics, music, engineering, etc. World-class experts became that way usually through lots of hard work, long hours, and deliberate practice. Golfer Tiger Woods, computer scientist Bill Gates, physicist Albert Einstein, musicians Mozart and the Beatles—are just a few examples of world-class experts [Gladwell, 2008].

We will never be bored in Heaven, as there will be so many things to do. We currently live in a fallen world; however, in a renewed world without sin, but with perfected minds and bodies, we can spend time on bigger, better, and more creative things. Since we will likely have varied interests, different levels of motivation, and different personal allocations of time for different subjects, projects, tasks, exploration, ideas, music, singing, sports, entertainment, cooking, etc., that also means that we will not all have the same level of

expertise or interest in the same things. In other words, we won't all think or perform in the same way. Nevertheless, we will be able to relate to others, and establish relationships—possibly with everyone in Heaven, given the endless time we will have. Some common ground that we have right away will be our love for God, His people, and His creative work.

We will get a makeover! We will have a new body and an enhanced mind, yet we will retain our personal identities. Long-time quadriplegic Joni Eareckson Tada wrote a fascinating book called *Heaven: Your Real Home*. In it, she writes:

I, with shriveled, bent fingers, atrophied muscles, gnarled knees, and no feeling from the shoulders down, will one day have a new body ...

Can you imagine the hope this gives someone spinal-cord injured like me? Or someone who is cerebral palsied, brain-injured, or who has multiple sclerosis? Imagine the hope this gives someone who is manic depressive. No other religion, no other philosophy promises new bodies, hearts, and minds. Only in the gospel of Christ do hurting people find such incredible hope. [Tada, 1995, p. 53]

Randy Alcorn adds:

Joni tells of speaking to a class of mentally handicapped Christians. They thought it was great when she said she was going to get a new body. But then she added, "And *you're* going to get new minds." The class broke out in cheers and applause. They knew just what they wanted—new minds. [Alcorn, 2004, p. 286]

Don Stewart asks us to consider the Library of Congress's incredible book collection about just about every topic under the sun [Stewart, 2015a]. How many of those topics do you excel in? Almost none. Now think about what you could learn in Heaven ... and there's going to be so much more!

Think of the beauty in the world—like many national parks that we come to love and enjoy. For example, I think that the Canadian Rockies have the most spectacular scenery that I've seen anywhere. The all-day drive between Vancouver and Calgary is spectacular, and even more so if you take two detours along the way in Alberta: north from Banff National Park into Jasper National Park, and south from Trans-Canada Highway #1 into Kananaskis Country. And remember: these beautiful sites exist in a *fallen* world. We can assume that things will be even more spectacular in a restored world. Think of the creative ability of God: animals, birds, fish, plants, sunsets, lakes, mountains, etc. You're not an accident of evolution; you're here by design, and God has a purpose for you [Stewart, 2015a]! Stewart itemizes these characteristics of our transformation in Heaven:

- A new body (Philippians 3:20-21)
- A new mind (1 Corinthians 13:12)

- A new, righteous character (Revelation 22:14)
- We will lack nothing. All of our needs—not greeds—are going to be met (Revelation 7:16-17).
- We’re going to see God and be with Him (Revelation 21:3; Revelation 22:4; Matthew 5:8).
- Heaven will be a place of rest, but also a place of service (Matthew 25:21; Revelation 14:13; Revelation 22:3).
- There will be faultless worship—a pure heart and motive.
- There will be music and singing (Revelation 15:2-3).
- We’ll rule in Heaven (1 Corinthians 6:2; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 22:5). It is unclear whether this means that we will be involved in the Great White Throne Judgment, or if we will be involved in judging and ruling in the Millennium, or if we will be ruling in the eternal state [Stewart, 2015b]. We will judge angels (1 Corinthians 6:3). Although we tend to use the word “judge” in connection with “punishment”, there is the possibility that the word “judge” is better translated as “adjudicate”—meaning: make decisions, decide among options [Gonzales, 2020c].
- We will eat and drink in Heaven (Matthew 8:11; Revelation 22:2). We’ll probably have perfect food and perfect taste buds, adds Stewart.
- We will not be bored in heaven (see all of the above characteristics and references).

M.R. De Haan writes:

... the description of this New Jerusalem [Revelation 21-22] follows closely the description of the first abode of mankind in the garden of Eden. There, too, was the literal river with its three heads, and there, too, were trees, and in the midst, the tree of life. On this tree grew literal fruit and literal leaves.

The tendency to spiritualize is the result of a wrong conception of the life hereafter, of heaven and the New Jerusalem. We are liable to think of heaven as a place with golden streets, where angels and the saints play golden harps all day long. This is, however, wholly erroneous. When we get to glory, after the resurrection, we will still be human beings. Our resurrection bodies will be literal human bodies and we shall eat and drink and act like human beings. Scripture seems to indicate that we will not have to eat, but we will be able to eat. After His resurrection, Jesus ate literal food, and here we can believe that the tree of life is for our pleasure and enjoyment. [De Haan, 1946, pp. 302-303]

Relationships will exist in Heaven; but the relationships will be far better than those in our current, broken state. God will restore the earth to its state prior to the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden. Heaven means everlasting life, in the presence of God—and without sin, sadness, pain, etc.

When you get to heaven, you’re going to know all of the people you met down here and they will know you. It is unthinkable to me that in heaven we will know less than we do here. The Bible says, “For now we see in a mirror,

dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known” (1 Corinthians 13:12). [Jeremiah, 2017, p. 98]

Those bodies will be linked to the ones we currently have; but, they will be perfected—not subject to death or disease (1 Corinthians 15:53). We will not be angels. Angels have a different body than humans. Furthermore, our resurrected bodies will be unique (1 Corinthians 15:39-42). There will be continuity with our current bodies, and our glorified bodies. We will have the same identity [Stewart, 2015b].

You will be *you* in heaven. Who else would you be? If Bob, a man on earth, is no longer Bob when he gets to Heaven, then, in fact, Bob did not go to Heaven. If when I arrive in Heaven I’m not the same person with the same identity, history, and memory, then *I* didn’t go to heaven.

The resurrected Jesus did not become someone else; he remained who he was before his resurrection: “It is I myself!” (Luke 24:39). ...

Bruce Milne writes, “We can banish all fear of being absorbed into the ‘All’ which Buddhism holds before us, or reincarnated in some other life form as in the post-mortem prospect of Hinduism.”

... But to imagine we’ll lose our personal identities is a Hindu belief, not a Christian one.

... In addition to our earthly names, we’ll receive new names in Heaven (Isaiah 62:2; 65:15; Revelation 2:17; 3:12) [Alcorn, 2004, pp. 278-280]

Our bodies will not be subject to death or decay; they will be permanent and indestructible. We will have no physical or emotional ailments, handicaps, etc. We will have real, physical, recognizable bodies, and those bodies will be able to function in both heaven and on the new earth [Stewart, 2015b], which will become part of Heaven:

Luke 24:30-31 When he [Jesus] was at the table with them [the two men that Jesus met on the road to Emmaus], he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.

Heaven will not be an endless church service. In fact, Scripture says there won’t even be a temple there. It will not be boring or mindless. Rather, Heaven will provide plenty of opportunities for purposeful activity. Furthermore, Christ will be living among us.

Will we always be on our faces at Christ’s feet, worshiping him? No, because Scripture says we’ll be doing many other things—living in dwelling places, eating and drinking, reigning with Christ, and working for him. Scripture depicts people standing, walking, traveling in and out of the city, and gathering at feasts. When doing these things, we won’t be on our faces before Christ. Nevertheless, all that we do will be an act of worship. We’ll enjoy full and unbroken fellowship with Christ. At times this will crescendo

into greater heights of praise as we assemble with the multitudes who are also worshiping him.

Worship involves more than singing and prayer. I often worship God while reading a book, riding a bike, or taking a walk. I'm worshipping him right now as I write. Yet too often I'm distracted and fail to acknowledge God along the way. In Heaven, God will always be first in my thinking. [Alcorn, 2004, pp. 188-189]

Although we can't be dogmatic about it, it is quite possible that we'll have bodies in the prime of youth. For example, many people have died as babies or fetuses (the Hebrew word *brephos* is used for both); so, it would more realistic to expect a young adult appearance, rather than the "state" that a person was at, just before death. Furthermore, as people get older, the body tends to break down in various ways, so it's unlikely that a perfected body would be one that is quite old in appearance.

Hank Hanegraaff notes that we'll definitely be able to recognize our loved ones "from both a metaphysical and a physical standpoint". This is not at odds with Isaiah 65:17 because that verse implies that sin, mourning, pain, etc. will pass away. We'll know our loved ones from a deeper, non-physical, but more intimate perspective.

The DNA that we currently have will be perfected. Today, there are many imperfections in our DNA—imperfections that have existed since Adam and Eve sinned (i.e., since the "fall" of creation). Having said all this, we need to take care of our current bodies, no matter what they look like or feel like. We are commanded to regard our bodies as "God's temple":

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

Will Heaven be a boring place? Science fiction author Isaac Asimov wrote:

I don't believe in the afterlife, so I don't have to spend my whole life fearing hell, or fearing heaven even more. For whatever the tortures of hell, I think the boredom of heaven will be even worse. [Asimov quoted in [Jeremiah, 2017, p. 61]].

Hanegraaff comments that we won't instantly "know everything" once we get our resurrected bodies; otherwise, Heaven could very well be boring. We'll be continually learning and exploring the depths of God's wisdom, love, holiness, and creation. Imagine playing golf and getting a hole-in-one on every shot. Under these circumstances, argues Hanegraaff, even Tiger Woods would become bored and give up the game.

We will never come to an end of exploring the Creator's creative handiwork. The universe will literally be our playground. Even if we were capable of

exhausting the new heaven and the new earth, God, of course, could create brand new vistas for us to explore. ... Our ability to appreciate one another will be enhanced exponentially. ... Imagine being able to love another human being without even a tinge of selfishness. Well, will heaven be boring? Absolutely not! We will learn without error, but make no mistake about this: We will learn. We will grow. We will develop in heaven ... Far from being dead and dull, heaven will be an exhilarating, exciting experience that will never come to an end. Now if that's true, we should fix our eyes not on passing vanities, but rather on eternal verities. We should have an eternal perspective. [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, February 18, 2009]

David Jeremiah writes:

You and I will not be boring once we get to heaven. Whatever our personalities and temperaments are now, we're going to be so vastly improved that we'll be incapable of being bored or of being boring.

... We'll have all the energy and drive and ambition imaginable, and our bodies will never weaken or suffer fatigue.

... I believe we're going to be so radically changed at the resurrection that no matter how boring someone might be on earth, there will not be one moment of boredom in eternity!

Down here we have problems even with our closest friends. You know what that's like. Someone says something to you, and you aren't sure how to interpret it. You react to it— perhaps overreact.

... In heaven there will be none of that. Our relationships will be open, honest, interesting, loving, and uncomplicated by sin or our sinful natures. We will dwell with God, the angels, and one another in perfect compatibility and refreshing intimacy. [Jeremiah, 2017, pp. 66-69]

Yes, there will be work in heaven! ... Our work in heaven will be restful because it will fit us perfectly. It will be exactly what we are fitted for and love to do. It will have none of the pressures we experience in work today. There will be no outlandish deadlines, stressful coworkers or bitter competition. Things will not go wrong; Murphy's Law will have been repealed. We will feel truly fulfilled because we will work in a manner fitting to the way God designed each of us. We will be free to work for the benefit of God, others and ourselves. – Josh and Sean McDowell [Jeremiah, 2017, p. 69]

He will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord" (Matthew 25:21). That doesn't sound to me like we'll be sitting around forever trying to figure out what to do.

... We will discover new gifts, new interests, and new pursuits. We will have new responsibilities and exercise positions of authority.

... In his book *The Biblical Doctrine of Heaven*, Wilbur Smith said, "In heaven we will be permitted to finish many of those worthy tasks which we

	<p>had dreamed to do while on earth, but which neither time nor strength nor ability allowed us to achieve.” [Jeremiah, 2017, pp. 74-75]</p> <p>Admittedly, some people have had very challenging work lives; or have been working in fields that they had little interest in; or are truly tired and worn out. It is understandable that the prospect of doing even more work, or taking “charge of ten cities” as per Luke 19:17 may seem unappealing. However, one way of thinking about your future work or service in Heaven is to think back to some work or personal project that you worked on in the past which was so interesting and motivating, that it was a pleasure to work on. When you got up in the morning, you were anxious to continue working on it. Then, at the end of the day, you were still excited about doing further work on it the next day. At the end of the project, it was satisfying work, and perhaps, a substantial accomplishment.</p> <p>Mark Hitchcock writes: “Our lives today are training time for reigning time.” [Hitchcock, 2019a, p. 79] And it doesn’t matter what the tasks are—simple or complex, tedious or not—do them responsibly and reliably ... and with the right attitude.</p> <p>Colossians 3:23-24 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.</p>
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Topic/ Question	Will babies go to Heaven?
Both Positions	<p>Yes, this appears to be the case. The character of God, shown in thousands of verses throughout the Scripture, implies this [Jeremiah, 2017]. God is given the name “Father”. He is full of compassion, truth, fairness, and goodness.</p> <p>It is likely that children (and adults) before the age of accountability will go to Heaven. An example of such an adult is a mentally handicapped person who is incapable of making a decision for Christ. Regarding the age of accountability, most likely this also applies to aborted or miscarried children. Scripture stops short of saying this, possibly because it might lead to people feeling indifferent about abortions or the millions of children who die from disease or a lack of food in impoverished nations around the world [Alcorn, 2004].</p> <p>Recall that King David’s infant son died, but David knew that his son was in Heaven:</p> <p>2 Samuel 12:22-23 He [David] answered, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, 'Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me and let the child live.' But now that he is dead, why should I go on</p>

fasting? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me."

Here are some more Scripture verses that speak about God's thoughts about babies:

Psalm 22:9-10 Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you, even at my mother's breast. From birth I was cast on you; from my mother's womb you have been my God.

Psalm 137:13-17 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them!

Luke 1:15 "... for he [John the Baptist] will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born."

During His earthly ministry, Jesus demonstrated love and compassion for children:

Matthew 18:14 In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.

Matthew 19:14 Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Luke 18:15-16 People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

David Jeremiah shares some thoughts about those who do not reach an age of accountability:

God makes divine allowances for children. When the Israelites were denied entrance into the Promised Land due to the unbelief of the people, the children were exempted from that penalty. Deuteronomy 1:39 says, "Moreover your little ones and your children, who you say will be victims, who today have no knowledge of good and evil, they shall go in there; to them I will give it, and they shall possess it."

In other words, a full generation was penalized for rebellion and unbelief, but God did not hold the children responsible for the unbelief of the adults.

Jeremiah 19:4 adds, "Because they have forsaken Me and made this an alien place, because they have burned incense in it to other gods whom neither they, their fathers, nor the kings of Judah have known, and have filled this

place with the blood of the innocents.” These “innocents” were the children who are perishing on the blazing altars erected to idols during horrendous times of evil.

Ezekiel 18:20a says, “The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son.”

Isaiah the prophet ... said, regarding the birth of a certain child, “For before the Child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you dread will be forsaken by both her Kings” (Isaiah 7:16). Until we reach a certain age, we’re too young to refuse evil, choose good, or even significantly understand the difference between good and evil. Until we reach a certain age, our hearts and minds cannot grasp the Gospel message. Such souls are protected under the blood of Christ. They are not sinless, as I said, for we’ve all inherited the sinful nature of our first parents; but they are described in the Bible as “innocents,” and are, I believe, included in the redemptive power of the blood of the loving Savior. [Jeremiah, 2017, pp. 258-261]

Will babies still be *babies* in Heaven? There are two views here. One answer is “no” because Scripture records that the saved are praising God in Heaven. Thus, a child must be capable of understanding and worshiping. A common response to what age we will be in Heaven—according to a number of prophecy scholars—is that children might be around age 30, but with every imperfection removed; it’s as if they had grown and matured to that point. Recall that Christ was around age 30 at the start of His ministry.

But there is another view, which Randy Alcorn suggests when he writes, “Is it possible that children, after they are resurrected on the new earth, will be at the same level of development as when they had died? If so, these children would presumably be allowed to grow up in the new earth—a childhood that would be enviable, to say the least! Believing parents, then, would presumably be able to see their children grow up—and likely have a major role in their lives as they do so.” [Randy Alcorn, quoted in [Jeremiah, 2017, p. 276]]

Here is a thought-provoking question by David Jeremiah, with reference to miscarriages, aborted babies, or children who died while very young: “Will you be in heaven with your baby?” The parent needs to make his or her own decision for Christ.

If you are reading these words and you had an abortion, I want to tell you with all my heart, God knows how to pour his forgiveness and healing into your life through the merits of Christ. Abortion is not the unpardonable sin. God not only forgives you, He goes far beyond that. Because of His mercy, that little one, now lost, will be waiting for you in heaven and you will enjoy an eternity of loving fellowship with that precious one. [Jeremiah, 2017, p. 267]

Don Richardson believes that, from the start of recorded history, a staggering two-thirds of all conceived fetuses did not survive to age 5 [Jeremiah, 2017]. This includes aborted, miscarried, and stillborn babies; young children who died of disease; and young children who died through war, crime, accidents,

	<p>natural disasters, etc. That is a staggering figure, and it tells the rest of us that we are a fortunate minority to have lived as long as we have.</p> <p>This also lets us ponder the idea that perhaps these children will be able to grow up in a wholesome environment upon Christ’s return, and perhaps we will play a part in their upbringing. Childhood should be a fascinating and happy time of life for us—not only as children, but as parents, teachers, and other caregivers watching children grow up in a supportive environment unhindered by tragedy and misfortune. Reunions, forgiveness, love, opportunities, growth, wholesomeness, etc.—all these reflect the character of God. I think that those adults who did not have children will play a role in bringing up children during the Millennium, especially if the natural parents of those children did not believe in God (and therefore are not present in the Millennium and beyond).</p> <p>As the following Scripture passage shows, the prophet Isaiah made it clear that children would be born in the Millennium; but, we’re not sure if he meant it to apply to the eternal state, as well.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Isaiah 11:6-9 The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.</p>
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Topic/ Question	In Heaven, will we get to see God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit?
Both Positions	<p>We will see Jesus Christ because He is forever in flesh. Recall that Christ was seen, physically, after He rose from the dead. He will walk on the restored Earth with us. Resurrection is physical, not platonic.</p> <p>God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, are <i>spirit</i>, and therefore they cannot be seen.</p>

Topic/ Question	<p>What is meant in 1 Peter 3:19-20 by “[Christ] preached to the spirits in prison ... who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built”? Does this somehow mean that there’s a “second chance” for everyone to believe?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">1 Peter 3:18-20 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the</p>
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	<p>spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water,</p>
Both Positions	<p>It may mean that, in the days after his death on the Cross, Christ visited Hades, and proclaimed victory to the departed, unsaved souls in Hades (probably the rebellious angels imprisoned in Tartarus). However, there is no “second chance” for salvation; so, that is not what the passage is referring to.</p> <p>Hebrews 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:</p> <p>The unsaved remain in Hades, awaiting a future resurrection and judgment.</p> <p>This is why it is important to make sure that you’re saved, today. Tomorrow may be too late.</p> <p>Yet another viewpoint is one that the Reformers held, namely that Christ preached through His Spirit to the people of Noah’s day [Hanegraaff, <i>Bible Answer Man</i>, January 30, 2012].</p> <p>Perhaps the best viewpoint (from the dispensational point of view) is that Christ preached or proclaimed victory over the fallen angels of Genesis 6 [LaHaye, <i>et al.</i>, 2001].</p>

Topic/ Question	<p>Did Moses and Elijah have resurrected (glorified) bodies on the Mount of Transfiguration? Is this event the event that is referred to in Matthew 16:28?</p> <p>Matthew 16:28 I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."</p>
Dispensationalist Position	<p>Some dispensationalists believe that Matthew 16:28 was fulfilled at the Mount of Transfiguration:</p> <p>Matthew’s stress upon the actual, physical presence of the Son of Man is clearly met in the transfiguration because Jesus was personally and visibly present. Matthew says, “He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light” (17:2). The preterist interpretation does not meet Matthew’s criteria, since Jesus was not personally present at the later destruction of Jerusalem. [Ice, 2003d, p. 88]</p> <p>The transfiguration, which occurred 6 days after Christ’s comment in Matthew 16:28, was probably a preview of Christ’s Kingdom [Zuck, 1991].</p> <p>Since Jesus communicated with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration, does this mean that Moses (who had died) was <i>already</i> resurrected? This is not clear. Recall that Old Testament law prohibited</p>

	<p>communication with the dead [Urban, 2009]. Did he have a temporary body, that is, an intermediate state, prior to his ultimate physical resurrection at Christ's Second Coming? That is possible because if Moses is one of the two witnesses in Revelation 11, and if he already has a resurrected body, then he cannot die again [Whitcomb, 2014]. Thus, we assume that Moses and Elijah currently do not have glorified bodies.</p>
<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>The transfiguration cannot be used to explain the fulfillment of Matthew 16:28 because the verse seems to imply that many of the disciples would be dead, but some would still be alive. The transfiguration happened only about a week after Christ spoke those words; therefore, the timing makes this explanation improbable.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Hebrews 9:27-28 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.</p> <p>People do not die, get spiritual bodies, come back to life, and die again.</p> <p>Jesus is the “firstfruits” from the dead; therefore, it is unlikely that Moses and Elijah had real bodies after their departure from earth (but they will in the future). Scripture says that there is a time coming when all will rise from the dead. At some point in the future, all believers (alive or dead, before or after Christ) will take on changed bodies “in the twinkling of an eye” (i.e., immediately).</p> <p>Thus, we assume that Moses and Elijah didn't actually have a <i>body</i> on the Mount of Transfiguration. Sometimes we read about Christophanies (or Theophanies) or angelophanies, where Christ or the angels take on the appearance of a human (even though angels do not have a form).</p> <p>Recall that God is spirit. God can give form to Moses. God can give form to Elijah. These are <i>not</i> permanent appearances; and, it does not undermine the fact that they will both be resurrected in permanent, perfected, bodily form—but at the time of the judgment.</p> <p>Preterists believe that those who heard Christ speaking the words of Matthew 16:28 will experience the “son of man coming in his kingdom”, namely Christ coming in judgment of Israel in 70 AD [Newton, 2012]. John the Baptist started preaching the kingdom of God before the start of Jesus' public ministry. Even though Christ received His kingdom upon His ascension, it would be about 40 more years before the old covenant finally disappeared. Scripture passages that speak of the kingdom of God include Matthew 3:1-3; 4:23; 16:28; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43; 16:16; Acts 1:3; and 14:22.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The kingdom began with his public ministry, then was spiritually established by his death, resurrection, and ascension. Nevertheless, the “coming of the</p>

	<p>kingdom” was not complete until something else happened. The future aspect of the kingdom is the “<i>coming of the son of man.</i>” This was his spiritual return in judgment and the final days of the old age. This occurred 40 years later when the temple and Jerusalem burned.</p> <p>... The new people of God, those of the new creation, had their official start at Pentecost. Nevertheless, it was not until the temple came down in a blaze of fire that the age of the old covenant stopped. Therefore, the first-century church lived in a transition period, 40 years when the old covenant stood alongside the new.</p> <p>... The kingdom of God has already come in its fullness yet may still be in its infancy as to its final goal, the renewal of the earth. [Newton, 2012, pp. 98-99]</p>
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Topic/ Question	What is the difference between one’s <i>soul</i> and <i>spirit</i> ?
Both Positions	<p>The <i>soul</i> consists of the mind, will, and emotions. The <i>spirit</i> gives us the ability to have a relationship with God.</p> <p>These terms are used interchangeably in Scripture, and there is no distinction between them in Scripture. “Biblically, I don’t think you can make the case [that there is a difference between soul and spirit]”, argues Hank Hanegraaff.</p> <p>The soul and spirit are two aspects of the non-physical or immaterial part of humanity. Our soul relates to the creation; our spirit relates to the Creator. Our body, soul, and spirit are related, but note, for example, that the mind is distinct from the brain. The mind is non-physical. (Naturalists have a hard time explaining non-physical realities.)</p> <p>Upon death, a believer’s soul/spirit (i.e., the non-material aspect of humanity) goes to be with the Lord, whereas the body awaits a future resurrection—at which point the body and the soul/spirit become reunited—in a perfected state.</p> <p>One verse that suggests that we have a trichotomous nature (i.e., body, soul, and spirit—distinctly) instead of a dichotomous nature (body and soul/spirit) is as follows [Hamp, 2014b]:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">1 Thessalonians 5:23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.</p> <p>However, there are other verses which seem to use soul and spirit interchangeably. For example, compare John 12:27 with John 13:21; Genesis 41:8 with Psalm 42:6; Matthew 10:28; and Revelation 6:9. Perhaps the third part is a “compartment” for the Holy Spirit [Hamp, 2014b]. Nevertheless, to</p>

	be fully human, we need both a body and a soul/spirit [Alcorn 2004]. The bottom line is that we have both a material part, and an immaterial part.
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Topic/ Question	For believers, is there only one resurrection event—or are there multiple resurrection events? Will unbelievers be resurrected, too? When do these events occur?
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>Scripture indicates that there are several resurrections: two major categories (i.e., saved and unsaved), but the “saved” category will have multiple stages. In particular, not all believers are resurrected at the same time; and all unbelievers face a separate resurrection.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">1 Corinthians 15:20-23 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.</p> <p>The words “in turn” (NIV) or “order” (KJV) is a military term indicating a <i>sequential</i> ordering like that in a military procession [Fruchtenbaum, 2004].</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep [died]. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.</p> <p>The order of the resurrections is as follows, and may be compared to both: (a) the Jewish agricultural cycle of firstfruits (Christ, a preview of the harvest to come), harvest (Rapture of the church), and gleanings (all believers who died pre-Pentecost, as well as post-Rapture believers); and (b) the Roman military victory procession/parade of conquering general (Christ), the lead officer (Rapture), and those victorious in battle (all believers who died pre-Pentecost, as well as post-Rapture believers) [Woods, 2018b]. Finally, after all of the above, we have the unsaved which may be compared to both: (a) the chaff that gets burned up; and (b) the captives from the battle, who are on display at the end of the military parade. The unsaved are judged at the Great White Throne Judgment following the Millennium, just before the new heavens and new earth are created.</p> <p>In summary, we have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First, Christ (the “firstfruits”) when He rose from the dead • Then, a number of saints following Christ’s resurrection:

○ Matthew 27:52-53 ... The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

- Then, at the Rapture: the dead in Christ (i.e., the Christians who have already died). This is referred to as the general harvest.
- Next, also at the Rapture: the living Christians ... and note that this occurs after the dead in Christ get resurrected bodies
- The two witnesses in Revelation 11
- After Christ's Second Coming, but before the beginning of the Millennium: the Old Testament believers (i.e., believers from the time of Adam and Eve until the time of Christ, or more specifically, up to the time of the formation of the Church on the Day of Pentecost, which occurred 50 days after the Sabbath (Saturday) of Passover week)
- Also after Christ's Second Coming: the Tribulation saints (i.e., those who became believers post-Rapture, but who died during the Tribulation)
- At the end of the Millennium: the believers who entered the Millennium, and the believers born during the Millennium. We assume they get a translated body to prepare them for the renewal of the heavens and the earth, prior to entering the Eternal State (more about this later).
- At the end of the Millennium, at the Great White Throne Judgment: the *unsaved* from *all* ages past

Then, in those respective camps, there are judgments: degrees of rewards for the saved, and degrees of punishment (eternal conscious punishment) for the unsaved. Erwin Lutzer believes that the "books" (Revelation 20:12) will also contain the good deeds that the unsaved performed [Hitchcock, 2019a]. This will lessen their degree of punishment, although they won't be saved.

In the following Scripture passage, we have a clear indicator of a separation of 1,000 years between the resurrection at the time of Christ's Second Coming, and the end of the Millennium:

Revelation 20:4-5 I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded [during the Tribulation] because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They 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 a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.)** This is the first resurrection.

A good summary of the relative timing of the various resurrections is provided by Henry Morris:

The “first resurrection” does occur in more than one stage, according to 1 Corinthians 15:20-23. The resurrection of the dead began with Christ Himself, as the “firstfruits of them that slept,” followed immediately by “many bodies of the saints” which “came out of the graves after his resurrection” (Matthew 27:52,53). Next comes the rapture, when “the dead in Christ shall rise” along with the living saints (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17). At the middle of the tribulation the two witnesses rise (Revelation 11:11) and now finally all the rest of the tribulation martyrs. Morris, 1983, p. 417]

The Tribulation martyrs are those who died for Christ during the Tribulation. They rise from the dead after the Second Coming, but before the Millennium. At this same time, we have the resurrection of the Old Testament saints (i.e., those believers who died before Christ):

Daniel 12:1-2 "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress [Tribulation] such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time [end of the Tribulation] your people -- everyone whose name is found written in the book -- will be delivered. **Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.**"

Daniel 12:11-13 "From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up [in the middle of the Tribulation], there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days. "As for you [Daniel], go your way till the end. You will rest, **and then at the end of the days you will rise** to receive your allotted inheritance."

Revelation 20:5 [KJV] **But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.** *This is* the first resurrection.

Millennial believers will not die; thus, there is no “resurrection” of the Millennial saints. However, we assume that they are given perfected or “translated” bodies at the end of the Millennium—perfected in the qualitative sense of being equivalent to resurrected or glorified bodies. We base this assumption on:

1 Corinthians 15:50 I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

With respect to the last sentence of Revelation 20:5 (listed above), Morris notes that the word “is” appears in italics in the KJV Bible, meaning it is absent in the original manuscripts. Thus, the sentence should read: “This, the first resurrection”, or equivalently: “This completes the first resurrection”. Hence, the next verse makes perfect sense:

Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy are those who have part in the **first resurrection**. The **second death** has no power

over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

Note that *after* the first resurrection (with its multiple parts), there is a period of one thousand years during which resurrected individuals will be reigning with Christ. This should put to rest any arguments about there being: (a) a single judgment day for all of humanity, and (b) a single resurrection where the saved and the unsaved are both dealt with at the same time.

John F. Walvoord writes:

In reconstruction of the order of resurrection, it is clear that all will not be resurrected at the same time. Also mentioned in relation to Christ's resurrection was the token resurrection of a small number of saints (Matt. 27:51-53). At the Rapture of the church at the end of the present age, members of the body of Christ, Christians who died since Pentecost, will be raised out from among the dead. A special resurrection also was revealed concerning the two witnesses (Rev. 11:3-13) who will be raised and caught up to heaven at the conclusion of their witness (v. 12). All of these resurrections precede the resurrection at the time of the Second Coming (Dan. 12:2-3). The resurrection of some to shame and everlasting contempt (v. 2) will not occur until the end of the Millennium as is made clear in Revelation 20:4-6, 11-15. The resurrection here [at the Second Coming is] extended to all the saved of the Old Testament, whether Jews or Gentiles, all who were not resurrected at the time of the Rapture. They will be given resurrection life and new bodies and will enter the millennial kingdom as resurrected people. Tribulation saints will also be raised [at that time] (v. 4). At the beginning of the Millennium the only ones remaining in the grave will be the unsaved. [Walvoord, 1990, pp. 275-276]

J. Dwight Pentecost writes:

... there will be a multitude of believers among the Gentiles who will believe and await His return. In order for the Lord to fulfill the promises made in the Abrahamic, Davidic, Palestinian, and new covenants at His second advent, it is necessary that there be a believing remnant over whom He can reign and to whom the covenants can be fulfilled. There must also be a group of believing Gentiles who can receive, through faith, the benefits of the covenants in His reign. These groups go into the millennium in their natural bodies, saved, but not having experienced death and resurrection. If the church were on earth until the time of the second advent, these saved individuals would have been saved to a position in the church, would have been raptured at that time, and consequently there would not be one saved person left on the earth. [Pentecost, 1958, p. 214]

The bottom line is that there are several resurrections. The first has already occurred, and this is Jesus Christ Himself. He is the "firstfruits" of the physical resurrection, that is, the first of "more to come": namely the believers in the form of a future "harvest". In particular, at the time of the Feast of Firstfruits (on Nisan 17, which was the day on the Jewish calendar that Christ rose from the dead), we have the beginning of the Spring harvest, namely the barley harvest [Fruchtenbaum, 2019]. Counting 50 days from the Sabbath (Saturday)

of Passover week, we reach the date Sivan 6: the *Feast of Weeks* (also known as *Shavuot* or the *Feast of Harvest*, or in the New Testament: the *Day of Pentecost* which marks the start of the church age, as per Acts 2). This day marked the general barley harvest, as spoken of in the book of Ruth. It was the Spring harvest. But, at this time, it was *also* the firstfruits of the Summer harvest, namely the wheat harvest. Recall that in Scripture, Christ said that the wheat and the tares (weeds) would grow together; but, at the harvest, the wheat (representing the saved) would be separated from the tares (representing the unsaved). The harvesting of wheat is a symbol of evangelism and salvation in New Testament times (Matthew 3:11-12; 13:24-30) [Fruchtenbaum, 2019]. The parable of the wheat and the tares is not about the Rapture; it is about the Second Coming of Christ.

The Rapture of the Church is another stage of the resurrections. It is not clear if the Rapture is part of the harvest, or part of the firstfruits. Perhaps it is part one of the harvest: the barley harvest, followed later by the wheat harvest at Christ's Second Coming. At this latter event, the resurrection of the post-Rapture believers and the believers from pre-Church days (e.g., Old Testament saints) take place. Scripture references include: Leviticus 19:9-10, 1 Corinthians 15:20-24, John 14:1-3, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Revelation 20:4, and Daniel 12:2,11-13. The last resurrection is the resurrection of the unsaved. They will be separated from God, for eternity.

It is interesting to note that the book of Ruth is read in the synagogues on the Feast of Weeks. Ruth contains the story of the kinsman-redeemer Boaz—a *type* or pattern of Christ who was our great kinsman-redeemer. Ruth was a Gentile who lost her husband and two sons, but who followed her mother-in-law to Israel, and then decided to follow the God of Israel:

Ruth 1:16 But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God."

According to Jewish tradition, King David was born on the Feast of Weeks, and he died on the Feast of Weeks.

Importantly, the Torah (law) was given to Moses on Mount Sinai on the Feast of Weeks, and the Holy Spirit was given to the Church (Acts 2, which describes the birth of the Church) on this same anniversary day. This day was one of three feasts or festivals which Jewish males over the age of 20 were obligated to celebrate in Jerusalem: The Feast of Passover (aka the Feast of Unleavened Bread or *Hag Hamatzot*), the Feast of Harvest (aka the Feast of Weeks, the Day of Pentecost, or *Shavuot*), and the Feast of Ingathering (aka the Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast of Booths, or *Sukkot*) [Fruchtenbaum, 2019].

In some futurist circles, the Rapture includes both the believers in Christ and the Old Testament saints; however, most scholars believe the Rapture only applies to the New Testament Church (i.e., believers called Christians, sometimes called “The Body of Christ” in Scripture). In this more common understanding of the Rapture, the Old Testament saints take part in a *future* resurrection, that is, *after* the seven-year Tribulation, when Christ returns physically to the earth.

The Church is composed of all true believers from Pentecost in Acts [chapter] two until the Rapture of the Church. The Rapture excludes the Old Testament saints. It also excludes the Tribulation saints. The only saints who will be raptured are the Church saints. The Rapture passages clearly state that only those who are *in Christ* will partake of the Rapture. Throughout his writings, Paul uses terms such as *in Christ*, *in Jesus*, *in Jesus Christ*, *in Christ Jesus*, *in Him*, *in Whom*, *in the Lord*, in a very technical way, referring to those who were baptized by the Spirit into the Body of the Messiah, which only began in Acts two. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 142]

Since the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit permanently indwelled people as soon as they became believers. This is what John the Baptist meant in Matthew 3:11 and Luke 3:16 when he said that believers would be baptized by the Holy Spirit and fire. Prior to that, the Holy Spirit only came upon people temporarily.

1 Samuel 16:13-14 So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him [David] in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the **Spirit of the LORD** came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah. Now the **Spirit of the LORD had departed** from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him.

Scripture says that Christians’ bodies are the “temple” of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). That said, we have the ability to suppress the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives; so, we need to be regularly walking with the Lord, in prayer and in reading the Bible. As a side note: although some people were raised from the dead before Christ, these individuals were raised in a natural body, and they died again. Thus, Christ really is the “firstfruits” of the resurrection [Fruchtenbaum, 2019].

Let us try to put some of the days into perspective. From the start of the 70th week of Daniel (i.e., the beginning of the Tribulation), there will be seven years to the Second Coming (i.e., 7 years @ 360 days/Biblical year = 2,520 days). There are 3½ years (1,260 days) to the middle of the Tribulation, and then 1,260 more days to the Second Coming. From the book of Daniel, we see that there are 30 days more (presumably immediately following the Second Coming), to make a total of 1,290 days; and then there are another 45 days to make a grand total of 1,335 days. Presumably, the 1,335-day mark is the start of the Millennium:

Daniel 12:11-12 "From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum writes:

Though he will declare his deity within the Holy of Holies of the Temple, the Antichrist will not set up his throne there, but in Babylon. The Abomination of Desolation is to last a total of 1,290 days, while the Antichrist himself is allowed to continue 1,260 days. Hence, the Abomination of Desolation must include something more than merely the Antichrist's self-proclamation of deity. Furthermore, the Daniel and Matthew passages implied an image of idol that would be erected in the Temple. ...

Jerusalem will become the religious capitol of the Antichrist, and the Temple will be the center of the worship of the Antichrist, where the living image will be standing. So while the Antichrist will be disposed of after 1,260 days, the image will remain in the Temple another thirty days beyond that. Then it, too, will be disposed of. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 255-256]

Note the sequence of events in the following Scriptures, with some of these events occurring before the Scripture passages in Revelation about the Battle of Armageddon:

Revelation 19:7-9 Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! **For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.** (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God."

Revelation 19:14-15 **The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.** Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.

Revelation 19:19-20 Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

In Revelation 19:7-9 it is revealed that the consummation of the union between Christ and the church precedes the second advent. In many passages, such as Matthew 25:1-13; 22:1-14; and Luke 12:35-41, the King is seen in the role of Bridegroom at His coming, indicating that the marriage has taken place. This event, likewise, requires the expiration of a period of

time and makes the view that the rapture and revelation are simultaneous events impossible. ...

The translation [Rapture] sees the saints caught up into the air, and in the second advent He returns to the earth. ... In the translation Christ comes to claim a bride, but in the second advent He returns with the bride. ... The translation is imminent, while the second advent is preceded by a multitude of signs. [Pentecost, 1958, pp. 206-207]

As for further (circumstantial) evidence that the Rapture of believers occurs prior to Christ's physical return to the earth, note that Christ *returns* with the believers (saints), which means they had to be taken "up" *before* His Second Coming:

Zechariah 14:4-5 On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, **and all the holy ones with him.**

Jude 14-15 Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, **the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones** to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

Colossians 3:4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Note that when Christ comes at the end of the Tribulation, all Jews who are alive will be saved. They have to believe before they call on the Lord. It appears that those who endure until the end will believe, and will be saved.

Romans 9:27 Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved.

Romans 11:25-26 I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part **until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved**, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.

Those Jews who are alive upon Christ's return will be saved. This is consistent with the Olivet Discourse where Christ says:

Matthew 24:13 but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

The fact that “Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in” *implies a distinction between Israel and the Gentiles*. The “Times of the Gentiles” began in 586 BC when King Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem and removed the last reigning monarch (King Zedekiah) from Israel. Israel will have no king until the King of Kings (Jesus Christ) returns. Furthermore, the world’s last Gentile ruler will be the Antichrist.

Israel was always referred to as the nation made up of Jews who are physical descendants of not just Abraham but Abraham, Isaac, *and* Jacob. Seventy-three times in the New Testament the term “Israel” is used. In the majority of the instances given, Israel is referred to in the national, ethnic sense.

... The “Israel of God” ... is comprised of those Jewish believers who, in sharp contrast with the Judaizers, followed the rule of salvation by faith alone. Here Paul is speaking only of a division within ethnic Israel. [Oppenheimer, 2013, p. 7]

Anyone can become a follower of Christ, but most people will choose not to. All those who come to Christ, however, make up *one* body of believers:

Romans 10:12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile -- the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him,

For those who became Christians *after* the Rapture, and have died, they are resurrected *after* the Tribulation, but *before* the Millennium:

Revelation 20:2-5 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore **until the thousand years were ended**. After that, he must be set free for a short time. I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. **And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection.**

J. Dwight Pentecost summarizes the judgments following Christ’s Second Coming:

[There are] four judgments that have eschatological implications: the judgment on the nation Israel (Ezek. 20:37-38; Zech. 13:8-9), the judgment of the nations (Matt. 25:31-46; Isa. 34:1-2; Joel 3:11-16), the judgment on fallen angels (Jude 6) and the judgment of the great white throne (Rev. 20:11-15). [Pentecost, 1958, p. 413]

The Millennium will be followed by yet another renewal: a permanent, new heavens and a new earth (Revelation 21-22). The old heavens and earth will be renewed by fire:

2 Peter 3:7-12 By the same word **the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire**, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; **the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare**. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. **That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.**

Matthew 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

Isaiah 66:22 "As the **new heavens and the new earth** that I make **will endure** before me," declares the LORD, "so will your name and descendants endure.

Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a **new heaven and a new earth**, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

It is not clear why there will be no sea. Why do the heavens and earth have to be purged with fire? Well, nature and creation are currently under the curse (Romans 8:22) because of mankind's sin. Even outer space needs to be redeemed, as mankind's sin reaches there, too (e.g., many years of electromagnetic signals being sent into space, various space programs including Voyager). Also, Satan was the first sinner, and even the non-material, heavenly places to which Satan and his fallen angels had access are corrupted/defiled by sin. Thus, even that needs cleansing and restoration.

The elements of the earth are to be dissolved in the intense heat of the divine fire and all of man's "works" on the earth will also be burned up (Greek *katakaio*, "wholly consumed"). The age-long effects of God's great curse on the ground (Genesis 3:17) must be purged from the very elements before the earth can be renewed for its eternal purposes. The great beds of fossils and other testimonials of an age-long reign of sin and death must all be burned away. [Morris, 1983, p. 426]

The new heavens and earth will last for eternity, and there will be no more sin. Believers will enjoy the new heavens and the new earth for all eternity, with Jesus Christ:

Revelation 21:1-4 Then I saw **a new heaven and a new earth**, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed

	<p>away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."</p> <p>Lastly, nature itself is defiled due to Adam and Eve's sin, and will be restored:</p> <p>Romans 8:19-22 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>There is only one resurrection, not two or more. First, there's the judgment of the believers. Second, there's the judgment of the unbelievers. Both of these are part of a one-time judgment—only the order keeps them separate. Also, only at that time is the problem of sin finally and permanently dealt with.</p> <p>The first resurrection can be thought of as a <i>spiritual</i> resurrection, followed by a <i>physical</i> resurrection later—when Christ returns. In fact, this is the position of many amillennialists [Gregg, 2013]. Some postmillennialists, such as Benjamin B. Warfield, "held the view, also found among some <i>amillennialists</i>, that the first resurrection is the entrance into heavenly joys and that these verses present a picture of the souls of the redeemed safe in heaven" [Gregg, 2013, p. 531].</p> <p>The following resurrection passages give no indication of an interruption in time, and seem to suggest that "all" the dead will rise, together.</p> <p>John 5:28-29 "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out -- those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.</p> <p>John 6:39-40 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day."</p> <p>John 6:44 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day.</p>

Acts 24:15 and I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that **there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.**

As far as the “first” resurrection goes, note the following examples. Christ is said to be the firstborn over all creation (Colossians 1:15-16). This means that he has the *preeminent* position. David is said to be the firstborn of Jesse, yet he was last of Jesse’s sons.

All of humanity will stand before the throne of God to be judged. The throne of God is mentioned in Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1,11; and Revelation 4. Jesus is sitting on His throne—the throne of David—*right now* (i.e., since Christ ascended to Heaven), and the kingdom age has already begun [Newton, 2012].

Craig Keener, a posttribulationist, albeit not a preterist, states that because the “first resurrection” (Revelation 20:5) does not take place until *after* the Tribulation, there simply cannot be a pretribulation rapture [Keener, 2018].

As far as the “books” go: there’s the *Book of Life*, which can also be thought of as the book of mercy, which contains the names of all of those who are dressed in the robes of Christ’s spotless perfection (i.e., all the saved). There are other “books” which likely include all those works that will be judged—a form of audit log. Remember that everyone will be judged by what he has done. The separation that Christ spoke about is between the sheep (saved) and the goats (unsaved). We will either receive the robes of Christ’s righteousness, or the dirty robes of our own way.

In summary, *when Christ returns*, all the living and the dead will be judged *at one event*—not at two or more events separated by 7 years, or by 1,007 years, etc. At that point, believers will live in resurrected bodies for all eternity. Following Christ’s return, there is no 7-year Tribulation, no second chance for unbelievers to become believers, and neither will unbelievers (or anyone, for that matter) be born. Furthermore, creation itself will be redeemed, and the curse will finally be lifted.

Dispensationalists argue that many billions of people could exist during the Millennium. But, Scripture suggests that the only people living in the “Millennium” are those who were beheaded for Christ. Note the sequence of events in the following Scripture passages:

Revelation 20:1-5 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. **And I saw the souls of those who had**

	<p>been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection.</p> <p>Revelation 20:7-8 When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth -- Gog and Magog -- to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore.</p> <p>Revelation 20:11-15 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.</p>
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<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>Scripture says that many people rose from the dead in the days following Christ's resurrection. Was this a real event, or is it a metaphor?</p> <p>Matthew 27:50-53 And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.</p>
<p>Dispensa- tionalist Position</p>	<p>In his book <i>Heaven: The Last Frontier</i>, Grant Jeffrey comments that Christian writings around 32 AD support the Matthew 27:52-53 passage about some graves being opened with the resurrected people walking into Jerusalem [Jeffrey, 1990]. Writings external to the Bible claim that over 12,000 such people walked through Galilee and Jerusalem for 40 days. They ascended into Heaven when Christ ascended into Heaven.</p> <p>A little background information is valuable here. During Passover in Jerusalem, the population increased to many times the normal population, with many of these people being guests in fellow Israelites' homes. Jewish males were required to make three pilgrimages to Jerusalem every year: at Passover, at Pentecost, and at the Feast of Tabernacles. With this being the Feast of Passover, the point was that many people would have heard about the miracle of the firstfruits resurrection.</p>

It was this hope that gave the martyrs something to die for. They were singing to the death. They did not fear death.

Several documents claim that Simeon [Luke 2:25-32] who held baby Jesus in the temple, was resurrected at the time of Christ's resurrection, along with two of Simeon's sons. They were well known to the Sanhedrin because they were priests. The Sanhedrin was the highest ruling body in Judaism (like a Supreme Court dealing with Jewish religious and ceremonial laws—they condemned Jesus to death because of blasphemy [Reagan, 2021b]), and the Sanhedrin was going to investigate what was going on.

These records in the Ante-Nicene library claim that during the investigation, each of the sons of Simeon was separately and simultaneously interrogated. They both told the same story, namely that Christ had appeared to them in Hades, preached to all, and that those who had earlier responded to God were miraculously given new bodies and resurrected when Christ rose from the grave. [Jeffrey, 1990, p. 27]

Incidentally, Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead (John 11:14,43-44) during His earthly ministry, was probably not raised in a resurrected, perfected body because—presumably, in the absence of other information—he died again. The same comments may apply to the “many holy people who had died [and] were raised to life” (Matthew 27:52-53) after Christ’s resurrection; they may have been *resuscitated* without gaining glorified bodies at that time (because that would happen later, at the Rapture) [Woods, 2022a]. Some authors use the term “resuscitated” instead of “resurrected” for these cases [House & Price, 2003; Johnson, 2004] because the term “resurrection” implies perfection—bodies that are no longer subject to death and decay. The resuscitated body would only be a temporary body, if the person died again. For example, the two witnesses in Revelation 11 will not have a resurrected or glorified body when they arrive on the scene because they are going to die.

There were over 500 people who saw Christ in His resurrected body, but there is no indication that any of them rose from the grave:

1 Corinthians 15:3-6 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas [Peter], and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep [died].

Who saw the resurrected Jesus? On resurrection Sunday, Jesus was seen first by Mary Magdalene at the empty tomb, then by the women who came a second time to the tomb, then to Peter, then to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and then to the 10 disciples (i.e., minus Thomas, and of course the departed

	<p>Judas Iscariot) [Walvoord, 1990]. A week later, all 11 disciples saw Him, including Thomas. Then, he appeared on the shore of the Sea of Galilee when he met with 7 of the disciples, as per John 21. We also learn that he appeared to 500 people (described above), to His brother James, to 11 disciples on a mountain in Galilee, and then as He ascended from the Mount of Olives. After this, Jesus appeared to: Stephen at his martyrdom, Paul on the road to Damascus, Paul in Arabia, Paul in the Temple, Paul in prison in Caesarea, and finally to the Apostle John as recorded in the book of Revelation.</p> <p>Hebrews 9:27 says that we die once, and after that comes the judgment; however, “die once” appears to be a general rule with exceptions. For example, Enoch (Genesis 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kings 2:11) did not die at all, and neither will those who will be raptured (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) [Woods, 2022a]. Furthermore, it is believed that Lazarus died twice—as would people who have been resuscitated in hospital operating rooms, for example.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>The narrative in Matthew 27:52-53 is only found in the book of Matthew—not in the other three gospels (Mark, Luke, and John). Matthew is writing to an audience that is familiar with <i>apocalyptic language</i> (e.g., the writings of Isaiah); therefore, they would not take it literally.</p> <p>Hank Hanegraaff says that this passage does <i>not</i> refer to people who rose from the dead. We should not be taking this literally. It could be a stumbling block for some people, preventing them from taking the Bible seriously. If those resurrections actually occurred, then this would have been a <i>huge</i> apocalyptic event, yet little is written about it extra-biblically; thus, it probably didn’t occur.</p> <p>They couldn’t have perfected bodies at this time, since the general resurrection of believers won’t take place until some time in the future.</p>

Topic/ Question	Who is going to occupy and repopulate the earth following Christ’s return? What are the problems with posttribulationism?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>It appears that believers following the Rapture, who are alive when Jesus Christ physically returns, will occupy and repopulate the earth for the first 1,000 years (Millennium) of eternity. Raptured believers will likely also have access to the earth, but it is unclear what their specific roles will be.</p> <p>Pretribulationists have an answer for the repopulation question; however, posttribulationists have an unsolvable problem, as Thomas Ice explains:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Pretribulationists have no problem explaining how such a scenario will take place. At the rapture, all living church age believers will be evacuated to heaven by the Lord. At that split second in history there will not be one believer upon planet earth. But shortly after the rapture many unbelievers will realize that Jesus is the Son of God and will become believers. Because there will be an interval of days, weeks, months, or years between the rapture and the start of the tribulation, there could be millions of Christian converts even before the tribulation begins. Further, even more will be converted</p>

during the tribulation itself, meaning that there could be hundreds of millions of believers by the middle of the tribulation. Even though a high percentage of believers will be martyred during the tribulation, there will still be many that survive this time and are then ready to enter the millennium in their mortal bodies. This issue is not a problem for pretribulationism.

However, for posttribulationism this issue is in my opinion an unsolvable problem. If the posttribulationist view that the rapture occurs in conjunction with Jesus' second coming is accepted, then the rapture event will result in all believers alive at Christ's return being transformed from their current mortal state to immortality via a translation to heaven. Inasmuch as all unbelievers will be judged or killed at Christ's return (Matt. 13:30, 36-43, 47-50; 24:36-41; 25:30, 31-45), there will be no mortals left to enter into the thousand-year reign of Christ.

... Scholar Robert Gundry is one of the few to attempt an explanation of how premillennial posttribulationism might handle this biblical issue ... First, he says, "the 144,000 will include both men and women who will populate and replenish the millennial kingdom of Israel ...

Problems with this view start with the problem that Gundry has to make the 144,000, not Jewish men only, as the text demands, but men and women, so that there will be women in order to produce Jewish prodigy in the millennium. Revelation 14:4a says, "these are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste." The 144,000 must be Jewish men, based upon that passage. [Ice, 2010a, pp. 1,4]

Besides the repopulation issue, a problem with posttribulationism is that its adherents say that the Church will be present during the 70th week of Daniel; however, they don't explain why the Church is absent during the first 69 weeks. According to Daniel 9:24, the 70 weeks of Daniel apply specifically to the Jewish people:

Daniel 9:24 "Seventy 'sevens' [70 times 7 years] are decreed **for your people and your holy city ...**"

Thirdly, posttribulationists must deny the teaching of *imminency*. Ask any posttribulationist futurist if Jesus could come back today, and the answer would be "no" because the Tribulation hasn't started yet [Woods, 2021b].

A fourth problem with posttribulationism is that adherents are not able to explain the *sheep and goats judgment* of Matthew 25:31-46. It is unnecessary if posttribulationism is true because there will be no believers (sheep) left on the earth to judge; but it is necessary if *pretribulationism* is true [Ice, 2014c]. A pretribulationist rapture would be consistent with the Scripture passage, since 7 or more years would elapse, giving plenty of time to have new believers before the physical return of Christ.

A fifth problem: What is the point of the Rapture if we are immediately coming back down with Christ?

	<p>A sixth problem, related to the fifth: There is no time for the Bema Judgment seat (to reward Christians) if we go up, and then come down, immediately thereafter [Woods, 2021b]. Similarly, when does the Marriage of the Lamb take place?</p> <p>Thus, there are major problems with the posttribulational Rapture position.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>There will be <i>one</i> simultaneous rapture and resurrection at the end of time, in conjunction with the second coming of Jesus Christ. There will not be a “private” coming/rapture, followed by a public coming of Christ 7 years later.</p>

Topic/ Question	<p>Is there such a place as <i>purgatory</i>? Roman Catholicism and the Eastern Orthodox church believe that, upon death, people go to “purgatory” to suffer some degree of punishment before being admitted to Heaven. For example, an unbeliever or a weak believer would go here prior to going to Heaven.</p>
Both Positions Share the Same View	<p>The Catholic faith erroneously teaches that there is place called purgatory for people who have died but were not quite good enough to get into Heaven. It is believed that such people will spend an amount of time (in proportion to their sins) in purgatory in order to “purge” their sins before being permitted to enter Heaven.</p> <p>There is no such thing as purgatory. It is not in the Bible. For example, the parable of the rich man and the beggar (Lazarus) in Luke 16:22-28 seems to suggest that there is no such state as purgatory.</p> <p><i>Christ paid the full price on the cross.</i> It is through faith, and by God’s grace (unmerited favor), that we are saved. Beyond believing in Christ for salvation, there is nothing we can “do” on our own to get into Heaven; Christ accomplished it all. Furthermore, Christ did not have to go to Hades or hell after he died to “finish” the job. It was completed at the cross. At <i>that</i> time, Satan’s power over us was broken. Note that there was no need for Christ to “wrestle the keys of hell and death” from Satan in Hades—because Christ finished the work of atonement <i>on the cross</i>.</p> <p>The Greek word <i>tetelestai</i> is an ancient accounting term. It means “paid in full”. When Christ used that word while He dying on the cross, He literally meant that His death was paying, in full, the penalty of sin for all of mankind—providing, of course, that a person accepts that forgiveness. God the Father demands that payment be made for sin because He is a just God who demands payment for transgression. That penalty is the shedding of innocent blood. Christ provided that penalty for us. To that end, God looks upon a believer as having been cleansed from sin, because of Christ’s perfect sacrifice. In other words, we are “justified” by Christ. Only Christ, who was sinless, could offer a perfect sacrifice—i.e., the sacrifice of Himself. <i>Jesus Christ, the Creator of the universe, died on behalf of His creation.</i></p>

Because God Himself provided the sacrifice, there is nothing else that anyone can be added to make up for one's sin. No amount of personal punishment or pleading will do. It is finished—*Christ's sacrifice on the cross was sufficient to pay the full penalty of sin*. To insist that something be added beyond what Christ did, is wrong (i.e., apart from believing in Christ and accepting/acknowledging his forgiveness and authority). He was the "Lamb of God". It was the sacrifice of Christ that all the Old Testament animal sacrifices pointed to. Once Christ provided His own body as a sacrifice, there was no more need to continue with the animal sacrifices. By the way, the required sacrifices at the seven major Jewish holy days (feasts and fasts, sometimes called "holy seasons") but excluding the many Passover lambs were: 116 bulls, 40 rams, 1,260 lambs, and 33 goats [Fruchtenbaum, 2019].

Acts 4:12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

Before Christ's first advent, believers in God implicitly looked forward—by faith—to the promised Savior (Christ) who would pay the penalty for their sins. Many millions of common folk, pre-Christ, were saved. Thus, Old Testament saints are saved in the "same way" that we are today.

There is also the Catholic notion of praying for the dead or making a payment to the church to reduce the amount of time that a loved one spends in purgatory. This is called an *indulgence*. Indulgences have diminished since Vatican II—the Second Vatican Council [Hitchcock, 2011b]. The reality, however, is that after we die, all of our decisions become finalized; our works are done with, and nothing can change our salvation status. No amount of time can "purge" sins, and no amount of money can free one's soul. In other words, we need to make a decision about Christ *before* we die. It is the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross that takes away a believer's sins; so, in terms of salvation, there is nothing "extra" that a believer has to "pay for" or "purge" after death to ensure entrance to Heaven.

Saved people do not undergo any suffering after death. 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 indicates that there are degrees of rewards for believers. Those individuals who are saved, but did very little for the cause of Christ, will miss out on a lot of rewards—even though such people are saved and still have a great reward. Even the person who is saved "by the skin of his teeth" (e.g., a deathbed convert) will be in Heaven. Similarly, there will be degrees of punishment in hell (e.g., Matthew 10:11-15, 11:20-24; Luke 12:42-48). "God is a God of justice and righteousness. The punishment of sinners will fit the crime." [Hitchcock, 2011b]

Roman Catholic eschatology is amillennial. It also teaches that there is no Rapture. The Rapture would conflict with Catholicism's notion of purgatory, which is variable in length.

	Note that we cannot judge people’s hearts. There are people who believe in Christ, but may believe in purgatory. This isn’t to say that such people aren’t saved, but it is a very dangerous position to reject the notion that Christ paid it all. Christ <i>did</i> pay it all. Any other belief distorts Biblical Christianity.
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Topic/ Question	What is hell like? Where is hell? Is hell a real place? Is hell the same as the Lake of Fire? What is meant by the term “judgment” and its relative timing to other eschatological events? (Compare this section to a previous section titled “What is Heaven going to be like?”)
Dispensationalist Position (although Preterists would endorse many of these same points)	<p>There are great variations in people’s understanding of “hell”, even among Christians. Hell is described in Scripture, as follows [Hanegraaff, 2003+; House & Price, 2003]. It is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a place originally prepared for Satan and his demons (Matthew 25:41) • a fiery furnace (Psalm 21:9; Matthew 13:41-42,49-50) • a lake of burning sulphur (Revelation 14:10; 19:20; 20:10; 21:8) • a place of unquenchable fire (Matthew 3:12; Mark 9:43; Luke 3:17) • a place of blackest darkness (2 Peter 2:17; Jude 13) • a place of eternal separation from God (Matthew 25:41) • a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 13:41-42,49-50) • a place of thirst (Luke 16:24) • a place of agony (Luke 16:24) • a place of identity, memory, and remorse (Luke 16:19-31) • a place of anger and frustration (Matthew 13:24-30,36-42) • a place of misery and pain (Revelation 14:9-11) <p>In his radio and Internet broadcasts, Hank Hanegraaff sometimes says, “The most excruciating pain can be endured if we know that it will finally end. In hell, no such hope exists. In the words of Dante: ‘Abandon hope, all ye who enter here’.” Hanegraaff argues that many of the above descriptions of hell are metaphors to describe how awful hell is ... and how awful our existence would be, if we were to be separated from God. Christ said that there would be time coming (in the future, on judgment day), when <i>all</i> will rise from the dead and be resurrected—some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting destruction:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">John 5:28-29 "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out -- those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.</p> <p>If part of your body is “causing” you to lose your soul, Jesus comments: it is better to lose one part of your body than to send your whole body into hell—suggesting that hell is definitely a place to avoid!</p>

Hanegraaff reminds us that without a hell, there's no need for a Savior. Without a hell, there's no need for salvation or sacrifice. Christ suffered torment, so that we wouldn't have to suffer eternal torment.

But in the absence of God, Hell will have no community, no camaraderie, no friendship. I don't believe Hell is a place where demons take delight in punishing people and where people commiserate over their fate. More likely, each person is in solitary confinement, just as the rich man is portrayed alone in Hell (Luke 16:22-23).

... For Christians, this present life is the closest they will come to Hell. For unbelievers, it is the closest they will come to Heaven.

... Consider the wonder of it: God determined that he would rather go to Hell on our behalf than live in Heaven without us. He so much wants us *not* to go to Hell that he paid a horrible price on the cross so that we wouldn't have to. [Alcorn, 2004, p. 28]

In a classic sermon, Jonathan Edwards preached vividly on the reality of hell, urging men to repent [Edwards, 1741]. His sermon is believed to be one of the strongest sermons ever preached about hell and man's evil human nature. Its purpose was to call sinners to repentance, and of course, salvation. He argued that it is only the merciful and sovereign will of God that holds mankind up while he is dangling on a rotting bridge over the fires of hell. Edwards states that God is repulsed by sin, and if God were to withdraw His restraining power, sin would quickly take man away to destruction. The natural inclination of man is to fall into hell because of the choices he's made; but, God in His mercy desperately wants to give every man a chance to be redeemed—if only man would turn from his wickedness and unbelief, and call upon God for salvation. God pleads with people to accept His free gift of pardon from sin, by believing in His Son Jesus Christ, who paid the penalty for sin on our behalf, by dying on the Cross. Those who embrace Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, asking for the forgiveness of their sins, receive forgiveness ... and need not worry about hell.

The *place of the dead* (sometimes called *the abode of the dead* or *the unseen world*) is where the souls of human beings go after death (eventually to be followed by physical resurrection). Because our eternal destiny is involved, it is crucial to pay attention to what the Bible says about the afterlife. In what follows, we'll explore plenty of what the Bible has to say about heaven; so, please stay optimistic and keep reading; but first, let us examine the Hebrew and Greek words translated, in English, as "hell".

In the original Hebrew and Greek, the Bible uses 13 different words to describe the place of the dead [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. Most of these different words are simply translated as "hell" in English translations; but, Greek is a much more precise language than English, emphasizing distinctions in meaning. Consider the English word "love" which has at least four separate words in Greek: *agape* (Godly kind of love), *eros* (sexual love), *philia* (brotherly love), and *storge*

(affection or connection, e.g., family, country) [Wikipedia, 2017]. With that in mind, let us briefly turn to the passage in John 21. The context of this passage is the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus Christ on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, some days or weeks after He rose from the dead. He was speaking with His disciple Simon Peter, encouraging Peter to teach and lead others:

John 21:15-17 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

In English, the word "love" is used each time without qualification. Jesus was using the Greek word *agapeo* which refers to an unconditional, Godly kind of love (e.g., to love dearly [Strong, 2016]), whereas Peter was using the Greek word *phileo* which means a brotherly kind of love (e.g., a love that befriends). Pastor Dan Nicholson loosely refers to these two words as a "100% kind of love" and a "60% kind of love", respectively [Nicholson, 1993]. Thus, the passage could be paraphrased roughly as follows:

"Simon son of John, do you love me with a 100% kind of love?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you with a 60% kind of love." ...

Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me with a 100% kind of love?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you with a 60% kind of love." ...

The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me with a 60% kind of love?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you with a 60% kind of love." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

The KJV translation of the Bible translates the following four words as "hell" [Pentecost, 1958]:

- (1) In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *Sheol* is used to describe the place of the dead. The Old Testament is the earlier, and larger, portion of the Bible; and it was written in Hebrew, except for parts of the books

of Ezra and Daniel, which were written in Aramaic. The New Testament is the second part of the Bible, and was written entirely in Greek, which, as mentioned above, is a very precise language—much more so than Hebrew or English.

Sheol is a place of *conscious existence*, and the word is used 65 times in the Old Testament: 31 times it is translated in English as “hell”, 31 times it is translated “grave”, and 3 times it is translated “pit”. Sheol is *temporary*; the souls in it await a future physical resurrection: heaven or hell. Thus, we can probably use the term “grave” as an informal synonym for Sheol. Prior to Jesus Christ’s resurrection, *both the saved and the unsaved went to Sheol upon death*: the believers to a compartment or partition of Sheol called “Abraham’s Bosom”, and the unbelievers to a separate partition called “Abaddon” or “the Pit” [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. The latter two terms are always used in a negative sense when describing the place of the dead. (Abaddon could refer to either the place (pit), or to the fallen angel that is overseeing the pit [Strong, 1996]. “Abaddon” in Hebrew means “destroyer”; his name in Greek is “Apollyon”.) A great gulf separated the good and bad partitions, and it was not possible to get from one partition to the other (Luke 16:26). This also emphasizes the importance to get right with God in this life. *After death, it is too late.*

- (2) In the New Testament, the Greek word *Hades* is used 10 times to describe the place of the dead. Hades is equivalent to the Hebrew word Sheol, and Hades is translated in English as “hell” throughout the New Testament, except for one place: 1 Corinthians 15:55 where it is translated “grave”. Because Jesus Christ took the saved souls from Hades (or Sheol) to *Paradise* upon his death and resurrection, Hades now contains only the *unsaved* dead, who await the final judgment and resurrection at the Great White Throne Judgment. Furthermore, since the resurrection of Jesus Christ, when a saved person dies, his/her soul (the immaterial part of one’s body) is immediately taken to Paradise. *Paradise is a place of conscious existence.* Recall Jesus’ words to the repentant thief on the cross: “*today* you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). Note, however, that *the occupants of Paradise are still awaiting a physical resurrection*, and for Christians, this will take place at the Rapture; and for the Old Testament and Tribulation Saints, this will occur after Christ’s Second Coming—or, if you hold to the preterist model of eschatology, physical resurrection takes place on Judgment Day. Thus, we will have real and perfected bodies at resurrection time. Incidentally, saved people who are alive on Earth at Christ’s Second Coming will enter the Millennium in their natural bodies—and they will not become lost (un-saved) during the Millennium.

(3) In the New Testament, the Greek word *Tartarus* (sometimes spelled *Tartaros*) is used only once in the New Testament (2 Peter 2:4) to refer to hell and, in particular, to describe the judgment of a class of fallen angels. Many dispensationalists believe that these especially wicked angels from the time of Noah crossed a boundary line established by God (Jude 6), and are being held in Tartarus until Tartarus itself is thrown into the Lake of Fire. (There are other fallen angels (i.e., demons) who are actively promoting evil to this day, under the direction of Satan. They, too, will be judged; but, unlike the Tartarus class of angels, they are not currently chained for judgment.) Although most dispensationalist scholars believe that the occupants of Tartarus will never be released, other than into the Lake of Fire, some think these demons could be the ones released during the Tribulation by Apollyon (Greek translation) also known as Abaddon (Hebrew translation), in Revelation 9. That partition of Hades is called the Abyss or bottomless pit. It may well be separate from Tartarus. Tartarus and the Abyss can be compared to jail: demons in Tartarus have a life sentence, whereas demons in the Abyss will be released at some point [Fruchtenbaum, 2005].

The oldest, and most widely accepted, view among dispensationalists is that the Tartarus angels are fallen angels of God (Hebrew: *bene elohim*—or “sons of God”, translated “angels of God” in the Septuagint), and more specifically, the fallen supernatural beings of Genesis 6 who “intermarried” with human women to try to corrupt the line of the Messiah (Jesus Christ). The supernatural view was the generally accepted view until Augustine in the fourth century [Heiser, 2020a; Van Dorn, 2023].

Side note: In Greek mythology, Tartarus was the lowest part of the underworld, and was reserved for the most heinous offenders [Hitchcock, 2011a].

(4) In the New Testament, the Greek word *Gehenna* is used 12 times, and in 11 of those cases, by Jesus. In all cases, it is translated into English as “hell”. It is a geographical term, and it is the *final* state and location of the unsaved dead. It equates to the term “Lake of Fire” or “second death” in Revelation. Gehenna is synonymous with many people’s traditional or secular notion of “hell” (e.g., from cartoons, writings, and movies—although an argument could be made for this secular term encompassing both Hades (post-Christ) and Gehenna). This is the place where both the souls *and* the resurrected bodies of the *unsaved* dead go after judgment (still future). Note that Hades and Sheol currently and temporarily house the *soul* but not the *body*. Gehenna is a place of fire and eternal punishment. Currently, no one is in Gehenna.

In addition to the two sides of Sheol or Hades, and Tartarus and Gehenna, there may be another compartment of hell called the Abyss, sometimes called “the bottomless pit”, “the pit of the abyss”, or “the shaft of the abyss” (Revelation 9:1-2; Luke 8:31) [Morris, 1983; Walvoord, *et al.*, 2011]. It refers to a place of confinement of demons. Although it *excludes* the Antichrist and the False Prophet (c.f., Gehenna in Revelation 19:20), it *includes* Satan for 1,000 years (i.e., during the Millennium) (Revelation 20:2-3). Unlike Tartarus, it appears that the occupants of the Abyss *will be released* to return to Earth, and only *later* will they be thrown into the Lake of Fire (Gehenna). As an analogy, imagine if all the world’s worst criminals were simply released into society, all at once [Hitchcock, 2011a].

It seems clear that there are a number of different prisons in Hades. Tartarus, where the twice-fallen angels are confined, is one of these. ... The “pit of the abyss” is possibly still another compartment of Hades, in which have been stored a horde of fearsome creatures waiting to be unleashed. The legion of demons allowed by Christ to enter the herd of swine had urged Him not to send them to the abyss (Luke 8:31).

But [in Revelation] who is this mysterious [falling/fallen] star from heaven? That it is not a physical “star” falling from the sky, as under the two previous trumpets, is evident from the context—“to him was given the key.”

... The bottomless pit which he forthwith unlocks is literally “the pit of the abyss.” The word “abyss” comes from roots meaning “without depth” and so is properly translated “bottomless.” ... The pit of this abyss of Hades is apparently one of its imprisoning cells ... [Morris, 1983, pp. 156-157]

Here are five Scripture passages that explain when one of the two compartments of Hades/Sheol became Paradise. The passages are all from the New Testament. The first one refers to the parable of the saved beggar and the unsaved rich man that Christ told *before* He went to the Cross:

Luke 16:22-28 "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to **Abraham's side**. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell [Hades], where he was in torment, he looked up **and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side**. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, **between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.**' "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to **this place of torment.**'

The second passage was spoken by Christ *on* the cross:

Luke 23:43 Jesus answered him [the thief on a cross beside Christ], "I tell you the truth, **today** you will be with me in **paradise.**"

It is interesting to note that, at Passover time, just before Christ's crucifixion—and recall that Jesus Christ is what the "Passover lamb" sacrifice in the Old Testament ultimately pointed to—Pontius Pilate offered to release a prisoner of the people's choice. When the people were given a choice between freeing the criminal Barabbas (which means "son of a father") or Jesus Christ (who was the Son of *the* Father), they chose Barabbas. We are all sons of a father: Adam. Christ took the place of Barabbas—and us—on the Cross at Calvary.

Jesus is God in human form. He left Heaven, took the form of a man, and paid the penalty resulting from mankind's sins—dying on the Cross, in our place. No unholy person or thing can approach the Holy God. Because of Christ's substitutionary death, all who believe in Him as Lord and Savior will inherit everlasting life—and will someday live forever in Heaven (and on a restored Earth), with real, physical, perfected bodies.

Paradise on Earth was God's intent right from the beginning; however, to avoid a robotic form of love and obedience, God gave Adam and Eve free will: the choice to obey or disobey. They chose the latter, sin entered the world, and it's been a struggle ever since—for mankind, animals, nature, etc. The Bible promises that Heaven will include a restored Earth, and the permanent elimination of mankind's sin nature. There will be no more death, pain, suffering, disease, disabilities, etc.; and the peaceful nature of animals and even nature will be restored. As is described elsewhere in this book, Heaven is a real place with real people doing real things (purposeful activity) forever ... and it even includes food, fellowship, restored relationships, etc. Think of all the things you could do if you had all the time you wanted, and there was no sin and there was no death.

Continuing ... the third and fourth passages that explain when one of the two compartments of Hades/Sheol became Paradise were stated by the apostle Paul some time *after* Christ's resurrection and ascension:

2 Corinthians 12:2-4 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know -- God knows. And I know that this man -- whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows -- was caught up to **paradise**. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell.

Ephesians 4:8-10 This is why it says: "**When he** [Jesus] **ascended on high, he led captives in his train** and gave gifts to men." (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

Finally, the fifth passage was stated by the resurrected Jesus Christ around 95 AD, when it was quoted by the apostle John who wrote the book of Revelation (the final book in the Bible—to complete the Word of God) under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

Revelation 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the **paradise** of God.

Paradise is always referred to as “up” in Scripture; Hades is “down”. Before Christ’s resurrection, Abraham’s Bosom was paradise, but its direction was “down”. Christ descended to the place of the dead upon His death; but then He ascended and took Abraham’s Bosom with him. Thus, paradise is now “up” because sin has been paid for. Note that Stephen looked “up” to Heaven:

Acts 7:55-56 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”

When Jesus died, His soul, His immaterial part, descended into the righteous portion of *Sheol* or *Hades*. In Matthew 12:40, Jesus predicted that He must go down into the heart of the earth where *Sheol* or *Hades* is located. Ephesians 4:9 states that Jesus *descended into the lower parts of the earth*. First Peter 3:18-19 points out that in His spirit, Jesus *preached unto the spirits in prison*. These *spirits* were the unrighteous ones in Hell. Some have misunderstood this verse and taught that since He preached, He preached the gospel to them and gave them a second chance to be saved. However, the Greek word that is used here is not the Greek word that means “to preach the gospel,” but it is a Greek word that simply means “to make a proclamation”.

... When the Messiah ascended into Heaven, He took the souls of the Old Testament saints with Him; he led captivity captive (Eph. 4:8-10). Those who had been captive within the confines of Abraham’s Bosom were now taken out of Abraham’s Bosom. All the righteous souls who had died before the death of Jesus ascended with Jesus into Heaven. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 753-754]

Arnold Fruchtenbaum explains why those who were saved during Old Testament times (i.e., “the Old Testament saints”—in other words, all believers in God, before Christ) did not go directly to paradise, and he draws an important connection to the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament that pointed forward to their ultimate fulfillment in the death of the Creator of the universe, Jesus Christ:

While the Old Testament sacrifices covered the sins of the Old Testament saints, it did not remove their sins (Heb. 10:4). Only the death of the Messiah [the Anointed One of God: Jesus Christ] could do that. So while the sacrificial system was sufficient to keep them from Hell, it was not able to get them into Heaven. So all who died, both the righteous

and unrighteous, went to a place known as *Sheol* or *Hades*. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 517, my emphasis in bold]

Leviticus 17:11 For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.

The blood of animals did not remove sins; therefore, an Old Testament believer who died could not be ushered into Heaven to be in the presence of the Holy God. The believer had to wait until Jesus Christ purged sin by shedding His own precious blood on the Cross—thereby applying His blood to our sinful lives. At His death, Christ descended into Hades, and led the souls of the Old Testament believers into Heaven. Up to that point, they were resting in the paradise side of Hades, where they were awaiting the Messiah's sacrifice. From that point on, the souls of believers go to Heaven, awaiting a future resurrection.

Christ only had to do this sacrifice *once*, not over and over again—unlike the Old Testament sacrifices which, as mentioned, pointed to Christ—because, as had been planned from the beginning of time, God Himself provided the all-sufficient sacrifice:

Hebrews 9:27-28 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed **once** to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

David Hocking gives a real-life analogy that shows the difference between *covering* (atoning for) and *removing* sin. At a dinner function, David accidentally knocked over a gravy container. It made a mess on the white tablecloth. One of the servers placed a white cloth on top of the stain, so that the gravy stain was now out of sight, with the implication that “no one will know”. Thus, the white cloth *covered* the stain, but it didn't *remove* it, even though others may not have known about the spill.

When Christ removes our sins, we don't have to worry about “skeletons in our closet”. In the analogy above, we get a clean, white tablecloth. We are forgiven of our sins, and we are no longer condemned for them:

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Romans 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

Psalm 103:10-12 he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for

those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

Isaiah 1:18 "Come now, let us settle the matter," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

Scriptures such as these suggest that we won't be reminded of our past sins, shame, embarrassment, etc., in the life to come.

The theological term *propitiation* means "the satisfaction of God's wrath". Propitiation is also called "penal substitutionary atonement" [Stallard, 2017]. What this means is that Jesus Christ satisfied God's wrath by laying down His life, in our place, as the ultimate sacrifice for mankind's sin. The holy nature of God demands penalty for sin because no one unholy can enter into God's presence. But, God provides both justice and grace (unmerited favor) through Jesus Christ. The animal sacrifices of the Old Testament temporarily satisfied God's wrath, but these sacrifices pointed to the future—to a time when God Himself would take on the form of a baby (the story of Christmas) and grow into a man, and lay down His Own life for mankind (the story of Easter). Jesus Christ represents the grace of God—a gift given to anyone who wishes to receive Him. (See also Isaiah 53: "the suffering servant" along with Psalm 22. It is interesting to note that the most influential Old Testament Bible passages in bringing Jewish people to Christ are Isaiah 53 and Daniel 9:24-27 [Ice, 2014d]. Some rabbis thought that there would be two Messiahs since the Bible paradoxically talks about a suffering Messiah and a victorious or conquering Messiah. Some rabbis refer to these two Messiahs as Messiah ben Joseph and Messiah ben David, respectively.) Jesus Christ's death satisfied God's wrath. He rose from the dead on the third day.

Hebrews 2:17 [NKJV]: Therefore, in all things He [Jesus] had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make **propitiation** for the sins of the people.

Isaiah 53:3-5 He [Jesus] was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Compare an event that foreshadowed the sacrifice of God's one and only Son, and took place on what is probably the same location as Abraham's intended sacrifice of Isaac: on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, at or just outside the Temple Mount. Jerusalem is one of the most contested pieces of real estate on Earth.

Genesis 22:6-17 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

... "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he [God] said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

... The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

Mark Hitchcock argues that Moses' presence on the Mount of Transfiguration suggests that Moses' death did *not* result in him going to a holding area in Sheol awaiting Christ's death, but rather he went to Heaven immediately [Hitchcock, 2013a]. Hitchcock offers a similar argument for Enoch and Elijah; but, the scenario is different since they did not actually die. Hitchcock believes that when an Old Testament saint died, he/she went directly to Heaven (but not yet having a resurrected body): "He was gathered to his people." The individuals doing the gathering are likely angels (e.g., Luke 16:22) [Heiser, 2018].

We also read that the body of Samuel appeared to the witch of Endor in 1 Samuel 28.

These outlying cases are difficult to explain; so, we will have to leave those as puzzles. On a slightly different note, we know that angels and the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ sometimes take on physical form, such as Abraham's three visitors in Genesis 18, or the two angels who visited Lot in Sodom, in Genesis 19. The angels visiting Abraham spoke and ate with him. Thus, they, too, took on physical form—at least temporarily.

Regarding death, we see the phrase "gathered to his people" 7 times in the Bible (NIV translation): 4 times in Genesis, 2 times in Numbers, and 1 time in Deuteronomy. The phrase "rested with his ancestors" appears 36 times: 11 times in 1 Kings, 14 times in 2 Kings, and 11 times in 2 Chronicles. The word

“asleep” is used to describe someone who passed away 9 times: 1 time in Acts, 4 times in 1 Corinthians, and 4 times in 1 Thessalonians.

This much we know: First, recall that Daniel was told that he would “rest” for the time being, but would be raised at the end (i.e., just after Christ’s Second Coming):

Daniel 12:13 "As for you [Daniel], go your way till the end. You will rest [die], and then at the end of the days [after the Tribulation] you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance [rewards]."

Thus, we know that Daniel does not yet have a resurrected body, and we would have to assume the same for others from pre-Christian times. In other words, the Old Testament believers (i.e., those who were saved before the church age) will be resurrected after Christ’s Second Coming, but before the start of the Millennium.

Second, we know that Christ represented the *firstfruits* from the dead, that is, He was the “first” with a promise of more to come. Therefore, no one before Christ could have had a resurrected body (i.e., a perfected and glorified body, never subject to death or decay):

1 Corinthians 15:20-23 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the **firstfruits** of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ **all will be made alive. But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.**

Third, even New Testament believers from the church age (i.e., Christians) are still awaiting a resurrected body. In the passage immediately above, note the phrase “when he comes”, that is, when Christ appears to Christians at the Rapture (John 14:2-3), which is also described in this passage:

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and **the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.**

Note that the apostle Paul wrote 1 Corinthians in approximately 54-59 AD, and 1 Thessalonians in 50-53 AD, well after Christ’s death and resurrection.

As for the *unsaved* dead: first, they go to Hades; then they are resurrected; then they appear before the Great White Throne Judgment (at the end of the Millennium); and finally, they are cast into the Lake of Fire (Gehenna). Physical death is the first death; the Lake of Fire is the “second death” (Revelation 21:8).

The Lake of Fire appears to exist already, although it is presently unoccupied:

Matthew 25:41 "Then he [Jesus, at the final judgment] will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the **eternal fire** prepared for the devil and his angels.

Revelation 2:11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by **the second death**.

Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. **The second death** has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

Revelation 20:14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. **The lake of fire is the second death**.

Revelation 21:8 ... **the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.**"

Abraham's Bosom is essentially a synonym for "being in the presence of the Lord". As mentioned above, a great gulf or chasm separated the two abodes; it was not possible to get from one side to the other, as illustrated in Jesus' parable about the saved beggar Lazarus and the unsaved rich king. (It is also the only parable in which Christ used people's names—suggesting that the events were real. Secondly, Abraham and the rich man were having a conversation, suggesting consciousness/awareness after death.)

Newer Bible translations correctly distinguish between Hades (the idea of a temporary holding tank) and hell (the final dwelling place of the unsaved—i.e., permanent separation from God). Right now, no one is "burning in hell". Also, note that for 1,000 years (the starting point of which is still in the future), the Antichrist and the False Prophet are still in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:10). Furthermore, their bodies and souls are not annihilated.

For a thousand years, they will be its sole occupants, and one can well imagine their unspeakable loneliness, the bitter recriminations, the implacable hatred which will consume their thoughts during this period. [Morris, 1983, p. 401]

Revelation 20:7 When the thousand years [Millennium] are over, Satan will be released from his prison

Revelation 20:10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Is hell "endless torture"? Hank Hanegraaff states that hell is not eternal *torture*, but rather eternal *torment* because you're shut out from the presence of the

Lord. Whether there will be flames for eternity is another issue, says Hanegraaff. It could be that words like “flames”, “sulphur”, “blackest darkness”, “lake of fire”, etc. are *metaphors* that describe the state of being shut out from the presence of God for all eternity. Keep in mind that the *existence* of hell is not a metaphor, but the *description* of hell might be. Hell is being described in strong terms that we can understand. The key points about hell are: (a) it is literal, eternal separation from God; (b) it is unpleasant; and (c) no one should want to go there!

The converse is Heaven: real people, real (perfected) bodies, real relationships (much greater than the best relationships on present-day earth), real things to do; but no pain and no sin—for eternity, in a restored universe, in the presence of God. Christ restores things—to the way they were, or could have been, in a world without sin.

Christ will judge the living and the dead. When we are in God’s presence, we’ll see things from God’s perspective, and we’ll be satisfied with His righteous judgments (i.e., justice), love, and mercy. The fact that Christ sits at “the right hand of God” means that He is exalted above all.

Henry Morris states that “one of the mountain-peak verses of Scripture, and one of the most amazing of the great claims of Christ” is Christ’s claim to have the keys to hell (*Hades*):

Revelation 1:18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

When Christ first promised to build His Church, He also promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). When He returned from the dead, He Himself had the keys of hell (Revelation 1:18), the gates had been opened, and those of his captives who had died in faith had been set free to ascend with Him to Paradise. He still retains the keys, and the gates of hell can never close again on those who die in faith, as members of His Church. When they become absent from the body they are immediately present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). [Morris, 1983, p. 47]

2 Corinthians 5:4-6,8 For while we are in this tent [physical body], we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ... We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be **away from the body and at home with the Lord.**

The latter Scripture passage implies the existence of an interim (non-physical body) state between a believer’s current, physical, earthly body and that same believer’s future, resurrected, physical, earthly, and heavenly body. A

believer's conscious soul will *later* reunite with his/her resurrected body. Upon death, a believer's soul/spirit instantly goes to be with God, and is fully conscious. Recall what Jesus said to the thief on the cross next to Him:

Luke 23:43 Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, **today** you will be with me in **paradise**."

According to 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, there are *degrees of punishment* in hell (e.g., Hitler will be treated differently than a common pagan). It appears that all people—believers and unbelievers—will be resurrected; however, just as there are degrees of reward for believers, there are degrees of punishment for unbelievers.

In Romans 2:1-16, Paul pointed out that God will look at what people have done with their privileges and opportunities, and that He will be completely impartial and fair (vv. 5-11). Those who possessed His Word, the law of verses 12-14, will be held accountable for their response to it. Those who never received special revelation will be held accountable only for what they knew (vv. 14-16).

Jesus taught this same principle when He said that the servant who knew his master's will and disobeyed would be beaten with "many stripes," but that the servant who had less knowledge would be beaten with "few" (Luke 12:47,48).

No judge or jury fully understands the person on trial. No human being can evaluate the exact degree of accountability in himself or anyone else. We are all profoundly influenced by hereditary and environmental factors beyond our control. Yet we make choices after weighing options. Therefore, we are all accountable—at least to some degree. And God understands to what extent. He also knows how much we need His mercy.

When the young man who died in a gang war stands before Jesus Christ, he will find that the Lord understands all the circumstances of his short, violent, and troubled life—his absent father, his immoral mother, his disadvantaged peers, his complete ignorance of the gospel message, and his despair. The Lord Jesus will take all these factors into consideration. He knows exactly the degree of responsibility of this young man and will give him a sentence that perfectly suits his offense. [Sper, 1990, pp. 12-13]

He will be absolutely fair in punishment. Jesus pointed out that on the day of judgment the inhabitants of ancient Sodom would be treated with more mercy than the people in Judea who had deliberately rejected Him and His apostles (Matt. 10:15). He also spoke of the servant who would be punished lightly because he had little knowledge of God's will (Luke 12:48). [Sper, 1990, p. 24]

God will hold those who never hear the gospel responsible for what they did with the light that they had in this world. Paul said of the pagans that God had revealed Himself to them in nature (Rom. 1:18-21) and in conscience (Rom. 2:12-16). They must give an account of what they did with this light and will be punished accordingly. [Sper, 1990, p. 27]

It is interesting to note that God has given each person a degree of light, so that even if they haven't heard of Christ, creation itself proclaims there is a God; and there is also each person's conscience. Furthermore, God knows in advance who will accept the gospel (but He doesn't necessarily "cause" or force people to believe), with some claiming that God will *make sure* that those people who would respond positively to the gospel will, in fact, hear the salvation message—perhaps through personal evangelism, creation, dreams or visions, etc. [Jones, 2017] In other words, anyone who genuinely seeks God will find Him.

In contrast with some of the statements above, dispensationalist Dave Hunt argues that the unsaved will *not* have a bodily resurrection:

In contrast, the damned could not have been raised bodily, or death would not have conquered their bodies. ...

The only possible argument for a bodily resurrection of the damned would be so they could be eternally tortured in physical flames. So say Islam and Catholicism, but that is not biblical. ...

Nowhere in 1 Corinthians 15, the "resurrection chapter" (or anywhere else in Scripture) is there anything about bodies of the *damned* being raised. [Hunt, 2008b, p. 6]

The Bible does not say whether or not hell is a place of community, as opposed to a place of isolation. In other words, for those who are sent to hell, it is not known whether they will interact with one another. They may well be alone. As we saw in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, even people who are sent to hell will not want their family/friends to join them. Thus, it appears that people have reasoning capabilities and memories after death. The rich man wanted someone to go back to the earthly side to convince his brothers not to come to this place. The rich man remembered his life prior to death. He remembered his father's house, his five brothers, and the beggar Lazarus.

After death, believers will have greater understanding of things, but unpleasant memories are unlikely to exist (at least not in a form that invokes unpleasantness) since those are part of a fallen world, whereas the world to come will be redeemed and purged of sin.

Isaiah 65:17 "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.

Romans 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

Revelation 6:9-11 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, "How long,

Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been.

Thomas Ice doesn't think God will "erase our memory of the past" when we get to Heaven; otherwise, what's the point of history [Ice, 2021f]? Ice comments, "In our redeemed state, we'll be able to handle everything in a way that doesn't cause us sorrow." In other words, it's a form of maturity. But, as for the bad things we've done, God will likely remove those.

Can you imagine standing before God Almighty in judgment without having Christ's righteousness to cover you (i.e., without having Christ defend you via His sacrificial act of love on the cross)? Sadly, many people today reject Christ's message of salvation, implicitly or explicitly. If that describes you, why not embrace the gift of salvation that Christ offers you—right now? Scripture says:

Romans 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Humans have physical *and* spiritual existence. Our souls have existence outside of our bodies. While we are alive, our soul dwells in our body—and we make choices and take actions for which we are accountable on the day of judgment. In fact, much of our existence deals with the choices we make. *The sum of our choices determines our character and our destiny.* The choices depend on how we react to, and what we do with:

- The body we've been given (e.g., mental and physical health, intellectual ability, athletic ability, relationship ability)
- How we respond in the environment in which we have been placed (e.g., country, language, culture, and degree of freedom). Note that those of us in the Western world enjoy freedom and many privileges that much of the rest of the world does not have; therefore, we will be held to a greater degree of accountability.
- The type of resources that we've been given this life (e.g., family situation, financial situation, type of job, degree of mentoring)
- How we relate to others (e.g., spouse, family, co-workers, neighbors, friends, and even enemies)

To paraphrase theologian Henri Nouwen: "Life is a journey, and the one who sent me on that journey is waiting for me to come home and to tell the story of what I've learned".

With respect to the above, we note that there are many things beyond our control in life:

Acts 17:26 From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and **he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.**

What is important, however, is what we do with the resources (or lack of resources) that we've been given. How do we treat others, regardless of our circumstances? Remember, in Heaven, we will have all the resources we want at our disposal. No one will be poor, sick, or handicapped in any way in Heaven. Earth is just a temporary dwelling for us—and time goes by so quickly. The two essentials commanded by Christ are as follows:

Matthew 22:36-40 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: '**Love your neighbor as yourself.**' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

To summarize: At the time of death, there is a separation between our body and soul. Later, there is a resurrection (where the soul gets a physical body) and a judgment.

Most people, however, are merely ignoring the long-term possibilities of their own choices. They are either counting on the hope that God is too loving to send them to hell, or they are assuming that they aren't bad enough to be sent there. Many are so preoccupied with trying to survive day-to-day struggles that they have chosen not to worry about the future. [Sper, 1990, p. 5]

Dispensationalist David Levy remarks:

There are four groups of people who will enter into the Millennium, three in their glorified bodies, and one in their natural bodies. Those who enter in their glorified bodies will be the Old Testament believers, the Church and the Tribulation believers who will have been martyred for their faith. The righteous who survive the Tribulation will enter in with their natural bodies to procreate and repopulate the earth, especially the Jewish people ...

Those entering the Kingdom in their natural bodies who are blind, deaf, lame [or] dumb will be immediately healed (Isaiah 35:5-6). Most will be blessed with longevity of life since they will be free from illness (Isaiah 33:24). If one dies at a hundred years of age, it will be as if he had died in childhood (Isaiah 65:20).

Like Israel, the Church will be made a kingdom of priests (Revelation 1:6) and will be given authority to reign with the Lord, most likely serving Him among the nations (Revelation 2:26-27). Scripture seems to indicate that Christians who are given leadership in the Kingdom will rule and reign over Gentile cities (Luke 19:17-19), while the apostles are to be seated on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:28-30). [Levy, 1987, pp. 81-83]

Satan himself will be confined in the Abyss (a temporary holding tank in Hades) for 1,000 years. Isaiah 14:9-17 gives a description of Satan when he enters Hades (probably the bottomless pit (Abyss)). The verses can also be applied to the Antichrist since Satan and the Antichrist are “one in purpose” [Pitterson, 2021]. Recall that Jesus and God the Father are one in purpose; hence, we have a parallel situation. To paraphrase some of Isaiah 14: the occupants of hell are in disbelief as they see their leader come to naught. They placed their trust in Satan and his indwelled king—the Antichrist—to defeat the work of God. They gambled their eternal destiny—and lost. These occupants of Hades now realize that there is no hope for them. In particular, note Satan’s five “I will” statements:

Isaiah 14:9-17 The grave below is all astir to meet you [Satan] at your coming; it rouses the spirits of the departed to greet you -- all those who were leaders in the world; it makes them rise from their thrones -- all those who were kings over the nations. They will all respond, they will say to you, **"You also have become weak, as we are; you have become like us."** All your pomp has been brought down to the grave, along with the noise of your harps; maggots are spread out beneath you and worms cover you. How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, **"I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."** But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit. Those who see you stare at you, they ponder your fate: **"Is this the man who shook the earth and made kingdoms tremble, the man who made the world a desert, who overthrew its cities and would not let his captives go home?"**

“Isaiah 14 reads like an attempted coup in the divine council.” [Heiser, 2015, p. 85] The passage is rich with metaphor [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. With one exception, “stars” is a metaphor for “angels” in Scripture. “I will raise my throne above the stars of God” indicates that Satan wants to be exalted, claiming authority over all angels. The “mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain” may refer to the Millennial Kingdom—a future time when the Messiah will rule the world. Instead, Satan wants to be that ruler. “Clouds” are a symbol of God’s *Shekinah glory*: a visible manifestation of the presence of God, which is a “luminous glow which signified the presence of God” [MacArthur, 2006, p. 1917]. Recall that in Exodus, God showed His presence via a burning bush; in the wilderness via a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire at night; via thunder, lightning, and a thick cloud on Mount Sinai; via the light above the Ark of the Covenant; etc. Fruchtenbaum adds that the first appearance of the Shekinah glory may well have been the light in Genesis 1:3-5. This light appeared *before* God created the sun, and it may well be the eternal light for the new heavens and the new earth described in Revelation. Genesis

also describes the Shekinah glory in terms of a smoking furnace and a flaming torch—used to confirm the Abrahamic Covenant by God Himself. (Note: In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is God incarnate: God taking on human form. Jesus “tabernacled” (dwelt) with mankind. The glory of God was displayed at Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem.)

Many people associate “hell” with the Lake of Fire. Revelation 20:14 states that Hades itself (the place *holding* the unsaved dead) will be thrown into the Lake of Fire. Dispensationalists note that the first two people to be thrown into the Lake of Fire are the Antichrist and the False Prophet (right after the Battle of Armageddon), followed by Satan 1,000 years later. Note, however, that the Antichrist does not appear to have a burial following his defeat at Armageddon:

Isaiah 14:18-20 All the kings of the nations lie in state, each in his own tomb. But you are cast out of your tomb like a rejected branch; you are covered with the slain, with those pierced by the sword, those who descend to the stones of the pit. Like a corpse trampled underfoot, **you will not join them in burial**, for you have destroyed your land and killed your people. The offspring of the wicked will never be mentioned again.

Revelation 19:20 But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were **thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.**

Dispensationalist John MacArthur writes about the abode of the dead prior to the final judgment:

When a sinner dies today, he ends up in hell immediately. He doesn’t have to wait for the return of Jesus Christ for that. It is almost like being in prison before his final sentence. When somebody commits a [serious] crime, he is caught and waits in prison for the final adjudication and sentencing. [MacArthur, 2003a, p. 89]

Annihilationists or conditionalists (e.g., John Stott, David Reagan) believe that the body is consumed in hell (Gehenna); and once consumed, there is no further punishment or existence. Robert Peterson responds:

... seven passages teach the survival of the soul after the death of the body (2 Cor. 5:8; Luke 23:46; [Mark 9]:43; Phil. 1:23; Rev. 6:9; Heb. 12:23; Luke 16:19-31). Study of these texts should give annihilationists pause. And further theological reflection should do the same. The intermediate state/resurrection view demonstrates the continuity of personal identity. The same person who dies, lives on without the body and will one day be reunited in body and soul in the resurrection of the dead. The extinction/re-creation view, however, encounters serious difficulties in maintaining personal identity at the resurrection. In what sense is a human being who dies and ceases to exist the same person as the one who is re-created by God at the resurrection? [Peterson, 2007, p 16]

Hell is 'where the fire never goes out' [Mark 9:43] because the suffering of the wicked in hell never ends. Scripture in a number of passages uses fire imagery to depict the sufferings of the wicked, rather than their extermination, as conditionalists teach (e.g., Matt. 13:42,49-50; 25:41; Luke 16:23-25,28; Rev. 14:10[-11]; 20:10). ... All fires go out when they run their course and exhaust their fuel. Jesus says that the worms and fires of hell, by contrast, will never run out of fuel; the worm of the wicked is undying and the fire of hell is not quenched. That is, hell knows no end. [Peterson, 2007, pp. 18-19]

Consider Revelation 20:10, however: 'And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.' John here teaches ... that after the Devil is cast into the fiery lake as well, the beast, the false prophet, and the Devil 'will be tormented ... for ever and ever,' the beast's 'destruction,' therefore, is not annihilation, but eternal punishment.

The words 'they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever' plainly admit of only one meaning—everlasting conscious torment. Annihilationists attempt to deny this by claiming that the beast and false prophet represent institutions and not persons and thus could not be tormented forever, but this is not convincing. (The best interpretation of the beast and false prophet, I believe, is that they represent various enemies of God throughout history, culminating in two individuals.) Regardless of the precise identification of these two, the Devil's identity is transparent and there is no doubt that he is a personal being capable of suffering, and that is precisely what John teaches when he says that the Devil 'will be tormented day and night for ever and ever' (Rev. 20:10).

Annihilationists try to attain their goal by arguing as well that even if Revelation 20:10 teaches that the Devil will suffer endless punishment, that text says nothing about the fate of human beings. This argument fails also because five verses later John says that human beings too are 'thrown into the lake of fire' (Rev. 20:15; cf. 21:8). [Peterson, 2007, p. 21]

The Great White Throne Judgment occurs at the end of the Millennium when all the *unsaved* throughout history will be judged. Their status (i.e., being unsaved) is obvious at this point because the saved don't take part in this judgment; instead, it is the *degree of punishment* for each unbeliever that is being determined.

Some might argue that literal flames and a literal body would imply that the body is consumed. However, it is interesting to note that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into the burning furnace, as written in Daniel 3:16-27—yet the flames didn't consume their body.

Mark Hitchcock believes that annihilationism goes against the nature of God [Hitchcock, 2007]. "Is the punishment too great for the crime?" asks Hitchcock. We need to accept God at His Word, even if we have questions

about things we cannot understand. The *only* place where we can find reliable information about hell is in the Bible.

There are three “deaths” in the Bible, says Hitchcock: (a) spiritual death (i.e., spiritual separation from God, such as when Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit); (b) physical death (i.e., the separation of the material from the immaterial—the non-physical aspect of our humanity); and (c) the “second death”, that is, eternal separation from God. “If you’re born once, you’re going to die twice; but, if you’re born twice, you’re going to die once.” The latter phrase implies that those who are “born again” (saved) will have everlasting life, and won’t have eternal separation from God.

Every human being ever conceived, possessing a divinely-created human soul and spirit, will exist forever somewhere. [Morris, 1983, p. 270]

Eternal punishment was the traditional belief of the Christian Church until the 19th century [Hitchcock, 2007]. Exclusivism was also a traditional belief, that is, the fact that Jesus Christ is the *only* way to salvation:

John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. **No one comes to the Father except through me.**

The New Jerusalem is the final term in Scripture used to describe the future abode of the saved:

Revelation 21:1-4 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, **the new Jerusalem**, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Revelation 21:1-22:5 describes this city as coming down to Earth following the Millennium, although it currently exists. The dimensions of the New Jerusalem are given in Revelation 21:16: the city is 12,000 furlongs (i.e., 1,500 miles or 2,414 kilometres) in height, width, and length. It is interesting to note that the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle in the wilderness, and in the two former Temples in Jerusalem, were in the shape of a cube. The current geography of the earth would be unsuitable for the placement of the New Jerusalem; but, it is likely that there will be major geographical changes to the earth between now and then.

One could also say that the New Jerusalem is now in Heaven, but either way they are in the same locale and are more or less synonymous. ... when the

new earth is created, Heaven or the New Jerusalem will come down upon the new earth. The eternal abode of the Triune God, the elect angels, and the redeemed men will be in the New Jerusalem on the new earth. If one distinguishes between Heaven and the New Jerusalem, then one can say that [the souls of deceased] believers now go to the New Jerusalem in Heaven [awaiting bodily resurrection], and eventually the New Jerusalem will be placed on the new earth, when the new earth is created after the Messianic Kingdom. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004].

To summarize: from Adam until the Ascension of Jesus, Paradise was in Abraham's Bosom. From the Ascension of Jesus until the end of the Millennium, Paradise is in Heaven. Then after the Millennium and for all eternity, Paradise will be in the New Jerusalem on the new earth. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 748]

Lest anyone doubt that the postmillennial world is physical, we turn to the last two chapters of the Bible, namely Revelation 21-22, and see that the postmillennial world (with the New Jerusalem) has: light, nations, food, water, vegetation, time, etc.—in addition to people with real bodies (with perfect DNA, of course). It will be similar to the state of the universe before the fall of: Satan, one-third of the angels, and Adam and Eve.

Revelation 21:22-22:5 I did not see a **temple** in the city [the New Jerusalem], because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. **The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it**, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The **nations** will walk by its light, and the **kings of the earth** will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be **no night** there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. Then the angel showed me the **river** of the **water** of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. **On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse.** The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

The book of Ezekiel also describes this future, literal river:

Ezekiel 47:1 The man brought me back to the entrance of the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar.

	<p>Ezekiel 47:12 Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing."</p> <p>For emphasis, we point out that rebellion will never resurface:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Revelation 22:3a No longer will there be any curse.</p> <p>The 5 curses mentioned in early Genesis were on the serpent, Satan, Adam (all men), Eve (all women), and nature [Hindson, 2021].</p> <p>Sheol or Hades will no longer exist, since they are just temporary; however, heaven and hell (i.e., Gehenna) will exist for eternity. Note also that the New Jerusalem is unaffected by the “new heavens and a new earth”, meaning it currently exists, and will survive the events/renewal at the end of the Millennium. The phrase “the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” appears to be a preventative measure since there will be no sickness, death, or imperfection in the postmillennial world.</p> <p>Let me close this section by emphasizing that Jesus Christ finished the work of redemption with His death on the cross. He did not need to go to hell and “finish” the job. He descended to Hades alright; but, He did not need to fight the devil there because Christ already—through His shed blood and death on the cross—provided the necessary sacrifice to redeem mankind. It was what all the Old Testament sacrifices pointed to. Yes, <i>the Creator of the universe died in the place of you and me</i>. It was the only way that a holy and righteous God would accept a sinner. On the cross, just before His death, Jesus Christ said, “It is finished”—<i>tetelestai</i> in the Greek—an ancient accounting term meaning “paid in full” (John 19:30).</p>
<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>Most of the above discussion applies to both the preterist and dispensationalist positions, except for the dispensationalist descriptions of Tartarus, the fallen angels of Genesis 6, the Rapture, the 7-year Tribulation period, and the Antichrist and the False Prophet. Preterists’ understanding of these topics is dealt with, in detail, elsewhere in this book. Note also that various authors have different opinions about the Millennium. For example, some authors do not believe there will be a literal, 1,000-year, Millennium.</p> <p>When Jesus Christ comes again, <i>all</i> will rise from the dead—some to heaven, and some to eternal damnation. The judgments for (some of) the believers and (all of) the unbelievers are not separated by 1,000 years, according to most preterists.</p> <p>There are indeed degrees of rewards in Heaven, and degrees of suffering in hell (e.g., garden-variety pagan vs. Hitler, red light violator vs. unrepentant serial killer). Hell is <i>not</i> annihilation. Hank Hanegraaff says that the thought of Hitler dying in the comforting arms of his mistress—with no eternal consequence—</p>

	is inappropriate. God's justice demands that there is a hell; and everlasting torment is what the Bible teaches about hell.
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Chapter 4: The Mystery of the Church; the Church and Israel

Topic/ Question	<p>Has the Church replaced Israel (i.e., has God rejected the Jews and moved to the Gentiles)? Are Israel and the Church distinct? What is <i>replacement theology</i> (sometimes called <i>fulfillment theology</i>, or <i>supersessionism</i>)? Will all Jews, or all Israel, be saved at some point in the future?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Romans 11:25-26 I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.</p> <p>In light of Romans 9-11, just who is “Israel” today? Is it geographic Israel? Is it the Old Testament-believing, God-fearing, Jew?</p> <p>(See also the question/section titled “What are the major covenants in the Bible?”)</p>
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>When we read the words “Israel” or “all Israel” in Scripture, we understand Israel to mean both the ancient and modern land of Israel, and the descendants of Jacob (i.e., the ancestral line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). Recall that Jacob’s name was changed to “Israel” in Genesis 32:28.</p> <p>It is estimated that 30% of today’s Israelis are atheists [Hunt, 2009]. In light of the Scripture “all Israel will be saved”, this begs the question about how to define a member of Israel today. The argument is contentious.</p> <p>Unlike dispensationalists, replacement theologians believe that God turned from the Jews (after they rejected Christ), and transferred His covenant promises from Israel to the Church. In other words, any Old Testament promises made to Israel now belong to “true Israel”, that is, to all believers of Jesus Christ. Jewish people who accept Jesus Christ become part of “true Israel” which does not discriminate between Jews and Gentiles, male and female, free and bond, etc. When defending their position, scholars embracing replacement theology sometimes emphasize that God is not “racist” or “sexist”. They argue that the nation of Israel is not given “special treatment” by God, and there is no final restoration of (physical) Israel in the Middle East.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Interestingly, the New Testament never designates the church as “Israel.” In fact, the word Israel is found seventy-three times in the New Testament and always refers to the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Sometimes the term “Israel” in the New Testament refers to Jews in faith and sometimes it refers to Jews in unbelief. However, the term Israel in the New Testament always refers to those who are physical Jews. This word never refers to Gentiles, the church, or even a group that is a mixture of both Jews</p>

and Gentiles. This generalization even holds true with respect to the oft cited Galatians 6:16 passage, which employs the expression “the Israel of God.” Exegetically, the expression “the Israel of God” found in Galatians 6:16 only refers to believing Jews within the Galatian churches.

Furthermore, the Book of Acts records how the church came into existence in Acts 2 and continued to exist alongside Israel prior to the nation’s worldwide exile in A.D. 70. Throughout this transitional period, Acts is judicious in keeping the two entities of the church and Israel separate. Fruchtenbaum observes, “In the book of Acts, both Israel and the church exist simultaneously. The term *Israel* is used 20 times and *ekklesia* (church) nineteen times, yet the two groups are always kept distinct. [Woods, 2016a, pp. 149-150]

Israel always means ethnic Israel and is never switched with the term *church*, nor is the term *church* ever used in Scripture interchangeably with or as a synonym of *Israel*. [Zuck, 1991, p. 240]

In other words, in terms of people groups, Israel, the Church, and the Gentiles are three distinct categories. Israel refers to the Jewish people, that is, the descendants of Jacob. The Church is the Body of Christ, that is, all believers in Jesus Christ. It is one body, without differentiation. The Gentiles are those who are neither Jews nor the Church. It is, however, possible for Gentiles (in their pre-saved condition) to become part of the Church, and for Jewish people to become part of the Church, as well. In fact, the Church is made up of people who were formerly Jews or Gentiles. However, the Church cannot become Israel. Andy Woods states that the Church is not a *replacement* for Israel, but rather an *interruption* along the way. When the Church is raptured and the 70th Week of Daniel begins, God will again focus on Israel.

The classical dispensationalist position is that God did *not* abandon His covenant with the Jews. In other words, He did not reject them permanently. Romans 11:25-26 refers to a future event. Romans 9 and 10 may suggest that God has replaced Israel with the Church, but Romans 11 argues that Israel—i.e., physical Israel and the Jews—is still in God’s plan for the future. After all, if God could break His covenant with the Jews, wouldn’t that mean that He could do so with Christians, too?

God has made many declarations about his *unconditional* promises to Israel. Dave Hunt argues that preterism makes God a covenant-breaking liar. God has not (permanently) rejected Israel. Even Israel’s rejection of Christ could not break the “everlasting covenant” that God made with Israel, because it was an *unconditional* covenant; therefore, there were no conditions that Israel had to fulfill.

Ownership of the land is unconditional; but, *enjoyment* of the land is conditional [Fruchtenbaum, 2013b].

In the August 2006 issue of *The Berean Call*, Hunt writes: “Indeed, at the same time that God promises eternal blessings to Israel in a full restoration in the last days, He also recites here unfaithfulness to Him without a hint that the many sins of Israel and the Jewish people would be any deterrent to His fulfilling all of His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob”. Hunt adds, “The battle right now is between Islam (which says Israel must be destroyed) and the God of the Bible (who promises to preserve the nation of Israel forever).”

There is little doubt that many theologians of the early church promoted Replacement Theology. Irenaeus (130-200) wrote, “For inasmuch as the former [the Jews] have rejected the Son of God, and cast Him out of the vineyard when they slew Him, God has justly rejected them, and given to the Gentiles outside the vineyard the fruits of its cultivation.” ...

Clement of Alexandria (c. 195) claimed that Israel “denied the Lord” and thus “forfeited the place of the true Israel.” [Vlach, 2010]

Replacement theology has been the dominant view of the church from the third century until the middle of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, many churches today believe in replacement theology. The Roman Catholic church has been *supersessionist*, as were the first generation Reformers, including Martin Luther and John Calvin [Vlach, 2010]. The term *supersessionism* comes from the word “supersede”. Despite the good that Martin Luther did in taking Scripture literally and in advancing Protestantism, he unfortunately became anti-Semitic later in life.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, however, replacement theology “has received serious criticism and widespread rejection” thanks to dispensationalism and a more literal understanding of the Old Testament, especially with respect to Israel and the promises made to it. Vlach adds that the Holocaust and the re-establishment of the state of Israel have been significant factors, as well.

Let us look more closely at the book of Romans. Why did Paul write this long letter? Paul wrote to dispel the myth of replacement theology. The church in Rome in the 50s AD initiated replacement theology: the false assumption that the church has replaced Israel—at least with respect to the benefits. Oddly enough, many replacement theologians conveniently leave out the curses!

David Pawson argues that Romans 9 could be titled: “In the past, Israel has been selected”, and that Romans 10 could be titled: “In the present, Israel is being stubborn”, and that Romans 11 could be titled: “In the future, Israel will be saved” [Pawson, 2002].

Pawson argues that Calvinists tend to ignore chapters 10 and 11, and claim that God saves those whom He wants to save, that people have little choice in the matter, and that some people cannot be saved no matter what their intentions. It has also been said that replacement theologians tend to ignore chapters 9 and

11, and claim that Israel has “had its chance”, and now it’s time to move on. Pawson mentions that Zionists tend to ignore chapters 9 and 10. They claim that all Jews are God’s “Israel”. In chapter 10, it is clear that Paul desperately wants to evangelize Jews.

Note: Calvinists believe in *predestination*, that is, people don’t decide using their own free will. But, there must be free will, because that’s the only way that a righteous and trustworthy God could condemn people to hell. God has foreknowledge: He knows what decision somebody is going to make, without influencing that decision.

A common argument is that God has only ever had *one people* who worship Him—namely, the set of all believers in the God of the Bible (and in the days before Jesus Christ’s ministry on Earth, this obviously includes those who believe in the writings of the Old Testament, since the New Testament wasn’t written until the years following Christ’s ministry). Dispensationalists argue that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile today: that God accepts all people who believe in Jesus Christ—in fact, they become part of *one body of believers*. However, at the Rapture, God will remove the Church, and once again deal with the Jews. The hope is that many Jews will come to Jesus Christ (and some will), even in the early days after the Rapture, let alone waiting until the end of the 7-year Tribulation. We learn from Romans 11:25-26 that Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles (Christian Church) has come in—and so all Israel will be saved. Unfortunately, it will take the 7-year Tribulation for (most of) Israel to cry out to the Lord for deliverance, and they will long for the return of the Messiah, and He *will* deliver all of them that remain at the Second Coming.

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus said, “I will build my church”—and the church hadn’t existed before. The Day of Pentecost falls on Sivan 6 in the Jewish Calendar. Moses received the tablets of the law (the Ten Commandments) on Mount Sinai on Sivan 6, 1446 BC. On the anniversary date of Sivan 6, circa 30 AD, the Holy Spirit was given to the church, and the Christian church was officially birthed. On the day, the Holy Spirit was poured out on 3,000 people (Acts 2:24). Interestingly, on that day in 1446 BC, 3,000 people died when they made and worshiped a golden calf, after Moses received the Ten Commandments. The number 3,000 is surely not a coincidence.

Matthew 16:18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

The Old Testament covenants were not fulfilled in history, but they will be fulfilled.

In summary, the church has not *replaced* Israel; rather, it has temporarily *interrupted* God’s past and future dealings with Israel [Woods, 2012f]. God’s

promises to the Jews are unconditional, as per Romans 9-11. In particular, Jesus is the “vine”. Some, but not all, of Israel (the “branches”) have been pruned. Paul writes that the Gentile believers (i.e., the Christian church) represent wild olive branches that have been grafted into a natural olive tree (spiritual Israel). Imagine the future blessings when Israel turns to Christ, that is, when they, as “natural” branches, are grafted into their own olive tree:

Romans 11:1 I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! ...

Romans 11:11-12 Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression [rejection of Jesus Christ], salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!

Romans 11:17-26 If some of the branches [Jews] have been broken off, and you [Gentile believers], though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others [Jewish believers] and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root [Christ], do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches [Jewish persons], be grafted into their own olive tree! I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: **Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved**, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.

David Pawson notes that the branches which were cut out from the vine/tree are those Jews that drifted into unbelief after being redeemed from Egypt. The wild branches represent Gentiles who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. They were grafted in, but among the others [Jewish branches]. There has only been a *partial* replacement, and it's only of the branches. The tree trunk is still there, the root is still there, and some of the branches are still there. *It is not a new tree.* In other words, Gentiles have replaced some of the Jews, but the Gentiles have not replaced the Jews entirely. Furthermore, Gentile branches can be cut out again. (Pawson doesn't believe in the phrase “once

saved, always saved” that is common in many Christian circles; therefore, Christians should be careful not to turn their backs on God.)

Note these phrases in Romans 11:25-26: (a) “Israel has been hardened in part”—Israel is clearly not the Church because the Church couldn’t be hardened; (b) “until the full number of the Gentiles has come in”—which strongly suggests a distinction between Israel and the saved Gentiles (Christian church); and (c) “And so all Israel will be saved”—again, Israel cannot be the Church because an individual who is part of the Church is *already* saved. The *Church* is also known as *the body of Christ*—which, since the time of Christ, consists of both Jews and Gentiles, i.e., the saved Jewish remnant and the elect Gentiles. Note that Old Testament believers (i.e., those before Christ’s ministry) are also saved; they implicitly looked forward to a redeemer (Jesus Christ). At some point in the future, all Israel will be saved. Pawson believes it is heresy to say that the Church is the *new* Israel; rather, we have been grafted into an existing olive tree (the old Israel). Another way of stating it is that we (Christians) have been *added* in to the olive tree.

David Hocking notes that it is unnatural for wild olive shoots to be grafted into a natural olive tree, and actually produce fruit. However, if God can do this miracle with the Gentiles (i.e., enable them to produce bountiful fruit for the kingdom of God), imagine what will happen when the natural branches will be grafted back into their own olive tree!

The bottom line is that Christians have been adopted as full members into the family of God—the family that God had planned throughout the ages, but only revealed in (and throughout) the Old Testament.

Malcolm Hedding writes:

Jesus never denied that the physical kingdom would be restored to Israel.

Acts 1:6-7 So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you **at this time** going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.

If the [Abrahamic] Covenant has been abolished, then what Paul says is wrong! Moreover the writer of the book of Hebrews states that we can trust God to be faithful to the New Covenant because He has always been faithful to the Abrahamic Covenant (Hebrews 6:13-20). ... if the Abrahamic Covenant has been abolished, then God is a liar and indeed is not faithful, though the writer of Hebrews affirms that he is! ...

Israel has always been God’s vehicle of world redemption (Romans 9:1-5). In a way, she is God’s microphone, the means by which He speaks to a lost world. Moreover, she has birthed all God’s covenants into the world and has now come back to her ancient homeland, by the promise of the Abrahamic Covenant, to birth the final great covenant of history, the Davidic Covenant.

Herein lies the ultimate purpose of her modern-day restoration. Jesus will return to Zion as the root and offspring of David (Revelation 22:1-6; Psalm 2:1-12; Psalm 72:5-11). [Hedding, 2006]

Let us take a closer look at the “mystery” of the Christian church. The Christian Church is sometimes referred to as a “mystery” or “mystery Kingdom” because it is a major part of God’s revelation that was *not revealed in the Old Testament*. What might be the reasons for this?

The *establishment* of the Mystery Kingdom came as a result of the rejection of the Messianic Kingdom. The parables of Matthew 13 describe the mystery form of the Kingdom Program.

The *timing* of the Mystery Kingdom program can be stated generally as falling between the First and Second Comings of the Messiah. But to be more specifically correct, it begins with the rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus by Israel (Mat. 12-13) and ends with the acceptance of the Messiahship of Jesus by Israel (Mat. 23:37-39; 24:1-25:46). [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]

Arnold Fruchtenbaum remarks that the Mystery Kingdom is described in 9 parables. Some Bible translations use the “Kingdom of Heaven is like...” to interpret these parables:

1. The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:3-9,20-23)
2. The Parable of the Seed (Mark 4:26-29)
3. The Parable of the Tares (Weeds) (Matthew 13:24-30,36-43)
4. The Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31-32)
5. The Parable of the Leaven (Matthew 13:33)
6. The Parable of the Hidden Treasure (Matthew 13:44)
7. The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price (Matthew 13:45-46)
8. The Parable of the Fishing Net (Matthew 13:47-50)
9. The Parable of the Householder (Matthew 13:52)

Why did Christ speak in parables?

... the parabolic form of teaching allowed Him to simultaneously conceal and reveal. Christ desired to conceal truth from the nation since they had already rejected the offer of the kingdom (Matt. 12). Such concealment was actually merciful since the disclosure of more truth would have brought first-century Israel into even greater condemnation. Earlier, Christ had explained that greater revelation brings forth greater accountability (11:20-24). The disclosure of more truth to the nation at this point would not have helped Israel but rather would have only increased her degree of discipline since she had already chosen to reject the kingdom offer. [Woods, 2012e]

It is estimated that 63% of church attendees go to churches that teach replacement theology [Koenig, 2008]. Is Israel the Church? Is the Church Israel? David Hocking states that there is some truth to saying “yes” to these questions, that is, in terms of *faith* and *belief*; but, the believers of the Old Testament are *not* equal to the Church. God is not through with Israel at all.

Hocking adds that Benjamin Netanyahu, former Prime Minister of Israel, stated in a speech to the Knesset in 2007 that the only true friends of Israel are evangelicals in North America who believe what the Bible says about Israel.

Is there a future for national Israel?

Preterists advocate the replacement of Old Testament Israel with the church often called the “New Israel.” ... “Although Israel will someday be restored to the true faith, the Bible does not tell of any future plan for Israel as a special nation,” insists [David] Chilton.

... Gentry also follows lockstep in the preterist chant that Israel has no national future. In fact, Gentry teaches that the seven-sealed scroll of Revelation 6 “Is God’s divorce decree against his Old Testament wife for her spiritual adultery.” Gentry clearly teaches replacement theology when he says, “In his divorce of Israel God disestablishes her.” [Ice, 2003h, p. 427]

God called the Israelites, collectively, his *wife*; however, they forsook God. He anxiously awaits their return:

Hosea 2:7 She [Israel] will chase after her lovers but not catch them; she will look for them but not find them. Then she will say, 'I will go back to my husband [God] as at first, for then I was better off than now.'

The book of Romans speaks of diversity and unity. There are elements of both in the Godhead, the 12 tribes of Israel, and the Church (e.g., different gifts within one body of believers) [Horner, 2009]. “Scripture knows nothing of a future clone-like homogeneity, and especially with the economy of the Millennium.” Horner adds that this is a strength of premillennial eschatology.

Similarly, the book of Acts speaks of both Israel and the church, simultaneously—implying that there is a distinction [Fruchtenbaum, 2004].

Thomas Ice writes:

When we think about the unprecedented worldwide regathering and reestablishment of the nation of Israel, it should prompt us to ask the question: “Why would God bring the Jewish people back to their homeland, reestablish them as a nation if they have no future in the land? ... Why will Jesus return to Jerusalem at His second advent ...? What about the two witnesses who will minister in Jerusalem for forty-two months ...? [Ice, 2011b, p. 5]

Andy Woods writes:

In fact, the word Israel is found seventy-three times in the New Testament and it always refers to the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Sometimes Israel in the New Testament refers to believing Jews and sometimes it refers to Jews in unbelief. However, the term Israel in the New

	<p>Testament always refers to those who are physical Jews. The word never refers to Gentiles, the Church, or even a group that is a mixture of both Jews and Gentiles. In other words, the term Israel is a technical term or a word that means the same thing everywhere it is employed in Scripture. [Woods, 2012g]</p> <p>... God’s design for the church ... is to evangelize and disciple, or reach and teach, in fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). While it remains appropriate for the church to positively influence fallen culture in some sense (Matt. 5:13-16), she is not called to rule and reign in the present age with kingdom authority. Instead, the church is to await the future, earthly, Messianic Kingdom when Christ will rule and reign with a rod of iron (Ps. 2:9; Rev. 12:5). Until that glorious future day arrives, the world will remain under Satan’s influence (2 Cor. 4:4), and consequently the church will be living as a pilgrim in enemy territory. [Woods, 2015]</p> <p>Here are some differences between Israel and the Church [Woods, 2012g]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Israel gave birth to Christ; however, Christ gave birth to the Church. • Israel is a nation with borders and a capital; however, the Church is not a nation, but is comprised of people from all nations. • Israel fought wars with the Philistines and other enemies, including modern-day nations; however, the Church is fighting a spiritual war. • Israel had a priesthood with priests coming from the Tribe of Levi and the line of Aaron; however, the Church <i>is</i> a priesthood (Rev. 1:6). • Israel will be resurrected at the start of the Millennium; however, the Church is resurrected at the Rapture. • The gates of the New Jerusalem are named after the 12 tribes of Israel; however, the foundations of the New Jerusalem are named after the 12 apostles. <p>In summary, all Jews alive when Christ returns will be awaiting the Messiah, and they will all be saved. This parallels the story of the reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers (in Egypt). Like Joseph, Christ was rejected by His brethren, sold for pieces of silver, brought blessings to the Gentiles, and during a very difficult 7-year period, was finally recognized and accepted by His brethren, bringing life to all. Hundreds of years later, their descendants left Egypt, and traveled to the Promised Land. Because of their unbelief, most of them did not enter the Promised Land at that time. Conversely, at the end of the 7-year tribulation period, Christ will gather the Jews, bring salvation, and cause them to enter the promised land in their natural bodies. This promised land is an enlarged Israel, as per the Old Testament covenant. The Millennium period begins at that time.</p>
Preterist Position	Replacement theology is sometimes used as a pejorative term to push the dispensationalist viewpoint that God has two distinct groups of people. Instead of the term “replacement theology”, it is more accurate to use the term

“fulfillment theology”. Those who are “in Christ” are the true Israel. In other words, the Church has not *replaced* Israel; but rather, *the church is part of true Israel* (1 Peter 2:4-10). This is what the Old Testament pointed to: *one* body of believers. It is the “mystery” referred to in the New Testament: the two have become one [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, 2011+].

A question that continues to be asked and debated—even within Judaism—is: Does one have to be a believer [in God, not necessarily Jesus Christ] to be a Jew? Is Judaism a religion, or an ethnic group?

God has only ever had *one* people. The Church is part of “true Israel”. There is no distinction between Israel and the Church, that is, between Jew and Gentile. All can come to Christ, and when they do so, there is no difference in the body of believers.

Romans 10:12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile -- the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him,

Hank Hanegraaff believes that “all Israel” includes *all* believers worldwide, not necessarily Israelis. We’re talking about *true Israel*. It is not the natural children of Abraham, but the children of the promise. God does not differentiate us by race, but rather by our relationship to God. True Israel is not determined by nationality, but rather by spirituality. Therefore, true Israel refers to all believers. God created a new “Israel”—an Israel by faith in Jesus—after the Jews rejected Christ.

Hanegraaff argues strongly against both a 7-year tribulation and a pretribulation rapture. He insists that God will *not* deal separately with Israel in the future, and the Christian Church will *not* be removed from the earth at a so-called “Rapture”. Furthermore, there will not be a rebuilt Temple because sacrifices and sin offerings came to an end with Jesus Christ’s ultimate sacrifice.

God has only had *one* covenant community. “God is neither a racist nor a land broker”, argues Hanegraaff [Hanegraaff & Hitchcock, 2007]. “God does not put people on different footings. Throughout the entire Bible, God has one covenant community made from every tongue and tribe and language and people and nation.” In Scripture, there were people from other nations who turned to the God of Israel, and became part of the kingdom of believers. There are many examples, including Ruth, Rehab, many foreigners in the book of Esther (e.g., see Esther 8), many in the time of Christ, etc.

Hanegraaff argues that dispensationalism is a form of racism since it suggests that an entire race of people (the Jews) has special privileges and can be saved without believing in Christ. He warns people that John Hagee, for example, is incorrect in his teaching. Hagee believes that Jews can be saved *without*

coming to Christ. Furthermore, Hagee says that Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah to the Jews; therefore, the Jews did not actually reject Jesus as Messiah, but rather Jesus “refused” to be the Messiah to them.

Hanegraaff adds that dispensationalists could be viewed as replacement theologians because they “replace” the Church with Israel in the latter days!

John the Baptist said that God could raise up stones and turn them into children of Abraham; therefore, those Jews who claim that they belong to God merely because they are descendants of Abraham—are mistaken.

Will there be a time in the future when the Jews (many/all of them) will come to Christ? The position that Gary DeMar holds is that there will be a time in the future when the Jews will come to Christ, but so will many other people groups.

According to Romans 9-11, every believer has been “grafted into” Israel. The promises were not made to an ethnic group but were fulfilled for all believers in “the seed” (Jesus). In other words, it’s not based on nationality, but on spirituality. The Bible refers to “seed” (singular, and that’s emphasized in the text). If you belong to Abraham’s seed, then you are an heir to the promise. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile ... and we are heirs to the promise.

The olive tree’s branches that are broken off are Jews who do not believe in Christ. The nourishing sap refers to Jesus Christ. The olive tree is not a national symbol; it is a spiritual symbol. Abraham was to be the Father of many nations: if you are in Christ, then you are an heir of the promise (i.e., part of the cultivated olive tree mentioned in Romans 11).

... far from communicating that God has two distinct peoples, the Scriptures from beginning to end reveal only *one chosen people* purchased ‘from every tribe and tongue and language and nation’ (Revelation 5:9). As Paul explains, the ‘mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus’ (Ephesians 3:6).

As Paul goes on to explain, ‘If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise’ (Galatians 3:29).

Finally, the one chosen people, who form one covenant community, are beautifully symbolized in the book of Romans as one cultivated olive tree (see Romans 11:11-24). The tree symbolizes national Israel, its branches symbolize those who believe, and its root symbolizes Jesus—‘the Root and the Offspring of David’ (Revelation 22:16). Natural branches broken off represent Jews who reject Jesus. Wild branches grafted in represent Gentiles who receive Jesus. Thus, says Paul, ‘Not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham’s children. ... In other words, it is not the natural children who are God’s

children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring' (Romans 9:6-8).

... there is only *one distinct plan* [for salvation] ... The pretext that God postponed the original plan for Israel and initiated a parenthetical plan for the church that abruptly ends with a pretribulational rapture entirely misses the point.

First, far from the dispensational *postponement* of God's original plan for Israel, Scripture reveals the distinct *progression* of the divine plan to establish *through* Israel a new humanity (Ephesians 2:15) in a new homeland ... [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 49-51]

Ironically, the only portion of the Promised Land Abraham ever took possession of was a cave in Hebron where he buried his wife Sarah. And even then he did not assume it by virtue of the promise but through payment of the value. When Ephraim the Hittite offered the land to Abraham as a gift, he responded, 'Listen to me, if you will. I will pay the price of the field. Accept it from me so I can bury my dead there' (Genesis 23:13). In the end, for the sum of four hundred shekels of silver, 'the field and the cave in it were deeded to Abraham by the Hittites as a burial site' (v. 20). [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 176]

Hanegraaff continues:

Christian Zionists are convinced that these promises God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob with respect to the land are unconditional and yet unfulfilled. ... Israel must own all of the land from the river of Egypt in the north to the river Euphrates in the South. ...

These Zionists are convinced that Israel will soon control not only the West Bank, Gaza, and Golan, but Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon. Says John Hagee, 'The Royal Land Grant that God, the original owner, gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their seed forever, includes the following territory which is presently occupied by Israel, the West Bank, all of Lebanon, one half of Syria, two-thirds of Jordan, all of Iraq, and the northern part of Saudi Arabia.' ... Israel must yet control an area of land roughly thirty times its present size. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 177-178]

He adds:

Even as the life ebbed from his body, Joshua reminded the children of Israel that the Lord had been faithful to his promises. 'You know with all your heart and soul that *not one* of all the good promises the LORD your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; *not one has failed*' (Joshua 23:14).

Solomon, during whose reign the glorious temple was constructed, was equally unambiguous. 'Not one word has failed of all the good promises [the LORD] gave through his servant Moses' (1 Kings 8:56). In fact, at the height of the Solomonic kingdom, 'the people of Judah and Israel were *as numerous as the sand on the seashore*; they ate, they drank and they were happy. And Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River [Euphrates] to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt' (4:20-21).

	<p>Even in the aftermath of Israel’s exile into Babylon, Nehemiah extolled the faithfulness of God in fulfilling the land promises he had made to the patriarchs. ... In his impassioned prayer, Nehemiah praised the Lord for faithfulness to the Abrahamic covenant:</p> <p>... ‘You gave them kingdoms and nations, allotting to them <i>even the remotest frontiers</i> ... <i>You made their sons as numerous as the stars in the sky, and you brought them into the land that you told their fathers to enter and possess.</i> [Their sons went in and took possession of the land.]’ (Nehemiah 9:22-24). [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 178-179]</p> <p>The land promises that were fulfilled at the height of Solomon’s kingdom will find their <i>permanent</i> expression at the return of Jesus Christ.</p> <p>God is not giving the land that He promised to Abraham exclusively to the Jews. He is going to give it to all His children. Paul made this clear in Galatians 3:16 when he wrote:</p> <p><i>Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as one would in referring to many, but rather as in referring to one, “And to your seed,” that is, Christ.</i></p> <p>... To whom does the Promised Land belong? Who are the heirs of the land between the river of Egypt and the river Euphrates? All who put their faith in Jesus Christ. [Eberle & Trench, 2021, Kindle edition, location 9131]</p> <p>Finally, we note that Christians and Jews share the Judeo-Christian heritage that many of us enjoyed in our upbringing. Hank Hanegraaff reminds us that we share common roots:</p> <p>Jesus, the twelve apostles, and the apostle Paul were all Jewish! In fact, Christians proudly refer to their heritage as the Judeo-Christian tradition. In the book of Hebrews, Christians are reminded of Jews from David to Daniel who are members of the faith hall of fame. In fact, Christian children grow up with Jews as their heroes! From their mothers’ knees to Sunday school classes, they are treated to Old Testament stories of great Jewish men and women of faith, from Moses to Mary and from Ezekiel to Esther.</p> <p>The Bible goes to great lengths to underscore the fact that when it comes to faith in Christ, there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile (Galatians 3:38) and that Jewish people throughout the generations are no more responsible for Christ’s death than anyone else. As Ezekiel put it, “The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son” (Ezekiel 18:20). [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 105]</p>
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Topic/ Question	With respect to recognizing and acknowledging Christ, Israel failed the first time. Scripture says that they’ll acknowledge Him the second time (i.e., at His Second Coming). Are there other patterns of initial “failures” in Scripture that may be <i>types</i> of Christ’s mission?
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Both Positions	<p>There are several times in Scripture when God’s plan went ahead on the “second try” [Missler, 2005]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abraham didn’t leave home the first time; he merely moved up river. After his father died, only then did Abraham leave. • The brothers of Joseph didn’t recognize him during their first trip to Egypt during the famine. It was only during the second time that he was recognized for whom he was—and then only after Joseph explicitly told them so. • Moses was not accepted as the leader of the Israelites in Egypt. Instead, he went away, and returned about 40 years later. Then, he was accepted. • The tablets of the law (the Ten Commandments) were written on stone by the “hand of God”; but those tablets were broken after Moses came down from Mount Sinai and saw the rebellion. God had to make a second set. • The Israelites didn’t enter the Promised Land under the leadership of Moses during the Exodus from Egypt, due to disobedience. It was only 40 years later, under the leadership of Joshua, that Israel finally entered the Promised Land. <p>The dispensationalist view holds that, in the end times, the Israelites will come to salvation in Jesus Christ—they will recognize Jesus at the Second Coming, but only after looking for His return. Blindness will be lifted [Missler, 2012]:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Matthew 23:39 For I tell you, you will not see me [Jesus] again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Hosea 5:15 Then I [the Lord] will go back to my place until they admit their guilt. And they will seek my face; in their misery they will earnestly seek me."</p>
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Chapter 5: The Rapture

Topic/ Question	<p>What is the Rapture? When will the Rapture occur? Who will be raptured? Is the Rapture really pretribulational? If so, <i>where</i> in Scripture is a <i>pretribulational</i> rapture specifically described or inferred? Who will participate in the Rapture?</p>
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>The Rapture refers to the sudden, taking-away of believers from Earth to Heaven. This major event takes place seven or more years before Christ’s return to Earth at the Battle of Armageddon. The Rapture is a time of <i>resurrection</i> or bodily translation for <i>believers</i> (dead and alive) in Jesus Christ. The resurrected bodies are eternal—never subject to death, decay, disease, pain, depression, etc. Other believers (i.e., Old Testament believers and post-Rapture believers) are resurrected <i>after</i> Christ’s Second Coming. Thus, the resurrection of the saved takes place in <i>stages</i>. The resurrection of the unsaved, however, takes place in one event at the Great White Throne Judgment at the end of the Millennium.</p> <p>Although no single verse of Scripture specifically refers to a <i>pretribulational</i> rapture, the circumstantial evidence for a pretribulational rapture is strong. The same applies to the words “Bible” and “trinity”: they are not stated explicitly in the Bible, but they are implied, and the concepts are routinely used in writing and conversation. In this chapter, we will examine the evidence that infers a pretribulational rapture. Plenty of Scriptures, when taken together, support this position.</p> <p>This is important: We may debate the <i>timing</i> of the Rapture, but the Rapture is a fact and it <i>is</i> found in Scripture. The Greek verb used in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 to describe the action of the Rapture is <i>harpazo</i> (pronounced har-PAHD-zoh) which means “forcibly snatch away” or “great snatch”—or simply, “caught up”. We get the word “harpoon” (spearing and pulling towards) from the word <i>harpazo</i> [Woods, 2021h]. The Greek word <i>harpazo</i> appears 14 times in the New Testament—in a total of 7 different books of the New Testament.</p> <p>The English word “rapture” comes from <i>rapiemur</i>, <i>rapturo</i>, or <i>rapio</i> which are Latin words used to translate the Greek word <i>harpazo</i>. Recall that the New Testament was originally written in Greek. The Latin Vulgate was the only Bible used by the West for 1,200 years. It was the Bible that was in common use before the King James Version of 1611. “Vulgate” means “common language” of the people. Thus, the Latin Vulgate Bible contains the word for Rapture, although the actual word is not used in English translations. Nevertheless, the concept has been in the Bible since the New Testament was written.</p> <p>1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 is the strongest and clearest passage that supports the Rapture. Let us quote the surrounding verses to give the context:</p>

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep [died]. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and **the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up** [Greek: *harpazo*; Latin: *rapiemur*; English: *raptured*] **together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.** Therefore encourage each other with these words.

Note the words “in Christ”, “caught up” (*harpazo*), “we who are still alive”, and “in the air”. The “dead in Christ” refers only to Christians (and not to Old Testament saints (believers)). Thus, this Scripture teaches that there will be a “caught up” or “snatching away” event, which we call “the Rapture”.

Here is the Latin Vulgate for verse 17:

deinde nos qui vivimus qui relinquimur simul **rapiemur** cum illis in nubibus obviam Domino in aera et sic semper cum Domino erimus

The big debate among evangelical Christians is not whether or not there *is* a rapture, but rather, it is about its timing. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 clearly indicates that there will be a snatching away of living believers. Thus, there shouldn't be any disagreement among Christians about the occurrence of the Rapture. Note that the apostle Paul wrote “**we** who are still alive and are left”; and this tells us that Paul thought the Rapture was a possibility even in his day. In fact, the only Rapture model that can claim imminence is the pretribulational Rapture. *Imminence* provides strong support for the pretribulational model.

In John 14:2-3, Jesus specifically says that *He will take believers from the earth to be with Him in Heaven*:

John 14:2-3 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.**

Regarding the bold phrases above, the NASB translates them to: “... I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, [there] you may be also.” This suggests that believers will move towards Christ, as He approaches them [Showers, 1995]. Thomas Ice thinks that “take you to myself” is the better choice of words for the translation [Ice, 2021g].

John 14:2-3 is the first reference in the New Testament to the Rapture of the Church [Walvoord, 1990]. It is part of Christ's Upper Room Discourse, given the night before His crucifixion.

Is the Rapture imminent, as dispensationalists believe—or is it after some well-defined set of events that must still occur? If it is the former scenario, then this implies a pre-70th week of Daniel event, that is, an event that occurs *some time before* the start of a major event in prophecy. That event is called the Tribulation. Christ will not return physically to set foot on the Earth until 7 years *after* the start of the Tribulation, that is, 7 years after the Antichrist makes a major peace treaty or covenant with Israel.

On the other hand, if it were the latter scenario, then this includes the posttribulational (not pretribulational) Rapture position, whereby the Rapture is part of the Second Coming, and therefore the Rapture is no longer imminent. Douglas Moo, for example, argues that 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7 supports a posttribulational Rapture [Moo, 1996].

2 Thessalonians 1:6-7 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen **when the Lord Jesus is revealed** from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.

Moo thinks that the words “first resurrection” in Revelation 20:4-6 might refer to the Rapture—a posttribulational event that is followed the Millennium:

Revelation 20:4-6 ... And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They 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 a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

Note also that if the *posttribulational* Rapture position were true, this would place the Rapture *after* the events of the Tribulation, including the Battle of Armageddon (which occurs at the end) and, obviously, after the seven seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments (which occur much earlier on). Note that believers in the posttribulational model think they have at least 7 more years to convince their loved ones to be saved. Conversely, pretribulational believers think the matter is more urgent because the Rapture is imminent. That said, some posttribulationists think that posttribulationism better prepares believers for difficult times ahead. Note that many believers around the world currently live under persecution, not to mention all the martyrs and persecuted believers over the centuries—and it is a strong assumption that we Christians will be privileged to escape the Tribulation [Brown & Keener, 2019; Woods, 2020h]. Not only should we be ready to suffer for Christ, but we can provide a testimony

to support, encourage, and share our faith with non-believers who would be going through the Tribulation.

Some posttribulationists argue that God will protect believers so that they can go *through* the Tribulation, similar to the way God protected the Hebrews during some of the plagues during the Exodus (e.g., Exodus 9:6). In other words, God distinguishes between the believers and non-believers, although this only appears to occur in some cases (e.g., Revelation 9:4).

The Rapture gives Christians a reason for victorious and joyful living, since it means that Christians do not have to go through the Tribulation. Another reason in support of the pretribulation Rapture is that it prevents Christians from taking the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:16-18) [Frag, 2021]. People who have a genuine belief in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior are saved. They cannot lose their salvation. However, given how worldly some Christians are (just think of some social or theological issues that divide the church today!), it is easy to see how some people might take the mark of the beast, not realizing the eternal implications of doing so. But, a pretribulation rapture removes the opportunity for Christians to take the mark of the beast. In other words, there is no way we could accidentally take the mark, or be talked into it by loved ones, because we would be with Christ before the Tribulation even begins.

As we have just read, John 14:2-3 speaks of Jesus preparing a place for us in His “Father’s house” where there are “many rooms”. He plans to take us there. Dispensationalists believe this event is the Rapture, and that it occurs *before* the Tribulation (i.e., the day of the Lord, or the “wrath” of God) begins. Consider the following Scripture passages and note the bold font (my emphasis):

John 14:2-3 **In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.**

1 Thessalonians 1:10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead -- **Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.**

Revelation 3:10 Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also **keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world** to test those who live on the earth.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and **the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.** And so we

will be with the Lord forever. Therefore **encourage each other** with these words.

Isaiah 26:19-21 **But your dead will live, LORD; their bodies will rise -- let those who dwell in the dust wake up and shout for joy -- your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead. Go, my people, enter your rooms [Rapture?] and shut the doors behind you [bypassing the wrath]; hide yourselves for a little while until his wrath [Tribulation] has passed by. See, the LORD is coming out of his dwelling [Heaven] to punish the people of the earth for their sins.** The earth will disclose the blood shed on it; the earth will conceal its slain no longer.

Note the parallels of Isaiah 26:19-21 to the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18: the dead in Christ rise, those believers who are alive are taken away, and the Tribulation occurs. That said, some prophecy experts (e.g., [Woods, 2020b]) are cautioning that the Rapture—and for that matter, the Christian Church—is not found at all in the Old Testament, although there have been singleton raptures (Enoch, Elijah). In other words, Woods argues that Isaiah 26:19-21 is a resurrection and Tribulation passage, but not a Rapture passage. Instead, the reference to “shut the doors behind you” is a promise of protection for God’s people during the Tribulation [LaHaye, *et al.*, 2001]. In particular, the Jewish people are instructed to hide themselves in a place of safety in the mountains/wilderness (e.g., Bozrah (meaning “sheepfold” in Hebrew) in Jordan – not far from the newer town: Petra) during the Tribulation (Matthew 24:15-16; Revelation 12:6,12-13; Micah 2:12 (KJV); Isaiah 63:1) [LaHaye & Hindson, 2006]. Nevertheless, the idea of a connection or parallel between Isaiah 26:19-21 and the Rapture is interesting. In my opinion, Isaiah 26:19-21 is a “2 Chronicles 7:14” type of verse: it is primarily directed at the Jews, but it has applicability to Christians as well.

Let us connect two important Scripture passages about the Rapture. We will compare John 14:1-3 with 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17. The following comparison and sequence of keywords are due to J.B. Smith’s book *A Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1961, p. 312 [Walvoord & Hitchcock, 2012]. Consider the striking parallels in the two passages:

John 14:1-3	1 Thessalonians 4:13-17
trouble (v. 1)	sorrow (v. 13)
believe (v. 1)	believe (v. 14)
God, Me (v. 1)	Jesus, God (v. 14)
told you (v. 2)	say to you (v. 15)
come again (v. 3)	coming of the Lord (v. 15)
receive, you (v. 3)	caught up (v. 17)
to Myself (v. 3)	to meet the Lord (v. 17)
be where I am (v. 3)	ever be with the Lord (v. 17)

Thus, there is Scriptural support for the Rapture. Interestingly, there is no similar ordinal sequence that lines up with the *Second Coming* in Revelation 19:11-21—using either John 14:1-3 or 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17. This implies that the Rapture and the Second Coming are two distinct events, separated by some period of time.

The Thessalonian church was worried about what happens to their deceased friends and relatives, who were also believers [Woods, 2020a]. Would they be part of a general resurrection before the Millennium, or would they be raptured? Paul had previously taught them that the living believers would be caught up (raptured) at some time in the future. Now, in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Paul wrote to let them know that the deceased believers would actually precede the living believers in the Rapture. In fact, the Rapture is a reunion of sorts.

The verb describing the action of the Rapture [caught up; forcibly snatched away; Greek: *harpazo*] is used 21 times, in the following 14 verses: Matthew 11:12; 12:29; 13:19; John 6:15; 10:12,28,29; Acts 8:39; 23:10; 2 Corinthians 12:2,4; 1 Thessalonians 4:17; Jude 23; and Revelation 12:5. Here are some examples:

Acts 8:39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took [*harpazo*] Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing

2 Corinthians 12:2-4 I [Paul] know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up [*harpazo*] to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know -- God knows. ... was caught up [*harpazo*] to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell.

Revelation 12:5 She gave birth to a son, a male child [Jesus], who "will rule all the nations with an iron scepter." And her child was snatched up [*harpazo*] to God and to his throne.

Recall that *harpazo* is a verb. It describes the action of being snatched up, without resistance. However, after that happens, we are in the physical presence of Jesus, which is when the Greek noun *parousia* is used. (Rapture implies resurrection, and Christians and Christ each have resurrected bodies.) However, *parousia* is also used to refer to Christ's Second Coming at Armageddon (e.g., Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21) because that, too, represents Christ's physical presence. *Parousia* originates from two Greek words: *para* meaning "along" and *ousia* which is a form of "to be"; therefore, we can think of *parousia* meaning "to be alongside of" [Walvoord & Hitchcock, 2012].

Parousia is used 4 times in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24, and it is used 24 times throughout the Bible: in Matthew 24:3,27,37,39; Philippians 1:26; 2:12; 1 Corinthians 15:23; 16:17; 2 Corinthians 7:6,7; 10:10; 1 Thessalonians

2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:1,8,9; James 5:7,8; 2 Peter 1:16; 3:4,12; and 1 John 2:28. Online Bible tools such as the Blue Letter Bible will allow you to see, and translate, the Greek words. Note that in some of these cases, *parousia* describes the presence or arrival of someone other than Christ (e.g., Paul, Titus, Stephanas, etc.) In fact, *parousia* is even used to describe the presence of the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:9).

In summary, the Greek word *parousia* always means a physical presence, and it is used in three ways in Scripture:

- It can refer to the Second Coming: Christ's physical return to Earth.
- It can refer to our presence with Christ immediately following the Rapture because as soon as the Rapture takes place, we are in the physical presence of Christ.
- It can refer to anyone's physical presence.

Thus, when differentiating between the Rapture and the Second Coming, it is a strong assumption that the word *parousia* refers *exclusively* to the Second Coming. One way that you can test whether *parousia* refers to the Second Coming or to the Rapture is to see if the verse still makes sense if you substitute *parousia* with the words "Second Coming" or with the word "Rapture". Sometimes, "Second Coming" makes more sense; sometimes, "Rapture" makes more sense; and sometimes both might make sense. Thus, the *context* is important; but, it can be difficult to draw a conclusion.

Another Greek word used in numerous places in Scripture when describing an actual appearance of a person when coming or going is the verb *erchomai*. It appears 635 times in the Bible. According to Daniel B. Wallace's *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics*, it is a word in the *futuristic present tense*, which means that it is a future action, but imminence or certainty is associated with it [Woods, 2020e]. For example, just before lunch, when taking a phone call, someone might say, "I'm having lunch." More generally, and in a prophecy context, *erchomai* is being used so that every generation can understand that the given event could take place in the very near future, but it will certainly take place at some point. For example:

Revelation 22:7 "Look, I [Jesus] am coming [*erchomai*] soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll."

Matthew 24:30 "Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming [*erchomai*] on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory."

1 John 2:18 Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming [*erchomai*], even now many antichrists have come [*ginomai*]. This is how we know it is the last hour.

John 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back [*erchomai*] and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

Christ returns from the sky in a manner similar to how He ascended to Heaven:

Acts 1:9-11 After he said this, **he was taken up** before their very eyes, **and a cloud hid him** from their sight. They were looking intently up **into the sky** as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, **will come back** [*erchomai*] **in the same way** you have seen him go into heaven."

Remember, *parousia* is a noun, and it refers to an event (i.e., the physical presence of someone). Recall that a noun is a person, place, thing, concept/idea, or event related to an action (e.g., ascension, presence) [Zuck, 1991]. *Erchomai* is a verb, and it refers to the action of coming (i.e., movement from one place to another), and it has to do with imminence or certainty. Verbs have *tense* (past, present, or future), *voice* (active (e.g., "he sent me") or passive ("I was sent")), and *mood* (indicative ("he ran"), interrogative ("Did he run?"), imperative ("Run!"), or optative "I wish you would run") [Zuck, 1991].

Another word having to do with the appearance of Christ is the Greek verb *phaneroo* which means "to make manifest or visible" or "to show or reveal oneself" [Strong, 2016; Bauer, 1979]:

Colossians 3:4 When Christ, who is your life, appears [*phaneroo*], then you also will appear [*phaneroo*] with him in glory.

1 John 2:28 And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears [*phaneroo*] we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming [*parousia*].

A similar Greek word is the noun *apokalypsis* meaning "revelation" or "disclosure" such as what would occur at the *parousia* [Bauer, 1979]. For example:

2 Thessalonians 1:6-7 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed [*apokalypsis*] from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.

1 Peter 1:7 [NASB] so that the proof of your faith, [being] more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation [*apokalypsis*] of Jesus Christ;

1 Peter 1:13 [NASB] Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober [in spirit,] fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation [*apokalypsis*] of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 1:1 The revelation [*apokalypsis*] from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,

Interestingly, the Greek word *apokalypto* is also used to describe the appearance of the *Antichrist*, in 2 Thessalonians 2:3,6,8.

Another Greek word that is used to describe Christ's future appearance is the noun *epiphaneia* which means "appearance", "a visible manifestation of a hidden divinity", or "of Jesus' coming in judgment" [Bauer, 1979]. This word is used in 2 Thessalonians 2:8; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 1:10; 4:1,8; and Titus 2:13.

2 Thessalonians 2:8 [NASB] Then that lawless one will be revealed [*apokalypto*] whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance [*epiphaneia*] of His coming [*parousia*];

Titus 2:13 while we wait for the blessed hope -- the appearing [*epiphaneia*] of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,

... *epiphaneia* ...in the Pastoral Epistles it is practically equivalent to *parousia* as a name for his coming (1 Tim 6:14; 2 Tim 1:10; 4:1,8; Titus 2:13). This "appearance" phase of the *parousia* differs from the "gathering" phase (v. 1). It concludes and climaxes the tribulation instead of beginning it. [Thomas, 1978b, p. 326]

It is not clear why the Holy Spirit chose to use similar words in the above contexts. More research is required regarding the precision of these words. This is what makes the study of the words "Rapture", "Second Coming", "appearing", "revelation", etc. so interesting and difficult. Perhaps God chose all these Greek words so that we would actively explore, debate, and understand prophecy—not just the New Testament Scriptures that deal with eschatology, but many Old Testament Scriptures. The fact that we have computers and so many Bible Study tools today (e.g., [BLB, 2021; Strong, 2016; Bauer, 1979; Alsop, 1981]) allows us to get much deeper into the Scriptures than people have been able to do so in previous centuries.

Another important Scripture passage that is sometimes quoted as a rapture passage is 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; but, it does not state whether or not the Rapture is pretribulational. Rather, it simply highlights the fact that at some point in the future, Christ will return and believers who are alive at that time will receive translated (perfected and glorified) bodies at that time:

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep [die], but **we will all be changed** -- in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

Each of 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, and Matthew 24:31 speaks of a “trumpet” connected with the end times. Do any of these trumpets refer to one of the seven trumpet judgments in Revelation? No. Some scholars connect “the last trumpet” (having to do with the Rapture) with the last of the seven trumpet *judgments* in Revelation. Note, however, that: (a) the book of Revelation was not written until almost 40 years after Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, so Paul’s audience would not have been able to connect the “last trumpet” with Revelation; and (b) the last trumpet of the seven trumpets in Revelation occurs at approximately the start of the second half of the Tribulation. This is a long time before the Second Coming. This seems to rule out a posttribulation Rapture; however, in all fairness, some dispensationalists believe that the seventh trumpet judgment includes all 7 bowl judgments [Walvoord, 1990; Hitchcock, 2011c]. The Rapture appears to take place much earlier in Revelation (e.g., Revelation 4).

The last trumpet in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and 1 Corinthians 15:52 is associated with deliverance, grace, and mercy; whereas, the trumpets in Revelation have to do with judgments on an evil world [Walvoord & Hitchcock, 2012]. Andy Woods believes “the last trumpet” is the last trumpet of the Church age [Woods, 2020b].

Lastly, the trumpet in Matthew 24:31 seems to *follow* the Second Coming of Christ (Matthew 24:30). In particular, the elect of Matthew 24:31 are the living believers who are gathered together from the whole world upon Christ’s return [Walvoord & Hitchcock, 2012]. They are gathered on the earth, as opposed to in the air; thus, it is not the Rapture.

Matthew 24:30-31 "Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn **when they see the Son of Man coming** on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, **and they will gather his elect** from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

Robert Thomas compares 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 with Matthew 24:30-31:

Similarities between this passage in 1 Thessalonians and the gospel accounts include a trumpet (Matt 24:31), a resurrection (John 11:25,26), and a gathering of the elect (Matt 24:31) ... Yet dissimilarities between it and the canonical sayings of Christ far outweigh the resemblances ... Some of the differences between Matthew 24:30,31 and 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 are as follows: (1) In Matthew the Son of Man is coming on the clouds (but see Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27), in 1 Thessalonians ascending believers are in them. (2) In the former the angels gather, in the latter the Son does so personally. (3) In the former nothing is said about resurrection, while in the latter this is the main theme. (4) Matthew records nothing about the order of ascent, which is the principal lesson in Thessalonians. Distinctions between this and the Johannine passages are just as pronounced, if not more so. [Thomas, 1978a, pp. 276-277]

Arnold Fruchtenbaum thinks that the “last trump” (or “last trumpet”) fulfills the Feast of Trumpets:

The Corinthians would not have had any knowledge of seven trumpets. Yet it is evident from the fact that Paul used the definite article *the* last trump that he expected the Corinthians to know what he was talking about. The only knowledge they would have of trumpets are those spoken of in the Old Testament, especially those of the Feast of Trumpets. *The last trump* refers to the Feast of Trumpets and the Jewish practice of blowing trumpets at this feast each year. During the ceremony there are a series of short trumpet sounds concluding with one long trumpet blast which is called the *tekiah gedolah*, the great trumpet blast. This is what Paul means by *the last trump*. As such, it says nothing concerning the time of the Rapture; only that the Rapture, whenever it comes, will fulfill the Feast of Trumpets. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 147]

There is no explicit reference in Scripture about the timing of the Rapture relative to other prophetic events; but, there are many Scriptures, if taken in context, that provide strong circumstantial evidence of a rapture event before Christ’s Second Coming at Armageddon. Let us explore the verses that suggest a pretribulational rapture.

First, let us look more closely at John 14:2-3:

John 14:2-3 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come back and take you to be with me** that you also may be where I am.

This passage does make one key point: this coming for the believers was for the purpose of taking them to where He was then going. Since Jesus was then going to Heaven, this is a coming to take the saints to Heaven and not to the Earth. This is important because in Posttribulationism the saints meet the Lord in the air and [immediately] return with Him to the earth. But this is not the promise here. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 143]

The word “house” in the NIV is equivalent to the word “mansion” in the KJV. It refers to a temporary dwelling place, and has a spatial location. (Compare this to the argument that John 14:2-3 refers to receiving the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not have a spatial location, and the Holy Spirit came *to* the believers at Pentecost, rather than the other way around.) Furthermore, John 14:1 states that Christians are to be comforted with this message. Note, however, that the “rooms” or “mansions” are still future: upon death, believers do not immediately go to these residences; rather, we get these following the Rapture. Also, note that the New Jerusalem (which currently exists, and will be our future home) will descend to the earth following the Millennium, after the earth has been purged of sin [Woods, 2021g]. During the Millennium, it is suspended in space.

John 14:2-3 tells us that Christ will take us away to be with Him, and this implies the Rapture. The Second Coming, however, takes place back on the earth. There is a difference between these two events. The Second Coming has many prerequisites or warning signs; the Rapture has none. Those who have been raptured come back with Christ. Thus, the Rapture is a physical necessity.

As mentioned previously, a strong argument in favor of a pretribulational rapture is the notion of *imminence*, that is, living in expectation of Christ's coming *at any time*. On the other hand, if we are looking forward to the Tribulation rather than the Rapture, then this ignores the doctrine of imminence. Why? If we know that Christ cannot come back until *after* most of the events of Revelation play out, then we might decide to "coast along", that is, wait until we see the events of Revelation unfolding before we take prophecy and evangelism seriously. But, this is the opposite of what Christ commands. Recall that Revelation 1:3 promises a special blessing to those who study the words of Revelation:

Revelation 1:3 Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

Even for those who reject the notion of an imminent rapture, the reality is that any of us could die before we take our next breath; so, it is important to make a decision for Jesus Christ as soon as possible, and not to wait to see how things turn out on Earth before committing to Christ.

Serious support for the pretribulational Rapture lies in the notion of imminence. Many signs precede the Second Coming, but none precede the Rapture. Thus, the Rapture could happen at any time, although not necessarily anytime soon. Preterists have a hard time arguing against imminence.

Here are some verses suggesting that Christ will remove believers from the earth *before* the day of the Lord, that is, before the start of the Tribulation. (The day of the Lord is assumed to contain two phases: a 7-year period of God's wrath, followed shortly thereafter by a 1,000-year period of God's blessings called the Millennium.)

1 Thessalonians 1:10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead -- **Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.**

1 Thessalonians 5:9-10 **For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath** but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-8 **Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him [Rapture],** we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to

have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord [Tribulation] has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, **for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness [Antichrist] is revealed**, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's [rebuilt] temple, proclaiming himself to be God. Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? And now you know what is holding him back, so that he [Antichrist] may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; **but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he [the Holy Spirit acting through the Church] is taken out of the way [raptured]. And then the lawless one will be revealed**, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming [i.e., at Christ's Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation].

This passage was written by the apostle Paul to the church at Thessalonica. (The modern-day city is called Thessaloniki, Greece, and it has over one million people in its metropolitan area, compared to about 100,000 people in Paul's day [Byron, 2014].) Most dispensationalists believe that it was written in response to false teachers instructing the Thessalonians that they were currently living in the Tribulation period. That new teaching (posttribulationism) upset and confused them, as it contradicted Paul's (apparently) earlier teaching that the believers would be raptured before the Tribulation arrived. Paul wrote in response to this situation, that is, to set the record straight that he did not write such a letter.

Here is the inferred ordering of events of 2 Thessalonians 2—and note that items 1 and 2 could appear in either order since the Rapture is an imminent event, and nothing *needs* to precede it:

1. The Rapture occurs. In particular, the “one who now holds it back” (i.e., the “restrainer” according to some translations) will be taken out of the way. The restrainer is the Holy Spirit *acting through the Church*. More about this is written in the section titled “Who, or what, is the restrainer ...?”
2. The “rebellion”, or a falling away (apostasy), occurs.
 - For the time being, let us assume that this means a falling away from the faith, that is, a falling away from general Biblical teaching. We will approach this constraint from another angle, momentarily.
3. The lawless one (Antichrist) is revealed.
4. The Tribulation, or day of the Lord, occurs.

If the Thessalonians believed that they were in the Tribulation, then that implies that they missed the Rapture. That seems to be the focus of 2 Thessalonians 2.

After all, they had been waiting for—and expecting—Christ’s return, as evidenced by Paul’s first and second letters to them.

The above numbered ordering also implies that there is a gap of time (of unknown duration) between the Rapture and the start of the Tribulation. It could be days, years, or even decades [Missler, 2006]. On the other hand, some scholars think that the Rapture and the start of the Tribulation could occur simultaneously (or on the same day):

The only way to hold that this meeting with Christ in the air is an imminent prospect is to see it as simultaneous with the beginning of the divine judgment against earth. Only if the rapture coincides with the beginning of the day of the Lord can both be imminent ...

Were either the rapture or the day of the Lord to precede the other, one or the other would cease to be an imminent prospect to which the “thief in the night” and related expressions (1:10; 4:15,17) are inappropriate. [Thomas, 1978a, p. 281]

All we know is there are *at least* 7 years between the Rapture and the Second Coming because that is how long the Tribulation lasts. Tim LaHaye says there could be 25 or more years between the Rapture and the Second Coming [LaHaye, 2009b]. Only God knows. Many souls could be saved between the time of the Rapture and the start of the Tribulation.

An event which seems to take place after the Rapture but before the start of the Tribulation is the establishment of a power base for the Antichrist, whereby he dominates other leaders from the revived Roman Empire, and is in a position to make and enforce an agreement/covenant with Israel, guaranteeing Israel’s safety.

Further insight into 2 Thessalonians 2:3 suggests that the apostasy referred to, may actually be an important, single event, as opposed to a lengthy downward slide into apostasy. The terms “apostasy”, “departure”, etc. in the various translations often neglect the important qualification: the definite article “the” (Greek: *hee apostasia*). Some authors believe that the Greek word *apostasia* has been mistranslated in some Bible versions, and that the best translation is “the departure”, implying a physical or spatial departure (i.e., Rapture) rather than a gradual slide into apostasy [Ice, 2014a; Woods, 2018]. Andy Woods poses the question: “Is it a departure from the Word—or a departure from the world?” A physical departure would be consistent with the sudden snatching away found in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, and with the theme of 1 & 2 Thessalonians about the return of Christ, which has highly suggestive language about the Rapture [Woods, 2018a]. It would also be consistent with distinguishing “the blessed hope” from “the glorious appearing”, two separate phases (Rapture and Second Coming) of Christ’s return:

Titus 2:13 [KJV] Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

Looking for the Antichrist and the horrors of the Tribulation only leads to fear, dread, and depression. Looking for Christ's return as promised motivates us to the blessed hope and anticipation of a great future that makes believers want to share Christ with others, giving them a missionary vision and greater desire to serve the Lord. [LaHaye, 2011b, p. 173]

More about "the departure" possibly being "the Rapture" will be discussed in the section/question further below: "Is 2 Thessalonians 2 talking about Christians being worried that the day of the Lord (Tribulation) had already come?"

The following Scripture verse speaks of "the crown" and probably refers to the victorious Bema Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15) [Thomas, 1978a] which takes place after the Rapture, in Heaven, and well before the Second Coming of Christ:

1 Thessalonians 2:19 For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you?

Note also that Christ's Second Coming will include "all his holy ones" in the following Scripture. The term "holy ones" refers to "redeemed humanity" elsewhere in the New Testament [Thomas, 1978a]. In order for redeemed humanity to return with Christ at the Second Coming, *it is necessary that they be raptured previously, and already have resurrected bodies.*

1 Thessalonians 3:13 May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

There have been several raptures in the Bible [Hindson & Hitchcock, 2017, p. 62; Ice, 2009a], with more to come:

Who?	Scripture Reference
Enoch	Genesis 5:24
Elijah	2 Kings 2:11-12
Isaiah (possibly)	Isaiah 6
Philip (temporary)	Acts 8:39-40
Paul (temporary)	2 Corinthians 12:1-4
Living believers (future)	1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
John (possibly)	Revelation 4:1-2
Two witnesses (future)	Revelation 11:11-12
Jesus' ascension	Revelation 12:5

In more detail, Thomas Ice lists the people who have been raptured throughout history, and provides additional commentary, including some notes about the rapture of the two witnesses in Revelation 11 [Ice, 2009a]. I am quoting his work because of its thoroughness:

... while the rapture of the church is the first time that God will take a large group of people from earth to heaven without experiencing death, it will not have been the first time that God takes individuals to heaven in this way. Look at the following inventory of rapture events throughout biblical history as noted in the following list. ...

Enoch

As far as the biblical account records, Enoch became the first individual to be raptured and taken to be with the Lord. Genesis 5:24 records the remarkable event of Enoch's translation to heaven. "And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God *took* him" (Genesis 5:24). What does it mean that Enoch "was not, for God took Him?" It means that Enoch was translated, without dying, and went directly to be with the Lord. Enoch was raptured, to use the language of 1 Thessalonians 4:17 or he was "taken," to use the language of John 14:3. That Enoch was raptured or translated to heaven is clear when compared with the dismal refrain "and he died" that accompanies the legacy of the other patriarchs mentioned in Genesis 5.

Enoch's rapture is confirmed by the divinely inspired New Testament commentary found in Hebrews 11:5 which says, "By faith Enoch was *taken up* so that he should not see death; and he was not found because God *took* him *up*; for he obtained the witness that before his *being taken up* he was pleasing to God." The New Testament word "taken up" in Hebrews is the same one selected by those who translated the Old Testament into Greek. This word conveys the idea of being removed from one place to another. Thus, it is clear that both the Genesis passage and the thrice-repeated reference to Enoch in Hebrews teaches the idea of translation to heaven.

Elijah

... Like Enoch, Elijah was translated to heaven without dying. 2 Kings 2 records this interesting event with an emphasis upon the mode of Elijah's transportation to heaven. 2 Kings 2:1 says he was taken "by a whirlwind to heaven." In 2:11 the whirlwind is further described as "a chariot of fire and horses of fire." No doubt this was an appearance of the Shechinah glory of God since Hebrews 1:7 says, "and of the angels He says, 'Who makes His angels winds, and His ministers a flame of fire.'" God objectively marked Elijah as a genuine prophet by identifying him with the glory of God and his rapture to heaven.

We can see a pattern developing. Enoch was raptured before judgment while Noah remained and was preserved through the judgment. Elijah was raptured while Elisha remained behind. How does this relate to the rapture of the church?

Isaiah

Isaiah was called into the throne room of God (Isaiah 6). Since this was a physical transportation of Isaiah from earth to heaven and back to earth again, it most likely took place via a rapture. ...

Jesus Christ

Revelation 12:5 speaks in the form of a symbol that represents important aspects of the career of Christ. Within this picture, Christ is called the “male child” who it is said “was caught up to God and to His throne[?]” (Rev. 12:5). This picture looks back to the ascension of Christ that is described in Acts 1:8-11, where Christ ascends to heaven in a cloud. Thus, because Revelation 12:5 uses the word for rapture, this means that Christ’s Acts 1:11 ascension is view[ed] as a rapture, a trip from planet earth to heaven.

Philip

Philip, who was “snatched away” by the Spirit of the Lord after evangelizing the Ethiopian eunuch and “found himself at Azotus” (Acts 8:39-40), which is located in what we call today the Gaza Strip. Philip was not taken to heaven, but was physically transported from the Judean wilderness to the modern-day Gaza Strip area. This is the only example of a rapture in the Bible where the subject is not transported to heaven. Here he is taken from point A to point B upon earth.

Paul

Twice Paul mentions that he was “caught up [raptured] to the third heaven” and received “visions and revelations of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 12:1-4). Paul’s heavenly trip reminds us of Isaiah’s throne room commission (Isaiah 6:1-13). Perhaps a rapture was involved in this incident. Paul, via rapture, received a commission, message, and revelation that became the foundation for the unique purpose for the church during this age, “which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit” (Ephesians 3:5). Apparently, Paul’s heavenly visit was such a heady experience, the Lord gave him “a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me—to keep me from exalting myself![?]” (2 Corinthians 12:7).

Rapture of The Church

This is the most well known rapture in the Bible to the average Christian. 1 Thessalonians 4:17 says, “we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.” Of all the raptures in the Bible, this is the first time that our Lord will take a large group to heaven in a single instance, without first facing death. This is such a clear teaching in the Bible that even those Christians who do not emphasize the rapture as a distinct event, merge it into to the second coming in some way. Yet, this is the event that will take place before the seven-year tribulation.

Two Witnesses

Reminiscent of Elijah, the two witnesses during the tribulation are summoned “into heaven in the cloud” (Revelation 11:12). Certainly these special Divinely commissioned and protected messengers fulfill the role as ambassadors for our Lord to the Jewish nation during the tribulation. Along the same line, the “male child” is said to be “caught up [raptured] to God and His throne” in Revelation 12:5.

The Bible provides us with seven citations of the rapture of individuals throughout history. This provides a strong support that a group—the church—will be raptured in the future as 1 Thessalonians 4 teaches. Some opponents of the rapture seek to suggest that the worldwide disappearance of millions would be too odd to consider as a realistic possibility. Such is not the case if the Bible is the criterion for establishing possibilities. In fact, the Bible reveals a significant number of raptures or trips directly to heaven that provides assurance that God can and will take millions at one moment in time. Are you ready for the rapture?

Types

1 Corinthians 10:11, speaking of some Old Testament events says, “Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, ...” The word “example” is from the Greek word *tupos*, which means “form, figure, or pattern.” The English word “type” is developed from the Greek word and provides the basis for why Bible students coined the term “typology.” Typology refers to Old Testament patterns that illustrate doctrine—usually New Testament doctrine. It is wrong to teach a doctrine from a type. Types serve only to illustrate a doctrine that is taught clearly, or directly from the biblical text.

Old Testament raptures, while not teaching the New Testament truth of the rapture of the church, do provide us with Old Testament types, patterns, or illustrations of the rapture. Thus, Enoch and Elijah stand as types of the rapture of the church. I believe that the purpose for both Old Testament and New Testament raptures come into clearer focus when seen within the framework of the covenantal protocol of recalling one’s ambassador from a distant land.

Ambassadors for Christ

Paul describes New Testament believers as “ambassadors for Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:20). As I have noted earlier, an ambassador is one who represents a dignitary, often in a foreign land. Corresponding with Isaiah’s commission in the Old Testament, the church has been given its Great Commission through Christ’s apostles (Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:6-10). This commission includes the command to preach the gospel throughout the world until the end of the current age. Instead of just a local responsibility, as with Israel in the Old Testament, the New Testament church has a global responsibility as Christ’s ambassadors to entreat and beg humanity to “be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20). Paul ask[s] the Ephesians church to pray for him “that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (Ephesians 6:19-20). The primary

issue during the current church age between God and all mankind is the issue of belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ. When, in God's estimation, the world reaches the point of global rejection of Christ, then, as with Israel before her global deportation, God will recall His ambassador—the church—before the judgment of the tribulation. Since the church is described as heavenly citizens (Philippians 3:20), it makes sense that she is raptured before God's war commences against "those who dwell upon the earth" (Revelation 3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 12:12; 13:8,14; 14:6). This is one of many purposes for the New Testament doctrine of the pretribulation rapture of the church.

Conclusion

... I don't think that the concept of a rapture is such a strange event for those who have an understanding of biblical events. Regardless of what others may think, I am going to let the Bible inform me of what is possible and what the future holds. That's why I am constantly looking for our Lord's any-moment return. Maranatha!

Some Jewish traditions say that Enoch was born on—and later was translated (raptured) on—the Day of Pentecost (Sivan 6). The Day of Pentecost is also called the Feast of Weeks or *Shavuot*. Recall that the Christian Church was born on the Day of Pentecost. Might it be that Enoch is a foreshadowing or *type* of the Church? Recall that Enoch was removed before the Flood came. It's possible, although not required, that the Church might be raptured on this anniversary day.

David Reagan comments on the argument of "refining" Christians via the Tribulation:

Some may argue that the Church must be "purged" during the Tribulation to purify it. But to me, this idea is absurd. The blood of Jesus is sufficient to cleanse us of all our sins. That is an accomplished fact for those who have put their faith in Jesus (Eph. 5:26-27).

Furthermore, the concept of purging the Church during the Tribulation converts the whole period into a Protestant version of purgatory.

It also violates the wedding imagery that the Bible uses to describe the relationship between Christ and His Church. Jesus is not going to beat up His Bride for seven years and then marry her! [Reagan, 2009b]

Ron Rhodes writes:

Throughout Scripture, God protects His people before judgment falls (see 2 Peter 2:5-9). Enoch was transferred to heaven before the judgment of the flood. Noah and his family were in the ark before the judgment of the flood. Lot was taken out of Sodom before judgment was poured out on Sodom and Gomorrah. The firstborn among the Hebrews in Egypt were sheltered by the blood of the Paschal Lamb before judgment fell. The spies were safely out of Jericho and Rahab was secured before judgment fell on Jericho. So too

will the church be safely raptured before judgment falls in the tribulation period. [Rhodes, 2008, pp. 16-17]

The Rapture will hardly be a secret coming. Non-believers will see the results. Scripture says that the event will be “with a loud command ... with the trumpet call of God” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)—“at the last trumpet” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

What are some of the differences between the Rapture and the Second Coming? Here is a table that provides a summary of differences between the Rapture of the Church and the Second Coming of Christ—two different phases of end-time events [House & Price, 2003; Missler, 2006; Walvoord & Hitchcock, 2012]:

Rapture	Second Coming
Imminent (can occur at any moment)—1 Corinthians 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 4:16-18; 5:1-5,12; James 5:7-9	Follows a definite set of predicted signs (70 th week of Daniel, lasting 7 years)—Daniel 9:24-27, Matthew 24:4-29
Is a resurrection (translation) event—1 Corinthians 15:51-52	Is not a resurrection (translation) event
Christ comes <i>for</i> His saints, meaning the Church is removed (i.e., believers (translated saints) are taken away to Heaven) —John 14:2-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17	Christ comes <i>with</i> His saints, that is, the raptured saints return to Earth—1 Thessalonians 3:13; Jude 14. During the Second Coming, no one is taken to Heaven.
He comes in the air (not setting foot on Earth, yet) —1 Thessalonians 4:16-17	He comes to the earth—Zechariah 14:4
Believers are taken away very quickly—in the blink of an eye—departing from the earth—1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52.	Unbelievers are taken away; but, before then, the world will see Christ’s Second Coming—Matthew 24:27,37-41; Revelation 1:7. Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet are also taken away—Revelation 19:20; 20:1-3.
Involves believers only—John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	Involves the whole world, including Israel—Matthew 24:1-25:46
Unbelievers remain on Earth; however, some (probably many millions) become believers later on, and will enter the Millennial Kingdom in their earthly bodies	Believers remain on Earth, to enter the Millennium after a period of judgment—Matthew 25:1-13
Christ gathers the elect (believers) —1 Thessalonians 4:16-17	Angels gather the elect—Matthew 24:31
Is not in the Old Testament (i.e., it is a “mystery” revealed post-Christ)—1 Corinthians 15:51-52	Predicted in the Old Testament—in various places
Is a time of blessing and rewards—1 Thessalonians 4:17-18	Is a time of judgment—2 Thessalonians 2:8-12
Occurs <i>before</i> the day of wrath (i.e., precedes the day of the Lord, aka the Tribulation)—1 Thessalonians 1:10;	Occurs <i>at the end of</i> the day of wrath, that is, at the end of the Tribulation.

4:18; 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2; Revelation 3:10-11	The Millennium begins shortly thereafter.
Is followed soon thereafter by the Tribulation—Revelation 6	The Millennium follows soon thereafter—Revelation 20
Precedes the Bema Judgment Seat of Christ (where rewards are to be given); occurs years before the Battle of Armageddon; and occurs years before the Millennial Kingdom	Occurs near the end of the Battle of Armageddon; precedes the judgment of the living Jews and Gentiles on Earth; and precedes the Millennial Kingdom—Matthew 25:31-46

Thomas Ice provides a table of Scripture passages that contrast the Rapture with the Second Coming, showing that they are different events [Ice, 2014c]:

Rapture		Second Coming	
John 14:1-3	2 Thessalonians 2:3	Daniel 2:44-45	2 Thessalonians 1:6-10
Romans 8:19	1 Timothy 6:14	Daniel 7:9-14	2 Thessalonians 2:8
1 Corinthians 1:7-8	2 Timothy 4:1	Daniel 12:1-3	1 Peter 4:12-13
1 Corinthians 15:51-53	2 Timothy 4:8	Zechariah 12:10	2 Peter 3:1-14
1 Corinthians 16:22	Titus 2:13	Zechariah 14:1-15	Jude 14-15
Philippians 3:20-21	Hebrews 9:28	Matthew 13:41	Revelation 1:7
Philippians 4:5	James 5:7-9	Matthew 24:15-31	Revelation 19:11-20:6
Colossians 3:4	1 Peter 1:7,13	Matthew 26:64	Revelation 22:7,12,20
1 Thessalonians 1:10	1 Peter 5:4	Mark 13:14-27	
1 Thessalonians 2:19	1 John 2:28-3:2	Mark 14:62	
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	Jude 21	Luke 21:25-28	
1 Thessalonians 5:9	Revelation 2:25	Acts 1:9-11	
1 Thessalonians 5:23	Revelation 3:10	Acts 3:19-21	
2 Thessalonians 2:1		1 Thessalonians 3:13	

Who will participate in the Rapture? (a) All believers in Jesus Christ—young and old, dead or alive; and probably (b) all people before “the age of accountability” because they have are not able to make a decision for, or against, Jesus Christ. This latter category includes pre-born children, young children, and many handicapped individuals. Scripture implies that this category of individuals will go to Heaven; however, it is not clear whether they will actually be taken to Heaven at the time of the Rapture. For example, consider children in a non-Christian family. Those children will presumably be able to make a decision for or against Jesus Christ in the years following the Rapture, but prior to Christ’s physical return.

Most dispensationalists believe that *all* believers in Christ will be taken up in the Rapture, and not just those who are waiting for Christ’s return. However, some authors believe in a *partial* rapture, where only those who are waiting and watching for the Lord’s return are raptured. 1 Corinthians 15:51 argues against a partial rapture because it says: “We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed ...” Note the double usage of the words “we” and “all” [Hindson & Hitchcock, 2017].

Waiting or watching? Interestingly, a common theme among Rapture verses is the notion of “waiting”. Compare this to “watching” or “looking” for the signs of Christ’s Second Coming [Ice, 2021g].

Thomas Ice believes that the Rapture is not found in the Old Testament; whereas the Second Coming is found in both the Old Testament and the New Testament [Ice & Dodds, 2021a]. He adds that no judgment language is used in any of the Rapture passages; but, there is judgment language (e.g., blood and guts) in the Second Coming passages.

For completeness, we mention that some futurists (e.g., [Stott, 1991]) believe that all three chapters of 2 Thessalonians refer to the Second Coming of Christ, and that the Rapture takes place simultaneously with the Second Coming. Specifically, 1 Thessalonians 4:14-15 refer to the dead believers in Jesus Christ who ascend in their resurrected bodies to accompany Christ at the Second Coming. Then, during their descent to Earth, both they and Christ meet the living believers who will be raptured at that time to meet them in the air.

Unlike what some preterists say, the words “meet” and *parousia* do not mean to go out of a city (or wherever you are living) to greet an important person or dignitary, and then turn around and lead that person back into the city. It simply means to physically get together with someone, in the same way that we would meet someone in person today. Paul does not state what happens after we “meet” Christ [Byron, 2014]. For example, do we go with Him to Heaven? Do we return to the earth with Him? Are we suspended in the air, possibly to inhabit the New Jerusalem? Pretribulationists believe that we are taken to Heaven, as per John 14:2-3.

John Stott refers to the events of 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18 as taking place in 4 phases, in the following sequence [Stott, 1991]:

1. *Return* – Christ descends personally in the air. This event is called, in Greek, the *parousia*.
2. *Resurrection* – The dead in Christ rise, and meet Christ in the air.
3. *Rapture* – The living believers are snatched up to join Christ and the resurrected believers, in the air.
4. *Reunion* – Thus, the living believers are reunited with their loved ones.

Next, the 3 chapters of 2 Thessalonians describe these topics:

1. Revelation – of Christ
2. Rebellion – of Antichrist
3. Responsibility – of Christians

A weakness in Stott’s argument is that the *parousia* mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:1 is the combined Rapture and Second Coming, which he views as simultaneous or near-simultaneous events that occur after the Tribulation. Dispensationalists separate these two events by at least 7 years.

	<p>Stott assumes that the church will be on earth at the time of Christ’s Second Coming.</p> <p>Secondly, Scott closely associates the <i>day of the Lord</i> with the <i>parousia</i> rather than with the start of the Tribulation, perhaps assuming that the day of the Lord is specifically the fierce wrath of God which takes place at Christ’s Second Coming (at Armageddon). All dispensationalists assume that the day of the Lord includes <i>at least</i> the Tribulation, but as described elsewhere in this book, many dispensationalists also include the Millennium because the day of the Lord is described in Scripture as having both a judgment part and a blessing part. Some dispensationalists would even include, in the day of the Lord, this entire spectrum of events: Rapture + gap to the start of the Tribulation + 7-year Tribulation + gap to the start of the Millennium + 1,000-year Millennium + possible gap to the start of the new heavens and new earth + the new heavens and new earth.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>There are two main viewpoints about the Rapture from a preterist perspective. Full preterists say that Christ has already come, albeit <i>spiritually</i>; that there is no future Rapture; and that we currently live in the new heavens and earth. Partial preterists say that Christ came in judgment in 70 AD; that He will come <i>physically</i> in judgment at the end of time; and that His Second Coming affects everyone simultaneously—saved and unsaved.</p> <p>The notion that millions of people will suddenly disappear, while the rest of Earth’s inhabitants are left behind, is nonsense, say preterists and many non-dispensationalists. The notion of a pretribulational rapture is a fairly new development in the two hundred years—something that the early church did not share. Authors such as Hal Lindsey and Tim LaHaye have been instrumental in advancing this notion.</p> <p>Hank Hanegraaff argues that there are no clear Scripture passages that indicate a pretribulational rapture. Even Darby, in the 1800s, decided that there are an earthly people (the Jews) and a heavenly people (the Christians). He indicated that the Scriptures should be contextualized according to those Scriptures that apply to the Jews, and those that apply to the Church. Prior to the 19th century, almost all believers believed that the Rapture and resurrection were simultaneous events.</p> <p>Thomas Ice writes, “No single Bible verse says precisely when the Rapture will take place in relation to the Tribulation or the Second Coming in a way that would settle the issue to everyone’s satisfaction.” Ice goes on to argue that the teaching in Scripture on the pretribulational rapture is like that of the Incarnation or the Trinity, which are “the product of harmonizing the many passages that relate to these matters.” While he thinks the Scriptures teach “a clear position” on the pretribulation rapture, he acknowledges that this doctrine depends on “four affirmations,” none of which is uncontroversial. Says Ice, “Four affirmations provided a biblical framework for the Pretribulational Rapture: They are (1) consistent literal interpretation, (2) Premillennialism, (3) futurism, and (4) a distinction between Israel and the</p>

church. These are not mere suppositions, but rather are important biblical doctrines upon which the doctrine of the Rapture is built” (Thomas Ice, “Why I Believe the Bible Teaches the Rapture Before Tribulation,” <http://www.pre-trib.org/pdf/Ice-WhyIBelieveTheBibleTe.pdf> [accessed December 30, 2006], emphasis in original). Moreover, Gary DeMar elegantly refutes likening the pretrib rapture to the doctrines of the Incarnation and Trinity: “The incarnate nature of Christ can be proved by citing just two verses: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth’ (John 1:1,14). The Trinity is equally easy to prove: the Father is God (1 Cor. 8:6); Jesus is God (John 1:1); the Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4); and there is only one God (1 Tim. 2:5). Unlike the pretrib Rapture, these two doctrines have been part of church history for centuries” (DeMar, *End Times Fiction*, 219n4). [quoted in Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 246-247]

Hank Hanegraaff argues that the Scriptures only reveal one chosen people, not two. It includes *both* Jews and Gentiles—whoever puts their faith in Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:9-10 But you [Christians] are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

As for the Rapture, we will be left on this earth in a new body; we won’t go off to Heaven and then come back to earth. We’ll be on this earth, forever, with a resurrected, perfected body. No one’s denying that Jesus is going to return again. It’s just that there is no secret rapture beforehand. The early church concurs.

In the following passage, who are “all his holy ones”?

1 Thessalonians 3:13 May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

Stan Newton thinks that this refers to the 70 AD event when Jesus came in judgment bringing those believers who had already passed away, and were in Heaven [Newton, 2012]. They accompanied Christ at this judgment event.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 is an often misused passage. It simply says we’ll meet Christ *in the air*; but, it doesn’t say this will be followed by all kinds of events, like a 7-year tribulation, the reign of the Antichrist, etc.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the

dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.

Most partial preterists agree that this particular passage is about the Second Coming of Christ (still future) [Newton, 2012]. Except for 1 Thessalonians 4, the rest of the chapters in both 1 & 2 Thessalonians refer to Christ's coming in judgment in 70 AD.

When will we meet Him in the air? It will be upon Christ's return to Earth, and this will be His first return since His ascension around 30 AD. There will not be a two-phase future return. This single-phase return is a picture from Old Testament times about people who leave their village to meet an incoming king out in the country, and then lead him into their village.

Furthermore, the event is hardly a secret or quiet event. Scripture says that there will be "a loud command", "the voice of the archangel", and "the trumpet call of God".

Instead, the event is a simultaneous rapture/resurrection event. It focuses on resurrection, not on "the Rapture". First, the Lord returns; then, the dead rise (i.e., they are given resurrected bodies); and then, we who are alive will also be changed, that is, given resurrected/perfected bodies.

Pretribulational futurists Michael Brown and Craig Keener write:

He [Paul] speaks of believers being gathered to Jesus with the sound of a trumpet when Jesus comes in the clouds (see 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). In 1 Thessalonians 4:15 he uses the term *parousia* for this coming just as it is used in Matthew 24. That is, Paul seems to interpret this explicitly post-Tribulational gathering as the "Rapture" of believers.

... Paul elsewhere connects our bodily resurrection with the "last trumpet" (1 Corinthians 15:52). Yet if Paul knows that Jesus spoke of an end-time gathering at a trumpet after the Tribulation (as appears in Matthew 24:31), why would he refer to an *earlier* end-time trumpet gathering as the *last* one? [Brown & Keener, 2019, p. 145]

Furthermore, the passage about the "lawless one" in 2 Thessalonians 2 (i.e., "the day of the Lord" judgment in 70 AD) is not related to the 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 resurrection passage; the latter is in the future.

It is dangerous for dispensationalists to say that there is a pretribulational rapture because it gives false hope to people who miss the Rapture. For example, current unbelievers might be thinking, "Well, *if* I see these things happening like you describe, *then* I'll believe in Jesus; but, I have at least 7 more years to do so." Gary DeMar says that futurists are less likely to evangelize or work through their church than preterists would, because some

futurists will simply choose to sit back and let things unfold as they may since they think that Jesus is coming back soon [Hunt & DeMar, 1998]. DeMar says there is no rapture *of any kind*—be it pretribulational, midtribulational, or even posttribulational; so, even its timing is irrelevant. Furthermore, there is no Millennium; we are living in this broad range of time, when the church will advance the case for Christ. In Scripture, the number 1,000 is meant to convey a large number of years, rather than being a definite 1,000 years—similar to the fact that the Lord “owns the cattle on a thousand hills”.

Hank Hanegraaff writes:

Nowhere does the text say that when Christ comes down from heaven ‘with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God’ (1 Thessalonians 4:16) that Christ will hover with us in midair, suddenly change directions, and escort us to mansions in heaven while all hell breaks out on earth. Nor would the Thessalonians have understood Paul this way. As Dr. N.T. Wright has aptly noted, Paul conjures up images of an emperor visiting a colony or province. The citizens go out to meet him in open country and then escort him into the city. Paul’s image of the people ‘meeting the Lord in the air’ should be read with the assumption that the people will immediately turn around and lead the Lord back to the newly remade world.’ [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 58]

Conversely, as our Lord declares, ‘a time is coming when *all* who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned’ (John 5:28-29; cf. Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 12:35-48). ... The plain and literal sense of our Lord’s words suggests a moment in the future when both the righteous and the unrighteous will be resurrected and judged together. The notion that believers will be raptured during a secret coming of our Lord 1007 years prior to the resurrection of unbelievers is thus an imposition on the text.

John 14:2-3 talks about the Father’s House, but it is wrong to think that this is a physical place. Later, in verse 23, it says that “we” (Jesus and the Father) will make “my home” with each believer. The “House of God” mentioned in the Old and New Testaments never speaks of a heavenly location. In the Old Testament, it refers to the *Temple*; in the New Testament, it refers to the *Church*, which is the Body of Christ. In all cases, that home is on the earth.

The greater reality to which a type points and in which it finds its fulfillment is referred to as an antitype (from the Greek word *antitypos*). The writer of Hebrews specifically employs the word antitype to refer to the greatness of the heavenly sanctuary of which the Holy Land, the Holy City, and the holy temple are merely types or shadows: ‘Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one [antitype]; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence’ (Hebrews 9:23-24). The antitype of the land is found in the Lord, the antitype of Jerusalem is found in Jesus, and the antitype of the majestic temple is found in the Master Teacher.

... In his letter to the Romans, Paul refers to Adam as a 'pattern' (literally, type) of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:14). Similarly, the writer of Hebrews explains that the earthly temple is merely 'a copy and shadow of what is in heaven' (8:5), and 'the law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves' (10:1). Paul, likewise, taught the believers at Colossae that the dietary laws, religious festivals, and Sabbath of the old covenant were 'a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ' (Colossians 2:17).

The interpretive principle of typology is equally pervasive in the Gospels. Jesus's successful resistance of temptation in the desert after forty days of fasting is a direct typological contrast with the disobedience of the Israelites that resulted in their forty years of wilderness wanderings (see Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13). In remaining faithful to his Father, Jesus did what Israel was unable to do. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 170-171]

Hanegraaff adds:

It is not too much to say that the biblical principle of typology is anathema for Christian Zionists such as Tim LaHaye. In his view, to depart from a strictly literal interpretation leads the student of the Bible 'to all forms of confusion and sometimes heresy.' The reality is that the debate does not revolve around whether one reads the Bible literally or metaphorically but whether old covenant shadows find their final consummation in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

A classic case in point involves the words of Jesus, 'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days' (John 2:19). The Jews believed Jesus to be speaking of Herod's temple. Thus, with sarcasm dripping from their voices, they respond, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?' (v. 20). However, says John, the temple Jesus had spoken of '*was his body*' (v. 21). [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 174]

The conclusion of the matter is this: All of the types and shadows of the old covenant, including the holy land of Israel, the holy city Jerusalem, and the holy temple of God, have been fulfilled in the Holy Christ. It is Paradise—a new heaven and a new earth—not Palestine for which our hearts yearn. It is 'the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband' (Revelation 21:2) upon which we fix our gaze. And it is the Master Teacher, not a majestic temple, that forever satisfies our deepest longings. While John saw the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God ...

Revelation 21:22-27 I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

	<p>[Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 224-225]</p> <p>Did the Jews in Old Testament times—or even during the time of Christ—expect <i>two</i> comings of the Messiah? Most didn't, but the Scriptures speak of both a conquering Messiah and a “suffering servant” type of Messiah. So, how can both of these be reconciled? The answer is: through two comings of Christ. With the New Testament, the case is made clear. The New Testament shines light on the shadows of the Old Testament.</p> <p>Is there any Biblical evidence of a pretribulational rapture? No.</p> <p>Will there be reinstated sacrifices in a rebuilt temple? No.</p> <p>Will animal sacrifices after Jesus Christ's death on the cross be efficacious for the forgiveness of sin? No; yet dispensationalists claim that this will happen during the Millennium, in a rebuilt temple, as per Ezekiel 40-48. Gary DeMar argues: “Such a millennial temple would require Jesus to officiate over the very animal sacrifices that He shed His blood to replace.” [DeMar, 1997, p. 85] Stan Newton writes: “... the very notion of returning to the Old Testament priesthood would be unthinkable to Christians of the first century.” [Newton, 2012, p. 208]</p> <p>The “Millennium”, however, comes from the erroneous, literal interpretation of a 1,000-year period mentioned in Revelation, but that should be taken <i>metaphorically</i>.</p> <p>Is there any Biblical evidence that people can be saved <i>after</i> the Second Coming of Christ? No; but the pretribulational rapture model with its 7-year Tribulation and 1,000-year Millennium says that people <i>can</i> be saved during that 1,007-year, or longer, timeframe.</p> <p>The timing of the Rapture is something that we can vigorously debate in Christian circles, but it is not something that we need to divide over, says Hanegraaff. It may be an important issue to discuss, but it is not an <i>essential</i> issue. Evangelical Christians can agree on the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and, of course, on the fact that Christ will come again, and that there will be a future resurrection and judgment.</p>
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<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>Who, or what, is the restrainer in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-8?</p> <p>2 Thessalonians 2:6-8 [NIV] And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will</p>
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	<p>overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.</p> <p>2 Thessalonians 2:6-7 [NASB] And you know what restrains [him] now, so that he will be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains [will do so] until He is removed.</p> <p>In Verse 6, the Greek words for “what is holding ... back” or “what restrains” use the <i>neuter</i> gender [Strong, 1996; NIV, 2002]. However, in Verse 7, the Greek words for “the one who now holds it back” or “He who now restrains” use the <i>masculine</i> gender. Thus, the Restrainer appears to be both a “what” and a “he”.</p>
<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>Most pretribulationists conclude that the restrainer is the Holy Spirit acting through the Church. He is restraining the Antichrist and the incredible evil that the Antichrist will unleash. In Verse 6, the word “what” implies an indefinite thing such as a force, power, or principle; however, in Verse 7, it is “he” [Walvoord & Hitchcock, 2012]. The Holy Spirit satisfies both “what” (e.g., the Greek word for “spirit” is <i>pneuma</i>—which is neuter) and “he” (e.g., John 14:16; 16:13—which is masculine). This agrees with the gender for the Greek words for “restrains”, “holding back”, or “holds back”.</p> <p>If the Holy Spirit permanently indwells all Christians, and if the Holy Spirit is the Restrainer holding back the Antichrist, then it would make sense that Christians need to be removed (i.e., Raptured) prior to the advent of the Antichrist [Woods, 2023b].</p> <p>Once the Church is raptured, this leaves some serious gaps in society, and the stabilizing influence that the Church has provided to society over the past 2,000 years will be gone, especially as evil is left unrestrained.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An analogy: Think of the Church as being the offensive linemen in football. They act as blockers to prevent the defense (opposition) from tackling the quarterback. If the offensive line is suddenly taken out of the way, there will be a huge onrush. • The Bible states that God restrained Satan in the days of Noah (see Genesis 6:3) and during the testing of Job (see Job 1:9-11; 2:1-8) [Walvoord & Hitchcock, 2012]. • The Christian Church acts as a stabilizing influence in society. Church members are by no means perfect; however, they act as “salt and light” in society to make a positive difference. The purpose of salt in ancient times was to delay decay. It can be said that Christians have that kind of societal influence. <p>1 Corinthians 3:16 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?</p>

1 Corinthians 6:19 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

The presence of believers in the world exerts a powerful influence on this evil world. Christians who stand for civic righteousness and law and order will no longer be present exerting their influence. The salt and light will be suddenly, completely extracted from the earth. For the time being at least, there will be no one except unsaved people to run government. The net result will be that evil will erupt and expand unchecked beyond anything known in history. It will be like the removal of a huge dam. Evil will run amok. [Walvoord & Hitchcock, 2012, p. 130]

I don't think we can halt global governance. It's coming one day according to Bible prophecy. But I do believe there are things that we can actually do to slow down the progress of evil, and in fact that's God's expectation of you. ...

And you may look at your life as if it has no significance as a Christian. And yet Paul is telling us here that your life has tremendous significance because your presence on the earth is inhibiting Satan from bringing forth his man of lawlessness. He can only be kept at bay while the church is here. And this actually becomes a very strong argument for the pretribulational Rapture ... [Woods, 2022c]

- Christians are filled with the Holy Spirit; but as we read in Scripture, the filling is a continual process—because we “leak”.

Removal of the restrainer does not mean that the Holy Spirit is absent from the earth. Mark Hitchcock explains:

The main objection that is always mentioned when anyone identifies the restrainer as the Holy Spirit is that the Holy Spirit is omnipresent and cannot be removed from the earth. I agree. The Holy Spirit is the third member of the triune Godhead. He is omnipresent and cannot be removed from the earth. Moreover, millions of people will be saved during the tribulation (Rev 7:9-14). The Holy Spirit must be present on earth during this time to convict sinners of their need for salvation and bring them to faith in Christ just as He does today.

In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit came to earth in a new capacity that He had not fulfilled before. He was present on earth before that time. [He] came to fulfill a new ministry. The spirit was present during creation according to Genesis 1:2, and was on earth all during Old Testament times to convict sinners and uniquely empower certain ones of God's people. But on the day of Pentecost He came to earth with a new ministry—to indwell each individual believer and the church as a whole. He “came” to earth in a new capacity or new ministry. And the presence of the Spirit in all believers individually and corporately is the means God uses in this age to restrain evil. That restraining influence will be here as long as the church is here. The return of the Holy Spirit to heaven will not be a complete withdrawal from earth, but a return ... [to the state before] the church age.

... We are the temple of the Holy Spirit both individually and corporately (1 Cor 3:17; 6:19; Eph 2:21-22). [Hitchcock, 2011c]

During Old Testament times, the Holy Spirit *came upon* people, temporarily. In the New Testament, since the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit *indwells* believers, permanently. However, at some point in the future, the Church will be removed, and the Holy Spirit would go back to ministering to new believers in a way similar to that prior to Pentecost. This would also make the 70th Week of Daniel consistent with the previous 69 weeks.

Some authors (e.g., [Bar, 2023]) argue that Paul might be referring to a *cessation* of the Holy Spirit's restraining ministry, and that Christians would still remain on Earth. However, the removal of the permanent indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in Christians (on Earth) can only be explained by the removal of believers to Heaven during the Rapture. In other words, Christians still have the permanent presence of the Holy Spirit, although we will be in another physical location: Heaven—and returning with Christ, 7 or more years later.

Thomas Ice writes:

Those who do not hold to pretribulationism often mischaracterize our view of the Holy Spirit in the tribulation. ... We do believe that the Holy Spirit will be present and active during the tribulation. We do believe that the Holy Spirit will not be carrying out His present unique ministry related to the Church because the completed body of Christ will be in heaven. Further, we are saying that the Holy Spirit will be present in His transdispensational ministry of bringing the elect of the tribulation to faith in Christ, even though they will not be part of the body of Christ—the Church. The Holy Spirit will aid Tribulation believers as they live holy lives unto the Lord. The Holy Spirit will also function to seal and protect the 144,000 Jewish witnesses for their great evangelistic ministry as noted in Revelation 7 and 14 and the two witnesses of Revelation 11. [Ice, 2015e]

Besides the Holy Spirit acting through the Church, there are a number of other possibilities about who the restrainer is [NIV, 2002; MacArthur, 2006; Walvoord & Hitchcock, 2012; Woods, 2020h]:

1. The Holy Spirit (but not specifically through the Church)
 - We know that people will be saved after the Rapture; therefore, the Holy Spirit must be present, in at least some form. So, the Holy Spirit would not be taken out entirely.
2. Human government including, pre-70 AD: the Roman state.
 - It is true that the Roman state promoted law and order [Walvoord & Hitchcock, 2012]. Would the removal of the *Pax Romana* (“Peace of Rome”) have resulted in the chaotic Tribulation period, followed by the Second Coming? It didn't. Furthermore, human government is not stronger than Satan.

- John Stott states that “Rome and the power of the state” is the most widely held view about the restrainer [Stott, 1991]. The demise or removal of Rome’s power would help to explain why Paul had to be cryptic about whom the restrainer was. It would also explain why Paul would use both the words “what” (state) and “he” (leader).
3. Nero
 - Similar to the argument about the Roman state, the Second Coming did not occur after Nero; so, that rules out this possibility.
 4. Paul and his preaching of the gospel, including his missionary work
 - Perhaps Paul’s missionary work is the “what”, and Paul is the “he”.
 - First of all, Paul didn’t have to be cryptic about it; he could have told us so, if this was really his explanation [Stott, 1991]. But, this idea fails because after Paul died, there was no Tribulation, and therefore no Second Coming. Furthermore, Paul entertained the possibility that the Rapture would occur in his lifetime—not that it *had to*. It would be odd if Paul were both expecting to see Christ return in his lifetime, and writing that he had to be removed before Christ’s return could happen [Stott, 1991].
 5. Satan
 - Nowhere in Scripture does Satan restrain evil. In fact, he actually promotes and encourages it [Walvoord & Hitchcock, 2012].
 6. Israel
 - Israel was sometimes overpowered by its enemies, and did not restrain evil during New Testament times.
 7. Michael, the archangel
 - Michael is the prince who watches over the nation Israel and supernaturally protects it (Daniel 12:1-2). Michael’s role will be particularly important during the Tribulation period. Satan will be cast out of the heavenly realm, and will come to Earth (Revelation 7:13).
 - In Jude 9, Michael deferred action to the Lord: “But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’”
 8. Another angel

With respect to the last possibility, Dennis James Woods puts forth a good argument that an angel (not necessarily Michael) may be doing the restraining [Woods, 2020h]. Thus, in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7, “he” would refer to an angel; and “what” would refer to the place of confinement, perhaps the Abyss (bottomless pit) which is kept sealed. The Abyss is from where the beast

ascends, in Revelation 11:7 and Revelation 17:8 It is also the place where Satan will be confined for 1,000 years after Jesus Christ's Second Coming (Revelation 20:1-3), and it is interesting to note that an *angel* confines Satan to there. This angel is possibly the same angel in Revelation 9:1 who has the key to the shaft of the Abyss [Mounce, 1998]; however, with respect to Revelation 9:1, a good argument can be made that it is Satan who is the supernatural being "that had fallen from the sky to the earth" [Jeremiah, 2016; Hamp, 2021].

Woods argues that nowhere in Scripture does the Holy Spirit specifically restrain demons. The Holy Spirit might direct angels to do this, in a manner similar to how a judge passes down a sentence, but the Holy Spirit does not carry out the implementation details (e.g., incarceration). John 16:7-15 says that the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, righteousness, and judgment (i.e., makes us aware of sin, judgment, and salvation). Instead, it makes more sense to view the role of the restrainer in an angel-vs-demon context. In other parts of Scripture, we see the restraining role of angels, and that they are quite capable of restraining Satan and his fallen angels [Woods, 2020h]. For example:

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

Revelation 12:7-9 Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down -- that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

Daniel 10:12-13,20-21; 11:1 Then he [probably an angel] continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. ... Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come; but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince. And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I took my stand to support and protect him.)

Although he believes in the Rapture of the Church, Dennis James Woods seriously questions the existence of a *pretribulational* rapture. He argues that if 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7 does not refer to the Holy Spirit as being the restrainer, then this puts a dent into the pretribulational rapture theory. Thus, many

	<p>Christians who expect a pretribulational rapture might be unprepared for the events prophesied throughout the book of Revelation. For example, if pretribulationists were wrong about the Holy Spirit restrainer (Church) being removed, then Christians would still be on the earth when the Antichrist comes to power. Thinking that the Rapture should have occurred at least 3½ years before that time, some Christians could fall away when facing persecution by the Antichrist, similar to what Jesus described in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24:9-10. Thus, we should be teaching Christians about the entire book of Revelation, and creating an awareness of things to come, to help Christians (and non-Christians) prepare for the challenging times ahead, just in case the Rapture <i>does not</i> take place before the Tribulation.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>Although the Thessalonians apparently knew who the restrainer of this man of lawlessness was, we can only speculate. Gary DeMar speculates that the restrainer may have been the Roman Empire, the Jewish government, the Roman Emperor, Satan, the gospel, the church, the Holy Spirit, or even the archangel Michael. For example, it could be argued that the Roman government restrained Jewish opposition and persecution against the early Christians—even though some of their leaders (e.g., Nero) were persecutors, as well. As another example, the Romans tried to control Jewish unrest and fury towards Christians, including via the priesthood; but, King Agrippa interceded (Acts 25-26). The Romans prevented the Jews from killing Paul, because as a Roman citizen, Paul had the right to protection and a trial. Nero ruled from 54-68 AD, and oppressed Christians after 10 years of his rule. Nevertheless, Paul most likely was not thinking of an Antichrist figure during a 7-year Tribulation in the far future. Gary DeMar states that no verse of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 contains any indication of a temple or a 7-year Tribulation [DeMar & Epperson, 2005]. He insists that the tribulation mentioned in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 took place <i>prior to 70 AD</i>.</p> <p>Who was the man of lawlessness? Many people have been put forward. Many preterists think it was Emperor Nero. It is also possible that the restrainer was John Levi, a leader of the Zealots who were trying to overthrow the Roman government in the first century [Eberle & Trench, 2021]. His efforts and rebellion were instrumental in causing Rome to come to Jerusalem and attack and destroy it in 70 AD. Levi and his followers took control of the Temple and tried to put a stop to it, but they defiled the Temple while doing so. Eberle and Trench also put forward the suggestion that the man of lawlessness is not an individual, but rather humanity as a whole.</p> <p>DeMar says that the Holy Spirit cannot be the Restrainer because if the Holy Spirit is removed, no one will be able to be saved [DeMar & Epperson, 2005].</p>

Topic/ Question	Was the pretribulational rapture theory invented during the early 1800s by John Nelson Darby? Is there any evidence for a two-phase coming of Christ? Did
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	<p>the early church believe in the premillennial, pretribulational return of Christ? What Rapture position do most churches take today?</p>
<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>Eschatology is the last part of systematic theology (i.e., the study of Christian doctrine/dogma) to be developed [Ice, 2011f]. This is due to the notion of progressive illumination of Scripture [Woods, 2021b].</p> <p>With respect to the history of some of the Christian doctrines: their approximate dates of articulation, formulation, formalization, and systematization are as follows [Woods, 2019b]. There are other topics within systematic theology, too, such as ecclesiology (the doctrine of the Church).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canon (which books form the Bible): 180 AD • Christology: 500 AD • Atonement: 1100 AD • Soteriology (the study of salvation): 1500 AD • Eschatology: 1800 AD <p>Consider:</p> <p>Daniel 12:4 But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge."</p> <p>Daniel 12:8-10 I [Daniel] heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, "My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?" He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end. Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.</p> <p>Contrast these two verses to the book of Revelation—the final book of the New Testament—which brings the canon of Scripture (i.e., the Bible) to a close:</p> <p>Revelation 22:10 Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near.</p> <p>These verses suggest that towards the time of the end, more events would become clear regarding prophecy. Recall that much of what is written in the book of Daniel was prophetic, including some very specific details about world empires (now historical), the first coming of Christ, and about end-times prophecy (e.g., the 70th week of Daniel, the Antichrist, military alliances). Daniel didn't understand some of these prophecies, nor was he expected to; but, he wrote about them under the direction of the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>Until the Middle Ages, the common people didn't own a Bible, nor were the people literate. After the invention of the printing press, and the teaching of literacy, study of the Bible and its doctrines took off.</p>

The true antithesis is between what the Reformers called literal (historical, grammatical) interpretation and allegorical interpretation, which was so common for centuries throughout the Middle Ages and which regarded portions of Scripture as having secret, mystical meanings. [Zuck, 1991, p. 148]

... it was not until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that a movement to restore the literal truth of prophecy began to take hold. The twentieth century has been especially significant in the progress of prophetic interpretation and is one in which many details of prophecy have been debated and clarified in a way that had never been possible before. [Walvoord, 1990, pp. 9-10]

Ecclesiology is also a late part of systematic theology, and the relationship or distinction between the Church and Israel is a big part of this [Ice, 2011f].

Is the Rapture too new to be true, as some argue? The key thing to ask is not how old the doctrine is, but what does the Bible say? Remember, at the start of the Reformation, when Martin Luther stressed that salvation is by grace through faith and not by works, the Catholic Church used the same argument, namely that that doctrine is too new to be true [Reagan, 2020]. But Luther argued that Jesus, Paul, and John, among others taught this doctrine. Similarly, the Rapture is taught through the notion of Christ's *imminent* return in various places. (See Chapter 4 on the Rapture for details, arguments, and Scripture references.) We get the word "Rapture" from the Vulgate Bible, the Latin translation used for 1,200 years before the King James Version.

Contrary to those who claim that the pretribulation rapture theory originated with John Nelson Darby around 1830, it should be noted that some of the early Christians believed in a two-phase Second Coming of Jesus Christ: first the Rapture, then a return following the Tribulation.

The *Shepherd of Hermas* (circa 110 AD) contains a pretribulation explanation of escaping the Tribulation:

2[23]:5 Go therefore, and declare to the elect of the Lord His mighty works, and tell them that this beast is a type of the great tribulation which is to come. If therefore ye prepare yourselves beforehand, and repent (and turn) unto the Lord with your whole heart, ye shall be able to escape it, if your heart be made pure and without blemish, and if for the remaining days of your life ye serve the Lord blamelessly.

[From: <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/shepherd-lightfoot.html>]

Writings about Christ's imminent return are also found in *The Didache* (60-100 AD) and *The Epistle of Barnabas* (130-131 AD) [Reagan, 2005].

Early church fathers expected a coming Antichrist. Irenaeus believed that the Roman Empire would collapse into 10 kingdoms (from the 10 horns of Daniel 7 and Revelation 17), of which the Antichrist would control three. Irenaeus equated the Antichrist mentioned in 1 and 2 John with Paul's "Man

of Sin” in 2 Thessalonians 2 as well as “the Beast” in Revelation and the “abomination of desolation” mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 24. Irenaeus believed that the Antichrist would come from the Israelite tribe of Dan but be called a Latin. Tertullian, too, believed that the Roman Empire was the restrainer of 2 Thessalonians 2 and that its fall would result in 10 kingdoms and make room for the rise of the Antichrist. Hippolytus agreed that the Antichrist would come from Dan and, as a Jew, would rebuild the temple in Jerusalem and set himself up as a god. [Watson, 2015, p. 299]

Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp, who in turn was a disciple of the Apostle John who wrote the book of Revelation. In Irenaeus’ book *Against Heresies*, Book 5, Chapter 29, Sections 1 and 2, we read the following pretribulational interpretation of the Rapture:

1. “... And therefore, when in the end the Church shall be suddenly caught up from this, it is said, There shall be tribulation such as has not been since the beginning, neither shall be. Matthew 24:21 ...”

2. And there is therefore in this beast, when he comes, a recapitulation made of all sorts of iniquity and of every deceit, in order that all apostate power, flowing into and being shut up in him, may be sent into the furnace of fire. Fittingly, therefore, shall his name possess the number six hundred and sixty-six, since he sums up in his own person all the commixture of wickedness which took place previous to the deluge, due to the apostasy of the angels. For Noah was six hundred years old when the deluge came upon the earth, sweeping away the rebellious world, for the sake of that most infamous generation which lived in the times of Noah. And [Antichrist] also sums up every error of devised idols since the flood, together with the slaying of the prophets and the cutting off of the just. For that image which was set up by Nebuchadnezzar had indeed a height of sixty cubits, while the breadth was six cubits; on account of which Ananias, Azarias, and Misaël, when they did not worship it, were cast into a furnace of fire, pointing out prophetically, by what happened to them, the wrath against the righteous which shall arise towards the [time of the] end. For that image, taken as a whole, was a prefiguring of this man's coming, decreeing that he should undoubtedly himself alone be worshipped by all men. Thus, then, the six hundred years of Noah, in whose time the deluge occurred because of the apostasy, and the number of the cubits of the image for which these just men were sent into the fiery furnace, do indicate the number of the name of that man in whom is concentrated the whole apostasy of six thousand years, and unrighteousness, and wickedness, and false prophecy, and deception; for which things' sake a cataclysm of fire shall also come [upon the earth].

[Irenaeus, c. 180 AD]

In his analysis of the writings of Irenaeus, Lee Brainard concludes:

... Irenaeus taught all three core tenets of dispensationalism—a distinction between the Gentile saints of the current age and the Jewish saints of the Tribulation, the tribulation saints are Jews practicing Judaism that is honored of God, and the church being raptured to heaven prior to the start of the tribulation.

This is explosive evidence on the debate concerning the rapture views of the early fathers. Irenaeus got his prophetic views from the aged men (like Polycarp) who personally knew and interacted with the apostles. This establishes the truth of the claim by dispensationalists that the pretrib rapture was the view of the earliest fathers ... [Brainard, 2023]

Hippolytus (170-236 AD) was a disciple of Irenaeus. Hippolytus wrote *Against All Heresies* and he wrote the first Christian commentary on any book of the Bible: the book of Daniel [Ice, 2014d]. In it, he explained the 70 weeks of years, the 7-year Tribulation, and the gap between the 69th and 70th weeks. In fact, several of the earliest ante-Nicene church fathers—Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Africanus—believed in a gap [Ice, 2021b].

The Apostolic Fathers and Ante-Nicene Fathers both expected an imminent and premillennial return of Christ:

The Apostolic Fathers were Christian theologians who lived in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, who are believed to have personally known some of the Twelve Apostles, or to have been significantly influenced by them. [Wikipedia]

The “Ante-Nicene Fathers” refers to Christian theologians before the first council of Nicaea, which took place in 325 AD. There were some well-established eschatological beliefs about the imminent and premillennial return of Christ, and these beliefs pre-date the allegorization of eschatology by Augustine [Woods, 2020c]. Andy Woods draws our attention to Christian historian Jesse Forest Silver:

... they [Apostolic Fathers] expected the return of the Lord in their day ... They believed the time was imminent because the Lord had taught them to live in a watchful attitude.

... by tradition they [Ante-Nicene fathers] knew the faith of the apostles. They taught the doctrine of the imminent and premillennial return of the Lord. [Silver, Jesse Forest. *The Lord's Return: Seen in History and in Scripture as Premillennial and Imminent*, NY: Revell, 1914, pp. 62-64]

Woods explains that Augustine was wrong about “countless doctrines”, including prophecy. Woods contrasts the Alexandrian school of thought (e.g., Origen, Augustine) with the Antioch school. The Alexandrian school developed around the beginning of the 3rd century AD in Alexandria, Egypt. They were amillennial: they did not believe in a literal millennium. Instead, they taught that they were in the “millennial” kingdom already, via the Church. They allegorized many other aspects of prophecy including a future return of Jews to Israel, leading up to Christ’s literal return. They even taught that the four rivers in early Genesis were not meant to be taken literally.

There are many Old Testament and New Testament scriptures that speak of a *literal* kingdom; therefore, amillennialism and postmillennialism should be

discarded [Walvoord, 1990]. Furthermore, 1 Peter 5:8b states, “Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” This hardly fits the idea that Satan is currently “chained” or bound (Revelation 20:1-3), while the Church currently experiences the “Millennium”.

John Walvoord writes that the Alexandrian school was basically heretical because they “attempted to make all the Bible one grand allegory” [Walvoord, 1990, p. 519]. In the 4th and 5th centuries AD, Saint Augustine tended to limit allegorization only to prophecy.

On the other hand, the Antioch school (e.g., apostle Paul, Justin Martyr) took a literal approach, including a future earthly reign of Christ, and this was dominant for the first two centuries.

A third century bishop in modern Slovenia was Victorinus of Petrovium. He wrote, “the heaven will be rolled away, that is, that the Church shall be taken away ... the good will be removed, seeking to avoid the persecution” [Watson, 2017, quoting *The Sacred Writings of Victorinus*].

Watson adds that Methodius, a late third century bishop in Asia Minor, connected Revelation 12 (i.e., the symbol of the woman fleeing to the desert) to the Rapture of the church, as per 1 Thessalonians 4.

Thomas Ice quotes a sermon written between the 4th and 6th century AD, and was first brought to our attention by Grant Jeffrey. Some people attribute the sermon to Ephraem the Syrian. It was titled “Sermon on the Last Times, the Antichrist, and the End of the World” [Ice, 2001a]. (It might be work taken from his teachings over the next two or three centuries (at the latest: 632 BC), in which case the author is referred to as Pseudo-Ephraem, since historians aren’t sure if Ephraem the Syrian actually wrote it [Jeffrey, 2011].) Part of the sermon is as follows:

Why therefore do we not reject every care of earthly actions and prepare ourselves for the meeting of the Lord Christ, so that he may draw us from the confusion, which overwhelms all the world? ... **For all the saints and elect of God are gathered, prior to the tribulation that is to come**, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins. [my emphasis]

Ephraem wrote that the “great tribulation” would last “1260 days” (i.e., 3½ years) and that “there will be a great tribulation, as there has not been since people began to be upon the earth” [Jeffrey, 2011]. He also taught that the Magog invasion of Ezekiel 38-39 would take place before the Tribulation.

Andrew of Caesarea, a seventh century bishop in Cappadocia, connected Revelation 11 (the two witnesses and those who are “zealous”) to the Rapture [Watson, 2017].

Watson summarizes: “The expectations of restored Israel in the last days, with Antichrist raging in the great tribulation, and a rapture rescuing the church from the persecution of Antichrist and judgments God will pour out upon the earth have been believed throughout Church History.” [Watson, 2017]

For the first few centuries after Christ, the Church was premillennial [Feinberg, 1980; House & Price, 2003]. By the 4th or 5th century AD, the amillennialism of Origen and Augustine was preached, and futurism died out. Despite interpreting a lot of Scripture literally, Augustine believed that much of prophecy, especially Revelation, was to be taken symbolically or metaphorically. Origen (circa 185-254 AD) and Augustine (354-430 AD) allegorized Scripture, and implied that Scripture had more than one meaning. It also meant that ordinary people couldn’t understand the Bible without having some “enlightened” person interpret it for them [Alcorn, 2004]. Augustine tried to explain away the Rapture, the Millennium, and the new earth. He claimed that the Rapture occurs upon the return of Christ, not before—and it’s without a material universe. His view was adopted by the Catholic Church in 431 AD.

Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century, and other theologians, deviated from the early Church’s and rabbis’ understanding of the new heavens and new earth being a physical place with plants, animals, and real people doing real things. Instead, they promoted an immaterial, allegorized, and “spiritual” Heaven—albeit with worship of God at its center [Alcorn, 2004].

Today, we realize that amillennialism is likely incorrect. In light of the widespread teachings of amillennialism during the Middle Ages, little teaching of premillennialism took place, and therefore, it is reasonable to assume that even less teaching took place about a pretribulational rapture. For example, suppression of premillennial writings came from both Protestant and Catholic circles, and “blasphemous” books were burned [Ice, 2011f]. Thus, we see an immediate bias against premillennialism, in spite of the strong evidence that supports it.

In the Middle Ages words, phrases, and sentences in the Bible had taken on multiple meanings, losing all sense of objectivity. How, then, the Reformers asked, could the Bible be a clear revelation from God?

They responded that God has conveyed His truth in written form, using words and sentences that are to be understood by man in their normal, plain sense. Therefore the better we understand the grammar of Scripture and the historical setting in which those sentences were first communicated, the better we can understand the truths God intended to convey to us.

The Reformers were seeking to return people to the way the Bible had been treated by the early church fathers, including Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, and Irenaeus ... [Zuck, 1991, p. 98]

Francis Gumerlock—a posttribulationist—cited Brother Dolcino (1304) and the Apostolic Brethren movement, who were looking forward to a time of escape during the Tribulation (which they believed was 3½ years long)—in Gumerlock’s paper “Before Darby: Expanding the Historical Boundaries of Pretribulationism”:

... And that the Antichrist was coming into this world within the bounds of the said three and a half years; and after he had come, then he [Dolcino] and his followers would be transferred into Paradise, in which are Enoch and Elijah. And in this way they will be preserved unharmed from the persecution of Antichrist. And that then Enoch and Elijah themselves would descend on the earth for the purpose of preaching [against] Antichrist. Then they would be killed by him or by his servants, and thus Antichrist would reign for a long time. But when the Antichrist is dead, Dolcino himself, who then would be the holy pope, and his perserved [sic] followers, will descend on the earth ... [quoted in [Ice, 2009b, p. 3]]

By the late 1500s or early 1600s, however, premillennial teaching returned. This was due to:

- The Reformation
- An increasing number of people had Scriptures and other books available to them, in a language that they could understand—thanks to Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press. The first book printed was the Bible.
- Better hermeneutics (Biblical interpretation) and historical exegesis (i.e., understanding the author’s intended meaning), including more of an emphasis on literal interpretation rather than allegorical interpretation:

As a result of the Protestant Reformation, long-neglected Scriptures were read and studied by ministers and laymen alike who rediscovered apostolic teachings that had been lost to the church for centuries since the time of the apostles. [Hindson & Hitchcock, 2017, p. 99]

- More Protestants came into contact with Jews, and learned Hebrew.

One’s hermeneutics determines one’s eschatology [Missler, 2006]. *Hermeneutics* is the art and science of Biblical interpretation. Those who take the Bible literally are more likely to be in the premillennial camp. Those who allegorize prophetic teachings are more likely to be in the amillennial or postmillennial camps. Within the premillennial camp, we have pre-trib, mid-trib, pre-wrath, and post-trib rapture scenarios. Most denominations today fall into the amillennial and posttribulational camps, whereas most fundamentalist Christian churches fall into the premillennial and pretribulational camps [Missler, 2006].

A good discussion and comparison of allegories, parables, types, antitypes, illustrations, similes, metaphors, etc. is found in [Zuck, 1991].

A 15th century manuscript (i.e., during the 1400s) professionally identified as such because of its style of English, and because it was cited in an English library catalog in 1697, is MS 18646: “The Treatyse of the Cummynge of Antecryst”:

The anonymous author presents an interpretation of the Antichrist which is consistent with the majority view from the second through fifteenth centuries first outlined by Irenaeus in the late second century and also found in the work of Hippolytus, Cyril of Jerusalem, Jerome, Pseudo-Ephraim, Pope Gregory the Great, Andrew of Caesarea, the Venerable Bede, and others. He cites all the same passages used by prophecy authors throughout church history (Daniel 7-12, Matthew 24, Paul’s letters to the Thessalonians and to Timothy, and the book of Revelation). The author lists four things which shall precede the coming of Antichrist: the collapse of “ye Empyre of Romany” into ten kingdoms, represented by ten horns of the beasts in both Daniel 7 and Revelation 13; the rising of a “little horn”, representing the Antichrist who will overpower three of the previous kingdoms and force into compliance the other seven ... [Watson, 2017]

A rapture that was separate from the Second Coming of Christ appeared in Joseph Medes’ writings in 1627. Other individuals who taught about a pretribulational rapture include Increase Mather (1701, 1709), Thomas Collier (1674), Peter Jurieu (1687), Philip Doddridge (1738), John Gill (1748), James Macknight (1763), and Thomas Scott (1792).

Thomas Ice has been researching historical Church positions regarding the Rapture, Tribulation, and Millennium—arguing that Darby’s explanation is not “new” but rather a truth held by many theologians. Furthermore, historian William Watson has performed extensive investigation into pre-Darby (i.e., pre-1830) documentation about dispensationalism and a pretribulational rapture [Watson, 2015; Watson, 2012]. As a preview, here are four examples from Dr. William Watson’s paper “Pretribulational Rapture in 17th & 18th Century England” [Watson, 2012], with their original English spelling:

Robert Maton (1607-1653) in *Israel’s Redemption* (1642) says, “why shall the elect onely be gathered together and the rest be left behind ... they shall be left, either to perish in that great destruction, which shall come upon all Nations that fight against the Jewes, whom our Saviour shall then redeem: Or to bee eyewitnesses of Gods wonders in all Countreys at that time.”

Nathaniel Homes (1599-1678) in *The Resurrection Revealed* (1653) says, “Everyone (or, all mankind) shall rise in their order, Christ the first fruits ... afterwards, they that are Christs at his coming ... notes a distance of time of above a thousand and a halfe of yeers ... the rapture of the Saints into the clouds, to be their present translation into heaven ... this our gathering together unto Christ at his coming (so the Apostle calls this rapture, 2 Thess.2.1.) we shall from henceforth never lose his presence, but always enjoy it. Partly on earth, during his reign of the thousand yeers, and partly

in heaven, when wee shall be translated thither. [Why] this rapture of the Saints on high to meet the Lord in the clouds, rather than to wait his coming to the earth. What if it bee, that they may be preserved during the conflagration of the earth, and the works thereof, 2 Pet.3.10. That as Noah, and his family were preserved from the deluge, by being left up above the waters in the Ark, so should the Saints at the conflagration bee lift up in the clouds unto their Ark, Christ, to be preserved there from the Deluge of fire, wherein the wicked shall be consumed?"

William Sherwin (1607-1687) in *Eirenikon: or a Peaceable consideration of Christ's Peaceful Kingdom on Earth* (1665) says, "... he will raise all his people that then sleep in the grave, to reign on earth with him, till the great multitude of their fellow-members be come in . This Doctrine many of the ancient Fathers acknowledged ... Justine Martyr ... Irenaeus ... Tertullian ... even Augustine sometime held it, though by the subtlety of Satan, forgeinglyes to asperse the Millenary opinion, and stirring men up to foist in offensive errours ... in these latter times hath again discovered it, after so many hundred years of its lying hid for the most part in the Church, to be a doctrine really embraced by his faithful people [who] will doubtless certainly know, that upon their rapture to meet Christ, they shall be perfected in glory evermore in heaven."

John Mason (1646-1694) in *The Midnight Cry* (1691) says ... "When 'the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled' Christ ... will reign here upon earth ... there will be a Tribulation. This goes before the Destruction of Babylon ... Then comes the Conversion of the Jews: the appearance of the Son of Man, the Tribes mourning ... 'then shall two be in the Field, the one shall be taken, and the other left.'" [Ice, 2013, pp. 4-5]

Morgan Edwards, the founder of Rhode Island College which become Brown University, wrote in 1742-1744 about a distinct rapture taking place 3½ years before the start of the Millennium. His writings include mention of the disappearance of earthly saints to a John 14:2-3 home for a 3½ year period [Ice, 2011f; Watson, 2015] Edwards thought the Tribulation period only lasted for 3½ years [Ice, 2009b]. His writings are pre-Darby (i.e., before 1830). Edwards separates the Rapture from the Second Coming, stating that millions and millions of saints will accompany Christ (i.e., Adam to current believers), and that they would arrive at the Mount of Olives. Thomas Ice comments that Edwards hand-wrote 140 sermons, and it's unlikely that Darby read Edwards. Other people, including Darby in his early years of writing, also believed in a 3½ year period; however, Darby later changed his position to 7 years.

Millennialism, and its idea of the coming of the Messiah to rescue Israel from oppression, was a common notion at the time of Jesus, as evidenced by the wealth of apocalyptic texts found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Proponents and detractors of Christianity acknowledge that early Christians expected an impending apocalypse.

... Early church fathers overwhelmingly believed in the return of Christ to set up an earthly millennium. One of the foremost church historians of the Victorian era, Philip Schaff, wrote of this early belief even though he rejected it:

The most striking point in the eschatology of the ante-Nicene age is the chiliasm, or millenarianism, that is the belief of a visible reign of Christ in glory on earth with the risen Saints for a thousand years, before the general resurrection and judgment. It was ... a widely current opinion of distinguished teachers, such as Barnabas, Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Methodius, and Lactantius ...

... Future eschatology came largely to be replaced by otherworldly eschatology and mysticism the closer one got to the Middle Ages. The grip of imminentist eschatology on believers gradually loosened after the first century A.D.

... It was not until the Roman Empire converted to Christianity in the fourth century that there was a move away from a belief in an impending apocalypse.

... The sixteenth-century Reformation encouraged a more literal approach to the Bible, which brought on a revival of apocalyptic fervour.

... [In 1798] Anglican Bishop ... Thomas Newton ... correctly recognized that premillennialism was the dominant view in the first centuries of Church history, amillennialism was dominant in the next thirteen centuries, but premillennialism was making a comeback, especially in Puritan circles. [Watson, 2015, pp. 3-9]

The early church was strongly premillennial for the first 300 years [Wilkinson & Ice, 2016; Walvoord 1990; Hitchcock, 2012]. Augustine promoted amillennialism after that, and the number 1,000 (for Millennium) was not taken literally; it was meant to refer to a long period of time. His teachings assumed that Satan was “bound” at the cross. Premillennialism was finally revived as part of Protestantism between the 16th and 17th centuries [Ice, 2010d]; but, it was part of historicism rather than futurism. In other words, many writers on prophecy at that time believed that the events in Revelation were already progressing throughout church history [Watson, 2015].

Thomas Ice reports that Martin Luther brought historicism into Protestantism [Wilkinson & Ice, 2016]. That dominated premillennialism for some time. Premillennialism was revived in the late 1500s and especially in the 1600s. In fact, the Puritans who came to America around 1630 were almost all premillennial. Unlike Luther’s Europe, they were very pro-Israel [Ice & Dodds, 2021b]. This pro-Israel attitude continued in America to modern times; however, a recent survey suggested that only 50% of 18-25 year olds in America are in favor of supporting Israel.

Postmillennialism developed in the 16th century, with the teaching of the Unitarian Daniel Whitby [Hitchcock, 2013]. The belief was that the world would get better and better as the world becomes fully evangelized. Then, after the world was evangelized, Christ would return.

The 1600s and the 1800s were great times of spiritual growth and Bible study in Britain [Ice, 2014d]. Historicism gave way to futurism in the mid-1800s, starting in Great Britain.

Even in the 1600s, people were looking for the imminent return of Christ in the form of the Rapture. To discard the myth that the pretribulational Rapture is just a new development from the 1800s, we present the following examples from *Dispensationalism before Darby* [Watson, 2015], focusing (mostly) on the late 1600s and the 1700s. In that book, William Watson extensively researched the eschatology of 17th and 18th century English clergy. In a subsequent research paper [Watson, 2017], he extended this work to include findings from prior centuries, some of which we have highlighted above. Unless cited otherwise, the following examples come from [Watson, 2015]:

- In 1316, a Vercelli notary recorded northern Italy’s Apostolic Brethren’s doctrine of a rapture in *The History of Brother Dolcino*:

Antichrist was coming into this world. ... [A]fter he had come [the Brethren] would be transferred into Paradise, in which are Enoch and Elijah. And in this same way they will be preserved unharmed from the persecution of Antichrist. And that then Enoch and Elijah themselves would descend on the earth for the purpose of preaching [as the two witnesses in Revelation 11 against] Antichrist. ... [W]hen the Antichrist is dead ... his preserved followers will descend on the earth, and will preach the right faith of Christ to all, and will convert those who will be living then to the true faith of Jesus Christ. [Watson, 2015, p. 8]

- In 1479, the Dutch Carthusian monk, Denys van Leeuwen, believed in a sudden, pretribulational or midtribulational rapture.
- In 1615, Thomas Draxe encouraged people to “make ourselves ready against that day” so that they would be able to escape those things that shall come upon the earth.
- In 1642, Robert Maton wrote of the Gog and Magog invasion of Judea, calling it the Battle of Armageddon, and referring to passages in the books of Ezekiel, Joel, Zechariah, and Revelation. Maton said that the resurrection of the saints would have to take place well before this battle. William Watson wrote that it was a common expectation, in the 1600s, that the saints would be taken out of the tribulation to be protected from the wrath of the Antichrist.
- In 1652, John Browne wrote that the 144,000 virgins of Revelation cannot be the Church (i.e., “the Lamb’s Wife”) because the Church is taken up (i.e., raptured) and the 144,000 are left on the earth. Thus, the Rapture precedes the rise of the Antichrist on Earth. Furthermore, Browne believed that there would be several years between the (midtribulational) Rapture and the end of Antichrist’s reign.

- In 1658, James Durham indicated that there would be a “particular” resurrection before the general resurrection. The former is when Christ comes for the Church.
- In 1660, John Birchensha wrote that Christ would come in the air to gather the Church. Then, the Jews would return to their land; a great tribulation will occur; and Armageddon would take place.
- In 1667, Thomas Vincent wrote:

The wicked that are alive on the earth at the second appearance of Christ, shall see the righteous that are dead, arise out of their graves with marvelous beauty and joy; and those which are alive wonderfully changed into the likeness and fashion of Christ; all of them suddenly caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; which site will be fearful and amazing to them, when they perceive themselves to be left behind. ... Suppose that the heavens should just now open and you should hear the sound of the last Trumpet, and Jesus Christ should descend ... Then all you that [are] believers ... would be immediately caught up in the clouds, to meet your Lord: but all you that are impenitent and unbelievers, would be left behind: and think what terror would fall upon you to see us caught away from you ...

Christ’s appearance would be sudden and in a time of relative peace; but, his next appearance would be “more predictable and in the heat of battle” [Watson, 2015, p. 160].

- Also, in 1667, Samuel Hutchinson warned people to be prayerfully alert and be “accounted worthy to escape those things that shall come upon the World” [Watson, 2015, p. 162]:

Dr. Holmes tells us, That Millenarism [i.e., the Millennium] is no Heresie nor Error against the least point of Scripture-Religion. Also, he saith, That the general Council at Nice called by Constantine the Great, were of this Opinion ... Justin Martyr himself was of this Opinion, and assures us that most of the good Christians in his time were for it ... Irenaeus was a Millenary ... Tertullian ... Cyprian ... Origen ... Methodius ... Paulinus and Vitellius ...

Though Jerome was against this opinion, yet he saith ... many of the Ecclesiastical men & Martyrs said the same things. This was the opinions of the whole Orthodox Church in the Age immediately following the death of St. John ...

- In 1676, Joshua Sprigg taught of a sudden and secret coming of Christ, followed by a coming later that would be obvious to all—after a time of tribulation. He believed that the Saints (Church) would be taken out before the Tribulation begins, and the others would be left behind. The non-believing Jews would return to Israel, the Magog invasion of Ezekiel 38-39 would take place, the Battle of Armageddon

would occur, and then seven years of clean-up would take place before the New Jerusalem descends to the earth ... at which point the Millennium would begin.

- Also in 1676, W.S. (possibly William Sherwin) wrote about the following events in the day of the Lord (Tribulation):

The Lord's Coming; The Saints Resurrection and Change; then caught up to meet the Lord in the Air; the Jews conversion; The Consternation of the Wicked; and the Man of Sin, and his Company's Destruction; Calling of his Saints to Judgment; Subjecting the Nations to the Jews, Reigning over the Nations, &c. [W.S. quoted in [Watson, 2015, p. 170]]

Watson explains:

Note the consistency between W.S.'s understanding of the events, and their order, and the way modern Dispensationalists understand them. W.S. confirmed the necessity of "a two-fold resurrection." But he insisted that they had to be separated by a longer period of time that contemporary dispensationalists would claim was the seven years of tribulation. The first resurrection would take place before "the time of great Tribulation that shall come upon the world," and the other would take place later, when the risen saints return to earth at the coming of Christ to destroy the Antichrist. [Watson, 2015, p 170]

- In 1693, Samuel Petto wrote of a rapture to Heaven occurring at the start of the Tribulation, and that this event is distinct from Christ's Second Coming when He would return to earth, bind Satan, and inaugurate the Millennium.
- In 1696, M. Marsin taught a pretribulational rapture, urging people to be prepared for the Lord's return, and to pay attention to the signs of the times. Marsin cited 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 and Luke 17:34-35 ("one will be taken and the other left").
- In 1700, in *The General Assembly: or, a Discourse of the Gathering of All Saints to Christ*, Oliver Heywood wrote:

[T]he Souls of the glorified Saints shall descend and be united to their own Bodies, and then ascend to meet the Lord in the Air, and the wicked are left behind on their dunghill the earth. [Watson, 2015, p. 232]

- In writings of 1701 and 1709, Increase Mather taught that a pretribulational rapture would start the end-time events—with a subsequent return (with Christ) to the earth in judgment. Mather cited John 14:2, Zechariah 14:5, 1 Corinthians 15:23, and 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Increase Mather published about 125 books, and his first book (8 editions) was on the restoration of the Jews to Israel [Ice, 2014d].

- Robert Fleming, circa 1702, taught a rapture in Revelation 16, preceding the Battle of Armageddon. Furthermore, he believed that a “Special Resurrection” would take place, even earlier, to reward Christian witnesses.
- In 1705, Joseph Jacob, cited 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, teaching a partial rapture—limited to witnesses and martyrs of Christ.
- In 1711, John Hildrop wrote how true believers would escape the coming tribulations.
- In 1715, Edward Waple taught a partial rapture before the Great Tribulation.
- In 1721, John Floyer:

... discussed the first resurrection or rapture, the return of the Jews to reestablish Israel, the tribulation, the invasion of Gog and Magog, and the coming of the Messiah. Floyer cited 2 Esdras 2:16: “And those that be dead, will I raise up again and bring them out of their Graves.” He concluded that “the last Return of the Jews will be after the Resurrection.” He also quoted 2 Esdras 2:23-4: “The first Place in the Resurrection is promised to them who did good works. ... Others shall weep and be sorrowful.” [Floyer quoted in [Watson, 2015, p. 248]]

... It seems Floyer’s order of events is first the Saints are raptured up to heaven for their sealing and confirming at the marriage supper of the Lamb, then the Jews return to the Promised Land and rebuilding their temple. Gog (Islam) then invades Israel, bringing great trouble to the Jews for three and a half years, until the ten tribes return and Christ with His army of angels and saints clothed in white robes ride in on white horses to destroy Gog, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet. Then they set up the millennium upon the earth centered in Jerusalem. [Watson, 2015, pp. 249-250]

- In 1726, John Webb wrote that the righteous would rise first, then the remaining Christians rise considerably later, and then a thousand years after that, the wicked would rise.
- In 1727, John Asgill told his readers to expect an imminent rapture. He cited John 14:2-3, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, and 1 Corinthians 15:23.
- In 1742, Samuel Johnson said that all believers would be resurrected before the start of the Millennium, but there could be an order of individuals in the Rapture before Christ’s Second Coming.
- In 1761, Grantham Killingworth also wrote about a pretribulational rapture, occurring at least 3½ years before the Millennium. In the

following quotation, note the references to the Bema Judgment Seat of Christ (judgment, acquittal, and (not mentioned) rewards for the saved, as per 1 Corinthians 3:11-15); the two witnesses of Revelation 11; the rebuilt Temple; and the Antichrist). However, note that the reference to the temple mentioned in Ezekiel is really the fourth (Millennial) temple, and not the third temple which Antichrist will desecrate:

... Millennium will not commence till some years after the first resurrection ... [and after this resurrection] our blessed Lord and his vast retinue, will withdraw for a season, from the region of the air, beyond sight of the mortal inhabitants of the earth, who will be left behind : I say he will withdraw for a season, in order to judge the then raised, and changed saints; to acquit and justify them ... And upon this withdrawing ... the two witnesses ... will again appear upon the earth in their mortal bodies ... one of these ... must be the prophet Elijah ... long before this time, the Tribe of Judah will be gathered together, from their various dispersions, returned into Palestine ... they will build therein a most magnificent temple, according to ... the prophet Ezekiel ... And in this temple of God, will the great Anti-Christ, or man of sin, the son of perdition sit, to shew himself, and be worshipped as God. [Killingworth quoted in [Watson, 2015, p. 258]]

- In 1770, Samuel Hardy wrote of a time of tribulation in the End Times, as prophesied by Jesus Christ and the prophet Daniel. The Rapture would result in the believers being taken away to a place of safety during that time. This would take place after the Jews returned to the land of Israel. The Jews were out of Israel at the time that Hardy wrote; but, he believed in the literal interpretation of Scripture: God would cause the Jews to return, some day—and that is exactly what happened.

John Nelson Darby *advanced* pretribulation futurism starting around 1827 through the Brethren movement. His understanding of the doctrine came through careful study of the Scriptures rather than through some special revelation or invention. Darby believed that the Christian church (circa 30 AD) interrupted the fulfillment of most of the Biblical prophecies—and that their eventual fulfillments would take place post-Rapture [Ice, 2010d].

Darby was a very strong Christian who spent a lot of time studying the Bible. He was a very talented, award-winning scholar. As an example of Darby's commitment and service to the Lord, Thomas Ice states that Darby translated the New Testament into 6 different languages, and the entire Bible into 3 different languages [Wilkinson & Ice, 2016]. He led 600-800 people per week to Christ as an Anglican minister, north of Dublin, Ireland. Ice adds that Darby was "one of the top 5 most voluminous writers in the history of the church".

Paul Wilkinson began his PhD thesis in 2003 on John Nelson Darby and the origins of Christian Zionism. Wilkinson, along with Ice, vouches for the work

of Darby. Together, Wilkinson and Ice created a very well-reasoned rebuttal to the work of Joe Schimmel [Schimmel, 2015], who greatly criticized the work of Darby—and dispensationalism and pretribulationism, in general.

It is claimed that some of the people who picked up on Darby’s doctrine around that time included Emanuel Lacunza, Edward Irving, and Margaret MacDonald [Missler, 2005]. Others claim that they even led Darby to formulate his pretribulationist views [Schimmel, 2015]. However, there is no evidence whatsoever that Darby got his views from any of them [Wilkinson and Ice, 2016]. For example, Schimmel claims that Lacunza placed a 45-day gap before the Second Coming—which led people to gradually extend it to 3½ years, and then to 7 years, which is how we eventually got a pretribulationist rapture 7 or more years before Christ’s Second Coming. However, Schimmel, a posttribulationist, misrepresented Lacunza’s information. Wilkinson points out that Lacunza was actually referring to a 45-day gap *after* Christ’s Second Coming, in accordance with Daniel 12:11-13 [Wilkinson & Ice, 2016]. Thomas Ice adds that Lacunza and Irving were *historicists* not *dispensationalists*. Lastly, Margaret MacDonald was more along the lines of being *posttribulationist* than pretribulationist. Among others, Schimmel and Walter Martin (the former “Bible Answer Man” before Hank Hanegraaff, and the author of the well-respected book *Kingdom of the Cults*) claimed that Darby learned of pretribulationism from an “utterance” of the 15-year-old Margaret MacDonald around 1830. That is a false statement. Furthermore, it is claimed that until that time, no one in the church had ever heard of this doctrine. Much of the documentation in this section shows why that statement is also false.

As a posttribulationist, some of Schimmel’s motivation for creating his documentary is to prepare Christians to be ready for the Tribulation because some of them might lose their faith if there is no *pretribulationist* rapture. But that is silly. Pretribulationists and dispensationalists have advanced the cause of Christ for centuries, giving great amounts of time and money to evangelize the lost, advance the faith, disciple believers, and help Christians and persecuted groups around the world—including providing millions of believers and even non-believers with financial support, food, medicine, clothing, shelter, etc. It goes without saying that Christians in many parts of the world have been persecuted for their faith, sometimes paying for their faith with their lives [Open Doors, 2022]. “What prepares people for persecution is them becoming mature Christians”, says Thomas Ice [Wilkinson & Ice, 2016].

So far, we have seen that there is a lot of historical evidence for belief in dispensationalism, even if the word was not coined until modern times. The concept has been there, throughout the Bible. Interestingly, the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Mormons were very anti-pretribulationist. They were into historicism in the 1800s.

In the first half of the 20th century, teachers of a pretribulational rapture included James H. Brookes, J.R. Graves, William Blackstone (*Jesus is Coming* (1878)), C.I. Scofield (*Scofield Reference Bible* (1909)), Arno Gaebelein, A.J. Gordon, James M. Gray, R.A. Torrey, Harry Ironside, and Lewis S. Chafer.

The apostle Paul's comments in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 argue for a rapture, but do not give timing information other than the fact that "the dead in Christ will rise first". Some may ask: if the early church was pretribulational, why is there little evidence of this, or a lack of awareness of this? Thomas Ice gives several reasons [Ice, 2011f]. First, although preterists may claim that documents about dispensationalism are "missing" from the early church records, there probably were not many documents of *any* kind. Remember, the Bible itself was "hidden" from most people until the 1500s. Only 1 in 2,500 people could even *read* back then. Furthermore, Hebrew and Greek were not readily studied. Preterists are also "missing" documentation. If the history of preterism were to be compiled, we would have a hard time finding people prior to the 1820s who were preterists.

Second, some post-apostolic writings, and even New Testament writings, indicate that the early church had some trouble even presenting the gospel accurately; therefore, it is not surprising that there wasn't a propagation of pretribulational eschatology. In other words, the early church got some things wrong; so, even if a document on prophecy does not endorse the pretribulational view, it does not necessarily mean that the document's position is correct.

Third, we are gradually discovering more early-church documents that imply both premillennialism and imminence (imminence was common until about 150 AD), which in turn help to support a pretribulational view (e.g., [Watson, 2015]). Watson states that the Dead Sea Scrolls also attest to premillennialism.

A third-century document called *The Apocalypse of Elijah* describes a rapture of believers whereby the believers are taken to heaven prior to the time of wrath that involves the Antichrist's reign of terror on the earth [Hindson & Hitchcock, 2017]. This document was found by someone who is both a preterist and a postmillennialist [Ice, 2023].

Thomas Ice argues that there are at least four criteria in early church writings that support a pretribulational argument, even if the writer did not explicitly state that he/she was pretribulational [Ice, 2011f]:

- Any mention that there is more than one phase to Christ's future coming (i.e., that there is any interval of time between two stages of His coming)
- Any mention of Christ removing the Church
- Any resurrection of removed persons prior to His Second Coming

- Any distinction between Israel and the Church

For example, the Pseudo-Ephraim document (based on work circa 300 AD) titled “On the Last Times, the Antichrist, and the End of the World” (or “Sermon on the End of the World”) likely was authored by followers of Ephraim who wrote under his name. It makes reference to two distinct comings of Christ and a period of time between those two comings [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007]. The author(s) assumed a 3½-year Tribulation, not a 7-year one; however, they believed that the Church would be removed from Earth prior to the Tribulation.

Thomas Ice quotes from the works of Ephraim of Syria (306-373 AD) [Ice, 2023]:

For the elect shall be gathered prior to the tribulation, so they shall not see the confusion and the great tribulation coming upon the unrighteous world. (*Sermon on Repentance and Judgment and the Separation of the Soul from the Body*, p. 239)

Watch always, praying continually, that you may be worthy to escape the tribulation and stand before God ... for if anyone has tears and compunction, let him pray the Lord that he might be delivered from the tribulation which is about to come upon the earth, that he might not see it at all, nor the beast himself, not even hear of its terrors. For there shall be famines, earthquakes, and diverse pestilences upon the earth. (*Sermon on the Advent of the Lord, and End of the Age, and the Coming of the Antichrist*, pp. 115-116)

Let us pray the Lord in great humility that He would take us out (remove us) from the coming fear, and count us worthy of that rapture (snatching away) when the righteous are raptured (snatched) in the clouds to the air to meet the King of Glory. (*The Destruction of Pride*, p. 94)

William Watson published a table of 24 documents from approximately 1320-1768 that used the word/concept of the Rapture, that is, the same notion of “Rapture” as used in Matthew 24 or 1 Thessalonians 4-5 [Watson, 2015, p. 177]. These included the words “Rapt”, “Rapture”, and “Left Behind”.

Incidentally, the term *Maranatha* (Aramaic: “our Lord come”) was a greeting used by the first-century church to indicate that the Lord could return at any moment (1 Corinthians 16:22). Thus, it demonstrated an eager expectation on the part of the early Christians.

Reformer John Calvin (1509-1564), though amillennial, believed that Paul taught an imminent return of Christ [Hindson & Hitchcock, 2017].

It is hard to say what the Catholic church’s official eschatological view is. Catholics have had different views over time. Late in the 1500s, before the Reformation, they took the historicist view—as did most other believers. Later, some Catholics were upset that Reformers were calling the Pope “the

Antichrist”, so they were quick to promote the futurist view of Revelation. The Catholic church, however, is *amillennial*—and it has always been so.

William Sherwin (1607-1687) believed that “the true church would be rescued out of the world from the future ‘destruction,’ as were Noah and Lot” [Hindson & Hitchcock, 2017, p. 91].

In 1590, Jesuit scholars Francisco Ribera and Robert Bellarmine claimed that the early church fathers were unanimous in stating that the Antichrist would be a real person who would appear in the end times. However, their motivation for saying this was probably because some scholars in the tenth century and for hundreds of years thereafter were referring to the Pope as the Antichrist. By the 1600s, the idea of the Pope as the Antichrist began to lessen. In the 1620s, for example, some thought the Antichrist could be the Ottoman Turks. In 1794, James Rutherford, thought that the Pope would be the Antichrist, and Muhammed the False Prophet [Watson, 2015]. Around this time, some thought that Louis XIV would be the Antichrist.

In an anonymous pamphlet published at the end of King James II’s reign in 1688, the author pled with his readers to prepare for “the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus” and not to be “as one of the Foolish Virgins, when the Bridegroom Cometh.” The author clearly was futuristic (not historic) premillennial ...

The author presented the futurist premillennial idea of 1260 days (3 and a half years, half the 7-year tribulation), not the historic premillennial idea of 1260 years, since Constantine. He showed a grasp of both views, even differentiating between the two. He mentioned and rejected the preterist view ... The Antichrist would be “a Single Person” yet future who would rule 1260 days, and not the entire papal system that dominated over the past 1260 years, as historic premillennialists claimed.

The False Prophet of Revelation 16 and 19 was also understood to be a single and future person, and the two witnesses were understood to be a single people, not entire movements ... The author thought it ridiculous to believe that people over the past 1260 years had been unable to buy or sell unless they had taken the Mark of the Beast, but he thought such a thing possible for only 1260 days in a time yet future. [Watson, 2015, p. 305]

We have very little information about the early church fathers, but most systematic theologians seem to agree that the early Church was premillennial in its eschatology, with some aspects possibly being pretribulational [House, 2010]. Premillennialism was the view held by Papias (60-130 AD) who studied under the apostle John [Hitchcock, 2012]. During 100-165 AD, Irenaeus, Apollinarius, Tertullian, Victorinus, Lactantius, and Justin Martyr also taught about a literal Millennium.

With respect to the current status of teaching on the pre-trib Rapture, Thomas Ice writes:

Although still widely popular among evangelicals and fundamentalists, dominance of pretribulationism began to wane first in some academic circles in the 1950s and '60s. ... Pretribulationism is still the most widely held view of the day, but it cannot be taken for granted in many evangelical, charismatic, and fundamentalist circles as it was a generation ago. The doctrine of the rapture ... has surfaced wherever premillennialism is taught, especially when adhering to literal interpretation, futurism, and Dispensationalism, and a distinction between Israel and the church.

History has shown that what gets taught in academia is what filters through to the next generation [Ice, 2011f].

The partial and midtribulational rapture positions were developed in the 1900s:

In America, the Puritans were horrified at the implications of preterism and its allegorical interpretations of Scripture. [Ice, 2003b, p. 51]

No doubt the father of American preterism is clearly the aforementioned Moses Stuart (1780-1852) of Andover Seminary, who 'introduced Preterism into the United States about 1842. [Ice, 2003b, p. 56]

It also appears that Reformed and Reconstructionist scholar Greg L. Bahnsen (1948-1995) is the source and inspiration for the rise and spread of partial preterism. In the late 1970s, Dr. Bahnsen taught at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. Four of his students during this time were David Chilton, James Jordan, Gary DeMar, and Kenneth Gentry. I know from personal conversations over the years with these men that Bahnsen influenced their thinking toward a postmillennial form of preterism. ... His view of Revelation was the more traditional form of partial preterism:

'Here then is the course of history according to the book of Revelation. (1) Jesus is with His Church and has established the kingdom. (2) The Jews who persecuted are going to be destroyed by God. (3) The Romans who persecuted are going to be destroyed by God. (4) Then the Word of God is going to conquer the nations. The Great Commission is going to be fulfilled. (5) At the very end of history, Jesus will come back in judgment and he will introduce the new heavens and the new earth, where every tear will be wiped from our eyes and everything will be perfect.' [Ice, 2003, p. 59]

Like Dr. Bahnsen, Dr. Gentry believes the Olivet Discourse applies to A.D. 70 only up to verse 36. However, Dr. Gentry differs from Dr. Bahnsen in that he believes almost the entire book of Revelation was fulfilled by A.D. 70: "I believe that the judgment chapters of Revelation (chs. 6-19) focus almost exclusively on the events associated with the first imperial persecution of Christianity (A.D. 64-68), the Roman Civil Wars (A.D. 68-69), and the destruction of the Temple and Israel (A.D. 67-70)." ... While DeMar holds to a preterist view of the book of Revelation, he has also focused on arguing for a first-century fulfillment of all of the Olivet Discourse (including Matthew 25). [Ice, 2003, p. 61]

It is interesting to note that renowned schools such as Moody Bible Institute, Philadelphia Bible College, Bible Institute of Los Angeles (BIOLA), and

Dallas Theological Seminary all taught and defended the pretribulational Rapture [Ice, 2006].

In the 1970s, Hal Lindsey's *New York Times* best-seller *The Late Great Planet Earth* caused worldwide interest in the pretribulational Rapture. Since then, much pretribulational literature, including the highly successful *Left Behind* series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins, has been published.

Unlike dispensationalist premillennialists, *historic premillennialists* such as Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, and Tertullian believed that the Church would go through a period of trial and persecution before Christ's return, and that the Church "will fail in her mission, lose influence, and become corrupted as worldwide evil increases toward the end of the Church Age" [Kenneth Gentry quoted in [Sproul, 1998, p. 199]]. Furthermore, the Rapture, resurrection, and judgment will occur upon Christ's return and will be done "in the twinkling of an eye", as per 1 Corinthians 15:51-52. Following this, Christ will fight at the Battle of Armageddon; bind Satan; and establish a worldwide, political kingdom for 1,000 years. At the end of the Millennium, Satan will be set free temporarily, and the final, but unsuccessful, rebellion will occur. This will mark the end of sin and evil, and the eternal order will begin.

The bottom line is that the early church fathers (including Justin Martyr) held to the premillennial view of a resurrection, followed by the Millennium, including a physically enlarged Jerusalem, as per the writings of Ezekiel and Isaiah [Woods, 2013a]. Furthermore, this was the opinion of Barnabas, Papias, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Methodius, and Lactantius.

Did Darby invent dispensationalism or recover a lost doctrine? Dispensationalism's opponents have tended to argue that it was Darby's own invention; allies have sought to show how it was anticipated from the earliest church fathers until Darby's own time. The answer lies somewhere in between. The division of the history of the world into six preordained one-thousand-year eras was common in early Judaism and early and medieval Christianity, as we have seen. In a sense, Darby was not proposing anything new. His innovation lay in the specific pattern of divine work and human response that he saw in each dispensation and how this influenced specific scriptural interpretations. Darby, we conclude, founded a theological movement, which innovates by building on something previous well-established. [Irwin & Perry, 2023]

More discussion on the early adherence to dispensationalism can be found in [Watson, 2015; Hitchcock & Ice, 2007].

So, did John Nelson Darby invent the pretribulational Rapture, circa 1830?

The idea that the pretrib rapture is a recent invention is a well-worn straw-man argument. It's incorrect, and pretrib opponents should stop using it. [Ice, 2011h]

<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>Preterists counter with some claims of their own, as follows.</p> <p>Today, a lot of people believe that the Rapture will occur 7 or more years prior to Jesus Christ setting foot on Earth again. Up until 1830, however, virtually all Christians believed that the Rapture and the Second Coming (i.e., the physical presence of Christ on Earth) were the <i>same</i> event [Hanegraaff, 2007; Keener, 2018]. Craig Keener was originally taught a pretribulational perspective, and didn't question it at the time. Later, he had difficulty equating various scripture verses with the pretribulational points being made.</p> <p>Hank Hanegraaff writes:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">For nineteen hundred years of church history, no one—including historical luminaries such as Ephraim, Augustine, Calvin, Luther, Knox, Zwingli, and Wesley—had any concept of the pretribulational rapture that LaHaye claims is so 'clearly taught' in Scripture. [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 47]</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Finally, as there is no postponement or parenthesis in the plan of God, so too there is no pretribulational rapture. For nineteen hundred years, the idea of a pretribulational rapture was completely foreign to mainstream Christianity. Prior to Darby, the Plymouth Brethren believed that the rapture and the return of Christ were simultaneous events. Darby's innovative invention gave birth to the notion of a pretribulational rapture. As historian Timothy Weber explains, 'Before Darby, all premillennialists, futurists included, believed that the rapture would occur at the end of the Tribulation, at Christ's second advent. But Darby understood the rapture and the second coming as two separate events. At the rapture, Christ will come for his saints, and at the second coming, he will come with his saints. Between these two events the great tribulation would occur.' [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 55]</p> <p>John Nelson Darby expressed the idea because he felt that God was dealing with two distinct groups of people: Jews ("Israel") and Christians ("the Church"). A third group refers to Gentiles or pagans, who are neither Jews nor Christians. His thesis was: when the Jews rejected Christ (at His first coming, ending with His crucifixion), God turned from the Jews to the Gentiles, as per the book of Acts. Then, in the future, there will be a time when God raptures the Church from the earth, and once again, deals with the Jews separately.</p> <p>Steve Gregg states that Francisco Ribera, a Jesuit priest from Spain, expressed this futurist view in the late 1500s. About three years before Darby, Samuel Maitland introduced this futurist view to the non-Catholic world. Apparently, Darby picked it up from there.</p> <p>Contrary to the claims of dispensationalists, Gregg argues that dispensationalist doctrine was not preached until around 1830, when John Nelson Darby, a church leader in the Plymouth Brethren movement, formalized it.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Prior to Darby, Christian theologians almost unanimously taught that the promises made to Israel have found their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Darby</p>
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believed the former theologians had erred through their failure to employ a thoroughly literalistic hermeneutic. ...

As a result of this hermeneutical commitment, Darby's views placed Israel, not the church, at the center of God's eschatological interest. The church, then, was said to comprise a *parenthesis*, occupying the interim between Israel's rejection of Christ, in the first century, and the restoration of Israel to God in the end times.

Darbyism, as it is sometimes called, became popular in the United States through a variety of media, not least of which was the publication of the Scofield Reference Bible in 1909, whose notes, printed at the foot of each page, provided dispensational explanations of the associated biblical text. This publication had far-reaching influence on many evangelical readers, who often read Scofield's notes as though they carried some kind of canonical authority. [Gregg, 2012]

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 is the set of verses most often quoted by pretribulationists. In it, Paul is *not* saying that Christ would come back secretly and silently, and then return seven years later at His Second Coming. Instead, he was referring to Christians who have *died* and whose spirit has gone on to be with the Lord.

The *pretribulation Rapture*, however, has no evidence in the early church—none before the 19th century, it appears. For example, Harry Ironside said that he did a lot of searching for evidence of the early church fathers' belief in pretribulationism, and couldn't find such evidence [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, May 18, 2015].

Hanegraaff adds that Grant Jeffrey did a lot of research on the same point, and the best he could come up with was the Pseudo-Ephraim document, which wasn't convincing.

When Luther made the Bible available to the common people of the day, he made it easier for Christians to avoid erroneous teaching such as the notion of indulgences (i.e., people paying money in order to have deceased loved ones become saved, or to minimize their deceased loved ones' suffering in purgatory).

There will be one physical resurrection at the end of time for both believers and unbelievers (at the same time), and then comes the judgment. Christ will return bodily to the earth at some point in the future. We have no way of knowing *when* Christ will return.

Lastly, a *full preterist* doesn't believe there is a Second Coming. However, that contradicts an essential message in the Bible, and is therefore a heretical position. Full preterists do not believe in a future Millennium or a future resurrection and judgment. They believe the Great White Throne Judgment

	occurred in 70 AD, and that the devil and the fallen angels were cast into the Lake of Fire at that time [Beshore, 2013].
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Topic/ Question	Surprisingly, the Church is not found in the Bible in Chapters 4-18 of Revelation. Does this support a pretribulation rapture?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>Yes. The Church has been raptured from the earth before most of the events of Revelation take place, thereby leaving God to deal with the Jewish people separately again (although many people—Jews and Gentiles—will still be saved after the Rapture).</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Revelation 4:1 After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."</p> <p>There have always been two groups of people on Earth: believers and unbelievers. These groups can be partitioned into Jews and Gentiles before Christ; and into Jews, Gentiles, and Christians after Christ. The Christian Church or "Body of Christ" is made up of both Jews and Gentiles—in other words, whoever chooses to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. "For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all, and richly blesses all who call on him" (Romans 10:12).</p> <p>The absence of the Church in Revelation 4-18 supports the notion of a pretribulation rapture. Revelation is largely silent about the church, and "the silence is deafening" [Hitchcock, 2011c]. The Bride of Christ (i.e., the Church) is in Heaven during this period "to make herself ready", as per Revelation 19:7 and 21:9.</p> <p>Note also that the 144,000 Jewish evangelists (and the 2 witnesses or evangelists) mentioned in Revelation would not be necessary if the Church were present during the Tribulation. Note also that angels proclaim the everlasting gospel in Revelation 14, something we normally expect the Church to do:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Revelation 14:6 Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth -- to every nation, tribe, language and people.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>The fact that the Church is not found in Revelation after Chapter 3 is perhaps the strongest argument (of any) for the dispensationalists.</p> <p>The first 3 chapters mention seven "churches" rather than <i>the</i> Church as a whole. We do find the Church mentioned by other names such as "the saints". Dispensationalists argue that these saints are believers after the Rapture, that is, they are "tribulation saints". In a concordance, the word "saints" is</p>

	synonymous with the word “Christians”. Thus, there’s no reason to think that Revelation 13 or 19 refers to a separate group of saints. This implies that the Church <i>is</i> on Earth during this time.
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Topic/ Question	<p>Is the failure to teach the pretribulational Rapture crushing the hope of many people? Is this what is meant by scoffers asking, “Where is the promise of His coming?”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2 Peter 3:4 They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."</p>
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>Dave Hunt warns that the failure to support classical dispensationalism may lead to a denial of the “blessed hope” that many Christians should be looking forward to.</p> <p>In society today, it is not uncommon for believers to be ridiculed for their interest in prophecy—and some of this scoffing comes from within the church. Date setters, sensationalists, and those who take Scripture out of context have given Bible prophecy a bad name. Because of all the different interpretations, many pastors rarely teach on eschatology. There will inevitably be people in the congregation who disagree with some of their points—even well-presented and well-supported points. Therefore, to avoid controversy, Bible prophecy is sometimes given a back seat to other teachings on the Bible. Early Genesis is similar, due to the various positions that Christians take. Thus, the “bookends” of the Bible (Genesis and Revelation) are often under-taught.</p> <p>Furthermore, many people are skeptical about supernatural events or miracles in today’s society, especially—but not exclusively—unbelievers.</p> <p>David Reagan adds that some Christians are not terribly interested in hearing about Christ’s soon Second Coming:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">... there are many carnal Christians who cannot get excited about the coming of the Lord because they are in love with the world. ... They want the Lord to come, but they want Him to come when they are 80 years old and have experienced all that this world has to offer. In other words, they want Him to come, but they don’t want Him to mess up their lives. [Reagan, 2005, p. 365]</p>
Preterist Position	Prophecy should not crush the hope of many people, but should actually help to build their faith.

Topic/ Question	Is 2 Thessalonians 2 talking about Christians being worried that the day of the Lord (Tribulation) had already come? In other words, did they think they had missed the Rapture?
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	<p>[2 Thessalonians 2:1-8] Concerning the coming [parousia] of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us - - whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter -- asserting that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.</p>
<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>Note: Search for the section titled “What is the Rapture?” (start of Chapter 4) in this book for extended comments about the Rapture. In the current section, we focus on 1 & 2 Thessalonians ...</p> <p>What is the theme of 2 Thessalonians 2? Apparently the Christians at Thessalonica misunderstood the letter that they thought was sent by Paul or one of his colleagues. The recipients thought that they were now in the Tribulation. In 2 Thessalonians, Paul corrected them to let them know that the Tribulation would not occur until the Rapture takes place, and the man of lawlessness (Antichrist) is revealed. Therefore, they were not in the Tribulation, nor were they in the gap between the Rapture and the Tribulation, nor did they miss the Rapture.</p> <p>The event described in Verse 1, that is, “our being gathered to him”, is the same Rapture event described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 [Byron, 2014]. However, John Byron does not believe in a <i>pretribulation</i> rapture. Instead, he thinks that the Rapture occurs when Christ returns physically to the earth, that is, as He is descending to earth—essentially simultaneously with His return at Armageddon. Rather than including the 7-year Tribulation within the period of time known as the day of the Lord, Byron assumes that the day of the Lord is synonymous with Christ’s Second Coming (<i>parousia</i>), which would be <i>at the end of</i> the Tribulation. In other words, he argues that 2 Thessalonians 2 teaches that believers will <i>not</i> be gathered to Jesus until after the coming (<i>parousia</i>) of the lawless one. Pretribulationists think the opposite: believers will be gathered to Jesus <i>before</i> the Antichrist comes on the scene.</p> <p>The more common view is the pretribulation Rapture, described in detail by Robert Thomas in his commentaries on 1 Thessalonians [Thomas, 1978a] and 2 Thessalonians [Thomas, 1978b]. In particular, the <i>parousia</i> described in</p>

Scripture includes two phases to Christ's return: first, in the air, for his departed and living saints, which we call the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18); and second, with those same saints at the Second Coming where Christ literally sets foot on the earth. The two phases to Christ's *parousia* are necessary because they cannot be combined into one phase and still have it make sense in the context of the many Scriptures in the New Testament describing Christ's return.

Some limit the *parousia* to a single event and insist that it comes after the tribulation ... It is hardly possible, though, to explain the variety of relationships belonging to *parousia* in these Epistles if it is understood only as a single event. ...

If Paul had given oral or written instruction to this effect, the false claim that the day of the Lord was already present could hardly have alarmed these Christians. According to this scheme, the day of the Lord could not begin without Christ's personal reappearance. His continued absence was obvious to all.

Yet the claim was made and accepted to the extent that the church was troubled. This implies Paul had not taught that a one-phase *parousia* after the period of wrath will begin the day of the Lord. He had told them that the coming of the Lord to gather his saints into heaven would initiate both the tribulation and the day of the Lord. [Thomas, 1978b, p. 318]

Paul's two letters to the Thessalonians state that Thessalonians were looking forward to Christ's return, as was Paul, and Paul was trying to encourage them that they had not missed the Rapture. Apparently, the Thessalonians thought that they were in the Tribulation already, which would have meant that they either missed the Rapture or that they misunderstood Paul's earlier teachings. The Rapture precedes the Tribulation. The Rapture is imminent. Note that if they had missed the Second Coming, they would have known it, because everyone in the world would be aware of Christ's return.

The tribulations that the Thessalonians were going through at the time may have formed the basis for their worries, since Roman oppression at the time was quite severe—a tribulation/persecution, no doubt; but not *the* Tribulation, which would be more severe. This also implies that they (and Paul) believed in a pretribulational rapture. Note that since Paul was a Christian, he would have been raptured if they had been in the day of the Lord, and therefore he could not have even written that note; so, they clearly misunderstood the note.

2 Thessalonians 2 can be interpreted in the following way (with possible interpretations in square brackets):

[2 Thessalonians 2:1-12] Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him [Rapture], we ask you, brothers and sisters, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us - - whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter

-- asserting that the day of the Lord [Tribulation] has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion [apostasy, falling away, or departure; Greek: *apostasia*] occurs and the man of lawlessness [Antichrist] is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's [rebuilt] temple, proclaiming himself to be God. Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? And now you know what [the Holy Spirit, acting through the Church] is holding him [Antichrist] back, so that he [Antichrist] may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one [Holy Spirit] who now holds it back will continue to do so till he [Holy Spirit, acting through the Church] is taken out of the way [via the Rapture]. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor [appearance] of his coming [Second Coming]. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

Does the Antichrist come before the Rapture? The Antichrist will not be *revealed* until after the restrainer moves out of the way and the Rapture has occurred. However, he will likely build a power base and establish leadership qualities and respect, long before he is accepted by the world, and finally revealed. Only after the Rapture (possibly months or years after the Rapture) will the 70th week of Daniel (the Tribulation) begin. A new set of believers, post-Rapture, will be able to identify the Antichrist because of Daniel 9:27 (the 7-year covenant) and Revelation 13:18 (the number of the beast: “666”).

Let us look at the Greek word *apostasia* used in the above Scripture passage. Some older translations of the Bible translated the word as “departure”. The KJV (1611) was one of the first translations to stray away from “departure”, possibly because of Catholic influence, such as an earlier Catholic translation of the Latin Vulgate into English: the Rheims Bible (1576) [Ice, 2014a; House, 2011]. Perhaps the Catholics were worried about Protestants departing from Catholicism. The following words were used to translate *apostasia*:

- “departure” or “departing” (used in these Bible translations: the Latin Vulgate (Jerome’s fourth-century translation of the Greek New Testament into Latin), and the English translations of Wycliffe (1384), Tyndale (1526), Coverdale (1535), Cranmer (1539), Breeches (1576), Beza (1583), and Geneva (1608))
- Since the 17th century, here are the modern translations of *apostasia*:
 - “a falling away” (KJV, NKJV, ASV, Berkeley)

- “the apostasy” (NASB)
- “the rebellion” (NIV, NRSV, Goodspeed, RSV, Moffatt, Phillips, Jerusalem, Williams)

Here is the translation from the popular New American Standard Bible (NASB)—and note the presence of the definite article *the*:

2 Thessalonians 2:3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless **the apostasy** comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

Here is the translation from the New King James Version (NKJV)—again, note the presence of the definite article *the*:

2 Thessalonians 2:3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless **the falling away** comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,

Ice argues that a slow, steady slide into apostasy isn't the focus here. Several books in the New Testament warn about apostasy already being present in the first century. Thus, if the Thessalonians were worried about being in the Tribulation, it wouldn't make sense if Paul wrote that the Tribulation couldn't have happened yet because “apostasy” hadn't occurred. Instead, what Paul may have meant was that “the departure” had to occur first. And, this is not a departure from the faith; but, a unique, definite departure event, which we call the Rapture.

If verse 3a, is talking about a physical departure and not a spiritual departure, then the debate concerning when the rapture will transpire is all but over. ... then it becomes a decisive victory for *pretribulationism*. [Woods, 2018a, p. 4]

Note that a different Greek word is used by Paul when discussing a falling away or departure *from the faith*:

1 Timothy 4:1 [NKJV] Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart [*aphistemi*] from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons

Note also that the “man of lawlessness” is referenced three times in 2 Thessalonians 2: once in verse 3, and twice in verses 7 and 8. Because of these references to the Antichrist, it may well be that *apostasia* is “the departure” or “the Rapture”. Furthermore, 1 and 2 Thessalonians deal with comforting Christians about “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him” (2 Thessalonians 2:1). Thus, “the departure” may well be the intended translation.

The great fourteenth-century scholar John Wycliffe, in 1384, was the first of the seven English translators to render the text as “departing.” Not until three centuries later, with the KJV translators who were hired to do the king’s bidding, was the meaning of the word changed.

There seems to be no known reason why most of the modern translators since the time of the KJV have used it as a template. Could it be eschatological bias? At that time in English history most translators held an amillennial or posttribulational view of the return of Christ which did not even include a rapture.

... To our knowledge, no one in the early church and up to the early seventeenth century saw that word as meaning anything else. We can therefore conclude that it is the correct translation, and in all probability, is the original meaning of the word. ... Until someone can give a convincing reason why the first seven translators of the Greek New Testament into English were wrong to use the word “departing,” we are justified in believing they were correct in doing so. [LaHaye, 2011b, pp. 158-159]

A popular Greek lexicon, Liddell and Scott, explains that *apostasia* means “rebellion against God, apostasy, departure, disappearance, distance.” [Woods, 2018a, p. 19]

J.B. Hixson summarizes and paraphrases 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 as follows:

My Thessalonian brethren—concerning the Lord’s coming to rescue us from the Day of the Lord’s wrath, which I have already told you about in my first letter, I ask you not to be worried or shaken in your faith. I realize that some false teachers are suggesting that the Day of the Lord has already begun and that you are about to face the full force of God’s wrath on earth.

But don’t believe it! Don’t be deceived. Remember, as I said before, the Day of the Lord will not begin until after you depart from this earth! And not only that, but before the Day of the Lord can begin, the man of sin—the antichrist—must be unveiled first.

Since neither of these things has happened—the departure and the revelation of the antichrist—you cannot possibly be in the Day of the Lord. So fear not! And be aware that when the antichrist does come, after you have all been rescued from this present evil age (Gal. 1:4), he will bring terrible deception and lying wonders on the earth and many will perish because they never believed the Gospel. [Hixson, 2014]

That said, some Bible commentators believe that the Greek word *apostasia* likely means “a falling away”, as in a departure from the truth. That word is only used in one other place in Scripture, by Luke, and there it seems to indicate a falling away from the truth:

Acts 21:21 They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from [apostasia] Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs.

Lee Brainard agrees that a key theme in 1 & 2 Thessalonians is the Rapture, and that the definite article “the” is there for a reason, but it is unlikely that it is the Rapture.

There will be a distinct apostasy in the last days associated with the antichrist. The foundation of this apostasy is already [laid] with evolution, secular humanism, and the reimagining of religion through the lens of a deeply spiritual brand of evolution. ... It is a definite apostasy with a distinct character that distinguishes it from the apostasies that preceded it. [Brainard, 2022a, p. 44].

The following two verses imply that the Rapture was taught by the apostle Paul:

2 Timothy 2:17-18 Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.

Hymenaeus and Philetus must have claimed that the people missed the Rapture (i.e., a big part of the first resurrection). If the people actually believed that there was only one resurrection (i.e., occurring at the same time for both the saved and the unsaved, at the end of time), then they wouldn't have been alarmed since they would easily be able to see that it wasn't the end of time. After all, people were still around, sin continued, and life went on as normal. Alternatively, they may have claimed that the Rapture/resurrection already took place as a “spiritual” resurrection rather than as a future physical resurrection—as full preterists claim [LaHaye, *et al.*, 2001].

Scholars who equate “the apostasy” to “the departure” (as in a “physical departure”) include Arnold Fruchtenbaum, David Hocking, Thomas Ice, Tim LaHaye, J. Vernon McGee, Henry Morris, J. Dwight Pentecost, Chuck Smith, Don Stewart, and Andy Woods, among others [Woods & McGowan, 2022]. It's possible that “the departure” could mean *both* a physical departure of the true church and an apostasy from the faith.

Incidentally, it is believed that Paul was martyred under Nero in 65 AD [Sproul, 1998]. The Apostle Peter was also martyred under Nero [Salus, 2019]. Nero ruled from 54 AD to 68 AD, with persecution against the Christian community starting in 64 AD. In 55 AD, a statue of him was placed in the Temple of Mars in Rome. Nero committed suicide in 68 AD, at the age of 31.

Like Christ's first coming, His Second Coming will be literal, and will be accompanied by the Shekinah Glory.

[Matthew 24:30b states:] “... they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.” When the text says, “they will see the Son of Man,” it has to be a reference to the visible, bodily, physical return of Jesus Christ to earth! This did not happen in A.D. 70. Josephus does not record it nor is it recorded in any other sources. This

	<p>cannot refer to a symbolic, naturalistic interpretation that somehow Jesus returned in conjunction with the Roman army in the first century. ...</p> <p>If Jesus returned in A.D. 70, as preterists contend, then, on what day did He return? Since this is a past event, we should be able to know the exact day our Lord supposedly returned and fulfilled this passage. I have never read in any preterist material where any of them ... can tell the day and exact manner or event that supposedly was Christ's return in A.D. 70. In fact, this was such a non-event in terms of church history, that it was not until the seventeenth century that there is an extant record of anyone suggesting anything like a preterist view that refers Matthew 24:27 and 30 to A.D. 70. [Ice, 2021, p. 209]</p> <p>Lastly, some teachers think "the lie" mentioned in the above passage (i.e., 2 Thessalonians 2:1-8) could refer to people who were presented with the gospel before the Rapture, but rejected it, and therefore will not get a second chance. It's not clear that this would be the case, but Satan will convince many people (regardless of whether they heard the gospel or not) to reject God.</p>
<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>From the preterist viewpoint, 2 Thessalonians 2:1's mention of the <i>parousia</i> does <i>not</i> refer to Christ's Second Coming, but rather it is a "coming in judgment" in a figurative sense [Newton, 2012; Byron, 2014]. This happened in 70 AD when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple.</p> <p>The "man of lawlessness" refers to a person like Antiochus Epiphanes in the book of Daniel [Newton, 2012]. This person is probably Roman, at the time of the temple's destruction. The Roman army placed their ensigns at the temple, and even offered sacrifices.</p> <p>What needs to precede the "day" when all this occurs? There needs to be a falling away or apostasy. Christ prophesied that this would happen. There also needs to be the appearance of the man of lawlessness. J. Stuart Russell claims that this is Nero. Nero fits the bill because he is pagan (not Jewish), holds the highest rank and authority in the Roman government, claims divinity, is lawless, and is wicked—and his destruction was to precede the events of 70 AD [Newton, 2012]. Stan Newton, however, disagrees with Russell in a few things. There is no evidence to suggest that Nero went to the temple and declared himself to be God. Also, 2 Thessalonians 2:8 says that the man of lawlessness would be destroyed by Jesus Christ (at His coming in judgment, in 70 AD). But, Nero died in 68 AD.</p> <p>Gary DeMar thinks that the man of lawlessness is Jewish—in particular, a religious leader, such as the high priest. John Bray suggested another individual from this time: John Levi of Gischala, because of his cunning nature, access to the temple, lawless behavior, and the likelihood that he was killed in the events of 70 AD. Stan Newton thinks that Levi would be the best candidate for the man of lawlessness.</p>

That said, partial preterists still expect a future *parousia*: Christ's Second Coming, where He will physically and visibly return. However, full preterists believe that the "Second Coming" *parousia* took place in 70 AD, and any future return of Christ beyond that point is a symbolic return [Byron, 2014].

Does this mean that the Thessalonians thought they had missed the Rapture? No, because *nobody* was missing! They knew that the apostle Paul (or his colleagues) wouldn't have missed it. So, how could the apostle Paul have written them a letter, if in fact he had already been raptured (and wasn't there to write it)? Therefore, we have to conclude that "the day of the Lord" passage in 2 Thessalonians has nothing at all to do with "the Rapture". There won't be a secret/special rapture other than the one at Judgment Day when all people—believers and non-believers—give an account of themselves at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

One thing is almost certain: the passage does *not* apply to the 21st century or to a third or fourth temple. On the other hand, it could have been the Roman Caesar, or the Roman Empire, in the first century AD. Concerning the "man of lawlessness" and "the day of the Lord", Hank Hanegraaff writes:

As N.T. Wright explains, "The Roman emperor Gaius Caligula, convinced of his own divinity, and angry with the Jews over various matters, ordered a huge statue of himself to be placed in the Temple in Jerusalem. Massive Jewish protests at all levels, and the anxious advice of his officers on the spot, failed to dissuade him from this provocative project. Only Gaius's sudden murder in January of AD 41 prevented a major disaster."

Wright goes on to explain that the events of the late AD 60s provided the near-future fulfillment of Paul's prophecy:

... Had Paul lived until AD 70 he would have recognized the initial fulfillment of his words in this passage. Evil must reach its height, and then meet sudden doom. The Roman empire itself would go through unimaginable convulsions: the death of four emperors in quick succession during 68 and 69, followed by the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, would certainly qualify, in Old Testament terms, for the title "the day of the Lord."

[Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 212-213]

Chapter 6: The Bema Judgment Seat of Christ

<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>What is the <i>Bema Judgment Seat of Christ</i>? What is the <i>Great White Throne Judgment</i>? When does the judgment of the “sheep and the goats” in Matthew 25 occur? What is the Tribulation timeline for these judgments with respect to other events in Revelation?</p> <p>2 Corinthians 5:10 For we [Christians] must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.</p> <p>Romans 14:10-12 You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we [Christians] will all stand before God's judgment seat. ... So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.</p> <p>Matthew 25:31-33 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory [at the Second Coming], and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.</p> <p>Revelation 20:11-15 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.</p>
<p>Dispensa- tionalist Position</p>	<p>Every believer and unbeliever will appear before God at some point in the future. For believers in Jesus Christ, it will be at one of: (a) the Judgment Seat of Christ (post-Rapture, but pre-Second Coming), (b) the end of the Tribulation (post-Second Coming, but pre-Millennium) because many believers will come to Christ during the Tribulation, or (c) the end of the Millennium (e.g., for people born during the Tribulation and Millennium). For Old Testament saints (i.e., pre-Christ), it will also be at the end of the Tribulation. Lastly, for unbelievers, the judgment will take place at the Great White Throne Judgment at the end of the Millennium, but before the new heavens and new earth are created.</p>

Let us consider these events in more detail. The Rapture occurs *seven or more years* before the return of Christ, that is, before He physically sets foot on the earth at the Battle of Armageddon. Believers in Christ are called the *Bride of Christ* in Scripture (Revelation 19:7; 21:9), and they are *already* saved because of their belief in Christ's finished work on the Cross; so that is not what the Bema judgment is about.

Romans 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

Instead, the Bema judgment is one of rewards—*not* punishment. It is similar to awards given to the victors at athletic contests. The term *bema* refers to an elevated platform used in Grecian/Isthmian Games to reward the winners. (See the section on “crowns” below.)

What kind of activities will be rewarded? Well, to begin, the foundation of a Christian's life is laid when a person accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. A person is *saved* by grace, not by works. It is a free gift. What a person does with his or her life after this point determines his or her reward:

1 Corinthians 3:11-15 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

Many Christians will have little to show for their lives, even though they may have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior many years before they died. Perhaps because of indifference, lack of desire, or enchantment with the world, the rest of their lives are symbolically represented as “wood, hay or straw”. This will probably also include “good” works that were performed for selfish reasons such as drawing attention or praise to themselves. The words “suffer loss” will not be a punishment but rather a disappointment about what rewards they could have had, had they made better choices with their time and resources. Finally, there are many others who worked hard for the Lord, and perhaps sacrificed greatly (the persecuted church comes to mind):

1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Colossians 3:23-24 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Matthew 16:27 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.

Revelation 22:12 "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done."

Mark Hitchcock summarizes the difference between: (a) belief or faith (i.e., salvation), and (b) works, using two key principles: (1) Your belief determines *where* you will spend eternity; and (2) your behavior determines *how* you will spend eternity [Hitchcock, 2019a].

Note that some people will have few rewards because, although they believed in Christ, they did little on this earth to show for it—possibly because they came to Christ on their death bed, even though they had a long life; or because they came to Christ earlier in life, but never really served or worshiped Him. They may have been choked with worldly pleasures. There is a sense of shame in this, even though they are admitted to Heaven.

1 John 2:28 And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.

Next, let's examine 2 Corinthians 5:10 more closely.

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or **bad**.

The word translated in English as “bad” is the Greek word *kakos*. Other words in Greek could have been used if the Lord had meant “sinful” or “wicked”. Instead, *kakos* refers to something that is “worthless” like a “bad apple” [Meredith, 2018]. This seems to suggest that God is not going to parade our sins in front of us and others. This is because Jesus removed our sins through His death on the cross. This can be a great comfort to those who are constantly tormenting themselves over past sins.

Most of us go through life gradually refining our character, whereby unproductive or shameful attributes are changed to more noble attributes. I believe these positive qualities will be retained in our resurrected bodies. Speaking from experience, it is unfortunate that we spend so much time in our “immature” state. The amount of time that we spend in this state depends on our life experiences; the people we choose to spend time with; our parents, teachers, and mentors; our occupation; the many other choices that we make on a daily basis; etc. Some of these events and circumstances are beyond our control; however, the Lord will only hold us accountable for the resources that we have. Furthermore, it is often through tragic personal/family circumstances that we grow the most; but, even so, the eternal rewards are enormous when we

commit to following Jesus Christ, and to make a difference for Him and for others throughout life.

Psalm 66:10 For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver.

Isaiah 48:10 See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.

Jeremiah 9:7 Therefore this is what the LORD Almighty says: "See, I will refine and test them, for what else can I do because of the sin of my people?"

Daniel 11:35 Some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time.

Zechariah 13:9 This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.'"

Malachi 3:2 But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap.

1 Peter 1:7 These have come so that your faith -- of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire -- may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Good mentoring, in particular, is extremely important at all stages of life. We should pass on what we learn and experience, so that others can benefit. Without adequate mentoring, most people struggle in life, repeating the mistakes made by others, and living below their potential.

There other judgments besides the Bema judgment. In fact, premillennialists believe there will be four kinds of eschatological judgments before God, and these deal with the three major divisions of the human race: the Church (i.e., believers in Christ), Jews, and Gentiles—plus all unbelievers—as follows:

- Judgment of Christians at the Bema Judgment Seat of Christ—2 Corinthians 5:10 and 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. Everyone at this judgment is saved, and the judgment will provide rewards in accordance with one's works and motives.
- Judgment of the Old Testament believers and Tribulation saints following the return of Christ. Both groups are saved.
- Judgment of the nations (i.e., Gentiles) following the return of Christ—Matthew 25:31-46. Note that no such judgment of the nations occurred in 70 AD; thus, a preterist fulfillment is out of the question. Many scholars believe that the basis of this judgment—often called the Judgment of the Sheep and the Goats, or the Sheep and Goats

Judgment—will be on how the Gentiles who are alive at the time of the return of Christ treated the Jews during the Tribulation. Of the Gentiles, the sheep are the believers, and the goats are the unbelievers. The purpose of this judgment is to determine who can enter the Millennium Kingdom of Christ, and who cannot. James 2:26 reminds us that faith without works is dead.

... if a Gentile befriends a Jew to the extent of feeding and clothing and visiting him, it could only mean that he is a believer in Jesus Christ and recognizes the Jews as the chosen people. Thus in this context, such works become a distinctive evidence that the Gentiles described as sheep are those who are children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. [Walvoord & Dyer, 2013, p. 347]

Recall that Scripture says that upon Christ's return, all Israel will be saved (Romans 11:25-27) because the remaining remnant will be looking for Him. They will enter the Millennium, as will the believing Gentiles.

As for the unsaved Gentiles at the Sheep and Goats Judgment, it is unclear whether they will simply be killed at this time, and face resurrection and judgment at the Great White Throne Judgment; or if they go directly to the Lake of Fire because their judgment is complete [Stewart, 2015b]. It is probably the former [Ice, 2021].

- Judgment of unbelievers at the Great White Throne Judgment, at the end of the Millennium. This resurrection involves two sets of books: the Book of Life (which shows that the person is not saved, if his/her name is not written in it) and the other "books" which document the individual's works while on Earth—and which in turn determines the degree of that person's punishment.

In particular, the judgment involving the separation of the sheep and the goats appears to be a separation of the individuals from Gentile nations at the return of Christ, that is, *after* the Battle of Armageddon, but *before* the Millennium. This judgment determines who will enter the Millennium, possibly because of the Gentiles' treatment of the Jews during these last few years on Earth. The treatment of Christ's "brethren" (the Jews) reflects the Gentiles' faith and belief in God (Matthew 25:34-40). Amir Tsarfati argues that no person who has the Holy Spirit, is born again, reads the Bible, and has the fruits of the Spirit, could hate Israel during the Tribulation [Tsarfati, 2020d]. Thus, their actions will indicate their faith.

There will be degrees of reward for the saved (those who enter the Millennium), and degrees of eternal, conscious punishment (determined at the Great White Throne Judgment) for the unbelievers who do not enter the Millennium.

Note that posttribulationists have a problem if the Rapture occurs simultaneously with the Second Coming: no one will be left as "sheep" since there will only be "goats" left for Christ to judge [Hitchcock, 2011c]. Similarly,

if there are no “sheep”, there will be no one to repopulate the earth during the Millennium. Furthermore, God would hardly be sparing the believers from His wrath if believers have to go through all the events of the Tribulation. Thus, pretribulationism seems to be the best explanation for the timing of the Rapture.

Secondly, some posttribulationists assume a yo-yo type of “Rapture”, whereby believers meet the Lord in the air and instantaneously turn around and come back to the earth (with the Lord), in their newly resurrected bodies.

What does it mean to “meet” the descending Lord? The term used here for “meeting” was sometimes conjoined with *parousia* (coming). When an important personage was coming to a city (in a *parousia*), a delegation from the city would go out to “meet” him and then escort him on his way into the city. That is, the term used here for “meeting” most often means meeting someone on his or her way and then accompanying that person the rest of the way. That is also its sense in its other New Testament uses (see Matthew 25:6; Acts 28:15). Jesus does not meet us on our way up to heaven; rather, we meet Him on His way down to rule the earth. [Brown & Keener, 2019, p. 149]

Jay Adams—a partial preterist—also thinks that 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (typically taken as a Rapture passage) actually refers to a posttribulational event where Christians meet Christ in the air to escort Him back to earth [Adams & Cook, 2006]. Adams adds that the 10 virgins in Matthew 25 go out to meet the bridegroom (Christ) and escort Him back.

However, the word “meet” in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 is the Greek word *apantesis*, which simply means “to meet one”. It does *not* mean to go out and meet someone and escort him back into the city. The most trusted Greek lexicon makes no mention of going back to where the greeters came from [Walvoord & Hitchcock, 2012]. Acts 28:15 supports this. Furthermore, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 does not say what we are going to do *after* we meet Christ in the air at that time [Hitchcock, 2019d]. However, John 14:2-3 does. It says that Christ will take us to His Father’s house rather than turn us around and head back to earth. Remember, 1 Thessalonians 1:10 states that the Lord will deliver us from the coming wrath (Tribulation); and in 1 Thessalonians 5:9, it states that we are not appointed to wrath.

Also, who is Christ going to rule with a “rod of iron” during the Millennium if everyone were translated and given a perfected body, beforehand? In the meantime, how is every Christian going to survive the Tribulation? Christ said, “Let not your heart be troubled.” But, there will be plenty of trouble, including much martyrdom, during the Tribulation.

John 14:1-3 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

Another strike against the posttribulation Rapture position is that the order of events in Matthew 24:39-41 is reversed. Matthew 24 describes the Second Coming of Christ. Rather than the Rapture occurring upon Christ's return at Armageddon, the "taken" event that is being described is the gathering of *unbelievers*. They are taken to judgment.

Some posttribulationists do not believe there will even be a 7-year Tribulation. But, this contradicts the book of Daniel and other Scripture passages such as Jeremiah 30:7-9 and most of the book of Revelation.

The Second Coming is described in Revelation 19:11-21, yet there is no mention there of a posttribulation rapture [Hindson & Hitchcock, 2017]. This is yet another strike against the posttribulation position.

Another judgment that occurs at the Second Coming is the judgment of the Antichrist and the False Prophet. The interim judgment of Satan also takes place and he is chained for most of the Millennium.

Revelation 19:20 But the beast [Antichrist] was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

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

Although Satan is chained up during the Millennium, and the Antichrist and the False Prophet are thrown into the Lake of Fire before the Millennium begins, many fallen angels and demons may still be at work during the Millennium because there is (limited) sin taking place. Scripture doesn't explicitly state *when* the Millennial believers are judged, although it may be just before the Great White Throne Judgment. The Great White Throne Judgment appears to be for unbelievers only.

With respect to the relationship among the Rapture, the Bema Judgment Seat of Christ, and the Second Coming, Dave Hunt writes:

"Matthew 24:29 (vv. 27-31) refers not to the Rapture when believers are caught up to meet Christ in the air, but to the Second Coming when His feet touch the Mount of Olives and angels gather back to Jerusalem from all over the world 'His elect' [i.e., the 1/3 of the Jews who have survived the Great Tribulation and are left alive when Christ returns to take the throne of His

father David—Ezk 39:28 and Zec 13:9]. This occurs at the end of the Great Tribulation and has nothing to do with the Rapture. By the way, when His feet touch the Mount of Olives, Christ brings ‘all the saints’ (Zec 14:5) from heaven with Him—so the Rapture must have already occurred to take them up there. Of course this must be the case, because the Judgment Seat of Christ must have occurred in order for the bride to be ‘arrayed in fine linen, clean and white’ to dress her for the wedding in heaven’ (Rv 19:7,8). Only after these two events in heaven can the Second Coming take place (19:11-21). [Hunt, 2007, p. 5]

The *Great White Throne Judgment* refers to the judgment of the unsaved. Just like there are degrees of rewards for the saved, there are degrees of punishment for the unsaved. Note that the books (plural) mentioned in Revelation 22:12 contain the works of each unbeliever here on Earth. None of us can escape judgment; it’s just a matter of *which* judgment we will appear at [Hitchcock, 2007].

Would an evangelist who wins souls for the Lord, but then later stumbles in his walk with God, lose his reward? This is debatable; but, it appears that the good works survive, and the bad works are burned up. The consequences of sin exist in this life, meaning that it is likely that fewer good works follow one’s pursuit into a sinful lifestyle; therefore, there are fewer rewards to claim at the Bema judgment than might otherwise be had. Even King David, a man after God’s heart, stumbled—and there were consequences in his later life (including the rebellion of his sons Absalom, Amnon, and Adonijah); but Scripture tells us that David will still be rewarded mightily by God.

Mark Hitchcock states that the Bible tells us what we will be evaluated on, at the Judgment Seat of Christ [Hitchcock, 2007]. These “examination questions” have been given to us in advance, and include:

- How we treat other believers
- How we employ our God-given talents and opportunities
- How we use our money
- How well we accept mistreatment and injustice
- How we endure suffering and trial in this life
- How we spend our time (e.g., the choices that we make with our hours)
- How we run the particular “race” that God has set before us—and note that each person’s situation is unique
- How we control our fleshly appetites
- How many souls we witness to, and win for Christ. Evangelism is simply “one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread”.
- How much the Rapture means to us (i.e., looking for the return of Jesus Christ)
- How faithful we are to God’s Word and to God’s people
- How hospitable we are to strangers

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How faithful we are in our vocation • How we use our tongue <p>See how well you do, when going through the above checklist.</p> <p>Unconfessed sin is part of that which will be burned; however, we can build on the lessons we learn from confessed sin. Sometimes sin is exposed, and may lead to confession and repentance (e.g., Nathan the prophet speaking to King David). On the other hand, people can also get angry and defensive when confronted with sin, engage in further sin, and stray further from the Lord. Any shame that we have now, and the reactions we have to people because of that shame, need to be kept in balance [Whitcomb, 2009]. There needs to be a spirit of forgiveness and restoration, despite the consequences of sin.</p> <p>It appears that the unrighteous have a single day or time appointed for judgment, namely at the White Throne Judgment, as many Scriptures dictate; however, the judgment and rewards of the righteous take place at different times. The term “day” in Scripture can mean a longer period of time, depending on the context. For example, the “last day” is used in Scripture to refer to the time between Christ’s first coming and His Second Coming, inclusive. Even preterists view “the last day” as being any time between Christ’s first coming and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.</p> <p>Finally, note that the Bema judgment occurs after the Rapture. When a believer dies, he doesn’t receive his reward upon death; the rewards come later.</p> <p>(See also the comments below on the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.)</p>
Preterist Position	<p>There is only one set of judgments: one for believers, and one for unbelievers. When Jesus Christ comes again, <i>all</i> will rise from the dead: some to heaven, and some to eternal damnation. The judgments for (some of) the believers and (all of) the unbelievers are <i>not</i> separated by 1,000 years.</p> <p>Here are some of the Scriptures which indicate a single day of judgment, if we assume that the word “day” is to be taken literally:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Matthew 10:15 Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">2 Peter 2:9 if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">2 Peter 3:7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Acts 17:31 For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has</p>

	<p>given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”</p> <p>As mentioned earlier, there are degrees of rewards in Heaven, and degrees of suffering in hell.</p>
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<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>1 Corinthians 3:11-15 says that “fire” will test the quality of each person’s work. Will any of our creative or technological works survive from this world and be present in the next world?</p> <p>1 Corinthians 3:11-15 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.</p>
<p>Dispensa- tionalist Position</p>	<p>In his excellent book called <i>Heaven</i>, Randy Alcorn puts forward the case that the noble works that we have created that do not promote sin, and were done for the right reasons, may well survive to the next world [Alcorn, 2004]. For example, some books, music, movies, works of art, etc. might be preserved in some form, although possibly edited. Many classic hymns that honor God may still exist. It’s likely that friendships and positive family relationships will carry over from the current world. Alcorn is a strong believer of <i>continuity</i>:</p> <p>Books are part of culture. I expect many new books, great books, will be written on the New Earth. But I also believe that some books will endure from the old Earth. Any book that contains falsehood and dishonors God will have no place in Heaven. But what about great books, nonfiction and fiction? Will we find A.W. Tozer’s <i>The Knowledge of the Holy</i>, J.I. Packer’s <i>Knowing God</i>, John Piper’s <i>Desiring God</i>, John Bunyan’s <i>Pilgrim’s Progress</i>, and Charles Sheldon’s <i>In His Steps</i> on the New Earth? I’ll be amazed if we don’t find them there, just as I’ll be amazed if no one sings John Newton’s “Amazing Grace” in Heaven. [Alcorn, 2004, p. 314]</p> <p>What we really want is to live forever in a world with all the beauty and none of the ugliness—a world without sin, death, the Curse, and all the personal and relational problems and disappointments they create.</p> <p>... Adam and Eve will be <i>coming</i> home. Only they will have lived on three earths—one unfallen, one fallen, and one redeemed. Only they will have experienced, at least to a degree, the treasure of an original, magnificent Earth that was lost and is now regained.</p> <p>When we open our eyes for the first time on the New Earth, will it be unfamiliar? Or will we recognize it as home? [Alcorn, 2004, pp. 153-154]</p>

	<p>Learning will take place, too, because, unlike God, we will not be omniscient (knowing everything). In Eden, God commanded Adam and Eve to take dominion over the earth, including fish, birds, and animals (Genesis 1:28). They had roles and responsibilities. They had work to do in the Garden of Eden, and almost certainly there was learning and exploration along the way. Similarly, in the Millennium and the eternal state, we will most likely be able to explore the universe, learn about science, invent things, understand mathematics, create literary works or art or music, and probably do all kinds of physical activities including sports, some of which are not invented yet. Since we will have physical bodies that will function perfectly, and keen minds and memories, it seems natural that we will be able to do many, if not all, of these things. We'll glorify God as we search the wonders of God's creation.</p> <p>Culture won't regress to Eden, where musical instruments hadn't yet been invented or where metalworking and countless other skills hadn't yet been developed (Genesis 4:20-22). The fact that God mentions in Scripture these and other examples of technological progress suggests that he approved of the use of creativity and skills to develop society, even though people were hampered by the Curse.</p> <p>Some people expect the New Earth to be a return to Eden, with no technology or the accomplishments of civilization. But that doesn't fit the biblical picture of the great city, the New Jerusalem. Nor is it logical. Would we expect on the New Earth a literal reinvention of the wheel? [Alcorn, 2004, p. 234]</p> <p>The stated reference point for understanding the future destruction of the world is the Flood. The Flood was certainly cataclysmic and devastating. But did it obliterate the world, making it cease to exist? No. Noah and his family and the animals were delivered from God's judgment in order to inhabit a new world made ready for them by God's cleansing judgment. Flooding the whole world didn't destroy all the mountains (Genesis 8:4). Though many people believe that the Tigris and Euphrates rivers near Eden (Genesis 2:14) weren't the same rivers as those we know today, the fact that they were given the same names as the original suggests some continuity.</p> <p>... The New Earth will be the same as the old Earth, just as a new Christian is still the same person he was before. Different? Yes. But also the same. [Alcorn, 2004, pp. 148-149]</p>
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Topic/ Question	What are the five crowns that are spoken of in Scripture, with respect to rewards? What do we know about the 24 elders in Revelation who have some of these crowns?
Both Positions (except for comments)	<p>Arnold Fruchtenbaum explains the five crowns or rewards:</p> <p>The Greek language has two words meaning "crown." One is the word <i>diadem</i>, which is a king's crown. It is the crown of a sovereign and of a person who is royal by his nature and by his position—a king. This is the</p>

about the Rapture)

kind of crown that Jesus wears. The second Greek word is *stephanos*, which is a crown given to an overcomer, a victor, one who has won a race. These are the kinds of crowns available to believers because they overcame in the spiritual warfare and are now crowned at the Judgment Seat of the Messiah.

There are five such crowns mentioned in the Scriptures. The first such crown is called the *incorruptible crown* in I Corinthians 9:24-25 ... given to those who ... have learned to live a Spirit-controlled life.

In I Thessalonians 2:19, a second crown is called the *crown of rejoicing* ... given to those who win souls for Jesus ...

II Timothy 4:7-8 speaks of a third crown, the *crown of righteousness* ... for those who have kept the faith both doctrinally and morally in spite of adverse circumstances. It is a crown given to those *who love his appearing*, those who look longingly for the return of the Messiah. ...

A fourth crown is called the *crown of life* and is mentioned in two passages. In James 1:12, it is a crown for those who endure trials ... In Revelation 2:10, it is given to those who suffer martyrdom for their faith ...

A fifth and final crown mentioned in the Scriptures is a *crown of glory* in I Peter 5:2-4 ... for faithfully feeding the flock of God. It is available to those pastors, elders and others who feed the sheep with the milk and meat of the Word of God. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 158-160]

David Jeremiah comments on the crowns:

I suspect [the Crown of Rejoicing] isn't just reserved for those who actually lead another person to Christ. I think it will be shared by all those who play a role in bringing others to Christ. It's a team effort. Whenever I have the opportunity of leading others to receive Jesus as Savior, I almost always find someone else has already planted the seed of the Gospel in their hearts. Paul wrote, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase" (I Corinthians 3:6). [Jeremiah, 2017, p. 126]

This crown [Crown of Glory] seems especially designed for Christian leaders and for those who are faithful shepherds of the people of God. Now, I don't believe you have to be an official pastor on the staff of the church. You might be the shepherd of a small group. Your flock might be your family and your children. It might be your Sunday school class or small group. The Lord often gives us responsibility for the spiritual well-being and nurturing of others, and what an opportunity to serve him! [Jeremiah, 2017, p. 133]

With respect to the Crown of Life:

James 1:2-3 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, when you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

Revelation 2:10 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for

ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

We are fortunate in North America to be free to practice our faith without persecution. However, quite a few countries in the world experience persecution—even to the point of torture and death—for their Christian faith. Open Doors is a ministry that annually publishes its list of the 50 worst countries in the world in which to practice Christianity [Open Doors, 2022]. Many countries in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa are on this list.

I think we are going to stand before the Lord one day, and when we see that all the troubles we went through while we were faithfully trusting Him were compiling for us an eternal weight of glory, we will wish we had experienced more troubles! [Meredith, 2018, p. 6]

The point is that all Christians can gain any or all of these crowns. The 24 elders in Revelation have some of these crowns. The elders represent the church; they are not angels or priests. They appear to be resurrected in Heaven:

Their *crowns* suggest that they [the elders in Rev. 4:4,10] represent the church. These twenty-four are not wearing monarch's crowns (*diadema*) but victor's crowns (*stephanos*), which had been won in a conflict. They therefore have been both resurrected, for a spirit would not be wearing a crown, and judged, for they could not receive a crown as a reward apart from judgment. Further, the judgment must have only recently taken place, for they are seen in the act of casting their crowns at Christ's feet (Rev. 4:10). [Pentecost, 1958, pp. 256-257]

These elders probably get their crowns at the Judgment Seat of Christ, which occurs after the Rapture. The fact that the elders are described in Revelation 4 with their crowns, and the fact that the Tribulation events are mentioned in Revelation 6 and beyond, lends support to the pretribulational Rapture. Furthermore, the group of 24 elders does not include Israel, or the Tribulation saints, since neither of these groups is complete by the time of Revelation 4. Only the Church is complete at this time [Ice, 2011e].

Why 24 elders?

Nowhere else in Scripture is the term [elders] used to describe celestial or angelic beings. This term is used of humans in positions of authority either in the synagogue or church.

The figure 24 is probably taken from I Chronicles 24, where David divided the Tribe of Levi into 24 courses to represent the whole. Since the Church is a kingdom of priests, these 24 elders represent the Church as a whole. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 165]

The figure "24" may refer to a cycle (like a clock), signifying completeness, rather than referring to an exclusive group of 24.

	<p>Revelation 5:8-9 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.</p> <p>It is interesting to note that the 24 elders have their crowns/rewards already (Revelation 4:10), yet the seven seals in Revelation <i>have not been opened yet</i>. This suggests a <i>pretribulational</i> rapture, since the seals, trumpets, and judgments are still in the future [Missler, 2005].</p> <p>It is unlikely, however, that the group of 24 elders refers to a single, unified group of representatives from the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles of Jesus Christ [Ice, 2011e].</p> <p>Finally, note that, "Choices matter. Just because you can't lose your salvation doesn't mean you can't lose other things of value—one of those things being a potential crown." [Woods, 2018c]</p>
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Topic/ Question	What are the parallels between the Church as the <i>Bride of Christ</i> , and the role of Israel as the wife of God? Does this mean that Israel and the Church are indistinguishable in the New Testament?
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>Israel and the Church are distinguishable.</p> <p>First, let us examine Ariel Canada's Statement of Faith at Web site http://arielcanada.com:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">We believe that God called a people to Himself who are the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; that Israel is the Wife of Jehovah, unfaithful in the past, divorced in the present, and to be reunited in the future; that God has made four unconditional covenants with this elect nation that have remained unfulfilled; that God intends to fulfill all His promises to Israel in a literal way just as His warnings and judgments were fulfilled in a literal way; that in Israel's history of unbelief there has always been a believing remnant according to the election of grace; that there will be a national regeneration of Israel at which time all of the provisions of the unconditional covenants will be fulfilled, including the seed, land, and blessing aspects.</p> <p>The life and times of the wife of Jehovah (God) can be outlined in six stages:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Dispensationalist Arnold Fruchtenbaum has summarized the Old Testament picture of Israel as the wife of the Lord involving the following phases: (1) the marriage contract (Deut. 5:1-3; 6:10-15; 7:6-11; Ezek. 16:8), (2) the great adultery (Jer. 3:1-5; 31:32; Ezek. 16:15-34; Hosea 2:2-5), (3) the separation (Deut. 24:1; Isa. 50:1), (4) the divorce (Jer. 3:6-10), (5) the punishment (Jer. 3:11-18; Ezek. 16:35-43, 58-59; Hosea 2:6-13), (6) the remarriage with</p>

restored blessings (Isa. 54:1-8; 62:4-5; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 16:60-63; Hosea 2:14-23). [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007, p. 37]

Isaiah 54:5-9 For your [Israel's] Maker is your **husband** -- the LORD Almighty is his name -- the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth. **The LORD will call you back** as if you were a **wife deserted** and distressed in spirit -- **a wife who married young**, only to be rejected," says your God. "For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back. In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you," says the LORD your Redeemer. "To me this is like **the days of Noah**, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again.

The entire format of the Book of Deuteronomy is that of both an ancient suzerain-vassal treaty and an ancient marriage contract. In other words, what Moses did in Deuteronomy was to take all the various facets of the three earlier books [Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers] and present them in the form of an ancient marriage contract. This book contains the marriage contract signed between Israel and God—where Israel became the Wife of Jehovah. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 570]

Even after about one hundred years of separation, during which time the blessings of Deuteronomy continued to be withheld, Israel still failed to return to God, her husband. ...

The Book of Hosea was God's bill of divorcement of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and the Book of Jeremiah is the bill of divorcement of the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

Because she worshiped the gods of the Egyptians, the Egyptians will destroy her. Because she worshiped the deities of Assyria, the Assyrians will devastate her. Because she worshiped the idols of Babylon, the Babylonians will make her desolate. The nations who worshiped the very gods Israel committed adultery with will be the ones who will invade and destroy the nation of Israel. ... The aim of this punishment is not so God can be vengeful and get His revenge upon Israel, but rather to cause her to stop sinning and to stop her adulteries ... [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 576-579]

Several major prophets in the Old Testament wrote about the situation:

The Jewish prophets did not leave things in a state of hopelessness. They spoke of a coming day when Israel will again become the restored Wife of Jehovah. Of course, this will require a brand-new marriage contract, and this marriage contract is found in Jeremiah 31:31-34 ...

	<p>According to [Ezekiel 16:60-63], God will enter into <i>an everlasting covenant</i> with Israel in the future. This everlasting covenant is the same as the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34. ...</p> <p>The restoration of Israel as Jehovah's wife is also described in Isaiah 54:1-8. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 581-582]</p> <p>This explains God's relationship to His wife; however, what is different about this relationship, and the Church? First, we must realize that while the Church is called the Bride of Christ, she is pictured today as an engaged bride who is <i>not yet</i> joined by marriage to her husband. This latter stage will occur at the Rapture, when believers will be joined with Christ. Whereas the wife of God is Israel (already married [Walvoord, 1990]) and can be outlined in six stages (see above), Arnold Fruchtenbaum outlines three stages to the Bride of Christ [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The espousal (2 Corinthians 11:2) • The process of sanctification, maturing, or purifying of the bride (Ephesians 5:25-27) • The marriage (Revelation 19:6-9). There are four stages to the marriage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The arrangements: the father of the groom made the arrangements and paid the bride price (i.e., the blood of the Messiah) ○ The fetching of the bride after a possibly long period of time (the Rapture) ○ The marriage ceremony to which only a few would be invited (the Church at the Marriage of the Lamb after the Judgment Seat of Christ) ○ The marriage supper or feast in which many more were invited. Besides the Church, which is already there, add the Old Testament saints and the post-Rapture saints, including the Tribulation saints. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb likely takes place at the start of the Millennium. • The home of the bride (Heaven) <p>Fruchtenbaum emphasizes that many contradictions appear if the wife of Jehovah and the Bride of Christ are the same entity. They are not. Thus, many would-be contradictions disappear.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>At Christ's Second Coming, the Bride of Christ (the church universal) is complete. There is no need to wait another 1,007 years for its completion. If a 7-year tribulation exists following a pretribulational rapture, it seems kind of silly for the church to enjoy a heavenly wedding feast at the same time that the world is going through so much tragedy and suffering.</p>

Chapter 7: The Magog Invasion of Ezekiel 38-39

Topic/ Question	<p>Does the “Magog invasion” of Ezekiel 38-39 speak of a Russian-Muslim alliance vs. Israel? Does this Scripture passage refer to a <i>past</i> event—or does it refer to a <i>future</i> event? What nations make up the invading armies?</p> <p>The identities of most of the nations are clear, but there is some disagreement about the others.</p>
Dispensationalist Position	<p>The book of Ezekiel was written around 570 BC, that is, about 2,600 years ago. The Magog invasion, sometimes called “the War of Gog and Magog” or “Ezekiel’s War” is found in Ezekiel 38-39 and is one of the major unfulfilled prophecies in the Bible. Jewish eschatology teaches that this is a future event proceeding the appearance of the Messiah, who will come to rescue them [Ice, 2021a]. Thomas Ice thinks that the Magog invasion will take place during the gap between the Rapture and the Tribulation.</p> <p>Ezekiel 38-39 indicates that specific nations will attack Israel in the latter days (i.e., latter years or the “end times”), and those invading armies will be destroyed on the mountains of Israel. Then, Israel (and presumably many other countries and people) will acknowledge that the God of the Bible is for real. Note: The KJV translation states that five-sixths of the armies are destroyed, but most translations say that <i>all</i> of the troops and people with them in the invasion will fall (die) on the mountains of Israel.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ezekiel 39:2 [NIV] On the mountains of Israel you will fall, you and all your troops and the nations with you. I will give you as food to all kinds of carrion birds and to the wild animals.</p> <p>Note also that “the mountains of Israel” assumes that Israel has control of Judea and Samaria; therefore, Ezekiel 38-39 could not have been fulfilled until this time in history (i.e., since 1967). Although Israel claims <i>ownership</i> of Judea and Samaria, it does not have <i>autonomy</i> over it, other than perhaps 30% of that region [Woods & Bench, 2020]. Judea and Samaria are often referred to as the “West Bank” of the Jordan River. It’s also possible that the Golan Heights make up part of “the mountains of Israel” in the prophecy. The Golan Heights were part of the tribe of Manasseh, in the northeastern part of Israel. This area was called the land of Bashan; it’s where King Og lived.</p> <p>Chief among these invading nations is a major power “from the north”—or in some translations, the “utmost parts of the north”—which many prophecy scholars believe is Russia. In early 2022, the Russian military invaded Ukraine, sparking a major crisis, and making many people wonder how close we are to the Ezekiel 38-39 war that was prophesied about 2,600 years ago.</p>

Ezekiel 38:1-12 [NASB95] And the word of the LORD came to me saying, "Son of man, set your face toward **Gog** [the leader] **of the land of Magog** [possibly the southern republics of the former Soviet Union], **the prince of Rosh** [probably Russia], **Meshech and Tubal** [both Turkey], and prophesy against him and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am against you, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal. "I will turn you about and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out, and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them splendidly attired, a great company [with] buckler and shield, all of them wielding swords; **Persia, Ethiopia** [modern-day Sudan] and **Put** [Libya] with them, all of them [with] shield and helmet; Gomer with all its troops; Beth-togarmah [from] the remote parts of the north with all its troops -- **many peoples with you**. "Be prepared, and prepare yourself, you and all your companies that are assembled about you, and be a guard [armorer] for them. "After many days you will be summoned; in the latter years you will come into the land that is restored from the sword, [whose inhabitants] have been gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel which had been a continual waste; but its people were brought out from the nations, and they are living securely, all of them. "You will go up, you will come like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land, **you and all your troops, and many peoples with you**." 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "It will come about on that day, that thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil plan, and you will say, 'I will go up against the land of unwalled villages. I will go against those who are at rest, that live securely, all of them living without walls and having no bars or gates, **to capture spoil and to seize plunder**, to turn your hand against the waste places which are [now] inhabited, and against the people who are gathered from the nations, who have acquired cattle and goods, who live at the center of the world.'

Ezekiel 38:15 You will come from your place **in the far north**, you and many nations with you ...

Ezekiel 39:2 I will turn you around and drag you along. I will bring you **from the far north** and send you against the **mountains of Israel**.

Who is Gog? The term refers to a leader. Some think this is an actual person, such as the leader of a nation or confederacy of nations. Others think this is a demonic (non-human) leader, possibly even the Antichrist [Hamp, 2022]. Why the great discrepancy? Although the writings in Ezekiel 38-39 seem to suggest that this is a human participant in the Magog Invasion, the same word for Gog is used in Amos 7:1, which is translated in the Septuagint as follows:

Amos 7:1 "... a swarm of locusts were coming, and behold, one of the young devastating locusts was **Gog the King**."

Furthermore, Gog is mentioned again, in Revelation 20:8, but this is about 1,000 years after the Magog invasion, that is, near the end of the Millennium. Thus, the name "Gog" may indeed be a demonic leader, and not necessarily a human leader.

When the prophet [Ezekiel] made his prediction [about 2500-2600 years ago], Russia was on the fringe of civilization and populated by nomadic tribes. But from World War I onward, Russia has been a major player on the world stage. [LaHaye & Hindson, 2015, p. 115]

That said, some authors think that Russia is *not* involved with this battle:

Supernatural threats to Israel likewise came from the north. Bashan, the entrance to the Canaanite underworld; Mount Hermon, El's mount of assembly and the site of the Watchers' rebellion; and Mount Zaphon, the home of Baal's palace, were all located north of Israel. This is the context for viewing the war of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38 and 39. [Gilbert, 2021, p. 303]

Part of the reasoning for this is that Armageddon and the Gog and Magog battle use similar—though not identical—language: a feast for the birds and beasts; the Ezekiel 39:20 reference to *gibborim* (Hebrew for “the mighty” which was also used in Genesis 6:4 to refer to the Nephilim; whereas the Septuagint uses the Greek word *gigantes* for “giant” in Genesis 6:4); and the Ezekiel 39:17 reference to Bashan—a connection to the underworld: “Bashan was considered an evil place by the Hebrews, the literal entrance to the netherworld” [Gilbert, 2021, p. 320].

Will there be literal “horses and horsemen”, “swords”, and “bows and arrows” (Ezekiel 38:4; 39:9)? Remember that the book of Ezekiel was written around 500-600 BC. We note that ancient Hebrew had no words for missiles, guns, aircraft, computers, etc.; therefore, the ancient writers may have been using the best-fitting existing words to describe what they saw in their vision, without understanding anything about the technology. However, we should not discount the possibility that this form of warfare might be realistic and literally as described after a post-EMP (electromagnetic pulse) attack, when most electronics will be inoperable. Yet another possibility is that because “the mountains of Israel” are rugged terrain unsuitable to modern-day tanks and trucks, horses could be involved in the invasion. The “mountains of Israel” refer to the mountains of Judea and Samaria which were not back in Israel hands until 1967. Interestingly, the Battle of Armageddon also involves horses (Zechariah 12:4).

The phrase “many nations with you” could mean that it is not just Russia, Iran, Turkey, Sudan, and Libya that attack, but perhaps a number of Israel's neighbours will be included. It is unclear why Israel's neighbours were explicitly omitted from the list—at least by name—in Ezekiel 38-39, leading some scholars to believe that either Israel has taken over some of its neighbours (perhaps in a Psalm 83 scenario), or there is a peace treaty intact, or perhaps the neighbours were taken over by Russia, Turkey, Iran, Sudan, and Libya.

With respect to the outcome of the Magog invasion, it will take Israel 7 months to bury the dead invaders (Ezekiel 39:9). The dead will be buried in a valley east of Jerusalem and the Dead Sea called the Valley of Hamon Gog (meaning “hordes or multitudes of Gog”)—in modern-day, central Jordan. Ezekiel 39:11 states the burial location will be in Israel, implying that Israel has possession of that part of Jordan, as per Zephaniah 2:9. After the 7 months’ of burial time, if anyone sees a body part/bone, he/she is to place a marker next to it, and specialized personnel will move and bury it:

Ezekiel 39:2-16 On the mountains of Israel you will fall, you and all your troops and the nations with you. I will give you as food to all kinds of carrion birds and to the wild animals. You will fall in the open field, for I have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD. **I will send fire on Magog and on those who live in safety in the coastlands, and they will know that I am the LORD.** "I will make known my holy name among my people Israel. **I will no longer let my holy name be profaned, and the nations will know that I the LORD am the Holy One in Israel.** It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the Sovereign LORD. This is the day I have spoken of. **"Then those who live in the towns of Israel will go out and use the weapons for fuel and burn them up -- the small and large shields, the bows and arrows, the war clubs and spears. For seven years they will use them for fuel.** They will not need to gather wood from the fields or cut it from the forests, because they will use the weapons for fuel. And they will plunder those who plundered them and loot those who looted them, declares the Sovereign LORD. **"On that day I will give Gog a burial place in Israel, in the valley of those who travel east toward the Sea. It will block the way of travelers, because Gog and all his hordes will be buried there. So it will be called the Valley of Hamon Gog.** **"For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them** in order to cleanse the land. All the people of the land will bury them, and the day I am glorified will be a memorable day for them, declares the Sovereign LORD. **"Men will be regularly employed to cleanse the land. Some will go throughout the land and, in addition to them, others will bury those that remain on the ground. At the end of the seven months they will begin their search. As they go through the land and one of them sees a human bone, he will set up a marker beside it until the gravediggers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon Gog.** (Also a town called Hamonah will be there.) And so they will cleanse the land.'

The NKJV and NASB95 versions of the Bible translate Ezekiel 38:2-3 as follows, inserting the extra name “Rosh”, which some scholars believe is modern-day Russia. Other versions translate “Rosh” as the adjective “chief”, rather than as a proper name for a geographical location. The Septuagint uses the proper name “Ros”.

Ezekiel 38:2-3 [NKJV] Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, **the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal,** and prophesy against him, and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal.'

It's hard to see how the preterist position explains the burial of the dead over a seven-month period as being a fulfilled event. This event can only apply to the future because it hasn't been fulfilled yet, and the language in the text clearly indicates that it is a major event that surely would have been noticed if it had already occurred.

Currently, in world geopolitics, most of the invading nations mentioned above would like to wipe Israel off the map.

Some nations in Ezekiel 38-39 are difficult to identify (e.g., Gomer); but others are not (e.g., Persia (Iran), Put (Libya), and Cush (nation(s) south of Egypt)). The reason that some nations are difficult to identify is that the Bible lists the locations or family trees of the *ancestors* (which cannot change), and not the modern-day names (which would have been unknown to the audience at the time that the Scriptures were written). For example, Russia didn't exist until about 900-1000 AD. Nations and cities change their names periodically. Even though the boundary lines of some nations have changed as the years go by, some regions are identifiable with high probability.

Before looking more closely at the groups of people mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39, it may also be helpful to look at the Table of Nations in Genesis 10, in conjunction with writings of some ancient historians [Missler, 2010]. Noah's three sons were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Who were the descendants of these sons?

- Shem: Elam and Persia (both in modern-day Iran)
- Ham: Mizraim (Egypt, Philistines), Cush (Sudan or Ethiopia), Put (Libya), Canaan (the land from Sidon to Gaza; Sodom and Gomorrah)
- Japheth: Gomer (perhaps settlers of the Danube/Rhine area: Cimmerians), Askenaz (Germany), Togarmah (Turkey), Magog (perhaps the Scythians; or a number of nomadic tribes in the Russian Steppes, from the Ukraine to China, during the 10th to 3rd centuries BC)
 - The ancient historians Philo and Josephus said that the Great Wall of China was called the "Ramparts of Gog and Magog".

There seems to be good historical support for treating Rosh as a proper noun referring to the name of a geographical region [Woods, 2022b]. In particular, Rosh can be traced to the people groups of Russia, especially north of the Black Sea. We read about Gog and Rosh as follows, in some translations of the Bible:

Ezekiel 38:2 [NIV] "Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, **the chief prince of Meshek** and Tubal; prophesy against him

Ezekiel 38:2 [NKJV] "Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, **the prince of Rosh**, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him,

Ezekiel 38:2 [NASB95] "Son of man, set your face toward Gog of the land of Magog, **the prince of Rosh**, Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him

Here is a summary of the nations involved in the Ezekiel 38-39 invasion of Israel. Ezekiel wrote about the nations or regions as they were during the time of writing (approximately 593-573 BC). The corresponding modern-day nations or regions are identified as follows [Hitchcock, 2006; Rhodes, 2008; Shoebat & Richardson (S&R), 2008; Woods, 2016b].

Ancient (Biblical) Name	Modern Name
Rosh ("chief prince" is called "prince of Rosh" in some translations)	[Hitchcock, Rhodes, Woods]: Russia [S&R]: Turkey
Magog	[Summary of all 4 sets of commentators]: Lands in central Asia. Details: [Hitchcock, S&R]: Lands in central Asia and possibly Afghanistan (e.g., land today occupied by the former southern Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and possibly the northern parts of modern Afghanistan). [Rhodes, p. 103]: "The <i>Expositor's Bible Commentary</i> suggests that <i>Magog</i> refers to "the land of the Scythians, a mountainous region around the Black and Caspian seas." [Woods, p.5] This likely includes the "stans" or nations of central Asia ... and Ukraine.
Meshech & Tubal	[All 4]: Turkey Notes: Meshech and Tubal make up the area to the south of the Black and Caspian seas, in Turkey [Rhodes, p. 110]; the area to the southeast of the Black Sea, in Turkey [Woods, p. 7]
Persia	[All 4]: Iran
Cush	[Hitchcock, S&R, Woods]: Sudan [Rhodes, p. 112]: Ethiopia or Sudan (the area just south of Egypt on the Nile River)
Put	[all 4]: Libya. Details:

		<p>[Rhodes, p. 112]: Libya, plus possibly Algeria and Tunisia, since ancient Put was larger than Libya is now</p> <p>[S&R]: Libya, plus possibly Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Mauritania</p>
	Gomer	<p>[Hitchcock]: Turkey</p> <p>[S&R]: central Turkey</p> <p>[Woods, p. 10]: Galatia (modern-day Turkey)</p> <p>[Rhodes, p. 113]: “Identifying Gomer is difficult. No clear consensus exists among Bible scholars. The best guess among scholars is that it refers either to modern-day Turkey or modern-day Germany.”</p> <p>“In support of the Germany hypothesis, the Jewish Talmud claims <i>Gomer</i> refers to Germani, or the Germans. Arnold Fruchtenbaum says Gomer is ‘located in present-day Germany. This too was the rabbinic view. The Midrash calls Gomer <i>Germania</i>, and that is also the way the Talmud refers to Gomer.’”</p> <p>“Which view is correct? We can’t be sure. The Josephus reference as well as the historical data we possess on the Cimmerians leads me to believe that <i>Gomer</i> probably refers to part of the geographical territory around modern Turkey, an Islamic territory.”</p>
	Beth-Togarmah	<p>[all 4]: Turkey. Details:</p> <p>[S&R]: southeastern Turkey, near Syria</p> <p>[Woods, p. 10]: the area between Galatia and Asia (modern-day Turkey)</p> <p>[Rhodes, p. 114]: “may refer to Turkey <i>and</i> some neighboring geographical territories.”</p>

Ezekiel 38:15 refers to some of the invaders coming from “the far north”. In 1864, Dr. John Cumming wrote about Russia’s involvement:

This King of the North I conceived to be the autocrat of Russia... That Russia occupies a place in a very momentous place, in the prophetic word has been admitted by almost all expositors. [quoted in: [Lindsey, 2018]]

Some authors state that Meshech and Tubal are part of modern-day Russia. The 5th century BC Greek philosopher Herodotus equated Meshech and Tubal with the Sarmatians and Muscovites [Lindsey, 2018]. More specifically, the Muscovites are ancient residents of the city of Moscow. Furthermore, the first century Jewish historian, Josephus, equated Meshech and Tubal with the

Moschevi and Thobelites. Josephus said that the Greeks called the people of Magog: the Scythians—who lived north and east of the Black Sea (i.e., modern-day Ukraine and Russia) [Lindsey, 2018]. Dr. Wilhelm Gesenius, a 19th century Hebrew scholar, wrote:

Meshech was the founder of the Moschi, a barbarous people, who dwelt in the Moschian Mountains.

Tubal is the son of Rapheth, founder of the Tibereni, a people dwelling on the Black Sea to the west of the Moschi. [Lindsey, 2018]

Gesenius added that Moschi was the source of the name for the city of Moscow.

Shoebat and Richardson write:

If we examine some of the greatest Biblical references, like the *Macmillan Bible Atlas*, *Oxford Bible Atlas*, and *The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands*, they all locate Magog, Meshech, Tubal, Gomer, and Beth Togarmah in Asia Minor, and not Russia.

Are they all wrong?

... One common denominator in the argument over the Gog and Magog story is that everyone at least agrees that *Gog is Prince of Meshech and Tubal*. No serious historian would argue that Meshech and Tubal are not in Turkey. [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008, pp. 256-257]

Note the *absence* of Babylon (modern-day Iraq) from the above list of nations that are part of the Magog invasion.

First of all, I believe that the ancient city of Babylon will be rebuilt in the end times as a great commercial capital for the Antichrist (see Isaiah 13; Revelation 17-18) ...

Second, the Bible says that Babylon will be destroyed at the end of the Tribulation just before Jesus comes back to earth. According to Ezekiel 38, the Islamic invaders will be destroyed in the first half of the Tribulation ... She will not meet her doom with the other Islamic nations during the Tribulation, but will be destroyed later. Babylon has her own personal appointment with destiny just before the Second Coming of Christ. [Hitchcock, 2006, pp. 169-170]

It is interesting to note the names of some of the other nations that are absent from Ezekiel 38-39. They include Israel's neighbours: Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. This may be because they don't agree with the other invaders, that is, Russia, Iran, Turkey, Sudan, and Libya. In fact, as of the time of writing this part (2018), Saudi Arabia is engaged in a war in Yemen that has Iran as a backer of Yemen. Saudi Arabia and Iran are not on good terms. Saudi Arabia is largely Sunni Islam; Iran is largely Shiite Islam.

Iran already has a serious presence in Lebanon, Syria, and even Gaza (southwest corner of Israel); therefore, some argue that Iran is already there.

Russia is currently involved in military action in Syria's long-standing internal wars which include ISIS and other military groups; consequently, Russia is close to Israel, too. Circa 2016, it was reported that at least 47 different armies or people groups appear to be involved in the military conflicts in Syria.

Furthermore, the Kurds are looking for a homeland of their own; and they're opposed by Syria, Turkey, Russia, and ISIS.

Ezekiel 38 describes the events of the Magog invasion as follows. There will be a great earthquake (verses 19-20); disease (verse 22); and rain, hailstones, fire, and burning sulphur (verse 22).

... Infighting among the troops of the various nations (Ezekiel 38:21). In the chaos after the powerful earthquake, the armies of each of the nations represented will turn against each other. Just think about it: the troops from the various invading nations will speak Russian, Farsi (Persian), Arabic, and Turkic languages. They will probably begin to kill anyone that they can't identify. This could be the largest case of death by friendly fire in human history. [Hitchcock, 2006, pp. 170-171]

Chapter 37 deals with Israel's restoration to the land; however, the initial regathering is in unbelief. Chapter 40 begins a new section describing the millennial temple and sacrifices. Therefore, the invasion of Gog and Magog [Ezekiel 38-39] is placed sometime between the beginning of Israel's restoration to the land and the beginning of the Millennium or 1,000-year earthly reign of Christ. [Hitchcock, 2006, pp. 170-171]

... the invasion will occur at a time when Israel is "at rest", "living securely", and dwelling in "unwalled villages." It is true that the inhabitants of modern Israel live in unwalled villages and have some degree of security due to their military might. However, they are not "at rest" as required by Ezekiel 38:11. The Hebrew word translated *at rest* means "be quiet, undisturbed." This hardly describes Israel today. The nation is one huge, armed camp. The people are disturbed on a regular basis by threats and homicide bombings. Since 1948, Israel has lived under the constant threat of terrorist attacks and invasion by her neighbors. The terminology in Ezekiel 38 fits much better with the first half of the seven-year tribulation when Israel will enjoy the protection of her covenant with the Antichrist and will temporarily let down her guard (Daniel 9:27). [Hitchcock, 2006, p. 182]

The power vacuum created by the destruction of the armies of Russia, Iran, and most of the other Islamic nations [involved in Ezekiel 38-39] will be quickly filled by the Antichrist. He will seize this opportunity to launch his world empire at the midpoint of the seven-year tribulation. He will establish a headquarters in Babylon (modern Iraq) ... [Hitchcock, 2006, pp. 193-194]

Was Ezekiel 38-39 fulfilled during the time of Esther, around 473 BC? No, for the following reasons. First, Ezekiel 38:16 speaks of the land of Israel being

invaded, and the invaders being destroyed on the mountains of Israel. In Esther, the events took place in Persia—a long way from Israel. Second, God destroys the invaders of Ezekiel 38-39 via supernatural and natural means; however, in the book of Esther, the Jews and the local government did this. Third, Put (Libya) was not part of the Persian empire. Fourth, God sends fire upon Magog and those who live in the coastlands (Ezekiel 39:6); however, no such thing happened in the book of Esther [Hitchcock, 2006].

Ron Rhodes writes:

The unique alignment of the nations described in Ezekiel 38-39 has never occurred in the past, but it is occurring now. ... even now one can observe alliances between Russia, Iran, and other Muslim nations, all of whom would like to see Israel obliterated.

Related to this, an alliance between many of the nations mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39 may not necessarily have made good sense in Ezekiel's day because some are not located near each other, but it makes great sense in our day because the nations that make up the coalition are predominantly Muslim. That alone is more than enough reason for them to unify in attacking Israel—especially given current Islamic hatred for Israel.

Ezekiel's invasion occurs after Israel is regathered from all over the earth—"gathered from many nations" (Ezekiel 38:8,12)—to a land that had been a wasteland. Certainly the Jews had been in bondage before. For example, they were held in bondage in Egypt. They went into captivity in Assyria and Babylon. But in each of these cases, they were freed from a single nation, not many nations around the world. The only regathering of Jews from many nations around the world in Israel's history is that which is occurring today.

Ezekiel 36-37, which prophesies the rebirth of Israel, appears to be fulfilled before our very eyes as Jews return to their homeland from all over the world. Chapters 36-37 are apparently being fulfilled literally, so we can reasonably assume that chapters 38-39 will likewise be fulfilled literally. [Rhodes, 2008, pp. 90-91]

Regarding taking prophecy *literally*, Rhodes adds:

Undoubtedly one of the major problems in understanding prophecy is determining whether it should be understood in its natural, or literal meaning. Unless prophetic statements are taken in their normal sense, it is almost impossible to determine their meaning with any consistency. If one denies that a prophecy is to be taken in its normal sense, the door is opened to dozens of unauthorized interpretations. The non-literal interpretation of prophecy has been a major source of confusion and contradiction. [Rhodes, 2008, p. 91]

Regarding Iraq's notable absence in Ezekiel 38-39, he adds:

Another possible scenario is that Iraq will not be a part of this Islamic invading coalition because a rebuilt Babylon (capital of Iraq) will be the headquarters of the Antichrist during the tribulation period (Revelation 17-18). Scripture reveals that the Antichrist will sign a seven-year peace pact

with Israel (Daniel 9:27), and this will signal the beginning of the tribulation period. If the Ezekiel invasion takes place in the first half of the tribulation, Iraq could not possibly be a part of the invading force simply because Iraq, with its capital in Babylon, will be controlled by the Antichrist, who signed the peace pact with Israel. J. Dwight Pentecost suggests the possibility that when God destroys the invading coalition, the Antichrist may try to take credit for it. [Rhodes, 2008, p. 115]

Regarding America's possible absence from Ezekiel 38-39 (and actually from seemingly all of Scripture), Rhodes writes:

An interesting discussion has arisen over the phrase, "*Tarshish with all its villages.*" Thomas Ice is one of many who believe the phrase "refers to the colonies of Western Europe and the nations that have subsequently arisen from them. This would include North America and the United States." What are the arguments for this interpretation?

[Thomas Ice]: "First, merchants of Tarshish refer to the Phoenician maritime and trading community located in Spain during the general time of King Solomon, 3,000 years ago. Second, the merchants of Tarshish, during the last 500 years, developed into the modern mercantile nations of Western Europe like Spain, Holland, and Britain. Third, the phrase "with all its villages" or the variant rendering "with all the young lions" [in the KJV] would be a reference to its trans-Atlantic colonies, which would include America. Thus, it is reasoned, because America is the most dominant of these Western nations, this must be a reference to America."

If this interpretation is correct, then according to Ezekiel 38:13, the United States would be among the nations lodging a protest against this massive invasion into Israel. But the protest is not backed with action.

Many today believe this passage refers to the United States, but I just don't find enough scriptural evidence to support the view. Therefore, I cannot subscribe to it. [Rhodes, 2008, p. 121]

An interesting phrase appears in Ezekiel 38:11:

Ezekiel 38:11 You will say, "I will invade a land of **unwalled villages**; I will attack a **peaceful and unsuspecting people** -- all of them **living without walls and without gates and bars.**

This hardly describes Israel today because Israel has walls for protection from some neighbors, is not living in peace, and is always on the alert. Some scholars believe that the conditions of the peace treaty or covenant mentioned in Daniel 9:24-27 and possibly inferred in Ezekiel 38 represent the same agreement, because both of these describe a time of peace and prosperity [Hitchcock, 2010].

It should also be noted that most of the cities of Israel had walls built around them until modern times [Brimmer, 2011]. For example, until 1860, Jerusalem

	<p>was a walled city with none of its residents living outside the walled area. Today, the Old City within Jerusalem still has walls; however, most of Israel’s cities are unwalled. There is, of course, the wall between Israel proper and some of the Palestinian-controlled areas—erected for security reasons.</p> <p>Lastly, the Gog and Magog that are mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39 are <i>not</i> the same Gog and Magog described in Revelation 20:8. The former refers to an event that will probably occur well before the start of the Millennium, whereas the latter event occurs near the end of the Millennium. This means that about 1,000 years separate the two events. However, it is interesting to note that in both cases, God’s judgment includes fire.</p> <p><i>For a discussion about whether or not the United States is mentioned in prophecy, see the section further above titled “Is America in Bible Prophecy?”</i></p>
Preterist Position	<p>Hank Hanegraaff and other scholars believe the language of Ezekiel 38-39 has been fulfilled in Old Testament prophecies—and in Jesus Christ.</p> <p>Ezekiel 36-39 was fulfilled in Old Testament times, not in 1948. When Ezekiel 36:8 states that Israel will “soon” come out of exile, the prophet Ezekiel is not speaking about 2500+ years later; rather, he is talking about the return from exile in Babylon.</p> <p>Most of Ezekiel 38-39 can be taken <i>symbolically</i>. For example, the words about fire, brimstone, and earthquakes are apocalyptic writing, and should not be taken literally. Other writings are also expressed in apocalyptic language (e.g., Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, and other Old Testament books)—and are meant to be taken symbolically.</p> <p>Furthermore, note the description of events. Ezekiel 38-39 involves horses, horseman, bows, and arrows. Gary DeMar notes that this doesn’t sound like modern-day warfare. He says that is because <i>it was an ancient battle</i> [Hunt & DeMar, 1998]. DeMar argues that Ezekiel 38-39 was fulfilled in the days of Haman and Queen Esther of Persia (e.g., circa 473 BC). Dispensationalists disagree.</p> <p>Some authors state that the idea that “Rosh” and “Gog and Magog” refer to Russia, is nonsense. When using the word “north”, Ezekiel is giving the <i>direction</i> of the attack, not the location of the attacker’s country.</p> <p>Harold Eberle and Martin Trench believe that Ezekiel 38-39 was fulfilled in the wars that took place from 164-175 BC between the Seleucids and Antiochus IV Epiphanes [Eberle & Trench, 2021]. The descriptions of horses, horsemen, shield, buckler, and sword speak of warfare during those days, and not some future event.</p> <p>The idea that this is a future attack by Russia is incorrect. Ezekiel 38-39 was not written to today’s audience. It was fulfilled long ago. Authors who believe</p>

	<p>that Russia will invade Israel from the north (in the future) are leading people astray with their misinterpretation of Scripture. Hank Hanegraaff says that the book of Ezekiel (and also Daniel) was fulfilled a century after its writing, that is, when Ezra and Nehemiah rebuilt Jerusalem and the Temple (which was subsequently destroyed in 70 AD). Ezekiel was a member of a refugee camp on the banks of the Kebar River, circa 570 BC. He was looking forward to the days when Israel would be back in the land, with a rebuilt temple. The temple that he was looking forward to was the <i>second</i> temple.</p> <p>Hanegraaff adds that modern-day friction between Iran and Israel has nothing to do with Bible prophecy. This is an “abuse of Scripture”. Instead of trying to use newspaper headlines as a possible fulfillment of prophecy, we should focus on the real, future prophecies: resurrection, no more sin, no more Satan, etc.</p> <p>Contrary to what some dispensationalists claim, it is wrong to associate the Prince of Rosh [NKJV] with Russia. <i>Rosh</i> is never used as the name of a nation in the Bible. Instead, it means “chief” or “head”, such as that indicated by the Jewish Holy Day <i>Rosh Hashanah</i> (literally translated as <i>head of the year</i>). By associating Gog and Magog with modern-day Russia, it is negatively associating today’s Russians with errant Bible prophecy.</p> <p>As the writer of Revelation, John is giving a description of the forces of evil coming against the people of God, “both from within the Jewish ecclesiastical society and the Roman government”—when he mentions Gog and Magog in Revelation 20:8 [Hanegraaff, <i>Bible Answer Man</i>, August 29, 2011]. This passage refers back to Ezekiel 38 and 39, which was a real event. The Revelation passage mentions “1,000 years”; however, this does not refer to a <i>literal</i> period of 1,000 years, but rather it signifies that the time of oppression by the forces of evil will be short, but the vindication will be eternal.</p> <p>Hanegraaff comments that the notion of Gog and Magog being literal—or being Russia for that matter—isn’t something that Christians should divide over, because it is not an essential doctrine of Christianity.</p>
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<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>When will the Magog invasion take place? Is the Magog invasion part of the Battle of Armageddon?</p> <p>Are the references about the destruction of Babylon, Assyria, the land of the Philistines, Moab, Damascus, Cush, Tyre, Egypt, Edom, Arabia, etc., also part of the Battle of Armageddon? Have any of these prophecies been fulfilled? Is there any reason to believe that these prophecies are part of the Magog invasion? What about Israel’s neighbors: Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt? Are they also part of the Magog invasion or Armageddon?</p>
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<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>Regarding the Ezekiel 38-39 timeline, the most common timeframes seriously considered today are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>After the Rapture, but before the Tribulation.</i> Most pretribulationists support this view (e.g., Arnold Fruchtenbaum, Thomas Ice, Tim LaHaye, Randall Price, David Reagan, and Ron Rhodes) [Woods, 2016b; Reagan, 2019b; Rhodes, 2019]. Note that it is possible that there may be many years—even decades—between the Rapture and the start of the Tribulation. 2. <i>During the first half of the Tribulation.</i> Mark Hitchcock, J. Dwight Pentecost, Charles Ryrie, and John F. Walvoord take this position, in part because Israel won't be “at rest” until a covenant is confirmed with Israel at the start of the Tribulation [Woods, 2016b]. Andy Woods states that there will only be two times when Israel will be “at rest”: during the Millennium, and during the first part of the Tribulation after the Antichrist promises peace and security to Israel—although it will be a false peace. David Levy thinks that the Magog Invasion will probably take place in the first half of the Tribulation but towards the middle of the Tribulation [Levy, 2011a]. 3. <i>At the Battle of Armageddon</i> (i.e., near the end of the Tribulation). Adherents include Charles Feinberg, Gary Hamrick, Douglas Hamp, Dave Hunt, Hal Lindsey, and John MacArthur. <p>Less common timeframes include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. <i>At the middle of the Tribulation.</i> Thomas Ice writes that this position was popular in the 1980s, and at that time included notable prophecy researchers such as Hal Lindsey, John Walvoord, J. Dwight Pentecost, and Charles Ryrie [Ice, 2009c]. Today, many dispensationalists hold to the <i>pretribulationist view</i> of the Magog invasion. 5. <i>Before the Rapture</i>; but, this viewpoint is much less common. It was part of the popular <i>Left Behind</i> fiction series. 6. <i>A two-phase view</i> in which most of Ezekiel 38 takes place during the first part of the Tribulation, and Ezekiel 39 takes place near the <i>end</i> of the Tribulation [Woods, 2016b]. The time of relative peace described in Ezekiel 38 would be similar to the time of the opening of the second seal in Revelation. Most of Ezekiel 39 describes the time near the end of the Tribulation. There would be no problem with extending into the Millennium: the burial of the dead and the use of the weapons for fuel for 7 years.
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7. *At the end of the Millennium.* Revelation 20:7 says that Satan will be released from his prison: the shaft of the Abyss. This view is more difficult to support.

Let us consider the most common cases, in order:

(1) After the Rapture, but before the Tribulation

Thomas Ice, an advocate of [this] position, puts it: “It will be during the interval of days, weeks, months, or years between the rapture and the start of the seven-year tribulation.” Several arguments support this view:

1. The world will be in a state of absolute chaos following the rapture. The United States has a heavy population of Christians, so the rapture will have a devastating effect on the United States. Russia and her Muslim allies may well seize the moment and launch a massive attack against Israel, which, up until this time, had been protected by the United States.

2. Once God destroys Russia and the Muslim invaders prior to the tribulation, the Antichrist would be free to rise as the leader of the revived Roman Empire—a European superstate. Thomas Ice writes, “...this would remove much of the Russian and Muslim influence currently in the world today and allow a Euro-centric orientation to arise.”

3. If God destroys the Muslim invaders prior to the beginning of the tribulation, the Antichrist could more easily sign a peace pact with Israel (Daniel 9:27), guaranteeing that Israel will be protected...

4. This scenario ... may account for Israel’s ability to construct the Jewish temple on the temple mount in Jerusalem...

5. If the invasion takes place after the rapture, and the rapture takes place at least three and a half years prior to the beginning of the tribulation, Israel would have time to burn the weapons for seven years prior to the midpoint of the tribulation, when they take flight from Jerusalem. A significant lapse of time may therefore exist between the rapture and the beginning of the tribulation. [Rhodes, 2008, pp. 182-183]

Arnold Fruchtenbaum, David Reagan, and Ron Rhodes believe that the Magog invasion will take place *at least 3½ years before the start of the Tribulation* [Fruchtenbaum, 2004; Reagan, 2010; Reagan, 2019b]. The fact that Israel will use the invaders’ weapons for fuel for 7 years, and that it will take Israel 7 months to bury the dead, suggests this timeframe. In particular, it rules out a midtribulational—or later—timeframe of the Magog invasion because Israel will be too busy fleeing from the wrath of the Antichrist, and would simply not have time to bury the dead (near a newly constructed town: Hamonah). Also, there seems to be no indication of the Antichrist, in Ezekiel 38-39, implying that he is not yet on the scene.

This war will result in the destruction of the military power of the Russians and its Arab allies, including the non-Arab nation of Iran. Ezekiel says the armies will be totally destroyed by the Lord on the mountains of Israel.

Ezekiel further states that the Lord's weapons of destruction will be torrential rains, hail, fire, brimstone, pestilence and a great earthquake—all of which will produce battlefield confusion that will cause the troops to end up killing each other (Ezekiel 38:19-22).

Incidentally, regarding the earthquake, Ezekiel says it will be a "great earthquake" that will shake the entire Middle Eastern area, "collapsing mountains and walls" (Ezekiel 38:19-20). I believe this earthquake will destroy the Dome of the Rock and pave the way for the Jews to rebuild their Temple.

Once the War of Gog & Magog is concluded, I believe the Antichrist will rush to fill the vacuum left in the Middle East by signing his treaty with Israel. And with that area peaceful, he will then launch his campaign to conquer the world.

... Also, a revolt throughout Asia will occur, producing an army of 200 million that will start marching toward Israel to challenge the Antichrist (Revelation 9:16).

Daniel says that when the Antichrist arrives back in the Middle East with his army, he will rampage from Syria down through Israel to Egypt and then, according to Zechariah 14:1-2, he will return to conquer Jerusalem. And just as he has conquered half of Jerusalem, he will hear that the Asian army has reached the Euphrates River. This news will motivate him to retreat from Jerusalem to the Valley of Armageddon where he will prepare to confront the invading armies (Daniel 11:14-15). [Reagan, 2019b, pp. 7-8]

(2) During the First Half of the Tribulation

Ron Rhodes writes:

[A] possibility is that the northern military coalition's invasion into Israel takes place sometime during the first half of the tribulation, even as late as the middle of the tribulation. This view is held by John F. Walvoord, J. Dwight Pentecost, Charles Ryrie, Herman Hoyt, Mark Hitchcock, and others. Here are some of the arguments in favor of this position:

1. This position easily satisfies the precondition of Israel being secure and at rest prior to the invasion. This state of security and rest will be based on Israel signing the peace pact with the leader of the revived Roman Empire (the Antichrist). ... During this time of security and rest, during the first half of the tribulation period, the northern military coalition will invade Israel.

2. When God destroys the northern coalition during the first half of the tribulation, the resulting power vacuum will allow for the quick ascendancy of the Antichrist. With no more Russian and Muslim military forces, the Antichrist will have a much easier time of attaining world domination (see Revelation 13). As John F. Walvoord puts it, "When the invading armies are

defeated, the ruler of the ten nations will elevate himself and proclaim himself ruler of the entire world.”

3. The destruction of Muslim forces in the first half of the tribulation will also allow for the emergence of a one-world religion ... [which] will be much easier in this religious vacuum. [Rhodes, 2008, p. 184]

Thomas Ice writes:

I recently read that on the modern battlefield of today, because of the great firepower of modern armies, that about 20% of warfare deaths worldwide are due to friendly fire. [Ezekiel 38:21] clearly states that the only killing to be done by Gog’s invaders of Israel will be that of massacring their fellow troops. “And I shall call for a sword against him on all My mountains,” declares the Lord GOD. ‘Every man’s sword will be against his brother.’” Apparently in the confusion generated by the Lord’s earthquake and great shaking of the mountains of Israel, Gog’s armies will experience a whole lot of friendly fire as the Lord confuses them and they turn upon one another.

Imagine the great embarrassment and humiliation that Gog’s constituents back home experience when they learn that the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] did not even engage this great army; they did not have to because many of them killed each other. Upon further examination Gog’s allies will learn that it was really the God of Israel that they went up against. [Ice, 2008]

Mark Hitchcock remarks that Daniel 11 is probably a parallel passage for a number of reasons [Hitchcock, 2013b]. First, Daniel and Ezekiel were contemporaries, and contemporaries often write about the same thing. In particular, both of the battles described in Ezekiel 38 and Daniel 11 take place during the “latter years”. They are just treated from different perspectives. The attacking nations in both cases will be wiped out by God. The nations come from the same geographic areas. Both events will take place at a time when Israel is living securely in the land, which seems to imply that this is during the first half of the Tribulation. Furthermore, after the invading armies of Ezekiel 38-39 get destroyed, the Antichrist (Daniel 11) may attempt to fill the power void.

(3) At the Battle of Armageddon (i.e., at the End of the Tribulation)

A minority of Bible scholars believe that the events of Ezekiel 38-39 *are part of the Battle of Armageddon*. Dave Hunt argues that the Antichrist needs to enforce some “guarantees” to: convince Israel to live in peace without walls, bars, or gates; and allow the Temple to be rebuilt. Furthermore, at the end of this battle, it appears that Israel will turn to God. Here are some Scriptures that suggest this is “the grand finale”:

Ezekiel 38:23 And so I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD.'

Ezekiel 39:7 "I will make known my holy name among my people Israel. **I will no longer let my holy name be profaned, and the nations will know** that I the LORD am the Holy One in Israel.

Ezekiel 39:22 From that day forward **the house of Israel will know** that I am the LORD their God.

Ezekiel 39:28-29 Then they will know that I am the LORD their God, for though I sent them into exile among the nations, I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind. **I will no longer hide my face from them,** for I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD."

However, with respect to Ezekiel 38-39 being part of the Battle of Armageddon, Mark Hitchcock writes:

However, there are four main obstacles to this view. First Ezekiel 38 names specific allies, whereas Armageddon involves all the nations of the earth. Second, in Ezekiel 39 the destruction is on the mountains of Israel while at Armageddon it stretches from Megiddo in the north to Petra in the south. Third, in Ezekiel the armies are destroyed by convulsions of nature, but at Armageddon they are destroyed by the personal appearance of Christ. Fourth, and most importantly, at the end of the tribulation Israel will not be "at rest" or "living securely" which is required by Ezekiel 38:8,11,14. In the time of great tribulation, Israel will not be at rest, for Christ told them to flee to the mountains to escape their persecutors. By the end of the tribulation many Jews will have obeyed Him and fled into the wilderness, and the rest of the Jewish people will have endured three and a half years of persecution by the Antichrist. The end of the tribulation will be one time when Israel will not be "at rest" or "living securely." Therefore, the invasion described by Ezekiel could not be a part of the battle of Armageddon. [Hitchcock, 2006, p. 183]

Here is a table of contrasts between the two battles:

Battle of Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 38-39)	Armageddon (Revelation 16 & 19)
Gog leads the invasion.	The Antichrist leads the invasion.
Israel is at peace.	Israel is not at peace; it is in chaos.
The armies gather to plunder Israel.	The armies gather to fight Christ.
The battle takes place on the mountains of Israel.	The battle takes place on a vast plain (wide valley) starting at Megiddo in northern Israel, heading south past Jerusalem.
Christ does not appear at the battle.	Christ appears at the battle.
The attackers are destroyed by pestilence, hailstones, fire, and brimstone.	The attackers are destroyed by a supernatural word from Jesus.
The armies are drawn by God ("I will put hooks in your jaws").	The armies are gathered by demons.
Iran, Russian, and Islamic allies invade Israel.	All nations invade Israel.

[sources: Hitchcock, 2006; Rhodes, 2008; Reagan, 2010]

The weapons mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39 are bows, arrows, shields, war clubs, and spears; and horses are used for transportation. Although this is possible—and would be consistent with a literal interpretation of Scripture [Ice, 2012b]—Hitchcock emphasizes Ezekiel may have simply been writing in the language of the day—when readers would have understood the battle scene much more readily than if Ezekiel had described guns, missiles, tanks, and planes to an ancient audience. This is also another reason why Ezekiel referred to the invading nations by their ancient/Biblical names (e.g., from the Table of Nations in Genesis 10). Some nations change names and borders relatively often; therefore, their ancient names serve as a stable reference point. The wording of Scripture also encourages the study of Bible prophecy. God is not giving away too much “information” that could cause some groups (even Christian groups) to “influence” or accelerate future events. The descriptive details in Ezekiel 38-39 should serve as a testimony (i.e., a sufficient verifier) of Bible prophecy, even to non-believers, upon its fulfillment!

The *two-phase view* mentioned as Scenario (6) has its fulfillment close in time to the Battle of Armageddon, although it is not part of the Battle of Armageddon. There are similarities between Ezekiel 39:4,17-18; Matthew 24:27-29; and Revelation 19:17-18 (e.g., beasts and birds feeding on human remains) [Woods, 2016b]. Andy Woods got this two-phased view from Harold Hoehner. The first phase (Ezekiel 38) takes place when Israel is living in peace (Hebrew: *batach* meaning: living securely; and Hebrew: *shacat* meaning: quiet, undisturbed, tranquil, or peaceful) [Woods, 2022d]. Then, the second seal of the 7 seals of Revelation is opened, and there is a transition from peace to warfare. The second phase (Ezekiel 39) takes place in the judgments leading up to Armageddon, just before Christ’s Second Coming. It is a time when all Israel calls for Christ to return, in accordance with Matthew 23:39. Ezekiel 39:22,29 indicate that, from that day forward, Israel will know that the Lord is with them. Remember, one of the key purposes of the Tribulation is to win Israel back to the Lord. It would be surprising for Israel to be won over to Christ early in the Tribulation period. Woods thinks that Ezekiel 38-39 will be a tool that God uses to wake up Israel. The weapons of the invaders will be used for fuel for 7 years—and this timeframe extends into the Millennium.

Walid Shoebat and Joel Richardson believe that the Magog invasion is part of the Battle of Armageddon because of some of the same verses as above, and because of a major earthquake described in several passages:

Ezekiel 38:19-20 In my zeal and fiery wrath I declare that at that time there shall be a **great earthquake** in the land of Israel. The fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, every creature that moves along the ground, and all the people on the face of the earth will tremble at my presence. The mountains will be overturned, the cliffs will crumble and every wall will fall to the ground.

Zechariah 14:2-4 I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city. Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, **and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west**, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.

Ezekiel 38:22 I will execute judgment upon him with plague and bloodshed; I will pour down torrents of rain, **hailstones** and burning sulfur on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him.

Revelation 16:16-21 Then they [demons] gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called **Armageddon**. ... Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe **earthquake**. **No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake**. The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. From the sky huge **hailstones** of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.

Shoebat and Richardson comment that the seven-year period for burning the weapons could easily extend into the Millennium. As noted in the table above, they believe that Magog is *not* Russia, but rather Turkey. They are of the opinion that the war involving Gog and Magog and its allies are all Muslim nations:

Speaking to an audience of several of the most prominent prophecy authors in Dallas, Texas, I asked a question, “Besides the argument of whether Magog is Russia or not, can you name any literal references in the Bible to a nation that God destroys in the end-times that is not Muslim?”

I paused, waiting for someone to rise to answer the question. “No one is raising their hands. Is it because you can’t find any?” ... Yet, all of them failed to name a single nation that Jehovah-God will destroy that is not a Muslim nation.

In every portrayal of Christ’s return to the earth, He is fighting a nation that today is Muslim. Try to imagine how I felt when I read Habakkuk 3, which says that in the last-days, God, the Holy One, would actually come to the earth on a mission to execute vengeance on Teman (Arabia) and Cushan (Sudan). “I saw the tents of Cushan in distress, the dwellings of Midian in anguish” (Habakkuk 3:7). Here Christ fights in battles against Arabia, Sudan and Somalia—all Muslim nations. I had to ask myself, if Allah and the God of the Bible are one and the same, why then does the Bible consistently portray God as being on the side of Israel and against the Muslims? ... in the Book of Isaiah, chapter 19: He will come to *Egypt* to execute *vengeance*;

“See Jehovah rides on a swift cloud and is coming to Egypt. The idols of Egypt tremble before him, and the hearts of the Egyptians melt within them.”

Again, in Isaiah I read that “the Lord, Jehovah Almighty would lop off the boughs of the ‘great cedar’ [Antichrist] with great power and ‘Lebanon will fall before the mighty one.’” (Isaiah 10:34) ...

I could not deny the fact that the Bible portrays Jesus the Messiah as returning to fight nations that come against Israel. In numerous passages, he actually confronts them by name. Even in Joel 3, where we find the judgment of the nations for dividing Israel, we read: “Now what have you against me, O Tyre and Sidon [Lebanon] and all you regions of Philistia [Gaza]; Are you repaying me for something I have done? If you are paying me back, I will swiftly and speedily return on your own heads what you have done.” (Joel 3:4).

... But which nations does He [God] rouse Himself to fight? The nations that He wars against are well defined in Psalm 83 as a confederacy of Muslim nations allied against Israel: “They form an alliance against you—the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, of Moab and the Hagrites, Gebal, Ammon and Amalek, Philistia, with the people of Tyre. Even Assyria has joined them to lend strength to the descendants of Lot.” (Psalm 83:5-8) [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008, pp. 29-32]

Shoebat and Richardson continue to describe the nations that Jesus Christ fights against upon His return, emphasizing that these are Middle Eastern nations, and *not* European nations. They draw many references from the Old Testament about unfulfilled Bible prophecies that will be fulfilled when Jesus Christ returns, at the Battle of Armageddon:

Gideon is crucial if we want to understand what the Messiah will do during His war expeditions after He sets foot on the Mount of Olives to fight for the Battle of Jerusalem. Though it is rarely discussed, Christ, like Gideon will fight against “Midian.” The Bible refers to Midian as Ishmaelites (Judges 8:22). They are the descendants of Abraham’s fourth son with his concubine Keturah.

Like Gideon, the Bible portrays Christ as fighting against the inhabitants of Arabia: “God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth. His splendor was like the sunrise; rays flashed from his hand, where his power was hidden” (Habakkuk 3:3-4). Jesus in person is returning from battle out of Teman in Arabia. How often is this discussed in churches? Jesus will physically return and will judge not only the inhabitants of Arabia, but also Cush, which includes the modern day Islamist nations of Sudan and Somalia: “I saw the tents of Cushan in distress, the dwellings of Midian in anguish” (Habakkuk 3:3-6).

Midian refers to the regions east of the Jordan River and southwards on into modern Saudi Arabia.

... Ezekiel 35 speaks of the judgment of Mount Seir (v. 1) and connects it with Edom: “As you rejoiced because the inheritance of the house of Israel was desolate, so I will do to you; you shall be desolate, O Mount Seir, as well as all of Edom—all of it! Then they shall know that I am the Lord” (v. 15).

Greater Edom encompasses the land from Teman to Dedan which today is from Yemen to Saudi Arabia.

... “The hand of Jehovah will rest on this mountain (Zion); but Moab will be tramped under him as straw is trampled down in the manure” (Isaiah 24:10)
... Once again, the Messiah comes back to trample Moab.

... For those who hold to the European Antichrist paradigm, why does God specifically mention Moab and not any nations from Europe? If you take a *face-value* approach to interpretation, which is more reasonable to conclude; that this passage is pointing to the final End-Time defeat of the modern day physical and spiritual descendants of Moab, or that this passage is allegorically pointing us to Europe? Let’s get real here. The Bible simply does not teach a European Antichrist paradigm.

The Prophecy of Isaiah 63 concludes with the Messiah emerging out of Edom with his robes literally drenched with blood from the multitudes of those that he has slaughtered. That’s right. Have you ever seen Messiah portrayed this way? He left as a lamb, but he returns as a mighty conquering lion: “Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? ‘It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save.’ Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress? ‘I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing. For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redemption has come.’” (Isaiah 63:1-4).

Ezekiel 25 also reveals exactly how God feels about Edom: “Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them; Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also stretch out mine hand upon Edom, and will cut off man and beast from it; and I will make it desolate from Teman; and they of Dedan shall fall by the sword” (v.13 [KJV]).

Teman is in Yemen, while Dedan was an ancient city in central Saudi Arabia that is now known as Al-Ula. Because of the use of both Teman and Dedan, we are to understand that the entire landmass stretching southward along the Red Sea and well into central Saudi Arabia is being highlighted. The Jewish Tanakh translates this verse; “from Teman to Dedan.” This is a massive area.

... So who are the nations God says on whom He will pour out his wrath? The list follows. As you read the list, ask yourself if the emphasis is on the Middle East or Europe: “Pharaoh king of Egypt, his attendants, his officials and all his people, and all the foreign people there; all the kings of Uz; all the kings of the Philistines—those of Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the people left at Ashdod, Edom, Moab and Ammon; all the kings of Tyre and Sidon; the kings of the coastlands across the sea; Tema, Buz and all who are in distant places; all the kings of Arabia and all the kings of the foreign people who live in the desert; all the kings of Zimri, Elam and Media; and all the kings of the North, near and far, one after the other—all the kingdoms on the face of the earth. And after all of them, the king of Sheshach will drink it too ... for I am calling down a sword upon all who live on the earth, declares Jehovah Almighty” (v. 19-26, 29).

Again, the word used for earth is “eretz” and need not literally refer to every last nation on the whole earth. If it were, then what would be the point of providing all of these names? The nations that are named however are all middle Eastern Muslim nations. Is this a coincidence? [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008, pp. 185-190]

Ezekiel 25-32 lists 7 nations that are singled out for judgment: Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt [Missler, 2012]. Edom, in particular, is singled out for judgment more often than any other nation in the Old Testament.

Regarding the judgment of nations mentioned in the book of Isaiah:

Consider the nations that are emphasized: *Babylon*—Isaiah 13; *Assyria and the Philistines (Palestinians)*—Isaiah 14; *Moab*—Isaiah 15; *Damascus*—Isaiah 17; *Cush (Sudan and Somaliland)*—Isaiah 18; *Tyre*—Isaiah 19; *Egypt and Cush*—Isaiah 20; *Babylon (Iraq and Arabia) and Edom (Arabia)*—Isaiah 21; *Tyre (Lebanon)*—Isaiah 23.

Does this sound like a ten-nation European confederation to you? [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008, p. 226]

Isaiah 17:1 A prophecy against Damascus: "See, Damascus will no longer be a city but will become a heap of ruins.

Damascus is said to be the world’s oldest, continuously inhabited city. The first Biblical reference to it is Genesis 14:15. Some claim that Isaiah 17:1 may have been fulfilled in 732 BC via the invasion of the Assyrians under Tiglath-Pileser; however, it is not clear that Damascus actually became a “heap of ruins”. We know that Isaiah’s ministry ran from about 739 BC to 686 BC [MacArthur, 2006]. There is certainly the possibility that Isaiah prophesied about Damascus early in his ministry; however, many prophecy teachers think this applies to a future event. Those who think Isaiah 17:1 is part of an imminent future event include Arno Gaebelein, Mondo Gonzales, Jack Hibbs, Tom Hughes, Thomas Ice, Hal Lindsey, J. Vernon McGee, Chuck Missler, J. Dwight Pentecost, Joel Rosenberg, and Bill Salus [Salus & Gonzales, 2022].

The locations of the nations of Isaiah 21 (Dumah, Dedan, Tema, Kedar) are all part of Arabia, “the desert by the sea” (Isaiah 21:1):

Some might argue that the context of Isaiah 21 is only historical. But it is difficult to ignore the multiple references throughout the Book of Isaiah to Kedar, Tema, Dedan and Dumah. Dumah is in Saudi Arabia near Yathrib (Medina), and today is known as “Dumat el-Jandal.” Dumah, one of the sons of Ishmael, is also associated with Edom and Seir in Isaiah 21:11. It is believed by many that Kedar, another of Ishmael’s sons, is the line from which Muhammad descended. It is likely that Mecca is the “glory of Kedar” mentioned in verse 16. Historians generally identify Dumah with the Addyrian Adummatu people. By these and other references, we can conclude that Dumah stands for Arabia. [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008, p. 397]

Abraham was the father of both Ishmael (“God Hears” in Hebrew) and Isaac (“laughter” in Hebrew; equivalently, “Yitzhak”). Hagar (Abraham’s maidservant, a surrogate mother) bore Ishmael, whereas Abraham’s wife—Sarah—was the mother of Isaac, 13 years after Ishmael was born. Jesus Christ came through the line of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, ...

The 12 sons of Ishmael are: Nebajoth, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadar, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. Hagar and Ismael are believed to be buried in the Ka’aba at Mecca, Saudi Arabia [McQuaid, 2019]. Muslims consider Mecca to be the most sacred city in the world.

After Sarah’s death, Abraham took another wife—Keturah—and they had 6 other children (Genesis 25:1-2): Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. Thus, Abraham was the father of many nations.

It is interesting to see the diversity of the “Mothers of the Middle East”—that is, the women who had significant roles in the history of Israel and the ancestry of Jesus Christ [Hindson, 2012a]:

Mother	Wife of ...	Nation of Origin
Sarah (an Aramean)	Abraham	Syria
Rebekah	Isaac	Syria
Leah (from Haran)	Jacob	Syria
Rachel (from Haran)	Jacob	Syria
Tamar	Judah	Canaan
Asenath	Joseph	Egypt
Zipporah (a descendant of Keturah)	Moses	Midian
Rahab	Salmon	Canaan
Ruth	Boaz	Moab

Boaz was the father of Obed, who was the father of Jesse, who was the father of David, the future King of Israel ... who was also an ancestor of Jesus Christ.

Around 760 BC, the prophet Amos wrote the following prophecies, that are yet to be fulfilled:

Amos 1:1-15 The words of Amos, one of the shepherds of Tekoa -- what he saw concerning Israel two years before the earthquake, when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam son of Jehoash was king of Israel. He said: "The LORD roars from Zion and thunders from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds dry up, and the top of Carmel withers." This is what the LORD says: "For three **sins of Damascus**, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. Because she threshed Gilead with sledges having iron teeth, I **will send fire upon the house of Hazael** that will consume the fortresses of Ben-Hadad. I will break down the gate of Damascus; I will destroy the king who is in the Valley of Aven and the one who holds the scepter in Beth Eden. The

people of Aram will go into exile to Kir," says the LORD. This is what the LORD says: "For three **sins of Gaza**, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. Because she took captive whole communities and sold them to Edom, **I will send fire upon the walls of Gaza** that will consume her fortresses. I will destroy the king of Ashdod and the one who holds the scepter in Ashkelon. I will turn my hand against Ekron, till the last of the Philistines is dead," says the Sovereign LORD. This is what the LORD says: "For three **sins of Tyre**, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. Because she sold whole communities of captives to Edom, disregarding a treaty of brotherhood, **I will send fire upon the walls of Tyre** that will consume her fortresses." This is what the LORD says: "For three **sins of Edom**, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. Because he pursued his brother with a sword, stifling all compassion, because his anger raged continually and his fury flamed unchecked, **I will send fire upon Teman** that will consume the fortresses of Bozrah." This is what the LORD says: "For three **sins of Ammon**, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. Because he ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to extend his borders, **I will set fire to the walls of Rabbah** that will consume her fortresses amid war cries on the day of battle, amid violent winds on a stormy day. Her king will go into exile, he and his officials together," says the LORD.

Furthermore, consider the following Scriptures:

Ezekiel 30:3-5 For the day is near, the day of the LORD is near -- a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations. A sword will come against **Egypt**, and anguish will come upon **Cush**. When the slain fall in Egypt, her wealth will be carried away and her foundations torn down. Cush and **Put, Lydia** and all **Arabia, Libya** and the people of the covenant land will fall by the sword along with Egypt.

Ezekiel 32:24-30 "**Elam** is there, with all her hordes around her grave. All of them are slain, fallen by the sword. ... Because their terror had spread in the land of the living, they bear their shame with those who go down to the pit; they are laid among the slain. "**Meshech and Tubal** are there, with all their hordes around their graves. ... "You too, O Pharaoh, will be broken ... "**Edom** is there, her kings and all her princes; despite their power, they are laid with those killed by the sword. ... "All the **princes of the north** and all the **Sidonians** are there; they went down with the slain in disgrace despite the terror caused by their power."

Bill Salus believes that the Magog alliance and the Battle of Armageddon are separate events, and furthermore, these two events follow a decisive victory by the Israeli Defense Forces over Israel's neighbors [Salus, 2008]. He groups these three battles into three rings or zones, each progressively further away from Israel:

1. Israel's "exceedingly great army" (Ezekiel 37:10 and Jeremiah 49:21) gaining victory over its immediate neighbors (e.g., Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt)—as a fulfillment of Psalm 83
2. The Magog invasion—as a fulfillment of Ezekiel 38-39
3. The Battle of Armageddon—as a fulfillment of Revelation 19-20

His thought-provoking thesis is based on these observations: (a) Psalm 83 (discussed in detail in the following pages) gives prophecies about Israel's immediate neighbors, but these nations are *surprisingly absent* from the list of nations that participate in the Magog invasion of Ezekiel 38-39; (b) Israel has an "exceedingly great army" (Ezekiel 37:10) following its return to the land in 1948 and beyond, which Salus claims may well be a reference to the modern-day Israeli Defense Forces; (c) Israel expands its borders to include its current neighbors (first ring); (d) Israel is a very wealthy nation before the Magog invasion (Ezekiel 38:13, second ring), which is hardly the case as of 2008; and (e) Ezekiel 38:11 characterizes Israel as being the home of a peaceful people, dwelling without walls, gates, or bars before the Magog invasion, which, again, is not the case in 2008.

Ezekiel 37:10 [NKJV] So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an **exceedingly great army**.

Ezekiel 38:11 You will say, "I will invade a land of **unwalled villages**; I will attack a **peaceful and unsuspecting people** -- all of them living without walls and without gates and bars.

Psalm 83:3-18 With cunning they conspire against your people; they plot against those you cherish. **"Come," they say, "let us destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel be remembered no more."** With one mind they plot together; they form an alliance against you -- the tents of **Edom** and the **Ishmaelites**, of **Moab** and the **Hagrites**, **Gebal**, **Ammon** and **Amalek**, **Philistia**, with the people of **Tyre**. Even **Assyria** has joined them to lend strength to the descendants of Lot. Selah Do to them as you did to Midian, as you did to Sisera and Jabin at the river Kishon, who perished at Endor and became like refuse on the ground. Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna, who said, "Let us take possession of the pasturelands of God." Make them like tumbleweed, O my God, like chaff before the wind. As fire consumes the forest or a flame sets the mountains ablaze, so pursue them with your tempest and terrify them with your storm. Cover their faces with shame so that men will seek your name, O LORD. May they ever be ashamed and dismayed; may they perish in disgrace. Let them know that you, whose name is the LORD -- that you alone are the Most High over all the earth.

Psalm 83 was written by Asaph, who was both a prophet and the worship leader of David—circa 950 BC. It is not clear whether the passage relates to modern-day *Syria*—or to ancient *Assyria* (north of Babylon, with Nineveh as its capital).

Nineveh was destroyed by the Babylonians in 612 BC. Were any of the Psalms prophetic? Yes. Examples include Psalm 2, Psalm 22, and Psalm 60:8. The Psalms include messages about Christ’s first coming and about His Second Coming [Salus, 2014a]. Salus argues that Psalm 83 has never been fulfilled.

Before examining Salus’ thesis, it should be noted that some scholars (e.g., Mark Hitchcock, Thomas Ice, and Andy Woods) are not in agreement with it. For example, Thomas Ice argues that many of the Scriptures that refer to Israel’s neighbors (in the context of Psalm 83) are likely to be part of the Battle of Armageddon, rather than be part of a pre-Rapture event [Ice, 2011c; Ice, 2011d]. Ice’s argument is at least partially supported by judgment references in the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel—references about some of the same nations that are listed in Psalm 83.

Amir Tsarfati states that Psalm 83 was a precise description of Israel’s fight for independence in 1948, when the neighbouring countries (Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, and Egypt) attacked [Tsarfati, 2018]. Israel won a decisive victory over these much larger and better equipped militaries.

Andy Woods thinks that Psalm 83 is really Asaph’s prayer against God’s enemies, requesting God’s judgment upon them; but, it does not prophesy a war at all [Woods, 2022d].

Salus argues that all of the neighbors of modern-day Israel are listed in Psalm 83. The Psalm 83 confederacy includes: Lebanon and Hezbollah to the north of Israel; Hamas, Egypt, and the Muslim Brotherhood to the southwest; Saudi Arabia to the southeast; the Palestinians, Jordan, and Iraq to the east; and Syria to the northeast [Salus, 2014a]. More specifically:

Psalm 83 Nations	Modern-Day Equivalent [Salus, 2008, p. 20]
Tents of Edom	Palestinian Refugees and Southern Jordanians
Ishmaelites	Saudi Arabians
Tents of Moab	Palestinian Refugees and Central Jordanians
Hagrites	Egyptians
Gebal	Northern Lebanese
Ammon	Palestinian Refugees and Northern Jordanians
Amalek	Arabs of the Sinai Peninsula
Philistia	Palestinian Refugees and Hamas—both of the Gaza Strip
Tyre	Hezbollah and Southern Lebanese
Assyria	Syrians and perhaps Northern Iraqis
Descendants of Lot	Moabites and Ammonites

... the Psalm 83 confederate Arab nations are absent from the Russian-Iranian alliance. Some commentators have found it interesting that Palestinians, Lebanese, Syrians, Jordanians, [Saudis], and Egyptians, who are presently the most observable opponents of the Jewish state, appear to opt out of this advance [Magog invasion]. The logical explanation for their transparency would be their prior defeat at the hands of Israel’s exceedingly great army. [Salus, 2008, p. 50]

Another possibility is that these neighbors of Israel are taken over, not by Israel, but by the enemies of Israel—that is, some of the nations listed in Ezekiel 38-39.

Although there is agreement with Salus on the modern-day names of the locations of most of the countries listed above, some scholars believe that the Ishmaelites, Hagrites, and Gebal (mentioned above) refer instead to people groups of northern Saudi Arabia (and possibly southern Jordan) [Ice, 2011d].

According to the Scriptures, the believing Egyptian (Isaiah 19:23-25), Jordanian (Jeremiah 48:47; 49:6), and Syrian (Isaiah 19:23-25) remnants of the Psalm 83 confederacy will return to their homelands following the return of Christ. According to Obadiah 1:18, the Edomites, however, will have no survivors. The Edomites were long-time enemies of Israel. They are the descendants of Esau. Their land will largely be possessed by Israel.

Concerning the Abrahamic covenant and the god Molech of the Ammonites, the prophet Jeremiah wrote:

Jeremiah 49:1-3 Concerning the **Ammonites**: This is what the LORD says: "**Has Israel no sons? Has she no heirs? Why then has Molech taken possession of Gad? Why do his people live in its towns?** But the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will sound the battle cry against **Rabbah of the Ammonites; it will become a mound of ruins**, and its surrounding villages will be set on fire. Then Israel will drive out those who drove her out," says the LORD. "Wail, O **Heshbon**, for **Ai** is destroyed! Cry out, O inhabitants of Rabbah! Put on sackcloth and mourn; rush here and there inside the walls, **for Molech will go into exile, together with his priests and officials.**

These passages allude to the defeat and captivity of the peoples, priests, princes, and their gods Chemosh and Milcom. The theme of defeat, plunder, captivity, and god reduction all worked hand-in-hand, and was well understood in historic times. Ancient armies commonly prayed to their deity for victory before entering into battle. In defeat, the conclusion was that the god of the victor was greater than the god of the loser. [Salus, 2008, p. 317]

For centuries, the region worshipped Jehovah, Milcom, Chemosh, Baal, Asherah, Dagon [the fish god], Molech, and others. Scholars estimate that as many as 360 different gods had been worshipped in the region throughout the time leading up to the arrival of Muhammad.

He [Muhammad] declared that he was the last prophet, and [invited followers of all other gods to submit to] Allah. [Salus, 2008, p. 229]

Interestingly, the Ammonites are no longer mentioned in Scripture after the 6th century BC; only archaeological ruins remain [Walvoord, 1990].

Jeremiah 49:7-8 Concerning Edom: This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Is there no longer wisdom in **Teman**? Has counsel perished from the prudent? Has their wisdom decayed? Turn and flee, hide in deep caves, you who live in **Dedan**, for I will bring disaster on **Esau** at the time I punish him.

Teman was the grandson of Esau, making Abraham his great-great-grandfather. Teman was one of the chiefs of Edom during his generation, and was renown in the region for his wisdom. This wisdom included an acutely detailed understanding of the contents of the Abrahamic Covenant. What was common knowledge to Teman and accredited to him as "wisdom," has vanished from his Edomite [descendants] ... [Salus, 2008, p. 310]

Some additional Scriptures:

Obadiah [verse] 15 **"The day of the LORD is near** for all nations. As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head.

Obadiah 1:18 The house of Jacob will be a fire and the house of Joseph a flame; the house of **Esau** will be stubble, and they will set it on fire and consume it. **There will be no survivors from the house of Esau.**" The LORD has spoken. People from the Negev will occupy the mountains of Esau, and people from the foothills will possess the land of the **Philistines**. They will occupy the fields of Ephraim and Samaria, and Benjamin will possess Gilead.

Zephaniah 2:3-7 Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the LORD'S anger. **Gaza** will be abandoned and **Ashkelon** left in ruins. At midday **Ashdod** will be emptied and **Ekron** uprooted. Woe to you who live by the sea, O **Kerethite** people; the word of the LORD is against you, O Canaan, land of the **Philistines**. "I will destroy you, and none will be left." It will belong to the remnant of the house of Judah; there they will find pasture. In the evening they will lie down in the houses of Ashkelon. The LORD their God will care for them; he will restore their fortunes.

Isaiah 19:17-18 And the land of Judah will bring terror to the Egyptians; everyone to whom Judah is mentioned will be terrified, because of what the LORD Almighty is planning against them. In that day five cities in Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to the LORD Almighty. One of them will be called the City of Destruction.

The third or outer ring of Salus' thesis involves nations from around the world. It is the Battle of Armageddon. During this timeframe, the Antichrist aims to destroy the Israelites, who will be fleeing rather than fighting. The Lord Jesus Christ will personally handle the response.

Daniel 11:40-45 **"At the time of the end** the king of the South [Egypt] will engage him [the Antichrist] in battle, and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He will

invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood. He will also invade the Beautiful Land [Israel]. Many countries will fall, but **Edom** [southern Jordan and possibly parts of north-western Saudi Arabia], **Moab** [central Jordan] and the leaders of **Ammon** [northern Jordan] will be delivered from his hand. He will extend his power over many countries; **Egypt** will not escape. He will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt, with the **Libyans** and **Nubians** [Ethiopians] in submission. But reports from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many [the Jews]. He will pitch his royal tents between the seas [Mediterranean Sea, Dead Sea] at the beautiful holy mountain [in Jerusalem]. Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.

Salus summarizes his position:

First, the Jordanians align themselves as a member nation in the Psalm 83:6-8 confederacy. Second, this confederacy engages in a major war against Israel. Third, Israel exacts victory via the hands of its “exceedingly great army.” Fourth, Israel establishes sovereignty over Jordan. Fifth, the Antichrist initiates a military campaign to overthrow the glorious land ... comprised of countries predominantly under Israeli sovereignty, including Jordan. Sixth, the Antichrist avoids Jordan, and marches through Israel proper instead.

... Because the Antichrist is on a campaign to overthrow the “Glorious Land” and kill all the Jews, his focus is on the supreme leadership headquartered in Israel, rather than their ambassadors stationed in Ammon.

... The Antichrist intercepts troubling news while he is basking in the glory of his victory over Egypt. The newsworthy information comes from the east and the north.

... The Antichrist then moves to “plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain.” This move by the Antichrist sets the stage for the heavily prophesied campaign of Armageddon. [Salus, 2008, pp. 271-276]

Putting the above together, we see that Salus’ three-ring thesis may explain why a power vacuum forms in Europe and the Middle East—and is naturally filled by the leader of the revived Roman Empire. In other words, instead of Israel making a future peace treaty with its Islamic neighbors, it would make a covenant with the leader of a revived Roman empire.

Let us return to the prophecy about Elam, and in particular, draw some distinctions between Elam and Persia [Salus, 2014b]. Modern-day Iran is composed of both of these ancient territories, plus Media in the north (during the time of Daniel). Ancient Elam makes up about 10% of modern-day Iran—it is part of the west-central area of Iran, bordering the Persian Gulf. A major nuclear facility exists here—the 40⁺-year-old Bushehr nuclear plant—in a

seismically active area near the junction of three tectonic plates. Elam is separated from Persia by the Zagros mountain range.

Bill Salus analyzes a major prophecy regarding Elam found in Jeremiah 49:34-39, and possibly mentioned in Ezekiel 32:24-25. This prophecy in Jeremiah 49:34-39 is different from the prophecy about the Magog invasion in Ezekiel 38-39 which specifically mentions Persia rather than Elam. Psalm 83 is another unfulfilled prophecy that is sometimes considered with these two prophecies. Salus argues that all three of these passages deal with separate prophetic events.

Jeremiah 49:34-39 This is the word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning **Elam** [west-central Iran], early in the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah: This is what the LORD Almighty says: "See, **I will break the bow of Elam**, the mainstay of their might. I will bring against Elam the four winds from the four quarters of the heavens; I will scatter them to the four winds, and **there will not be a nation where Elam's exiles do not go. I will shatter Elam** [in a terrifying manner] **before their foes** [enemies], before those who seek their lives; **I will bring disaster upon them**, even my fierce anger," declares the LORD. "I will pursue them with the sword until I have made an end of them. **I will set my throne in Elam and destroy her king and officials**," declares the LORD. "Yet **I will restore the fortunes of Elam in days to come** [NASB: in the last days]," declares the LORD.

Psalm 83:1-18 A song. A psalm of Asaph. O God, do not keep silent; be not quiet, O God, be not still. See how your enemies are astir, how your foes rear their heads. With cunning they conspire against your people; they plot against those you cherish. "Come," they say, "let us **destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel be remembered no more.**" With one mind they plot together; they form an alliance against you -- the tents of **Edom** and the **Ishmaelites**, of **Moab** and the **Hagrites**, **Gebal**, **Ammon** and **Amalek**, **Philistia**, with the people of **Tyre**. Even **Assyria** has joined them to lend strength to the descendants of **Lot**. Selah Do to them as you did to Midian, as you did to Sisera and Jabin at the river Kishon, who perished at Endor and became like refuse on the ground. Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna, who said, "Let us take possession of the pasturelands of God." Make them like tumbleweed, O my God, like chaff before the wind. As fire consumes the forest or a flame sets the mountains ablaze, so pursue them with your tempest and terrify them with your storm. Cover their faces with shame so that men will seek your name, O LORD. May they ever be ashamed and dismayed; may they perish in disgrace. Let them know that you, whose name is the LORD -- that you alone are the Most High over all the earth.

Ezekiel 38-39 is dealt with, at length, in this book. See Chapter 6, titled "The Magog Invasion of Ezekiel 38-39".

Let us examine the differences among these prophecies.

First, although Persia and Elam both are part of modern-day Iran, the prophet Ezekiel does *not* mention Elam when describing the Magog invasion in Ezekiel 38-39; instead, he mentions Persia. Conversely, in Ezekiel 32, Ezekiel specifically mentions Elam, but not Persia. Thus, Ezekiel under the direction of the Holy Spirit is undoubtedly being precise when he uses the names Elam, Meshech, and Tubal in Chapter 32, and then Persia, Meshech, and Tubal in Chapter 38. Interestingly, in both sets of passages, Meshech and Tubal are mentioned (both are usually assumed to refer to modern-day Turkey). Ezekiel 32 also mentions, in order, 7 people groups among the slain: Egypt, Assyria, Elam, Meshech, Tubal, Edom, and Sidon.

Second, none of the nations mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39 appear in Psalm 83.

Third, although both Jeremiah 49 and Ezekiel 38-39 have a militaristic overtone, the former takes place in Iran; whereas the latter takes place on the mountains of Israel.

Fourth, the destruction in Ezekiel 38-39 is handled by God; whereas the defeat in Psalm 83 and Ezekiel 25:14 suggests the involvement of Israel's military forces for some of these battles. (Note also that the Battle of Armageddon is handled by God.)

Ezekiel 25:14 I will take vengeance on Edom by the hand of my people Israel, and they will deal with Edom in accordance with my anger and my wrath; they will know my vengeance, declares the Sovereign LORD.'"

Fifth, in Ezekiel 38-39, the invaders attack Israel from the north; whereas, in Psalm 83, the invaders largely surround Israel.

Sixth, fortunes will be restored for the survivors in Elam; but, the same is not said about the survivors in Persia.

Seventh, the NASB translation of the Bible states that Elam's fortunes will be restored "in the last days" (Jeremiah 49:39); and equivalently, the KJV and NKJV state that it is "in the latter days".

None of the Elam prophecies took place in history; therefore, they are still to be fulfilled. How do we know that they weren't fulfilled? Simply put, there is no historical evidence [Salus, 2023]. King Nebuchadnezzar did not destroy Elam in the manner described, nor did he kill its king. We know that King Cyrus of Media-Persia was friendly towards the God of the Bible (Ezra 1:1-4). Nothing in history suggests that God was particularly appalled at Persia during the times of Jeremiah or Ezekiel. The prophecies were not fulfilled during the time of Persia's King Ahasuerus (aka King Xerxes I) or Queen Esther (both circa 475 BC) or King Artaxerxes (circa 450 BC) because there was no wide

dispersion of Elamites, nor was the area destroyed. Even after Christ's ascension circa 30 AD, Acts 2 mentions that Elamites were among the participants on the Day of Pentecost.

Salus conjectures that Elam is involved in a major disaster taking place sometime *before* the Magog invasion. Then, years later, the Magog invasion takes place, and the larger part of Iran ("Persia" before 1935) participates.

Similarly, the events of Psalm 83 involving the neighboring nations of Israel are over by the time the events in Ezekiel 38-39 occur. In particular, Salus argues that all of the nations of Psalm 83 are defeated by Israel prior to the Magog invasion. Neither Elam nor Persia is not mentioned in the prophecy written by Asaph (i.e., Psalm 83) which lists a coalition of nations.

Salus thinks Israel can tear down the walls it currently has, and be a wealthier, larger, more secure Israel—by annexing land. He thinks that the Israel that Russia and its allies will attack is a much larger Israel than it is today. Verse 18 of Obadiah suggests Israel defeats southern Lebanon; Jeremiah 49 suggests Israel takes part of Jordan; and Isaiah 19:18 says that 5 cities of Egypt will speak the language of Canaan (Hebrew) and give praise to the God of the Bible.

Keep in mind that if the Rapture occurs prior to the events of Jeremiah 49:34-39, then all Elamites who believe in Jesus Christ at the time will be spared from disaster and be assured of everlasting life. In fact, Iran is experiencing the fastest growth rate among evangelical Christians: approximately 20% annually, compared to under 1% for the United States [Salus, 2014b].

Despite the disaster that occurs when God breaks Elam's "bow" or military strength, and the mass exile that occurs because of this, there will be a remnant of Elamites that will be blessed (i.e., fortunes will be restored). Perhaps they will turn to the Lord—or perhaps they were believers all along (and the Rapture had not yet taken place).

Interestingly enough, God says that He will place His throne in Elam. This is the only place other than Jerusalem where God says He will set his throne. This suggests that many Elamites will be especially blessed upon their return. The final verse (verse 49) in Jeremiah's prophecy probably takes place after the return of Jesus Christ; thus, it probably occurs years after the other verses in that same prophecy. These Scripture verses were written by Jeremiah, circa 596 BC.

Salus orders these 3 prophecies, as follows:

1. Jeremiah 49:34-39
2. Psalm 83
3. Ezekiel 38-39

	<p>He adds that the Rapture could occur before any of these events—thus holding open the notion of an imminent Rapture.</p> <p>David Reagan goes one step further, and orders the major wars of unfulfilled prophecy, as follows [Reagan, 2014b]. Although he draws a distinction between Psalm 83 and Ezekiel 38-39, note that he does not have a separate entry for Jeremiah 49:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. War on Israel’s neighbors (Psalm 83, Zechariah 12:6) 2. First battle of Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 38-39) 3. War during the Tribulation (Revelation 6; Horsemen of the Apocalypse; Daniel 8:23-25; Revelation 8:7; 9:15, 16:5-6) 4. War in the Heavens (Revelation 12) 5. War against the Jews and the saints (Revelation 12, Zechariah 13:8-9) 6. Middle-East campaign of the Antichrist (Daniel 11) 7. Battle of Armageddon (Joel 3, Zechariah 14, Revelation 19) 8. Second battle of Gog and Magog (at the end of the Millennium: Revelation 20)
Preterist Position	Preterists think these events have been fulfilled in history. See the previous question for an explanation.

Topic/ Question	Will Israel become a nation of great wealth in the end times?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>The Bible suggests that Israel will be a wealthy nation. Two major, future events on Israel’s horizon include the Magog invasion and the Battle of Armageddon (some authors combine these two events). In reference to the Magog invasion, we read:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Ezekiel 38:9-13 You [Gog] and all your troops and the many nations with you will go up, advancing like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land. "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On that day thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil scheme. You will say, "I will invade a land of unwalled villages; I will attack a peaceful and unsuspecting people -- all of them living without walls and without gates and bars. I will plunder and loot and turn my hand against the resettled ruins and the people gathered from the nations, rich in livestock and goods, living at the center of the land." Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish and all her villages [ESV: young lions] will say to you, "Have you come to plunder? Have you gathered your hordes to loot, to carry off silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods and to seize much plunder?""</p> <p>It is clear that Israel will be very wealthy in the last days. The prophet Joel writes of the end times:</p>

Joel 3:1-2 'In those days and at that time, **when I** [God] **restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem**, I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will enter into judgment against them concerning my inheritance, my people Israel, for they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land.

Even earlier, Moses prophesied:

Deuteronomy 30:3 then the LORD your God will **restore your fortunes** and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you.

Deuteronomy 33:24 About Asher he [Moses] said: "Most blessed of sons is Asher; let him be favored by his brothers, and **let him bathe his feet in oil**."

The territory of Asher is located in northwestern Israel, by the Mediterranean Sea. Oil represents both energy (fuel/oil for lamps) and wealth.

What is meant by the phrases "restore the fortunes of" and "restore your fortunes"? Besides being wealthy because of technology, Israel is rich in commodities. Some people conjecture that Israel will mine the wealth of the Dead Sea area, including:

- Massive amounts of a valuable export—fertilizer—that the world needs to expand its food base
- Massive amounts of gold, silver, and other elements found in and around the Dead Sea
- Possible petroleum reserves from the Dead Sea area, especially the southern end of the Dead Sea—an area that has a history of bitumen/tar pits (e.g., the area near the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah)

Consider the enormous amount of gold and silver from the times of King David and King Solomon. Where is that gold hidden? After all, there were at least 100,000 talents (1 talent = 75 pounds) of gold referenced in Scripture, and at least 1,000,000 talents of silver [Dolphin, 2022].

1 Chronicles 22:14 "I [David] have taken great pains to provide for the temple of the LORD a hundred thousand talents of gold, a million talents of silver, quantities of bronze and iron too great to be weighed, and wood and stone. And you may add to them."

The gold alone has been estimated at well in excess of \$200 billion given the price of gold in 2022; and another \$28 billion for the silver. When and where was the gold hidden? Some conjecture that it was hidden before the Babylonian invasion of Israel, to prevent the Babylonian army from plundering it. Perhaps the gold is located under the Temple Mount, or on Mount Nebo, or somewhere in the mountainous regions of Israel. The wealth of the gold, should it be found,

	would be awfully tempting for other nations to plunder (e.g., Ezekiel 38:13)—not to mention the mineral wealth of the Dead Sea, which has been rumored to be in the trillions of dollars. Also, Israel has enormous gas reserves off the coast of northwestern Israel. All of these commodities would be coveted by Israel’s enemies.
Preterist Position	Unclear

Topic/ Question	What roles will Turkey play in eschatology?						
Dispensationalist Position	<p>By around 1500, the Ottoman Empire spanned modern-day Turkey across to northern Iraq, down to Egypt, and across the coastal strip of North Africa to the Strait of Gibraltar at the Atlantic Ocean. Some people believe that Christopher Columbus’ voyage was initiated to find a new trade route to eastern Asia because of the trade blockade posed by the Ottoman Empire, and because of the possibility of a Turkish invasion of Spain [Lipkin, 2008].</p> <p>After World War II, Turkey joined the UN (1945), IMF (1947), OECD (1948), Council of Europe (1949), NATO (1951), and European Community (associate membership, 1963) [Missler, 2003a]. They applied for EU full membership in 1987, but have not been accepted as a member, yet.</p> <p>Turkey will certainly be a player in the fulfillment of the prophecies of Ezekiel 38-39; however, it is difficult to predict what other role Turkey will have in eschatology. On the one hand, Turkey wants to join the EU, and this would open the door to unrestricted entry, travel, and commerce for 70 million Turks. It would obviously strengthen the Turkish economy. However, if Turkey is rebuffed in joining the EU, then it will naturally side with—and strengthen its alliances with—the Muslim nations of the Middle East. This delicate geopolitical situation is why Turkey is said to lie at a “crossroads”—Biblically speaking. On the one hand, there is a desire for peace and economic prosperity; on the other hand, there are concerns or fears. According to Avi Lipkin, there are 3 reasons why the Europeans don’t want the Turks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Turks need to have an advanced economic system—which they do not have yet. • Turkish human rights are poor. • Turkey has 70 million Muslims which would help Europe become an Islamic entity. <p>He reports the following percentage of each nation’s population that is Muslim:</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td>Austria</td> <td>30%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Belgium</td> <td>13%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>England</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> </table>	Austria	30%	Belgium	13%	England	10%
Austria	30%						
Belgium	13%						
England	10%						

France	15%
Germany	15%
Holland	13%
Switzerland	20%

So, it looks like Turkey will not be part of the European Community. Instead, Turkey will be a key participant of the armies that invade Israel in the latter days.

Finally, the book of Revelation mentions that Pergamum (also written as Pergamos) was one of the 7 churches to which part of the book of Revelation was written. Revelation 2:12-13 states that Pergamum is “where Satan has his throne”—at least, at that time—in part, due to the many temples and idols it had, including the temple of Zeus.

Chapter 8: The Temple

Topic/ Question	What is the significance of the Tabernacle in the wilderness and the temples that were built at Jerusalem?
Both Positions	<p>The Tabernacle and the two Temples were <i>types</i>:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Every part of the Tabernacle and Temple pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ. The gate pointed to Him as the Door. The altar pointed to the Cross[;] the laver, to His cleansing Word. The table of shewbread spoke of Him as the Bread of Life; the candlestick pointed to the Light of the World; the altar of incense spoke of Him as the interceding High Priest. The ark of the covenant was a picture of Christ who by His blood redeemed us from the curse of the law. The linen in the Tabernacle spoke of His righteousness[;] the brass, of the judgment He bore; the gold, of His deity; the silver, of His blood; the wood, of His humanity. [De Haan, 1946, p. 297]</p>
Additional comment about the Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>Eventually, there will be <i>four</i> temples, the first two of which were destroyed long ago, and the last two are still future: (1) Solomon’s temple, (2) the second temple (aka Herod’s temple), (3) the third temple, and (4) the millennial temple.</p> <p>The book of Zechariah states that Christ (“the Branch”) will build the millennial temple. We know that it is the millennial temple because Christ will rule and reign during that time period.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Zechariah 6:12-13 Tell him [Joshua] this is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the Lord. It is he who will build the temple of the Lord, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two.’</p>

Topic/ Question	Are these locations one and the same: Calvary, Golgotha, Mount Moriah, the Garden Tomb, the Temple Mount, the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the site of the first temple (Solomon’s Temple), and the site of the second temple (Herod’s Temple)?
Both Positions	<p>First of all, Christ did not die at the Temple, so Calvary and the Temple site are not the same place. The whole Temple Mount, however, is about 37 acres in size. The perimeter of the Temple Mount, in metres, is approximately 488 m (west), 315 m (north), 470 m (east), and 280 m (south) [Wikipedia, 2021].</p> <p>The Garden Tomb is located outside the walled city of Jerusalem (i.e., outside of “inner” Jerusalem), and it may be next to Calvary. Calvary (from the Latin) and Golgotha (from the Aramaic) are synonyms and all refer to the place of Jesus’ crucifixion: “the place of the skull” (John 19:17).</p>

Crucifixion was actually invented by the Persians, but was the form of capital punishment implemented by the Romans around the time of Christ. It was a very painful way to die. We get the English word “excruciating” (“out of the cross”) from the root word for “crucify”.

In order to put some of the locations into perspective, it helps to consider the significance of key points in Old Testament history. Consider the event where Abraham (the father) offered Isaac (his son) as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah. That event is believed to be a *type* (i.e., an event that foreshadows another more significant event)—2,000 years in advance—namely that of God (the Father) offering Jesus Christ (the Son), as a sin offering for the world ... the most significant event in human history.

Jesus Christ was sacrificed on the cross as *the* sin offering for the world—a sin offering that fulfills another *type* provided in the Old Testament ... this one being the animal sacrifices from the time of Adam and Eve until the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. The cross was at Golgotha, and Golgotha is believed by some to be Mount Moriah, the same place where Abraham offered up Isaac before Abraham was stopped by the angel of the Lord; but, Hebrews 13:12 tells us that Jesus died on the cross “outside the city gate”. However, His sacrifice also had an important connection with the Temple, and in particular, the Holy of Holies:

Immediately, as Jesus breathed His last breath, the curtain in front of the Holy of Holies ripped open from top to bottom. This curtain had always been the separating boundary between sinful, unholy people and a most holy God. Now, however, the curtain was ripped open and access to God was restored [Kramer, 2020, p. 43].

It is interesting to note that Abraham’s servant, Eleazar, later finds a bride for Isaac. Eleazar is a type of the Holy Spirit. His name means “comforter”, which is what the Holy Spirit is. Rebekah agrees to marry Isaac, despite not having met him. They wed at the well of LaHai Roi, which means “the well of Living One [who] sees me” or “the well of the Living God”.

The above description is one of many ways in which, “The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed; the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed” [Missler, 2005]. Chuck Missler states that the Bible is a *distributed message system*: the themes of redemption, sacrifice, salvation, Christ, etc. are present throughout Scripture (including the Old Testament), so that even if some of the Scripture were to be lost through “hostile jamming”—so to speak—the key messages would still be there through repetition.

Some scholars think that Christ may have been sacrificed on the Temple Mount; however, this places the event *inside* the city of Jerusalem, and the reality is that Christ died just *outside* the city (i.e., at Calvary). Furthermore,

	<p>this coincides with the parable about the rebellious workers in the vineyard who killed the owner's son outside the vineyard (Matthew 21:39).</p> <p>The Temple Mount is likely the same place as the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, which was the place where King David met the angel of the Lord, and where the plague on Israel stopped. To honor the Lord, David purchased the site, in an interesting and significant real estate transaction recorded in the Bible (see also 2 Samuel 24:21-24):</p> <p>1 Chronicles 21:14-27 So the LORD sent a plague on Israel, and seventy thousand men of Israel fell dead. And God sent an angel to destroy Jerusalem. But as the angel was doing so, the LORD saw it and was grieved because of the calamity and said to the angel who was destroying the people, "Enough! Withdraw your hand." The angel of the LORD was then standing at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. David looked up and saw the angel of the LORD standing between heaven and earth, with a drawn sword in his hand extended over Jerusalem. ... Then the angel of the LORD ordered Gad to tell David to go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. So David went up in obedience to the word that Gad had spoken in the name of the LORD. While Araunah was threshing wheat, he turned and saw the angel; his four sons who were with him hid themselves. Then David approached, and when Araunah looked and saw him, he left the threshing floor and bowed down before David with his face to the ground. David said to him, "Let me have the site of your threshing floor so I can build an altar to the LORD, that the plague on the people may be stopped. Sell it to me at the full price." Araunah said to David, "Take it! Let my lord the king do whatever pleases him. Look, I will give the oxen for the burnt offerings, the threshing sledges for the wood, and the wheat for the grain offering. I will give all this." But King David replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the LORD what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing." So David paid Araunah six hundred shekels of gold for the site. David built an altar to the LORD there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. He called on the LORD, and the LORD answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering. Then the LORD spoke to the angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath.</p>
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<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>In the second temple, at the time of Jesus' death, was a huge curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place (also known as the Holy of Holies). Was the curtain actually torn from top to bottom, supernaturally?</p> <p>Matthew 27:50-51 And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split.</p>
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	<p>Mark 15:37-38 With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.</p> <p>Luke 23:44-46 It was now about the sixth hour [12:00 noon], and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour [3 PM], for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.</p>
<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>Yes, it was torn from top to bottom. The Most Holy Place was sacred, and only the high priest would be permitted there, and only once per year. Israel's high priest made atonement there on behalf of the people. The tearing of the curtain indicates that people no longer needed a high priest to offer sacrifices for them; rather, they could approach God directly (through prayer) and claim forgiveness of sins through Christ's shed blood (i.e., His atoning sacrifice).</p> <p>In Old Testament times, the high priest made an atoning sacrifice, and sprinkled incense and blood around the Ark of the Covenant to make atonement for the sins of the nation, and for himself, once per year. It was a most solemn event, taking place on Yom Kippur each year. Only the high priest was allowed behind the veil. It was taken so seriously that—tradition has it—that the high priest had a bell roped around his leg, so that if he died while inside the Most Holy Place (where the Ark of the Covenant was) for whatever reason (e.g., impure thoughts, errors in the protocol), then he could be removed, even if he had died.</p>
<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>Hank Hanegraaff says "no". This is apocalyptic and symbolic literature. Had this event physically occurred, it most certainly would have been written about in extra-biblical sources [Hanegraaff, <i>Bible Answer Man</i>, September 14, 2011].</p> <p>It is a metaphor indicating that Christ, through his death and resurrection, is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. In particular, we no longer need a high priest to offer sacrifices on our behalf; rather, we can approach God ourselves, via prayer, to ask for forgiveness.</p> <p>Ezekiel 37 uses a similar style of apocalyptic and symbolic language:</p> <p>Ezekiel 37:4-6 Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'" "</p>

<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>Is the Temple mentioned in Revelation 11 symbolic—or literal? If the latter, does it refer to the second temple (i.e., the one in existence before 70 AD)—or to a future one?</p> <p>Is Ezekiel’s vision of the Temple (in Ezekiel 40-48) supposed to be taken literally? Is this the same Temple that is described in Revelation 11?</p>
<p>Dispensa- tionalist Position</p>	<p>The Temple in Revelation 11 is being measured by an angel, and exact dimensions are given in the text. When measures are being taken in the Bible, this implies a literal temple. It has worshipers, as well as an outer court for the Gentiles. It is not the same temple as in the time of Christ because the second temple was destroyed in 70 AD, and the book of Revelation was most likely written in 95 AD.</p> <p>Thus, the temple mentioned in Revelation 11 is likely the tribulational Temple (still future), that is, the Temple that will be desecrated by the Antichrist during the 70th Week of Daniel. Recall that Christ referred to the 70th week of Daniel during the Olivet Discourse. Daniel wrote of sacrifices and a temple. The Antichrist will set up an image of himself in this new Temple.</p> <p>On the other hand, the temple mentioned in Ezekiel 40-48 does not correspond to either the first or the second temple. It does not appear to be the tribulation (third) temple either, because the dimensions and the geographical description do not fit. It appears that major tectonic and geographical changes will take place during the latter part of the Tribulation. The millennial temple will be built at the start of, or just before, the Millennium. This temple will be used during the Millennium for the people on Earth, and is most likely the temple described in Ezekiel. Christ is likely the “prince” mentioned in Ezekiel 44 and 45. The fact that 318 exact measurements are mentioned for this temple imply that it is a <i>literal</i> temple [LaHaye & Hindson, 2006]. Furthermore, Ezekiel 43:18-27 seem to imply that Ezekiel himself will oversee some of the temple activities. Given that this temple is still in the future, this implies that a resurrected Ezekiel will be needed [LaHaye & Hindson, 2006], which is no problem because, by the start of the Millennium, Ezekiel and other believers from Old Testament times will be raised from the dead in accordance with Matthew 8:11 and Daniel 12:11-13.</p> <p>We note that the regathering in Ezekiel 20:34-44 is worldwide, and this would not describe the second temple. The sacrifices differ somewhat from the Mosaic Law—another difference from the second temple [LaHaye & Hindson, 2006].</p> <p>Preterists argue that the Temple mentioned in Revelation was Herod’s Temple (i.e., the second temple), and therefore, the book of Revelation must have been written <i>before</i> 70 AD because that is when the second temple was destroyed by the Roman army. Most dispensationalists believe that Revelation was written between 90 AD and 96 AD; 95 AD is commonly accepted. In fact, the majority</p>

of scholars place the writing of Revelation “well after A.D. 70” [Sproul, 1998, p. 141].

Recall that the apostle John was instructed to write about what he had seen, what he currently sees, and what visions about the future that he will be given (Revelation 1:19). Thus, a future temple is entirely plausible, without reflecting back on the Temple that was destroyed 20-26 years earlier.

Revelation 1:11 ... "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

Revelation 1:19 "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later."

Thomas Ice argues:

It does not matter at all whether the temple is thought to still be standing in Jerusalem at the time that John sees the vision, since that would not necessarily have any bearing upon a vision. John is told by the angel accompanying him during the vision to “measure the temple” (Rev. 11:1). Measure what temple? The temple in the vision. In fact, Ezekiel, during a similar vision of a temple (Ezek. 40-48) was told to measure that temple. Dr. Gentry would agree, that when Ezekiel saw and was told to measure a temple, that there was not one standing in Jerusalem. Thus, there is no compulsion whatsoever, that just because a temple is referenced in Revelation 11 that it implies that there had to be a physical temple standing in Jerusalem at the time. [Ice, 2000]

Currently, Jews are not permitted access to parts of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Instead, their presence is limited to the area around the Western Wall; otherwise, riots are likely to break out—not just at the Temple Mount, but in Muslim areas around the world. The Western Wall is the retaining wall built by King Herod on the expanded Temple Mount, for the second temple.

The Hebrew scholar John Whitcomb is quoted in [Ice, 1999]:

Thus, part of the strong covenant with “the many” in Israel (Daniel 9:24-27) must be permission to offer sacrifices again “in the temple of God” (2 Thess. 2:4). In light of the current situation in Jerusalem, it would take a very powerful person to obtain and guarantee such access by Israel to the Temple area. It seems possible that the “two witnesses” of Revelation 11:3-6, who have irresistible authority in Jerusalem during the first three-and-one-half years, will also be instrumental in arranging the terms of this covenant with the “little [horn],” for not until they are killed by him (after he “comes up out of the abyss”) is he able to break the covenant and terminate the sacrificial system.

Preterists argue that the Temple mentioned in Ezekiel 40-48 and in Revelation 11 cannot be a future temple because Christ fulfilled the sacrifice, and therefore there is no need anymore for a temple, priest, and sacrificial system. After all,

	<p>Christ gave His own life, and it would now be an abomination to introduce a sacrifice again. But a counterargument is that sacrifices <i>never took away sin</i>—they only <i>covered</i> (atoned for) <i>sin</i>. Only the death of Jesus Christ could take away sin. Thus, even in the Millennium, sacrifices cannot permanently take away sin. More will be said about this in the section following the Preterist Position below.</p>
<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>The Temple was clearly significant in Jewish worship. Many books of the Bible speak of the Temple, either the first temple or the second temple. If the second temple were still standing, John surely would have mentioned it when writing Revelation. Thus, it seems likely that Revelation was written while the second temple was still standing (i.e., <i>before 70 AD</i>).</p> <p>Jesus worshiped in the Temple, and prophesied its destruction. There is no longer any need to sacrifice at the Temple, since Christ was the ultimate sacrifice—the sacrifice that the Old Testament pointed to.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">John 4:20-24 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."</p> <p>The temple is a <i>type</i> of Christ. Roy Zuck, a professor of hermeneutics at Dallas Theological Seminary, explains that a type is a precursor of something better that is yet to come:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">A type may be defined as an Old Testament person, event, or thing having historical reality and designed by God to prefigure (foreshadow) in a preparatory way a real person, event, or thing so designated in the New Testament and that corresponds to and fulfills (heightens) the type. [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007]</p> <p>Because there are sin offerings and actual measurements, this Temple must be historical (i.e., before the cross). This is not about a literal, future Temple. Hank Hanegraaff asks: If the Living Temple (Christ) is in our midst [e.g., during the Millennium], then why would people want to focus on a Temple that was built with human hands? This is a valid question. Memorials? Perhaps; but, that's not what the text leads us to believe (because of the verses about sacrifices for atonement).</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Ezekiel 43:26-27 For seven days they are to make atonement for the altar and cleanse it; thus they will dedicate it. At the end of these days, from the eighth day on, the priests are to present your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings on the altar. Then I will accept you, declares the Sovereign LORD."</p>

Ezekiel 46:2 The prince is to enter from the outside through the portico of the gateway and stand by the gatepost. The priests are to sacrifice his **burnt offering** and his fellowship offerings. He is to worship at the threshold of the gateway and then go out, but the gate will not be shut until evening.

“The Word was made flesh among us”—we have seen the glory of God, not in a restored Temple in Jerusalem, but in Christ Himself. Jesus *is* the new Temple, and He fulfills everything mentioned in the Old Testament. Christ is the “body”, and all believers are the “Temple” of the Holy Spirit.

The Temple was destroyed in AD 70, and God has no intentions of allowing the Temple to be rebuilt. Jesus declared to the Jews, “*Behold, your house is left to you desolate!*” (Matt. 23:38). That Temple was meant to be left desolate. God does not want to see the Jewish religious system reconstructed. He destroyed it. He does not want people to approach Him through animal sacrifices, nor through a high priest in the Jerusalem Temple. He does not want that to happen—ever again. Jesus is the only mediator between God and humanity (1 Tim. 2:5). [Eberle & Trench, 2021, Kindle edition, location 9254]

The first temple may well have been destroyed (586 BC) by the time that Ezekiel 40-48 was written. (Ezekiel lived during this timeframe, and, in exile, he was yearning for a rebuilt temple.) Thus, Ezekiel would have been looking forward to the second temple, which would be built a century later, as per the writings of Ezra and Nehemiah. The bottom line is that the temple mentioned in Ezekiel is not another physical, future temple; it is the second temple. After all, why long for a third or a fourth temple, when the second one hasn’t been built yet? Thus, some authors think that Ezekiel 40-48 refers to the conditions upon the return of the Jews from the Babylonian exile, a long time ago [Irwin & Perry, 2023].

There is no need to look forward to a third or a fourth temple, say in the 21st century, which is to replace the Dome of the Rock, where there is water underneath it that will eventually flow to fill the Dead Sea (in which many kinds of fish will swim), and where Jesus Christ presides over a temple where there are animal sacrifices that atone for sin. Instead, Ezekiel was looking forward to—and describing, via symbolic language—the New Jerusalem: a new Heaven and a new Earth. Metaphorically, Christ is the living stone, and we are part of that living stone: “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s Temple ...?” (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). The water flowing in the Arabah is symbolic of the living water and of the Tree of Life mentioned in the books of Genesis and Revelation. John sees the water in the river of life, and notes that the fruit of the tree is for the healing of the nations. This is symbolic, consummation, or apocalyptic language to describe the post-return of Jesus Christ, in which there is a new Heaven and a new Earth, in which there will be righteousness [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*; August 3, 2012].

David Chilton comments on the outer court, and the notion that God is “now protecting the True Temple from the outpouring of God’s wrath. The outer court (the ‘court of the Gentiles’) accordingly represents apostate Israel (cf. Isa. 1:12), which is to be cut off from the number of the faithful Covenant people, God’s dwellingplace.” [Gregg, 2013, p. 276].

Lastly, it is not appropriate for a post-crucifixion Temple to be used in atonement. Christ finished the work, and it would be an abomination to offer further sacrifices because that would suggest that Christ’s work was not sufficient for salvation! After Christ came to Earth, there was no longer any need for another temple. Furthermore, when Christ returns, we will enjoy Jesus Christ as our metaphorical and eternal “temple”.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and **you are that temple**.

Topic/ Question	Consider the Temple sacrifices mentioned in Ezekiel 40-48. Why would there be <i>future</i> sacrifices if Jesus Christ was the ultimate and sufficient sacrifice? Are Chapters 33-48 of Ezekiel meant to be taken literally? If so, have the prophecies been fulfilled? Are the prophecies eschatological in nature?		
Dispensa- tionalist Position	Most dispensationalists believe that Chapters 33-48 are eschatological. They can be broken down as follows [Woods, 2014a; LaHaye & Hindson, 2006]:		
	Ezekiel 33	A promise of Israel’s restoration	Being fulfilled
	Ezekiel 34	Israel’s false shepherds and true shepherd; King David in the Millennium	Unfulfilled
	Ezekiel 35	Destruction of Edom	Unfulfilled
	Ezekiel 36-37	Israel’s political and spiritual reunification; Israel’s rebirth and restoration; Sanctification of God’s name; God working through Israel	Being fulfilled
	Ezekiel 38-39	The battle of Gog and Magog	Unfulfilled; stage being set
	Ezekiel 40-46	The millennial temple	Unfulfilled
	Ezekiel 47	The millennial river	Unfulfilled
	Ezekiel 48	The restoration of Jerusalem	Unfulfilled
	The latter chapters of Ezekiel deal with the millennial temple. But even before this, another temple will be built (still future) which will have animal sacrifices. The Jewish people do not believe in Jesus Christ, and therefore do not believe		

in the all-sufficient sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This is why animal sacrifices will resume, even though Christians firmly believe that Jesus Christ eliminated the need to do so. The Antichrist will permit worship in the temple—and animal sacrifices—for a while; but later, he will take away the sacrifice (in the middle of the 70th week of Daniel, according to Daniel 9:27).

The millennial temple is another temple—this one probably being built by Jesus Christ at the start of, or just before, the Millennium. However, the sacrifices in Ezekiel 40-48 appear to occur during the 1,000-year Millennium, which is *after* the return of Jesus Christ. So why are there sacrifices *again*? This appears to pose a problem for dispensationalists.

In Ezekiel 40-48, there are provisions for sin offerings, burnt offerings, guilt offerings, grain offerings, and fellowship offerings. Oddly enough, Ezekiel 45:15 says the offerings are “to make atonement for the people”. (To “make atonement” means to cover, to wipe away sins, or to purify. The same word for “atone” is used when the wood of Noah’s Ark was covered with pitch.) This passage is puzzling because it indicates future sacrifices are taking place, apparently after Christ’s finished work on the cross.

Some dispensationalists believe that these sacrifices are used to take away sin; however, it is clear to evangelical Christians that Christ fulfilled the role of the Temple sacrifice (because Christ Himself was the ultimate sacrifice). Thus, the sacrifices mentioned in Ezekiel 40-48 appear to be *memorial* (retrospective) sacrifices. Remember, even in Old Testament times, *the animal sacrifices could “never take away sins”* (Hebrews 10:11); instead, they pointed forward to Jesus Christ, and just acted as a temporary *covering* (i.e., atonement) of sins, but did not result in the *removal* of sins. As a side note, many sacrifices in the Mosaic Law were for purification and ritual purposes, rather than for atonement.

Hebrews 10:10-12 And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same **sacrifices, which can never take away sins**. But when this priest [Jesus Christ] had offered **for all time one sacrifice for sins**, he sat down at the right hand of God.

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a **high priest** who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are -- yet he did not sin.

Hebrews 9:22 In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

The only way it can be held that the sacrifices will be efficacious in the millennium is to hold that they were so in the Old Testament and this is a

clear contradiction of the whole New Testament. What folly to argue that a rite could accomplish in the future what it never could, or did, or was ever intended to do, in the past. [Pentecost, 1958, p. 525]

Note that there are 3 types of laws in the Old Testament: (1) moral laws, and these are still intact, dealing with righteous living—pointing people to Christ; (2) ceremonial laws dealing with Feasts, Festivals, Sabbaths, the way you should dress, etc.; and (3) dietary laws [Hamrick, 2020]. These latter two types of laws were given freedom in the New Covenant (e.g., see Colossians 2:16-17). Christ declared all foods clean.

If the Jewish people have no temple, and there are no sacrifices, then how do they achieve atonement for sin? Gary Hamrick reports that some people have been told by their rabbi that as long as a person lives a good life, practices good works, and prays, then this is acceptable before God [Hamrick, 2020].

Some scholars believe the Millennial offerings will be memorials, similar to keeping the Lord's Supper today in remembrance of Christ's death. They reason that sacrifices are needed because Millennial saints will live in an ideal setting where Christ's righteousness will fill the earth and people will need a reminder of the awfulness of sin.

Therefore, the shedding of blood will visibly remind them that only Christ's blood can take away sin. This interpretation has two problems: (1) Nothing in the text indicates the sacrifices are memorials, and (2) the prophet says the sacrifices are to make atonement.

Consequently, these offerings must be much more than memorials. The word for "atonement" (Ezek. 45:15,17,20) is the Hebrew word *kippur*, meaning to "cover" or "propitiate." Under the Levitical system, sacrifices were required to atone for sin and to cleanse the buildings, the altar (43:20-27), the Levities [sic] (44:25-27), and the sanctuary (45:18). The blood sacrifice covered the worshiper's sins (Lev. 17:11) and functioned as propitiation to God.

Animal sacrifices offered in the Millennial Temple will be needed to cover the worshipers' ceremonial uncleanness. Why? Because God will be dwelling on Earth in the midst of sinners living in their natural, unresurrected bodies. Without blood sacrifices, these impure worshipers would defile God's holy Temple when they come to worship Him.

Professor Jerry Hullinger came to the same conclusion:

... Ezekiel 40-48 indicates that during the millennium God's glory will return to the temple where sacrificial ritual will take place and in which offerings will make atonement. For Ezekiel the concept of atonement is the same as it was in the Book of Leviticus, namely, an act that wipes away and purges uncleanness.

... impurity is inimical to Yahweh, who refuses to dwell among a people if uncleanness remains untreated. Because of God's promise to dwell on earth during the millennium (as stated in the New Covenant), it is necessary that He protect His presence through sacrifice.

This function of sacrifices, according to the Book of Hebrews, is efficacious. However this was never the purpose of Christ's sacrifice, for it dealt with the internal cleansing of the conscience. Therefore, the two are harmonious. [Levy, 2011b, pp. 32-33]

Arnold Fruchtenbaum writes:

It should be kept in mind that the Mosaic sacrifices never took away sin and were not the means of salvation for the Old Testament saint (Heb. 10:1-4). The Old Testament saint was saved by grace through faith. The blood sacrifices were the means of restoring fellowship of a saint who had sinned. In this present age, fellowship for the believer is restored by confession (1 Jn. 1:9). The millennial sacrifices will not take away sin either, but they will be the means of restoring fellowship for the millennial saint who sins.

... it is necessary to remember three facts about life in the Millennial kingdom. First, the presence of God will dwell literally in the midst of the people. ... Second, the unglorified human population will be capable of incurring ritual defilement and polluting the earthly Sanctuary. ... Third, the Millennial population will be under the New Covenant and will be regarded as a holy and priestly Nation just as they [the Jews] were under the Mosaic Covenant. ... the Nation (and in the future, also the nations) must maintain a status of ceremonial purity. As argued above, this kind of sacrificial "atonement" is not for salvation nor for inward sanctification, but to preserve outward corporate "sanctification" (or ceremonial purification) so that a holy God can remain in the midst of an unholy people.

Dr. Thomas Ice expresses it this way:

Critics of future millennial sacrifices seem to assume that all sacrifices, past and future, always depict Christ's final sacrifice for sin. They do not! There were various purposes for sacrifices in the Bible. An overwhelming majority of sacrifices under the Mosaic system were for purification of the priests and objects used in various rites. This is why atonement can be said in the past to be effective, yet still need Christ's future sacrifice, because many of the sacrifices did atone ceremonially, cleansing participants and objects in Temple ritual.

Dr. Jerry Hullinger of the Piedmont International University reaches the same conclusion:

A solution that maintains dispensational distinctives deals honestly with the text of Ezekiel and in no way demeans the work Christ did on the cross. This study suggests that animal sacrifices during the Millennium will serve primarily to remove ceremonial uncleanness and prevent defilement from polluting the temple envisioned by Ezekiel. This will be necessary because the glorious presence of Yahweh will once again be dwelling on earth in the midst of a sinful and unclean people ... Because of God's promise to dwell on earth during the Millennium (as stated in the New Covenant), it is necessary that He protect His presence through sacrifice ... It should further be added that this sacrificial system will be a temporary one in that the Millennium (with its partial population of unglorified humanity) will last only one thousand years. During the eternal state all inhabitants of the New Jerusalem will be glorified and will therefore not be a source of contagious impurities to defile the holiness of Yahweh. [Fruchtenbaum, *et al.*, 2016]

Besides the prophecies in the book of Ezekiel, the following verses speak of a Millennial Temple: Isaiah 2:3; 60:13; Daniel 9:24; Joel 3:18; and Haggai 2:7-9 [LaHaye & Hindson, 2006]. The following verses speak of Millennial sacrifices: Isaiah 56:6-7; 60:7; Jeremiah 33:18; Zechariah 14:16-21; and Malachi 3:3-4.

Because God wrote that there *will be* animal sacrifices in the future (i.e., in the Millennial Kingdom), the onus is *us* to see how it fits into eschatology—not to question whether or not it is actually part of the future [Hanegraaff & Hitchcock, 2007]. And, no, it is not a reversion to the old covenant.

Like the Levitical sacrifices in ancient times, the Millennial sacrifices include these kinds of offerings: burnt, grain, peace, sin, guilt, and drink [MacArthur, 2006, p. 1186].

In summary, the Temple being described in Ezekiel 40-48 is the millennial temple. It is a future temple because: (a) no temple existed when Ezekiel wrote; and (b) the second temple—Herod’s Temple—was destroyed in 70 AD, and there is currently no temple in Israel. Is it the third temple? Well, the third temple will be built in unbelief (of Jesus Christ) and will be desecrated by the Antichrist; but the millennial temple appears to have different dimensions than the space on the Temple Mount. It appears that the fourth temple will be built by Jesus Christ upon His return.

Other points:

- Ezekiel 43:4 refers to the *Shekinah glory* returning to Israel by entering the millennial temple via the outer *eastern gate*, not the Golden Gate presently in the eastern wall of Jerusalem, which was built centuries after Christ [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. Following that, the Shekinah glory will enter the new Temple, and finally it will enter the Holy of Holies.
 - Some background is appropriate here. The Shekinah glory had left in four stages: (1) from the Holy of Holies to the threshold of the door of the Temple (Ezekiel 9:3), (2) from the threshold of the door to the eastern gate (Ezekiel 10:18-19), (3) from the eastern gate to the Mount of Olives (Ezekiel 11:22-23), and finally (4) from Israel altogether. Now, in Ezekiel 43, it returns to the Temple in the same way that it left.
 - It is interesting to note that, in the final days before His crucifixion, Jesus declared that the temple would be left desolate. Then, He left the Temple and walked *eastward* to the Mount of Olives, which is just east of the Temple Mount [Ice & Gentry, 1999].

- Arnold Fruchtenbaum notes that the Shekinah glory had returned temporarily to Israel—in the earthly life of Jesus Christ [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]:
 - First, the Shekinah glory actually returned at the birth of Jesus Christ, as shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks at night ... and the “glory of the Lord” shone around them (Luke 2:8-9).
 - The second occurrence was during the Magis’ visit from the East, via a “star” to direct them to the young Jesus Christ.
 - The third occurrence was with Jesus Christ Himself (Isaiah 9:2; 2 Corinthians 4:5-6; Hebrews 1:2-3).
 - Another manifestation was at the Mount of Transfiguration (e.g., Matthew 17:1-8). “The appearance of the cloud and the Voice of God speaking out of the cloud was the very same thing that had occurred at Mount Sinai.” [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 609]
 - Other occurrences include Saul’s conversion experience on the road to Damascus, and his leading into Damascus (twice); the flaming tongues of fire at Pentecost; and, of course, the revelation of Jesus Christ in the brightness of His glory (Revelation 1:12-16).
- The Shekinah glory will return with Christ at the Second Coming (Matthew 24:30), and, as mentioned above, at the millennial temple. It will remain over the millennial temple in a cloud of smoke and flame of fire, similar to that around the Tabernacle in the wilderness following the Exodus from Egypt. Finally, the Shekinah glory will be seen as a visible manifestation of the glory of Jesus Christ (e.g., Revelation 21:23-24). Revelation 21:23 and 22:4 tell us that the New Jerusalem (the city) will not need the the sun anymore, since Jesus Christ will provide the light—and there will be no night, forever.

According to Isaiah 4:5-6 the “whole area of Mount Zion” will be covered by the glory-cloud, which will be “a canopy” (literally *chupa*, like the canopy used by Jewish wedding parties) giving brightness by night (Isaiah 4:5) and shade by day as well as protection from storm and rain (Isaiah 4:6). This will also provide an independent light source for the city that will illuminate it both day and night (Isaiah 24:23; 60:19-20). The city will also be without walls, for the Lord will be a wall of fire around it (Zechariah 2:4-5), and the city’s gates will be open day and night (Isaiah 60:11).

The restored glory of Jerusalem is such that it can no longer be thought of without reference to the reality of God’s presence.

	<p>Therefore the city will be renamed “the Lord is there” (Hebrew, <i>YHWH Shammah</i> –Ezekiel 48:35). [LaHaye & Hindson, 2006, p. 218]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ezekiel 44:9-14 refers to the Levites’ duties in the Temple. • Ezekiel 44:15-31 refers to the sons of Zadok and their duties with respect to the sacrifices. • Ezekiel 45:9-46:18 refers to the duties of resurrected King David. • There are a substantial number of differences in the Mosaic Law and that presented in Ezekiel 40-48. The Millennium is not a restoration of the conditional, Mosaic covenant. Similarities and differences between the Aaronic (Levitical) and millennial systems of worship (e.g., the Temple services) are investigated in works such as [Fruchtenbaum, 2004; Pentecost, 1958]. For example, Dwight Pentecost and Nathaniel West point out that there is no Ark of the Covenant, pot of manna, tablets of the Law, cherubim, mercy seat, veil, golden candlestick, table of showbread, or Holy of Holies [Whitcomb, 2014]. Furthermore, there is no reference to evening sacrifices, the Feast of Pentecost, the Feast of Trumpets, or the Day of Atonement. <p>Furthermore, there appears to be a sequential ordering in Ezekiel. For example, the scattering of the Jews and their return, the valley of the dry bones, the Magog invasion, and the millennial temple. Not specifically mentioned are the Rapture and Armageddon; however, some scholars think that Ezekiel 38-39 might describe the same event: Armageddon and Magog, together.</p> <p>It may be possible for Israel to start building the Temple soon, perhaps with the Antichrist’s peace treaty giving the green light; however, there is currently a major obstacle: worldwide Muslim opposition. That is a reason for why the construction appears to be post-rapture. In fact, Ezekiel 38-39 appears to be post-rapture, too.</p> <p>Although Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles are mentioned in Ezekiel 40-48, there is no explicit reference to the third major feast, namely, Pentecost (the Feast of Firstfruits).</p> <p>Lastly, there do not appear to be any animal sacrifices <i>after</i> the Millennium.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>Christ’s death (i.e., the “finished work of Christ”) means that there is no more need for sacrifices; therefore, there will not be any future animal sacrifices.</p> <p>Ezekiel 40-48 rules out the fact that a future Temple has sacrifices as a “memorial”, because it says that the sacrifices are for a <i>sin offering</i>. Therefore, this “future Temple” must have been future at the time of Ezekiel’s writing, but</p>

	<p>not so at the <i>first</i> Coming of Christ. In other words, the Temple that Ezekiel wrote about has been “built” already. In fact, each Christian believer’s <i>body</i> is “a temple of the Holy Spirit”:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 Corinthians 3:16-17 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.</p> <p>Since the time of Christ, Christians celebrate communion (bread and wine) to symbolize the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ. It is a memorial until Christ comes again. Thus, there is no need for a sacrifice; in fact, a sacrifice is an abomination to Christ’s finished work on the cross.</p>
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<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>Is the Islamic Dome of the Rock located where the first and second temples used to stand? If so, wouldn’t the rebuilding of the temple displace the Dome of the Rock and therefore cause major religious, social, political, and even military problems?</p> <p>Some background: Unlike the Al-Aqsa Mosque on southern side of the Temple Mount, the Dome of the Rock is a shrine and not a mosque. This is the building with the golden dome that is so noticeable in photos of the Temple Mount. The Al-Aqsa Mosque was originally built in 705 AD, and was rebuilt in 754 AD, 780 AD, and 1035 AD [Wikipedia, 2019]. The Dome of the Rock was originally built in 691-692 AD, and was rebuilt in 1022-1023 AD.</p>
<p>Both Positions</p>	<p>It would be a huge problem to build the third temple on a Muslim holy site. The third temple will be built on the Temple Mount, but we do not know where, precisely, on the Temple Mount the first and second temples were located. A current topic of debate is whether or not it is located where the Dome of the Rock is.</p> <p>Recall that the second temple was completely destroyed in 70 AD, in accordance with Jesus Christ’s prophecy about the Temple in Matthew 24:2:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Matthew 24:1-2 Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."</p> <p>Koinonia House reports in its “K-House eNews” e-mail newsletter on June 23, 2009:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">An Israeli official made a visit to the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem on Tuesday [June 23, 2009], sparking anger among Muslims. Yet, while the Dome of the Rock is the third most holy site in Islam, it is the holiest spot on earth in Judaism as the site of the once and future Temple. Most recently, a Jewish scholar has argued that the Third Temple could be built on the Temple Mount without tearing down the Dome of the Rock. Of course, that idea has</p>

faced opposition from both Jews and Muslims.

... Many Jews do not believe that the Temple should be built until the Messiah comes. Muslims agree that no Jewish temple should be built near their shrine.

Sheikh Abdulla Nimar Darwish, founder of the Islamic Movement in Israel, argues that it's pointless to discuss rebuilding the Temple until the "mahdi"—the Muslim messiah comes. ...

Darwish warned that attempts to rebuild the Temple before the Messiah would only result in mayhem. "As long as there is a Muslim alive, no Jewish Temple will be built on Al-Haram Al-Sharif [the Temple Mount]. The status quo must be maintained, otherwise there will be bloodshed."

The Dome of the Rock, which dominates the skyline of Jerusalem, was erected on the Temple Mount in the late 7th century. Muslims believe that the dome is built over the spot where Mohammad ascended into heaven, making it a very holy site in Islam. In 1967 Israel regained control of the Temple Mount, but shortly after gave the Muslim Waqf (religious trust) the authority to manage the mount in order to keep peace. Since 2006, visitors have been allowed to enter the compound at restricted times. Non-Muslim worshipers are still not permitted to enter the area.

Jewish authorities do not approve of entering the compound anyway, primarily because the site of the ancient Temple is still holy and there is no purification system in place to make worshipers ritually clean. There is also concern that people might accidentally tread across the site of the Holy of Holies. The Chief Rabbinate of Israel has placed signs outside the Temple Mount that state in Hebrew and English:

"ANNOUNCEMENT AND WARNING: According to the Torah it is forbidden for any person to enter the area of the Temple Mount due to its sacredness."

There are at least three positions with respect to the location of the second temple [Missler, 2006]. The traditional view, and the rabbis' official view, is that the Temple stood where the Dome of the Rock presently stands. Leen Ritmeyer takes this view. He has published an excellent book summarizing the history, archaeology, and research of the Temple Mount [Ritmeyer, 2015]. The Rock formation found inside the Dome of the Rock is the apex of Mount Moriah, and the Holy of Holies (measuring 10 cubits by 10 cubits by 10 cubits) was built on top of it. In Solomon's Temple (i.e., the First Temple, circa 1000 BC), the Ark of the Covenant was in the Holy of Holies, but the Ark was absent in the Second Temple.

As the Ark was located in the Holy of Holies, that must have been the place where Isaiah saw the Lord, in the highest place in the Temple. This record of Isaiah's vision would agree with our location of the Holy of Holies built on the Rock, the highest point of Mount Moriah. [Ritmeyer, 2015, p. 277]

Some scholars disagree with the official view of the rabbis. For example, there are issues about the presence of a military moat, the water aqueduct, the view

	<p>that King Agrippa had of the Azarah (the place where they performed the offerings), etc. [Missler, 2005; Missler, 2006]</p> <p>The second view is one held by Asher Kaufman and others, who claim that the Temple stood about 100 metres to the <i>north</i> of the Dome of the Rock, lining up with the current eastern gate (sometimes called the Golden Gate). If that were the case, then this view satisfies some comments in Revelation 11, because it puts the Dome of the Rock in the outer court:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Revelation 11:1-2 I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.</p> <p>Finally, the third view is that the previous temple was located about 100 metres <i>south</i> of the Dome of the Rock. Some clues about this location come from the design/template of the Jupiter Temple at Baalbek in Lebanon which, when superimposed and aligned on the Temple Mount, seems to be a good fit. In this scenario, an equestrian statue of Hadrian would have been placed over the Holy of Holies. Chuck Missler remarks that infrared photography and ground-penetrating radar actually support the southern view.</p> <p>All three views have their adherents. It is tough getting information (e.g., underground archeology) because Israeli authorities and teams are barred from seeking artifacts under Muslim sites.</p> <p>Written in Arabic, around The Dome of the Rock, are words that translate in English as: "There is no god but God alone, without partner. Say: He is God, One, God, the Everlasting, who has not begotten and has not been begotten. ... to God who has not taken a son ..." [New Testament Bible Class, 2018]. This disagrees with the Bible, which clearly states that Jesus Christ is the Son of God:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Isaiah 9:6-7 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.</p> <p>Jesus is God and came from Heaven to Earth to become a sacrifice for the sins of mankind. Thus, God died for His own creation.</p>
Additional comment	<p>Hank Hanegraaff warns:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Christian Zionists today are bent on stoking the embers of Armageddon by scheming the construction of yet another temple—and that on the very spot</p>

from the Preterist Position	where the Dome of the Rock now stands. As previously noted, LaHaye calls Mount Moriah, site of the ancient Jewish temple, “the most coveted ground in the world.” In his words, “The deep significance of the 1967 Six-Day War is seen in the prospect that at long last Israel can rebuild its temple. This [is] not just a national yearning—but a prophetic requirement of God’s Word. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 207-208]
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Topic/ Question	Does dispensationalism actually “help” prophecy to move along? For example, wouldn’t “taking back” the Dome of the Rock (to make room for the third temple) accelerate Armageddon? Wouldn’t encouraging the Jews to return to Israel also accelerate Armageddon?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>In terms of evangelism, dispensationalism would help bring in the “full number of the Gentiles” by introducing more and more people to Jesus Christ, by giving people an understanding of the world through a Biblical worldview, and by convincing people that the Bible is as relevant for today as ever before. As for accelerating Armageddon, God has set the timetable and we should leave that to Him. No one can force his hand.</p> <p>By the way, it is possible that location of the first and second temples is just north of the Dome of the Rock, meaning that the Islamic site would not have to be disturbed, when the third temple is built. If the Dome of the Rock were to be disturbed, it would probably cause a serious reaction. (See the previous section for further comments.)</p>
Preterist Position	<p>By speeding the return of Jews to Israel, dispensationalists (using their own theological arguments) would be encouraging Israel to actually speed up a meeting with the Antichrist and would thus bring on a holocaust of much greater scale than the Holocaust of World War II. This is not encouraging news to the Israelis.</p> <p>Furthermore, if the Dome of the Rock needs to be destroyed to make room for a rebuilt Jewish temple, this could well ignite a world war (or accelerate Armageddon).</p> <p>Steve Gregg warns that the eschatological viewpoint of 50 million or more evangelical Christians in the United States could seriously impact world politics; therefore, it is extremely important that dispensationalists not get too excited about giving Israel the green light to “take back” the Temple Mount. With respect to dispensationalists sending money to allow Russian, Polish, etc., Jews to migrate back to Israel (where those same dispensationalists believe that the Battle of Armageddon will occur and where the Antichrist will massacre some of them), Gregg comments, “Why would I want to pay the airfare for somebody to go to the place where I believe they are going to be doomed? It’s part of the inconsistency of the whole dispensational system. They <i>think</i> they are pro-Israel [but] ...”</p>

	<p>Every Jew is loved by God, and He wants every Jew and Gentile to be saved, but that does not mean that God wants all Jews to return to Israel.</p> <p>Hank Hanegraaff argues that there will be no Armageddon [Hanegraaff, <i>Bible Answer Man</i>, January 5, 2012]. The “Armageddon” that dispensationalists think is a future world war that reaches its climax in northern Israel is instead an <i>apocalyptic term</i> that simply refers to the virtual destruction of the land of Israel and the second temple. Similar text in Isaiah refers to the destruction of Babylon. In particular, the Medes and the Persians defeated the Babylonians. Jesus used the same kind of language in the book of Revelation. He compared true Israel to prostituted Israel. Judgment came upon Israel in 70 AD. Jesus said that he was describing “what must soon take place” ... “because the time is near”. When Jesus says “soon”, “near”, and “this generation”, we should take Him at His word.</p> <p>Kenneth Gentry indicates that there is a difference between the time of Christ’s “judgment coming on Israel (Matt. 24:34)” and the time of Christ’s “second advent (Matt. 24:26)” [Gentry, 1998b, p. <i>liii</i>]. The former occurred in 70 AD, and the latter is still in the future.</p> <p>Because of the destruction of the second temple, the Jewish people have stopped performing animal sacrifices. Messianic Jews see no need for a sacrifice because Christ was the ultimate sacrifice, whereas other Jews reinterpret the Mosaic law and argue that study of the Torah replaces temple sacrifice [Hanegraaff, <i>Bible Answer Man</i>, July 3, 2013].</p> <p>As a postscript to this, the state of “rest” that the descendants of Abraham experienced upon crossing the Jordan River and entering the Promised Land, is symbolic of the permanent “rest” we receive when we accept Jesus Christ—and in the future when we are given resurrected bodies, and there is a new Heaven and a new Earth.</p>
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Topic/ Question	Where is the Ark of the Covenant? Where is the location of the Holy of Holies (with the respect to the Temple Mount), where the Ark used to be kept?
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>The Ark of the Covenant is sometimes called the Ark of the Testimony, because that is where the tablets of the law (i.e., the ten commandments, written on stone with “the finger of God”) were located. The Ark was housed in a tabernacle, sometimes called “the tent of meeting” during the years of the Exodus. There is a heavenly tabernacle and a heavenly Ark of the Covenant. Moses created the earthly version of the Ark of the Covenant based on what God revealed to him on Mount Sinai. The Ark has even been the subject of a series of movies (e.g., “Raiders of the Lost Ark”) by director Steven Spielberg.</p> <p>As one of the most sacred and powerful objects in history, God’s Shekinah glory dwelt above the gold mercy seat (the cover of the Ark). The Ark contained the</p>

tablets of the Law, a pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that had miraculously budded with almonds. It was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold, within and without. Wherever the Israelites travelled during the 40 years in the wilderness following the Exodus from Egypt, the Ark (and the rest of the Tabernacle) moved with them. The Levites were given very specific instructions on how to transport/carry the Ark.

The Ark disappeared from history, and we do not know what happened to it. The last time it is mentioned in the Bible is in 2 Chronicles 35:3, during the time of King Josiah, around 621 BC [Stewart, 2016c]. This is shortly before the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem. The Ark may have been moved and hidden, proactively, in case of an invasion. Don Stewart documents some theories about what may have happened to the Ark:

- Hidden somewhere underneath the Temple Mount
- Hidden by Jeremiah on Mount Nebo in Jordan
- Destroyed, possibly during the Babylonian invasion

And here are some proposed, but unlikely, possibilities:

- Taken to Ethiopia by Solomon's son Menelik, the alleged son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba ... but the son left a replica in its place, in Jerusalem
- Taken to Ethiopia at a later time
- Taken to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar's armies
- Taken to Egypt by Pharaoh Shishak
- Taken from Judah to the northern kingdom of Israel, by King Jehoash (Joash) of Israel
- Taken to Rome by the Romans

Archaeologist Ron Wyatt claimed to have found the Ark in 1982 [Tourniaire, 2019] in a tunnel under Skull Hill (possibly "the Place of the Skull"):

John 19:17 Carrying his own cross, he [Jesus] went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).

John 19:41 At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid.

This place is believed by many to be the same site as Mount Moriah, which is where Abraham was about to sacrifice his son, Isaac, before being prevented in doing so, by an angel.

Wyatt believes the Ark was hidden by Jeremiah as a preventative measure before the Babylonian army conquered Jerusalem in 586 BC [Tourniaire, 2019]. The work of General Charles Gordon, circa 1882, inspired Wyatt. Gordon was

convinced that the traditional site of Golgotha at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was not the site of Christ's crucifixion. Rather, he believed—as do many other evangelicals—that Golgotha was at Skull Hill, north of there. The Romans wanted to display the crucifixion of criminals as a warning to all, and it would have made more sense to do this on a well-travelled road, that is, by Skull Hill. Gordon also believed that Jeremiah wrote the biblical book of Lamentations in a cave (sometimes called “Jeremiah’s grotto”) at that location, as mentioned in the extra-biblical (but non-authoritative) book of 2 Maccabees (Chapter 2:4-8) which is one of the books of the Apocrypha [Fisher & Laird, 2017]:

Jeremiah found a cave-dwelling; he carried the tent, the ark, and the incense-altar into it, then blocked up the entrance. Some of his companions came to mark out the way, but were unable to find it. When Jeremiah learned of this he reprimanded them. ‘The place shall remain unknown’, he said, ‘until God finally gathers his people together and shows mercy to them. Then the Lord will bring these things to light again ...’ [Biblica.com, 2021]

Wyatt reported that the Ark was located under a series of cracks in the rocks which led from the crucifixion site at the surface to the Ark many feet below. He stated that he saw a blackened substance that looked like it had dripped through the cracks long ago, and onto the Mercy Seat, that is, onto the cover of the Ark of the Covenant. Might this have been Christ's blood? If so, it that would provide a very interesting connection to the sprinkling of blood by the high priest in the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur—the Day of Atonement (see below). Also, Wyatt claimed to have seen other temple artifacts with the Ark.

Wyatt passed away in 1999. Authorities are skeptical or secretive of his findings, with some publicly stating that they have not seen “any evidence of biblical artifacts or temple treasures” [“Ron Wyatt”, Wikipedia, 2022]. Wyatt's other interests included a search for Noah's Ark and for evidence of the Exodus from Egypt during the time of Moses, including the location of the Red Sea crossing. These are areas of active interest among archaeologists and explorers (e.g., [Mahoney, 2020a; Mahoney, 2020b]). It will be fascinating to see what evidence comes to light as we approach the time of Christ's return, including the impact that such discoveries would have on an unbelieving world.

The Ark is symbolic of Christ [Reagan, 2019a]. The Ark itself was made of wood, symbolic of Christ being human. It was covered with gold, speaking of His divinity. The Ten Commandments showed that Christ perfectly fulfilled the Law. The pot of manna spoke of Christ as the Bread of Life. Aaron's rod that budded is symbolic of the resurrection of Christ. Church father John Chrysostom notes that the symbols could also be interpreted as reminders [Stewart, 2016c]. The tablets of the law remind people of the rebellion, during which Moses broke the original tablets. The pot of manna reminds Israel of their complaints during the Exodus from Egypt. Aaron's rod serves as a reminder of the rebellion of the Israelites when in jealousy they questioned Aaron's authority (Numbers 17:10-11).

The lid of the Ark was called the “Mercy Seat”. Once per year, the high priest sprinkled blood on it, and this was symbolic of Jesus Christ eventually shedding His blood, to not just atone (cover) sin, but rather to *remove* sin. The following Scripture passage suggests that during the Millennium, when Christ will literally reign from David’s Throne in Jerusalem, there will be no need for the Ark of the Covenant:

Jeremiah 3:16-17 In those days, when your numbers have increased greatly in the land," declares the LORD, "people will no longer say, 'The ark of the covenant of the LORD.' It will never enter their minds or be remembered; it will not be missed, nor will another one be made. At that time they will call Jerusalem The Throne of the LORD, and all nations will gather in Jerusalem to honor the name of the LORD. No longer will they follow the stubbornness of their evil hearts.

The men of Beth Shemesh opened the Ark, and over 50,000 people died. King David made the mistake of forgetting how to carry the Ark—thus showing a lack of respect for the Ark, God’s holiness, and God’s specific instructions to the Levites. King Solomon finally brought the Ark to the Temple Mount, amid great celebration. Over 120,000 sheep were sacrificed that day.

Chuck Missler adds to the conjecture that the Ark of the Covenant is secretly stored in Ethiopia [Missler, 2005]. Tradition has it that the Ark was taken to Ethiopia (via Egypt) for safe storage by the Egyptian king, Pharaoh Neco, after the Levites sought protection from the evil Judean king, Manasseh (2 Kings 21). Pharaoh Neco, incidentally, was Ethiopian. According to this hypothesis, the Ark was to be held by the Ethiopians, and then was to be presented to the Messiah on Mount Zion (Isaiah 18:7; Zephaniah 3:10). An interesting conjecture is that perhaps the Ethiopian treasurer under Queen Candace (Acts 8:26-40) had been on his way to Jerusalem to see if it was the time to present the Ark to the Messiah (Jesus Christ). When the Ethiopian eunuch got to Jerusalem, however, he found out that the Messiah had been killed, and so the treasurer left in confusion. On his way home, the Holy Spirit moved Philip the evangelist to meet him on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. The Ethiopian happened to be reading Isaiah (possibly Isaiah 53) at that time. Philip then explained the mission of the Messiah, and the Ethiopian rejoiced because of what he had heard, and the fact that the Messiah was going to come back.

Zephaniah 3:10 [KJV] From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering.

Could the Ark be in Ethiopia today? Grant Jeffrey thinks this could be the case [Jeffrey, 1988]. He reports that the majority of the northern Ethiopians have Semitic background, and that the Ethiopian orthodox Coptic church traces its origin back to the times of King Solomon. We hear very little of the Ark of the Covenant after the time of Solomon. Recall that the Queen of Sheba travelled to

	<p>meet King Solomon (1 Kings 10; 2 Chronicles 9). Jeffrey thinks there may be a connection between the Ark, King Solomon, and the Queen of Sheba. Legend has it that the Queen of Sheba bore a son by Solomon. Incidentally, her palace is located near the Church of Zion in Aksum, Ethiopia.</p> <p>As a bit of trivia, recall that Moses married an Ethiopian woman (Numbers 12:1), and that an Ethiopian river, the Gihon, flowed through the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:13).</p> <p>King Josiah makes reference to the Ark in 2 Chronicles 35:3. After the Babylonian captivity, there is no record of the Ark. Furthermore, although the second temple existed from about 515 BC to 70 AD, there is no evidence to suggest the Ark was in the second temple, and there is no evidence to suggest that God met with the high priest in this Temple. It also begs the question of why the Ark was not brought forth if some people believed it was secured in a tunnel or storage area underneath the Temple Mount.</p> <p>David Hocking reminds us that, “God isn’t in the box”. As far as rebuilding the Temple goes, it doesn’t matter whether the Ark is found. After all, the Ark was not present for the second temple. Ezekiel 41-44 explicitly mentions some articles used in the future Temple service; therefore, some authors conjecture that the Ark of the Covenant will once again be part of the worship of God in the rebuilt Temple [LaHaye & Hindson, 2004]. In particular, 2 Thessalonians 2:4 states that the Antichrist will take his seat in the Holy of Holies, implying the presence of the Ark of the Covenant (the “mercy seat”) which historically occupied the Holy of Holies.</p> <p>The theoretical location of the Holy of Holies in present-day Jerusalem is unknown. It may have been just north of the Temple Mount in the area of the Dome of the Spirits.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>Many of the comments in the dispensationalist position apply to the preterist position.</p> <p>The location of the Ark of the Covenant is subject to conjecture, but the location is irrelevant since it is not needed to fulfill prophecy. Jesus Christ is what the Ark of the Covenant pointed to; there is no need to go back to Old Testament objects and practices. The earthly Ark was modeled after the heavenly Ark, so the real Ark is in Heaven.</p>

Topic/ Question	The ashes of the red heifer—are they important? How about with respect to the timeframe of a rebuilt Temple?
Dispensationalist Position	The ashes of a perfect red heifer are needed to consecrate the Temple’s furnishings and vessels, before sacrifices can resume. The purification rules involving the sacrifice and the ashes of an unblemished red heifer puzzled even wise King Solomon. Before they ran out, the ashes of a previous red heifer

	<p>were to be mixed with the ashes of a new, pure red heifer, to create a continuous thread. The Temple Institute thinks that it is not necessary that the old ashes be found; however, some Orthodox Jews think that it is necessary [Reagan, 2021b]. The Temple Institute in Jerusalem is ready to rebuild the Temple, should the time arise:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">It has strong Orthodox support and has also received funding from the Israeli government.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">... it has prepared all the vessels needed for the Temple ceremonies and sacrifices, as well as the necessary incenses and oils. The clothing for the priests has been prepared, including the breastplate and crown to be worn by the High Priest. Various musical instruments are being made along with furniture like the table of showbread and the altar of incense. All of these items can be seen online at the Institute’s website. ...</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The most expensive item the Institute has constructed for the temple is the golden menorah that will be placed in the Holy Place. It is covered with 95 pounds of pure gold and cost several million dollars. It is currently on display in a glass case at a site overlooking the Western Wall.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The Temple Institute has also constructed a copper laver to be used by the priests for ceremonial cleansing. ...</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The only thing needed for the Temple that the Temple Institute has not produced is the Ark of the Covenant. The reason they have refrained from tackling this project is because they are convinced that the original Ark is located beneath the Temple Mount in a special chamber that was designed for the Ark’s safekeeping. [Reagan, 2021b, pp. 4-5]</p> <p>Today, Jews are looking for a red heifer that is perfect, that is, with no imperfections, no blemishes, no white hairs, etc. Even a single white hair would disqualify it. It was sacrificed outside the city. There is a connection to Christ. Christ was perfect. He was sacrificed on a cross outside the city of Jerusalem. The ashes of the red heifer were used to cleanse or purify the temple articles. The blood of Christ cleanses us from sin and unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).</p> <p>We periodically hear rumors of a potential red heifer; but so far, there have no confirmations.</p>
<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>The red heifer and a rebuilt Temple are connected. There have only been a small number of such heifers (e.g., nine) throughout history, according to Jewish tradition. According to the prophecy, three years after a red heifer is born, it is ready for sacrifice; so, finding a red heifer may speed about the rebuilding of the Temple, and the rebuilding will cause much friction among Muslims. In this respect, the red heifer would be a “four-legged time bomb”.</p> <p>Hank Hanegraaff appeals to the book of Hebrews to describe Christ’s relationship to the red heifer:</p>

	<p>Hebrews highlights that Jesus is the antitype not only of the temple and the high priest, but he is the antitypical sacrifice as well: 'The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!' (9:13-14). Indeed, even the sacred ashes of the red heifer, like the blood of bulls and goats, find their ultimate antitypical fulfillment in the blood of Jesus Christ. It is for this reason that the writer of Hebrews explains in no uncertain terms that to revert to a sacrificial system is to trample the Son of God under foot, to treat as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant and to insult the Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:29; cf. Galatians 3-5; Hebrews 5:11-6:12). [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 223]</p>
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Chapter 9: The Olivet Discourse and the Upper Room Discourse

This chapter deals with several major, controversial doctrines. The *Olivet Discourse* is that portion of Scripture in which Christ answers the disciples' questions about when He will return, and therefore, when the Messianic Kingdom would be established. It deals with the Tribulation and the Second Coming—with some of Luke 21 dealing with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Such questions were being asked because it became clear that most of Israel had rejected Jesus Christ as Messiah. Thus, the Messianic Kingdom was put on hold.

The Olivet Discourse is the largest prophetic passage in the New Testament, apart from Revelation [Hart, 2011]. The Olivet Discourse is found in **Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, and Luke 21:5-36**. Luke 17:20-37 quotes Jesus about 1-2 weeks before the Olivet Discourse, but all of those passages have overlapping content. Of the 4 synoptic gospels, the book of John is the only one that doesn't have the Olivet Discourse; however, remember that John also wrote the book of Revelation which is his version of the Olivet Discourse [Gentry, 1998b]. Luke includes near-term (70 AD) *and* far-term (Tribulation) events; however, Matthew and Mark do not deal with the near-term events, just the far-term events [Ice in [Ice & Gentry, 1999]]. Furthermore, the Olivet Discourse lines up with the events in Zechariah 12-14, when Christ returns physically to rescue Israel. The events of Zechariah 12-14, however, do not support preterist claims. Incidentally, the name Zechariah means “Jehovah remembers” or “God remembers” which is a reference to God's unconditional commitment to Israel [Levy, 2011a].

The one passage that most preterists and futurists agree on, which deals with the 70 AD judgment on Jerusalem, is found in Luke 21:20-24:

Luke 21:20-24 "When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

Chuck Missler sometimes refers to the Olivet Discourse as an “intelligence briefing” by Jesus Christ to some of His disciples (Peter, James, John, and Andrew—as per Mark 13:3), on the Mount of Olives. It is one of the most important prophetic passages in the Bible. In Matthew 24-25, His disciples wondered if “now” was the time that Christ's kingdom was going to come. Note that Christ's Kingdom is the Millennial Kingdom, when He will literally rule and reign on the earth, as per Isaiah 9:7 and Luke 1:32-33. The Millennium Kingdom is clearly described in Revelation 20, but there are also many references to it outside of Revelation, including many places in the Old Testament.

The Rapture is an event that some authors connect with the Olivet Discourse; and while some verses might hint at the Rapture in Matthew 24, careful study shows that the Rapture is found in the Upper Room Discourse instead (see John 14:2-3—and related passages in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-52). The Rapture refers to the translation of the living believers, that is, the “snatching away of the saints”, when Christ takes believers to Heaven, and instantly gives them perfected/resurrected bodies that are never subject to death or decay. Dispensationalists argue that the Rapture is imminent, and occurs at least seven years *prior to the return of Christ* at Armageddon. Furthermore, during the 7-year period immediately preceding Armageddon, a major, well-defined event occurs: the Tribulation. Preterists, on the other hand, deny that such a rapture occurs; however, they agree that Christ will indeed return, and that there will be a physical resurrection. In particular, preterists believe that the following events occur simultaneously (or nearly simultaneously): Christ’s Second Coming, the resurrection of both the saved and the unsaved, and the judgment of both believers and unbelievers.

Although some churches have divided (split) over the doctrines surrounding Christ’s Second Coming, many dispensationalist and preterist churches believe that we can debate these doctrines, showing respect for each other, but without dividing over these issues. After all, both groups agree that Christ *will* return; it’s just a matter of *when*, and of trying to fit the pieces together. Essential doctrines that both groups agree to, include: the notion of original sin; Christ’s virgin birth; His life, death, and resurrection; the fact that He will return; the judgment of the saved and the unsaved; the fact that there is a heaven and a hell; and the fact that the saved will have everlasting life in both physical and spiritual form.

Topic/ Question	<p>What specific questions were asked at the Olivet Discourse? Clarification of the questions asked is paramount to our analysis in the rest of this Chapter.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Matthew 24:1-3 Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"</p>
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>The Olivet Discourse took place in the few last days of Christ’s life, after Christ left the Temple for the final time. The second temple had not yet been completed. As magnificent as the structure was at the time of Christ, it wasn’t completed until 64 AD.</p> <p>The disciples’ three questions can be paraphrased as follows [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When will Jerusalem and the Temple be destroyed? 2. What will be the sign of your Coming?

- Dispensationalists and preterists argue whether this means the Second Coming, or Christ's *coming in judgment*, respectively [DeMar, 1997].

3. What will be the sign of the end of this age?

Some scholars (e.g., [Walvoord, 1990]) claim that Questions 2 and 3 are really a single question because Christ's Second Coming signifies the end of an age (and the beginning of the Messianic age). The Greek word *kai* is used to connect the two nouns in the last two questions; so, those questions might be better translated as one question, "And what is the sign of your coming, even the end of the age?" [Walvoord & Dyer, 2013]—or as Craig Blomberg writes, "... the sign of your coming and end of the age?" [Ice, 2021, p. 5]. Matthew 24-25 deal extensively with those latter two questions (which are effectively one question). Interestingly, Matthew and Mark do not deal with the destruction of Jerusalem; but, Luke does.

The disciples automatically connected the destruction of the Temple with the end of the age, that is, with events connected to ushering in of the Millennium (the Kingdom of God) [Hitchcock, 2020; Ice, 2021a]. Thus, the destruction of the Temple, the sign of Christ's return, and the end of the age were basically the same event in the disciples' minds, that is, they were a sequence of events very closely related in time.

There is an argument that Matthew 24:4-14 and, similarly, Luke 21:8-24 describe general prophecies that are being fulfilled, even now, as we lead up to the Great Tribulation in the future [Walvoord, 1990]. Others, however, think that these verses are part of the Tribulation. Matthew 24:15-30 describes the Great Tribulation because Matthew 24:15-16 speaks of the "abomination of desolation" at the mid-point of the Tribulation.

Dispensationalists believe that the Rapture ends the Church age. Immediately, or sometime thereafter (perhaps years later), the 70th week of Daniel begins, to fulfill the 70 Weeks of Daniel; and the end of that age is the Second Coming. Partial preterists do not believe that Christ was referring to His Second Coming, with respect to Question 2, but rather to *His coming in judgment* in 70 AD [Eberle & Trench, 2021]. They believe that Question 3 refers to Christ's Second Coming.

The Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 does not answer question (1) [LaHaye & Hindson, 2004]. Luke 21:20-24, however, does, by mentioning that the city will be surrounded by armies. Only Luke's passage deals with 70 AD, when the Roman army destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple. Questions (2) and (3) are answered in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew and Mark, but also in the other verses of the Olivet Discourse in Luke 21.

	<p>The Rapture is <i>not</i> described in Matthew 24-25 [Walvoord, 1990; Ice, 2021]. Trying to fit it in, only leads to confusion, argues John Walvoord. Confusion also exists when people try to read the 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple into Matthew 24. Note that the Church age began at the Day of Pentecost, and will end with the Rapture.</p>
<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>Preterists believe that “the end of the age” means the end of the Jewish age [DeMar, 1997]—and that occurred in 70 AD when their sacrificial and temple system ended. It is the end of the Old Testament era: “the last days” of the Old Testament era which Matthew and Jesus were part of [Adams & Cook, 2006]. It is also the beginning of a new age that we are part of today.</p> <p>The generation that lived in the period 30 AD to 70 AD would not pass away until all of the events described in the Olivet Discourse occurred. The term “this generation” is the deal-closer. When that term is used, it always refers to the generation that was alive at that moment [Adams & Cook, 2006].</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Notice that the disciples did not ask about the end of the “world” (Greek, <i>kosmos</i>), as some Bible versions translate the Greek word <i>aion</i>. In context, with the temple and city as their primary focus, they asked about the end of the “age”. They were asking when time would run out for the temple, the city of Jerusalem, and the covenant promises that were related to the Mosaic system of animal sacrifices, ceremonial washings, and the priesthood. [DeMar, 1997, p. 45].</p> <p>Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD, about 40 years after Christ’s death and resurrection. Not only were Jerusalem and the Temple destroyed, but more than one million Jews were killed and almost 100,000 were taken captive [Eberle & Trench, 2021]. When the Jewish people rebelled in 130-135 AD, 580,000 Jews were killed. Israel was no longer recognized as a nation until 1948. Jesus said that “this generation” would not pass away until the events in the Olivet Discourse took place, and “this generation” was the generation alive in 30 AD.</p> <p>Jesus was not referring to His Second Coming in the second question of the Olivet Discourse. (Partial preterists still believe that Christ will have a future Second Coming.) So, which “coming” was it? Partial preterists are divided: some claim that it was Christ’s <i>coming in judgment</i> in 70 AD that was the subject of the Olivet Discourse; others think it was Christ’s <i>coming in His kingdom</i> where He would reveal Himself as King [Eberle & Trench, 2021]. Harold Eberle and Martin Trench believe it was the latter interpretation, which occurred at Jesus’ ascension in 30 AD. The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD would just be a sign or confirmation that Jesus had already come into His Kingdom (in 30 AD) and was presently reigning and sitting at the right hand of the Father.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Matthew 16:28 "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."</p>

	<p>Luke 23:42-43 Then he [the thief on the cross] said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."</p> <p>The third question, however, is about “the end of the age” which is equated to “the end of the world”, or more particularly, when Christ returns at His Second Coming [Eberle & Trench, 2021]. For that question, Jesus mentioned that no one knows the day or the hour, other than the Father. In Matthew 24, Jesus gave a number of comparisons about the surprise return: Noah’s flood (verses 37-39), two men in a field (verses 40-42), a thief in the night (verses 43-44), and a master returning (verses 45-51). In Matthew 25, He also compared the surprise return with ten virgins waiting (verses 1-13) and servants with talents or wealth (verses 14-30).</p> <p>The lack of warnings about Christ’s return differs from dispensationalists:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">If you come to accept the partial preterist view of Matthew 24, then you will embrace many ideas that may be new to you, the most important point being that there will be <i>no signs</i> preceding the second coming of Jesus or the end of the world. Jesus did not know of any signs, and no one else will be able to figure it out either. ...</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">This is contradictory to what is spoken of by futurist teachers, who love to create in their listeners’ anticipation of the Second Coming by talking about increasing wars, famines, earthquakes, false religious leaders, and people falling away from the faith. In reality, all of those signs preceded the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. [Eberle & Trench, 2021, Kindle edition, location 4388]</p>
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Topic/ Question	<p>Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, and Luke 21:5-36 contain the <i>Olivet Discourse</i>—a major set of prophecies concerning the end times, given by Jesus Christ two or three days before his death. Matthew was written to a Jewish audience; Mark was written to a Roman audience; and Luke was written to a Greek audience. Incidentally, Mark is not a first name; the author, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, is John Mark.</p> <p>In Matthew 24:30-34, it says that “all nations” will see Christ “coming on the clouds with power and great glory”, and that “this generation” would see the events leading up to this bigger event. What group of people is “this generation” referring to? Is it: (a) the people of that day (circa 30 AD to 70 AD), (b) the people alive in the years leading up to—and including—the Rapture, or (c) the people alive in the years leading up to—and including—the Second Coming of Christ?</p>
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>There is some debate about the chronology of the events described in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. Some scholars believe the events are chronological, and mirror the order of the events given in Matthew 24:5-9 [Pentecost, 1958].</p>

In general, when dispensationalists encounter the phrase: “This generation will not pass away until ...”, they think of the generation that will be alive to see the “signs of the times” of the days/years immediately prior to the Rapture. In particular, “this generation” is often understood to be the generation that saw Israel become an independent nation again, in 1948. This is why there is so much excitement among prophecy buffs today. Might the return of Jesus Christ be at hand?

An alternative dispensational interpretation of “this generation” is that it refers to the generation of Jewish people who are alive at the time that Matthew 24 unfolds, that is, those who see the Tribulation—and, in particular, the second half of the Tribulation [Woods, 2021h]. In the pretribulational Rapture model, the Rapture has already taken place by the time the Tribulation signs appear.

We know that the words “this generation” could not have applied to the generation of Christ’s day because none of the following events occurred (“all these things”) that are described in Matthew 24 [MacArthur, 2006]:

- Abomination of desolation
- Judgments
- False prophets
- Signs in the heavens
- Christ’s physical return to Earth
- Gathering of the elect (saved) from one end of the earth to the other

Thomas Ice writes that the “abomination of desolation” spoken of in Daniel 9 and Matthew 24 could not have occurred in 70 AD [Ice & Gentry, 1999]. In particular:

- No image was set up in the holy place.
- No image came to life.
- No one was required to worship the image.
- Christ did not return 3½ years later to rescue the Jewish people.
- Furthermore, if the Temple really was desecrated in the spirit of Daniel 9:27 and Matthew 24:15-16, it would have been *too late* for the people to flee (upon seeing the abomination of desolation) because, by then, the Romans had taken the city. Thus, the abomination of desolation must be connected to a *future* temple that precedes Christ’s Second Coming by about 3½ years. The abomination of desolation will give the Jews some time to quickly exit, unlike 70 AD where they were hemmed in by the time the Romans took the city and the temple. Christ returns to rescue the Jewish remnant—unlike the situation in 70 AD.
- Daniel 12:11 states that the one who commits the ultimate “abomination of desolation” will be destroyed 3½ years later. This

did not happen after the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in 70 AD [Ice, 2019]. Thus, preterists such as Ken Gentry and Gary DeMar are incorrect in arguing that this prophecy was fulfilled in 70 AD and the years following.

Ice notes the parallels between the Olivet Discourse and Zechariah 12-14:

These three chapters of Zechariah include three important factors: (1) Jerusalem will be surrounded by the nations, who will seek to destroy the holy city (12:2-9; 14:2-7); (2) The Lord will fight for Israel and Jerusalem and defeat the nations, who have come up to lay siege against the city (14:1-8); (3) At this time, the Lord will also save Israel from her sins and she will be converted to the Messiah – the Lord Jesus (12:9-14).

Factor 1 fits well into the language of Matthew 24. The nations have surrounded Jerusalem. It does *not* fit the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem, for that was accomplished by one nation, namely, Rome. Zechariah 14:2 says, “I will gather *all the nations* against Jerusalem to battle.”

Factor 2 also fits Matthew 24, but not the preterist view. Zechariah 14:3 says, “Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when he fights on a day of battle.”...

Factor 3 refers to the conversion of Israel. This certainly did not happen in A.D. 70. The whole purpose of the destruction of Jerusalem at that time was due to the nation’s rejection of the Messiah. ... It cannot be a reference to just the first-century Hebrew Christians ... For in the A.D. 70 event, the remnant had already fled the city by this point in the siege. ...

Further, Daniel 9:27 says that the one leading the siege of Jerusalem will himself be cut off; “even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.” This did not happen in A.D. 70. The Roman general Titus went back victoriously to Rome and lived a number of years after that noteworthy event.

... There are great parallels between Matthew 24 and Zechariah 12-14. I believe that our Lord’s discourse in Matthew 24 and the siege of Zechariah 12-14 refer to the same future event. Both prophesy a time when Jerusalem is surrounded by armies and the Lord moves to rescue his people and judge the invaders. [Ice & Gentry, 1999, pp. 139-140]

There are also parallels between Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, and Revelation 6-7, adding strength to the statement that the Olivet Discourse deals with the Tribulation [Walvoord, *et al.*, 2011, p. 120; Ice, 2021a]:

Matthew 24	Mark 13	Luke 21	Revelation 6-7
False Christs (24:4-5)	13:6	21:8	Rider on the white horse (6:1-2)
Wars and rumors of wars (24:6-7)	13:7-8	21:9-10	Rider on the red horse (6:3-4)

Famines and earthquakes (24:7)	13:8	21:11	Rider on the black horse (6:5-6)
Famines and plagues (24:7)	13:8	21:11	Rider on the pale horse (6:7-8)
Persecution and martyrdom (24:9-10)	13:9-13	21:12-17	Martyrs (6:9-11)
Worldwide preaching of the gospel (24:14)	13:10		Ministry of the 144,000 (7:1-8)
Cosmic Phenomena 24:29	13:24-25	21:11,25-26	Cosmic phenomena (6:12-14)

John Walvoord believes that verses 4-14 deal with “general signs”, some of which are present today, and for that matter in the general inter-advent age between Christ’s first and second comings—even though we are not in the Tribulation [Walvoord & Dyer, 2013]. Verses 15-26 are “specific signs” of Christ’s impending return. Finally, Verses 27-31 deal with the Second Coming, and these verses parallel Revelation 19:11-21.

Thomas Ice, however, believes that all of Matthew 24:4-41 deal with the Tribulation period [Ice, 2021]. None of the events listed there were fulfilled in history (70 AD or otherwise).

The Tribulation is divided into two parts, with the dividing mark in Matthew 24:15, at the abomination of desolation. In particular, Ice believes that verses 4-14 run parallel to the first 5 seal judgments in Revelation 6.

David Hocking believes “this generation” refers specifically to the nation of Israel *during the Great Tribulation* [Hocking, 2013]. That generation will say, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”, and that occurs just before Christ’s Second Coming [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]:

Matthew 23:36-39 I tell **you** the truth, all this will come upon **this generation**. ... For I tell you, you will not see me again until **you** say, '**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**'"

Hebrews 3:10 also uses the term “this generation”, but in reference to the Israelites who walked in the wilderness for 40 years [Ice, 2021].

Dispensationalists believe that the focus of the Olivet Discourse is *Israel*, rather than the Christian church. Preterists disagree. In fact, there are many controversies surrounding the events in the Olivet Discourse. First, let us examine some of those Scriptures.

Matthew 24:3-22 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, **but the end is still to come.** Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. **All these are the beginning of birth pains.**

"**Then** you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. **At that time** many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and **then the end will come.**

"So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel -- let the reader understand -- then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ... Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. **For then there will be great distress,** unequalled from the beginning of the world until now -- and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.

Matthew 24:29-34 "**Immediately after the distress of those days** 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' **"At that time** the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, **when you see all these things,** you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, **this generation** will certainly not pass away until **all these things** have happened."

Mark 13:30 I tell you the truth, **this generation** will certainly not pass away until **all these things** have happened.

Luke 21:32 "I tell you the truth, **this generation** will certainly not pass away until **all these things** have happened.

“This generation” ... is a conventional usage of language with respect to reference and does not have to apply to a present audience. In the prophetic passages of the Old Testament, it is common to find such language. For instance, Moses used language similar to Jesus’ when he said, “So it will be when all of these things have come upon you ...” (Deuteronomy 30:1). Even though he is speaking to the present generation (“you”), it is evident from the context that His words speak about a future generation that will live thousands of years later and into the eschatological period. The people of this “generation” (the “you”) are those who will have already suffered the judgment of exile (verse 1), captivity (verse 3), been regathered and restored (verses 4-5), and receive spiritual regeneration (“circumcision of heart,” verse 6). [Price, 2003b, p. 380]

Note the words “all these things” in the passages above. If we can identify “all these things”, we will know about whom “this generation” refers. Given the list of events described in Luke 21 (see below for more detailed treatment of them), were all of them fulfilled in the first century? No. The heavenly bodies were not shaken; there were no signs in the heavens. The times of the Gentiles were not fulfilled—they are ongoing to this day. People did not see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky (similar to Christ’s ascension in Luke 1:10). The words “all these things” include events in: the first half of the Tribulation, the middle of the Tribulation, and the second half of the Tribulation ... including the Second Coming of Christ.

The term “you” is used a lot in the above Olivet Discourse passages. Does this apply specifically to the people that Jesus was speaking to at the time? No. The word “you” also appears in Deuteronomy 30:1-3, yet this was written circa 1450 BC about a future time—generations later [Tsarfati, 2020c]. The same with Jeremiah 31:1-6.

When studying the Olivet Discourse, a question to ponder is whether or not Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 are parallel passages. Do they refer to the same events—or, might they be referring to similar, but distinct, events? Consider the gospel of Luke:

Luke 21:10-24 Then he [Jesus] said to them: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven. **"But before all this,** they will lay hands on you and persecute you. ... "When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

Note the words in Luke 21:12: “But before all this”, that is, *before* the beginning of birth pains (or before the “beginning of sorrows” in the KJV translation), that is, before the false Christs, earthquakes, famines, pestilences, etc., there would be a desolation of Jerusalem. Given that there was a desolation of Jerusalem in 70 AD, this seems to support both the dispensationalist and preterist camps, assuming that the beginning of sorrows is post-70 AD. (Note: The preterist camp actually has a weaker position because it claims that the beginning of sorrows occurred prior to 70 AD, even though there is no evidence of false Christs, earthquakes, famines, and pestilences—at least not to any significant degree—prior to 70 AD.) It may well be that the “false Christs” will be apparent during the Great Tribulation when people may falsely claim that Christ has already arrived, in the person of someone else; however, Christ’s actual arrival will be apparent to all (Matthew 24:26-27).

One might ask if pestilences (plagues), wars and rumors of wars, ethnic conflicts, upheaval within nations, famines, earthquakes, etc. are “signs of the times”—meaning: is the Rapture at hand? First of all, the Rapture is said to be imminent, but we don’t know the day or the hour. Second, many of these things have always been taking place; but, in recent decades, these signs have been increasing in frequency and intensity. Third, when the Olivet Discourse mentions these things, it is referring to the *Tribulation*. However, if these events are already taking place, that is, if we are *already* seeing pestilences (plagues/diseases) like, for example, the COVID-19 pandemic, an increase in conflicts among ethnic groups within a nation (e.g., protests and riots), wars among nations, general chaos, famines, earthquakes, etc.; and if we know these will be part of the Tribulation, then we have reason to believe that the 7-year Tribulation and the Rapture (which precedes it) are getting very close.

Incidentally, it should be pointed out that nothing has killed more people throughout history than infectious diseases [Hitchcock, 2020]. For example, the Black Death or Bubonic Plague (1347-1351) killed about 200 million people; Smallpox (1520), about 56 million; Spanish Flu (1918-1919), about 40-50 million; HIV/AIDS (1981-current), about 25-35 million; etc. As of August 8, 2020, COVID-19 has claimed over 700,000 lives worldwide. Some people claim that these are judgments from God due to the sin and evil in society. Indeed, some of the outbreaks of disease that are mentioned in the Bible are because of sin, such as the plagues in Egypt (prior to the Exodus), the plagues on the Philistines for taking the Ark of the Covenant, and the plague on Israel because of King David’s sin.

Although we don’t know why God allows modern-day outbreaks such as COVID-19, it’s possible that they are a “wake-up call” to get people’s attention, for people to turn to God, and therefore be saved and gain everlasting life [Hitchcock, 2020]. “There will be many people who will come to salvation

because of COVID-19 ... perhaps even on their death-bed.” [Hamrick, 2020]
This begs the question: Are we ready for Christ’s return?

The book of Matthew was written primarily to the Jews. Andy Woods summarizes Christ’s teachings as follows [Woods & McGowan, 2019c]:

- The Kingdom of God (with Christ as the King of Kings ruling and reigning from Jerusalem, extending peace, justice, and prosperity to the world) was offered to the Jews.
- The Kingdom was rejected (circa 30 AD).
- The Kingdom was postponed (until Christ’s Second Coming—still future).
- The Kingdom will ultimately be accepted.
- The interim program is described (i.e., the inter-advent years between Christ’s first and second comings). In particular, Matthew 24 describes the conditions in the final 7 years leading up to Christ’s Second Coming.

Let us continue with the Olivet Discourse, and specifically Luke 21. In verse 24, in the phrase “until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled”, note the word “until”. This implies a separation of an unknown length of time. That separation includes the Tribulation. Verses 25-28 then pick up the future Tribulation:

Luke 21:25-28 "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

Luke 21:20-28 provides the following outline of history: (1) the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, which is called the “days of vengeance” (vv. 20-24a); (2) followed by the “times of the Gentiles” (v. 24b); and then, (3) the Tribulation (vv. 25-26); followed by (4) the second coming of Christ to rescue elect Israel (vv. 27-28). As in the Old Testament, the second coming of Christ is associated with the salvation of Israel (called “your redemption” in v. 28). This did not happen in A.D. 70! Israel was under judgment, not redemption. Another way of looking at the two aspects of the passage are the “desolation” (v. 20) of Jerusalem in verses 20-24 as contrasted with her “redemption” (v. 28) prophesied in verses 25-28. [Ice & Gentry, 1999, p. 95]

For both camps, “this generation” could mean the *first generation*, that is, the generation just after Christ’s death. On the other hand, note the words in Matthew 24: “After this”, that is, *after* the beginning of sorrows. This passage seems to support only the dispensationalist camp because it implies a desolation

of Jerusalem that is well into the future (and still not occurring to this day). After this time (still future), there would be a desolation of Jerusalem.

Thus, there appear to be *two* desolations of Jerusalem in New Testament times: one spoken of in Luke 21, and another in Matthew 24 [Missler, 2005b]. (Note that an earlier desolation of Jerusalem occurred during the time of the Babylonian exile, as documented in the book of Daniel.) Some background information is valuable here: Bible scholars note that the gospel of Matthew was written to a *Jewish* audience; whereas the gospel of Luke was a chronological, historical account written by the physician Luke to a *Gentile* audience. The first desolation occurred in 70 AD. Historians such as Josephus estimate that about 1.1 million people died in this desolation of Jerusalem. We assume that many more would have been killed had they not heeded Jesus' warning to flee from the city when the invading army surrounded the city ... and paused. Thus, Jesus' advice was life-saving.

Missler argues that most Jews wouldn't have been reading Matthew anyway (circa 70 AD), but many might be reading Matthew as a handbook *during the last days*, that is, during the second desolation of Jerusalem a few years before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. In other words, Matthew is writing to a Jewish audience that would be reading his book long after the Rapture, and that's why Matthew speaks of watching for the Antichrist (Matthew 24:15-16) [Reagan, 2005]. These Jews would therefore be the *last generation* before the return of Jesus Christ. Thus, the words "this generation" could well cover *both* desolations, and this would still be consistent with dispensationalism. During the Tribulation, many Jews will come to Christ.

Thomas Ice distinguishes between "waiting" for the Lord's return via the Rapture versus "watching" or "looking" for the Lord's return via the Second Coming [Ice, 2021d]. Ice thinks that those Scripture verses that deal with *waiting* can best be connected to the Rapture, whereas those Scripture verses that deal with *watching* can best be connected to the Second Coming.

Note also that in Matthew 24:3 (and Mark 13:3), Scripture specifically says that a few of the disciples went to Jesus "privately" to ask him about the events, whereas in Luke 21:1-7, the word "privately" is not there. Luke's version appears to capture Jesus' discussion in the Temple, where there may have been a larger audience.

In summary, Luke seems to have the best fit with the first desolation of Jerusalem (70 AD), and Matthew and Mark correspond to the second/future desolation of Jerusalem (i.e., during the end times). The Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24-25 and Mark 13 do not refer to the Rapture, but rather to the Second Coming.

The phrase “at the end of this age” is used earlier in the book of Matthew. It seems like this phrase is connected with events that have not yet been fulfilled, and therefore the fulfillment of major events in the Olivet Discourse are still in the future.

Matthew 13:49 This is how it will be at **the end of the age**. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

With respect to the gospel being preached to all nations before the return of Jesus Christ, Thomas Ice argues that Matthew 24:14 and Revelation 14:6-7 are parallel passages that speak of worldwide evangelism, and this event was not fulfilled in the days prior to 70 AD [Ice, 2011g]. Ice argues that the event is truly about *global* evangelism rather than circa 70 AD “Roman Empire” evangelism, as some preterists such as Gary DeMar suggest. In particular, the passages from Matthew and Revelation both point to the middle of the Tribulation, around the time that the “mark of the beast” or “666” prophecy comes into play. The premise here is that before taking the mark of the beast, people all over the world will have an opportunity to hear the gospel and make their own personal decision about Jesus Christ. Furthermore, if DeMar is correct with his end times timeline, then this would water down Jesus’ Great Commission, that is, the fact that He would be with us “even to the end of the age”, which would imply approximately 70 AD.

With respect to Christ having already come “in judgment” in 70 AD, Thomas Ice writes:

Gentry interprets a reference to clouds in Revelation 1:7 as a non-personal coming of Christ. Christ never returned to earth in A.D 70 personally, so explaining the fall of Jerusalem as his coming violates the principle of literal interpretation. All contextual indications point to a literal and personal coming of Christ in that verse. Gentry calls this a “judgment-coming” of Christ, but the criteria of Revelation also connect a deliverance of the faithful with that coming. Preterism nowhere explains the promised deliverance from persecution that is associated with the coming, for example, in 3:10-11. Gentry's interpretation of 1:7 simply does not fulfill the criteria of literal interpretation of the text. The fact is, the church did not escape persecution in A.D. 70, but continued to suffer for Christ's sake long after that. [Ice, 2000]

... Another hermeneutical shortcoming of preterism relates to the limiting of the promised coming of Christ in 1:7 to Judea. What does a localized judgment hundreds of miles away have to do with the seven churches in Asia? John uses two long chapters in addressing those churches regarding the implications of the coming of Christ for them. For instance, the promise to shield the Philadelphian church from judgment (3:10-11) is meaningless if that judgment occurs far beyond the borders of that city. [Thomas, 1998].

Also, just as the sun was literally darkened as a sign, during Jesus' crucifixion, so will it be darkened at His return. And, the burden of proof is on preterists who do not take this passage literally as to why they don't. [Ice, 2003d, p. 95]

Dave Hunt doesn't give much credibility to a possible 70 AD fulfillment of most of the end-time events in the context of "Christ coming in judgment", as claimed by preterists [Hunt & DeMar, 1998]. Hunt refers to various Old and New Testament passages when he asks:

- Was Nero the Antichrist? When did he sit in the temple? (2 Thessalonians 2:4)
- Did every eye see Christ? (Revelation 1:7)
- Did all the kindred of the earth wail because of Him? (Revelation 1:7)
- Did Christ defend Jerusalem and fight for the Jews? (Zechariah 14:3)
- Did they look on Him whom they have pierced? (Zechariah 12:10)
- Did the Jews mourn for Him? (Zechariah 12:10)
- When did the marriage in Heaven occur ... with the Bride in white returning with Him? (Revelation 19:7-8)

None of the above occurred; they are still future events. Hunt could have added many other events that also were not fulfilled, such as:

- When did all the nations of the earth gather against Jerusalem? (Zechariah 12:3)
- When did Jesus judge the nations for dividing up the land of Israel and scattering the Jews? (Joel 3:2)
- When did God destroy all the nations that attacked Jerusalem? (Zechariah 12:9)
- When was there a cashless society with marks and numbers? (Revelation 13:16-17)
- When did the two witnesses appear in Jerusalem? Who were they? When did they get raptured/resurrected? (Revelation 11)

Since the Antichrist will sit in the temple declaring himself to be God, there must be a rebuilt temple. This will be the *third* temple. Ezekiel's millennial temple is also in the future; that will be the *fourth* temple.

F. Kenton Beshore provides some evidence against preterism [Beshore, 2013]:

1. None of the early Church fathers believed that Jesus Christ returned in any manner or form in 70 AD. Every early Church father who wrote about the Tribulation, the Rapture and the Second Coming made it perfectly clear that they would be fulfilled in the future. They also agreed that the Antichrist would rise to power in the future.

2. Nero, who many Preterists say was the Antichrist, was never in Jerusalem, and he never sat in the temple of God declaring himself to be God ...

3. Nero reigned for 14 years (54-68 AD). The Bible says the Antichrist will reign for 42 months (3½ years) ...

4. Nero died on June 9, 68 AD, after cutting his throat. He cannot possibly be the Beast (the Antichrist), because that enemy of God will be slain (Daniel 7.11), and then be resurrected.

5. There was no period of world-wide “*peace and safety*” (1 Thessalonians 5.3) before the alleged start of the Tribulation in 66 AD.

6. There was no world church that ruled over the Antichrist (Revelation 17.3).

7. There was no mark of any kind that people had to take to be able to buy or sell ...

13. All the nations of the world were not gathered against Jerusalem in 70 AD ...

14. Nation did not rise against nation and kingdom did not rise against kingdom in 70 AD (Matthew 24.7). There was only a minor revolt in the Roman Empire from 66 to 70 AD by a few thousand Jewish zealots. ...

16. There is no historical record of an event that could be a biblical fulfillment of the “*abomination of desolation*”. ...

As a postscript to this section, we note that the church (Greek: *ekklesia*) is mentioned 19 times in Chapters 1-3, but not again in Revelation other than by inference in Revelation 19:7-8 (the Bride of Christ coming *from* Heaven), by inference in Revelation 21:9, and finally by *ekklesia* in Revelation 22:16 (i.e., in the eternal state).

Revelation 19:7-8 Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his **bride** has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people.

Revelation 21:9 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the **bride**, the wife of the Lamb."

Revelation 22:16 "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the **churches**. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."

Why is the Church absent after Revelation 3? Dispensationalists argue that the church has been raptured and is in Heaven; and that is why it is not present on earth during the Tribulation. One could also argue that the Church is mentioned symbolically via the 24 elders and the 2 lampstands. Again, the context reveals

	<p>that the Church is in Heaven. Most of Revelation focuses on Israel, rather than the Church.</p> <p>Andy Woods has looked for any Scripture passage about the Tribulation that mentions the church in it, in any way (e.g., church, <i>ekklesia</i>, or Body of Christ); but, in all his research, he has not found even one verse about it [Woods, 2018e].</p>
<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>Preterists believe that “this generation” (i.e., the generation living at the time of Christ, circa 30 AD) would not pass away until Christ comes again. By “come again”, we don’t mean literally in person, but in the sense of His vindication/exaltation, says Hank Hanegraaff. Recall that Christ told the high priest: “You will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds ...” which describes His vindication in the holocaust of 70 AD. “Some of you standing here won’t taste death [before the coming of the Lord].” [Hanegraaff, <i>Bible Answer Man</i>, 2011+] Hank does not like “false eschatological paradigms” (e.g., those teachings failing to recognize 70 AD as the fulfillment of most of the parts of Revelation).</p> <p>Furthermore, Jesus drew reference to “the days of Noah”—a time when unbelievers were taken away in judgment, and the righteous were left behind. The “days of Noah” is not a rapture analogy because the <i>believers</i> were <i>not</i> the ones who were taken away. The clear meaning of the text implies the opposite. The Flood was a judgment.</p> <p>The passage is not talking about the end of the world, or a tribulation of the 21st century; rather, it is talking about the <i>end of the age</i> in 70 AD; and a key part of this is the destruction of the Temple [Hanegraaff, <i>Bible Answer Man</i>, November 24, 2011].</p> <p>In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus uses the language of the Old Testament prophets to speak of a near future event—to get the point across to people of the day. With respect to the Temple being destroyed, however, Christ was very specific, stating that “this generation” would not pass away until the Temple would be destroyed. It is likely that “this generation” meant exactly that: the generation that literally heard Christ say these things, that is, all of Matthew 24:1-34 [DeMar, 1997]. In fact, “this generation” can only be used with great difficulty to mean anything other than the audience of the writer’s day.</p> <p>We emphasize that this “coming” of Christ doesn’t mean a <i>physical</i> coming. It needs to be taken in context. This is seen in other passages. For example, in Colossians 1:23, it says that the gospel has been proclaimed to <i>every</i> creature under Heaven. Does this literally mean all over the world? In Colossians 1:6, it says that “all over the world, the gospel is bearing fruit”. Does this mean <i>all</i> over the world, or just the Roman Empire? Acts 2 says that Jews from <i>every</i> nation on Earth were present on the Day of Pentecost. The “code breaker” to this type of language is the Old Testament.</p>

“This generation” applies to the generation which witnessed the fact that “not one stone [of the Temple] will stand upon another”. This was fulfilled in 70 AD. Hank Hanegraaff elaborates:

The meaning of the pronoun *you* in the context of Christ’s Olivet Discourse is just as clear. When Jesus says, ‘*You* will hear of wars and rumors of wars ... Then *you* will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and *you* will be hated by all nations because of me ... When *you* see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ ... Pray that *your* flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath ... So if anyone tell *you*, ‘There he is, out in the desert,’ do not go out ... when *you* see all these things, *you* know that it is near, right at the door,’ it should be obvious that he is referencing a first-century, not a twenty-first-century, generation. [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 72]

Far from predicting his second coming, however, Jesus was telling his disciples that those who witnessed Jerusalem’s destruction would likewise see his vindication and exaltation as Israel’s rightful king.

Similarly, when the disciples asked Jesus about ‘the end of the age,’ they were not asking Jesus about the end of the world (*kosmos*). They were rather asking Jesus about the end of the current corrupt age (*aion*) in the context of his chilling prediction of the destruction of the temple and its buildings. With the destruction of the temple would come the end of the old covenant age of sacrifices that pointed forward to the ultimate sacrificial Lamb in whom the symbols would be fully and completely satisfied. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 84-85]

Believers all agree that Christ will return. One generation of Christ will not die, but this will occur *at* the physical return of Christ. There will not be a secret “Rapture” seven or more years before Christ’s Second Coming. Yes, there will be increasing persecution/tribulation before His return, but the Church will not be exempted from that tribulation. In other words, believers will go through “the Tribulation”.

... “this generation” appears with surprising regularity in the Gospels, and it always applies to Jesus’s contemporaries. In Matthew 11, Jesus asks, “To what can I compare *this generation*” (v. 16) ...

Jesus left no doubt that he was speaking of particularly those present as he continued his rebuke of the Pharisees and teachers of the law. “The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with *this generation* and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here” (Matthew 12:42). Jesus concluded his condemnation, saying, “That is how it will be with *this wicked generation*” (Matthew 12:45). [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 77-78]

Hank Hanegraaff quotes Bertrand Russell about some objections for why Russell is an unbeliever. These same points are echoed by dispensationalists as being unfulfilled in the first century:

Bertrand Russell, in Paul Edwards, ed., *Why I Am Not a Christian: And Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1957), 16. Russell also wrote that “there are a great many texts [in the Gospels] that prove” that Jesus believed he would return within the lifetime of his original hearers, but he cites only two: “I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes” (Matthew 10:23), and “I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom” (Matthew 16:28; cf. Luke 9:27). ... There is no question that the Lord Jesus indicates in these passages that at least some of his disciples as well as enemies would remain alive until the prophesied events unfolded. What Russell missed through his negligent dismissal of Scripture was a correct understanding of what Jesus actually predicted would happen within the near future: **not his bodily return to earth in the second coming, but his coronation as the true King by his death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of God, the manifestation of his kingdom through the power of the Holy Spirit, and climactically his vindication in the judgment on unbelieving Israel.** [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 249, my emphasis]

Similarly, the following verses are used by James Stuart Russell to support the case [Sproul, 2008]. In all of these verses, the reader can assume that Christ was referring to the current generation that He was addressing:

- “All these things shall come upon this generation” (Matthew 23:36)
- “Whereunto shall I liken this generation?” (Matthew 11:16)
- “The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation. ... The Queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with this generation.” (Matthew 12:39-45)
- “That the blood of all the prophets ... may be required of this generation” (Luke 11:50)
- “Whoever shall be ashamed of me in this adulterous and sinful generation” (Mark 8:38)
- “The Son of man must be rejected of this generation” (Luke 17:25).

R.C. Sproul believes that the bulk of the Olivet Discourse, and a large part of Revelation, were fulfilled in 70 AD [Sproul, 1998]. Regarding the phrase in Matthew 24: “and then the end will come”, Sproul inquires whether this means the Temple, the end of the world, or the end of the age. And, if is the latter, does it mean the end of the Jewish age, and hence the start of the Christian age (i.e., the beginning of the age of the Gentiles)? He concludes that it cannot mean *just* the end of the Temple because, to this day, there are still parts of the world that haven’t heard the gospel; consequently, it must mean the end of the Jewish age. Incidentally, the noted philosopher, mathematician, and atheist Bertrand Russell believed that Jesus Christ was not God because His prophecy about “*this* generation” [seeing His physical return] never came true.

Consider the passage in Matthew 16:28: “There are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man [Jesus] coming in his kingdom”. Sproul notes that the passage omits the Greek word *parousia* for

“coming” or “arrival”; therefore, “coming” may mean something other than Christ’s physical presence, in this particular context.

Many commentators see this manifestation in various critical moments of redemptive history, such as Christ’s resurrection, his ascension, or Pentecost, all of which provide some outward manifestation of the kingly glory of Christ. [Sproul, 1998, p. 54]

Sproul concludes that the term “this generation” can only apply to the particular generation that was alive at the time that Jesus Christ (circa 30 AD) gave this prophecy. Christ did come in judgment in 70 AD, thus fulfilling the Olivet Discourse prophecy; however, He will come again.

Matthew 24:15-23 "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel -- let the reader understand -- then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ... For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now -- and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.

Gary DeMar agrees that Matthew 24 was fulfilled in 70 AD. He writes:

If God had allowed the Romans to continue their lust for vengeance, not a single Jew living in Judea would have survived. The elect were the *Jewish* Christians who escaped after the Roman armies retreated. To the Romans, however, they were still Jews. They, too, would have been hunted down and killed, but for the sake of the elect the tribulation period was cut short. The elect are those who embraced Jesus as the promised and long-awaited Messiah. [DeMar, 1997, p. 121]

On the subject of apocalyptic language, DeMar argues that passages like Isaiah 19 (the oracle concerning Egypt) mention the Lord riding on swift clouds, with the idols of Egypt trembling at His presence [Hunt & DeMar, 1998]. Exodus 20:18 and Deuteronomy 33:2 mention thunder and/or lightning as the Lord comes from Mount Sinai. Micah 1:2 speaks of the Lord coming from His place, treading the high places, with the mountains melting ... because of the sins and rebellion of Israel. Thus, the Old Testament has multiple such descriptions or judgments.

Regarding the “new heaven and earth” (Isaiah 65:17; Matthew 24:35; 2 Peter 3:13; and Revelation 21:1):

The New Covenant replaces the Old Covenant with new leaders, a new priesthood, new sacraments, a new sacrifice, a new tabernacle (John 1:14), and a new temple (John 2:19; 1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:21). In essence, a new heaven and earth.

The darkening of the sun and moon and the falling of the stars, coupled with the shaking of the heavens ([Matthew] 24:29), are more descriptive ways of

saying that “heaven and earth will pass away” (24:35). In other contexts, when stars fall, they fall to the earth, a sure sign of temporal judgment (Isaiah 14:12; Daniel 8:10; Revelation 6:13; 9:1; 12:4). So then, the “passing away of heaven and earth” is the passing away of the old covenant world of Judaism led and upheld by those who “crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Corinthians 2:8). [DeMar, 1997, p. 183]

Ken Gentry comments on the “peace and safety” verse (1 Thessalonians 5:3) [Ice & Gentry, 1999]. He argues that it refers to the period of time encompassing the life of Christ and the surrounding decades. More specifically, it is the time from 17 AD (under Caesar Augustus) to 67 AD (just before Caesar Nero): a time of relatively peace, largely due to the Roman *Pax Romana* (“peace of Rome”). In February 67 AD, Nero ordered General Flavius Vespasian to take care of the revolt in Israel. When generals Vespasian and Titus had surrounded Jerusalem, they received news that Nero had died; so, their plans were temporarily interrupted until Vespasian became emperor in 69 AD [Gentry, 1998a]. In 70 AD, under General Titus, Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed. Thus, preterists argue that 1 Thessalonians 5:3 was fulfilled in the years leading up to 70 AD.

Harold Eberle and Martin Trench are partial preterists (who were former futurists) and they argue that all of the following were fulfilled in the years leading up to, and including, 70 AD [Eberle & Trench, 2021]:

- Many claiming to be Christ (Matthew 24:4-5)
- Wars and rumors of war (Matthew 24:6-7)
- Famines (Matthew 24:7 and Acts 11:28)
- Persecution (Matthew 24:9)
- Apostasy and false prophets (Matthew 24:10-13)
- Preaching of the gospel to the whole world (Matthew 24:14; Romans 1:8; 10:18; 16:25-26; Colossians 1:5-6,23)
- Warning of destruction, including the abomination of desolation (Matthew 24:15-20)
 - Jesus was not talking about an antichrist who would come hundreds or even thousands of years later, but rather some abomination that would be seen in their lifetime. ... Luke tells us that the abomination was the armies surrounding Jerusalem. [Eberle & Trench, 2021, Kindle edition, location 2415]
 - The early disciples took heed of Jesus’ warnings, and fled before the destruction of Jerusalem.
 - “In AD 70, more than one million Jews were starved, tortured and killed in a four-month period. Despite the twentieth century Holocaust’s larger magnitude, the violence during the AD 70 tribulation ended the lives of a much greater percentage of the Jewish population and was far more extreme in the atrocities that were committed. [Eberle & Trench, 2021, Kindle edition, location 2779]

	They also note that the war against the Jews lasted 42 months, that is, from February 67 AD which is when Nero commissioned Vespasian, to August 70 AD when Jerusalem fell [Eberle & Trench, 2021]. This was a fulfillment of Revelation 11:2.
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Topic/ Question	What are the differences between the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, and Luke 21:5-36) and the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>Although some or all of the Olivet Discourse is contained in gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the Upper Room Discourse is only found in the book of John [Ice, 2021], which was written specifically to a Christian audience.</p> <p>Andy Woods provides an excellent contrast between the Olivet Discourse and the Upper Room Discourse [Woods, 2020e]. In the Olivet Discourse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christ is using previously released material from the Old Testament. • The Church is definitely not the “new Israel”. Jesus very clearly said that God is going to fulfill His promises to Israel. • The role of the apostles is as representatives of the nation Israel. For example, in Matthew 19:28, they are told by Jesus that they will judge the 12 tribes of Israel. • In the Olivet Discourse, the disciples connected the destruction of the Temple with the Second Coming, but this is not what Christ was saying. Christ outlined Israel’s future in the Olivet Discourse, right through the Tribulation, and ending with the Second Coming. <p>On the other hand, in the Upper Room Discourse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christ is introducing <i>new</i> material—about 12 things [Ice & Dodds, 2021a]. Up until then, there had not been any information about the Church. Now, in this discourse, Christ is focusing on the Church. • Jesus said He was leaving, but the Holy Spirit was going to come. • Jesus said that it is actually to their advantage that He was leaving. Presumably, this was because Jesus, in His humanity, could only be in one place at one time; however, the Holy Spirit could minister to many, many people simultaneously all over the world. • In the Old Testament, the “Spirit” came <i>upon</i> believers temporarily (e.g., Saul in 1 Samuel 10:10; 16:13-14; 19:20,23): <p style="padding-left: 40px;">1 Samuel 16:13-14 So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him [David] in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah. Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him.</p>

However, in the New Testament, via the Church, the Holy Spirit would not come *upon* believers *temporarily*, but *live in* believers *forever*.

John 14:16-17 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another **advocate** to help you **and be with you forever -- the Spirit of truth**. The world cannot accept **him**, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for **he lives with you and will be in you**.

- The role of the apostles is as representatives of the Church (e.g., Ephesians 2:18-22).
- John 12:37 marks a turning point with respect to the Jews and their leaders, which is why Jesus gave the Upper Room Discourse in John 13-17. There was a national rejection, by most of Israel including its religious leaders, of Jesus being the Messiah. Thus, Jesus would not be ushering in the Millennial Kingdom at this time; it would be put off to His Second Coming. (This was not a surprise to God.)

John 12:37 Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him.

Matthew 23:37-39 "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

- Arno Gaebelein, in his commentary *The Gospel of John*, noted that Jesus disclosed something revolutionary that no one could have imagined at the time: taking a future generation of believers *directly* to His Father's house in Heaven, rather than to an earthly Jerusalem where the Messiah would rule from a future temple (as was the common expectation for believers, although the earthly presence will happen, too, following the return of Jesus) [Woods, 2020a].
- The Rapture is introduced, for the first time ever:

John 14:2-3 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

- Thus, from this point on, there was evidence of a two-phase resurrection (actually, three phases if we count the Firstfruits) [Woods, 2021h]. Prior to this, even as recently as three chapters before this, the believers were only aware of a resurrection *at the last day*. In fact,

	<p>the <i>pre-Church</i> believers of God will be resurrected after Jesus' Second Coming:</p> <p>Daniel 12:1-2 "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress [Tribulation] such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time [end of the Tribulation] your people -- everyone whose name is found written in the book -- will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt."</p> <p>Daniel 12:11-13 "From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days. "As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance."</p> <p>Martha confirmed the "last day" resurrection when discussing the death of her brother Lazarus. Then, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.</p> <p>John 11:23-27 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" "Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."</p>
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Topic/ Question	Did Christ fulfill the three roles of <i>prophet, priest, and king</i> during His first coming?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>During His ministry on earth at His First Coming, Jesus functioned in the office of a prophet. But this ceased at the time of His death. Since His death and resurrection, and until He returns, He is functioning in the office of a priest. This duty will cease at the Second Coming. Jesus has never yet functioned in the office of a king. For Him to do so, there must be the reestablishment of the Davidic Throne upon which He will sit to rule as King over Israel and King of the World. This duty will begin at the Second Coming. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 434]</p> <p>During His last days on Earth, when the leaders of the people and many of the people themselves had rejected Jesus Christ as Messiah, Jesus spent most of the remaining time with His disciples. It is at this time that He gave the famous Olivet Discourse, and ate with them at the Last Supper. It was around this time that Christ's role changed from prophet to priest. He provided the ultimate sacrifice: His own life.</p>

	<p>Hebrews 10:10-12 And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest [Jesus Christ] had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.</p> <p>Following Christ’s Second Coming, and in particular, throughout the Millennium, Jesus Christ will literally reign as king over all the earth (Zechariah 14:9).</p>
Preterist Position	Similar to the dispensationalist position, except many preterists are amillennial

Topic/ Question	How do the events of the Olivet Discourse correspond to the events of the first part of the Tribulation? Is there a connection?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>Thomas Ice argues that the events of Matthew 24:4-14 (part of the Olivet Discourse) and the first 5 seal judgments in Revelation 6 run in parallel, and therefore support consistent futurism [Ice, 2010d]. This makes verse 15 the “watershed” verse, dividing the first and second halves of the Tribulation: “So when you see standing in the holy place, the ‘abomination that causes desolation’ ...”</p> <p>Here are a few variations on the theme [Ice, 2010d]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hal Lindsey believes that the birth pains (Matthew 24:4-8) actually began with Israel’s independence in May 1948. • John F. Walvoord believes that Matthew 24:4-14 describes general characteristics leading up to the end. In particular, these verses are part of the inter-advent stage starting with the beginning of the Church age (circa 30 AD) and closing with the Rapture. • Arnold Fruchtenbaum believes that Matthew 24:9-14 applies to the first half of the Tribulation. <p>Like, Dr. Walvoord, Jack Hibbs believes we <i>might</i> be in the first part of Matthew 24 right now—definitely not at Verse 15 (dealing with the abomination of desolation) or beyond, but quite possibly up to end of Verse 13 (just before the gospel is being preached to the whole world as a testimony to all nations) [Hibbs, 2021].</p> <p>Matthew 24:12-14 Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.</p>

	<p>Thomas Ice believes that these verses apply to the Tribulation period—not before [Ice, 2019]. Those Jews who stand firm to the end (i.e., at the return of Christ) will receive salvation and will enter the Millennial Kingdom. The gospel will be preached to the whole world during the Tribulation via the two witnesses in Revelation, the 144,000 in Revelation, the angels, and of course, through the Bible and biblical literature—not to mention the many believers during that time. Persecution will be intense, probably more intense than at any time in history. This also has implications for Matthew 25:31-46—the Judgment of the Sheep and Goats, that is, how people in the world treated the Jews during the Tribulation. How they treat the Jews will give evidence of their own salvation. Those who treated them favourably during the Tribulation are saved; those who did not are lost.</p>
Preterist Position	There is no future 7-year Tribulation period; therefore, the question is irrelevant.

Topic/ Question	Can we predict when the Rapture or the Second Coming of Christ will occur? What about “date setting”?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>People are naturally enthusiastic about Christ’s return, and sometimes the enthusiasm gives way to date setting. Most dispensationalists believe that date setting is not appropriate. In fact, it defeats the notion of imminence because the implication is that Christ cannot come until that date. Nevertheless, one can sense from “the signs of the times” or “the times of the signs” that Christ’s Second Coming must be near. Some people in the dispensationalist camp have given dates—and have even done so in print. But, the bottom line is that we shouldn’t set dates. The only time when it would be appropriate to set dates is <i>following</i> the start of the Tribulation, in which case you were left behind because you were not a believer prior to the Rapture! So, in this case, you would be counting down the days until Christ’s Second Coming—His physical return to earth.</p> <p>Recent history is full of examples of people who tried to set a date for the return of Jesus or the rapture. William Miller predicted that Jesus would return on March 21, 1844. The day came and went, and his followers were left standing in a field in upstate New York. Edgar Whisenant proclaimed eighty-eight reasons why the rapture would happen September 11 to 13, 1988. When the prediction proved incorrect, he focused on 1989 as the year. In 1992, a group of Korean Christians looked for the rapture to happen in October of that year. As they waited, they ran up their credit cards and quit their jobs only to discover that it didn’t happen. ... Harold Camping, another prominent Christian leader, proclaimed that the rapture would happen on May 21 [2011], and we are still here.</p> <p>The problem with this sort of date setting is that it not only can make Christianity look foolish, but it leads to behavior that is in some cases unchristian. [Byron, 2014, pp. 174-175]</p> <p>Although Israel has a calendar (see the Jewish feasts, festivals, holy days, or holy convocation days listed in Leviticus 23), the Church does not have a</p>

calendar [Woods, 2021g]. In particular, there are 7 major Jewish holy days: Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles. This is why there is no point in date setting, as far as the Church goes. The Rapture is for the Church and can occur at any time. The date of the Rapture is sign-less. We are to “keep watch” in expectation of the return of Christ. If the Rapture doesn’t occur in our generation, then the next generation can continue in expectation of the return of Christ. The first 4 major holy days have already been fulfilled in Christ; the last 3 remain to be fulfilled in Christ, likely at/after his Second Coming.

It’s been said that Isaac Newton (1642-1727) spent a lot of time studying the books of Revelation and Daniel, trying to figure out when Christ would return. He spent more time writing about the Bible than writing about Science [Doyle, 2015]. Some scholars argue that if it were not for Newton’s knowledge of the Bible, he would have been unlikely to study Science so extensively [Woods, 2018d]. He believed in an orderly God who revealed His laws in nature. Newton’s faith was supported by evidence. Of the time that Isaac Newton spent writing about the Bible, much of it was focused on eschatology [Watson, 2015]:

Sir Isaac Newton ... was, from the 1670s until his death in 1727, premillennialist, a literal exegete of biblical prophecy, and ardent advocate of the Jews’ restoration to the Holy Land. Like most Christian Zionists today, Newton considered God’s covenant with Abraham in Genesis to be permanent and irrevocable. Entering into a debate that still goes on, he rejected claims that the prophecies of the Jews’ return from exile had already been fulfilled. Rather, he argued, the prophets foresaw two returns, one from Babylon, the other from the current diaspora. Newton based this “double return” of the Jews on Isaiah 11:11: “In that day the LORD will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant which is left of his people.” He believed the Jews would convert to Christianity and return to the Holy Land prior to Armageddon ... [Watson, 2015, pp. 282-283]

Newton wrote commentaries including commentaries on two of his favorite books of the Bible: Daniel and Revelation:

About the time of the end, a body of men will be raised up who will turn their attention to the Prophecies, and insist upon their literal interpretation, in the midst of much clamor and opposition. [Isaac Newton cited in Nathaniel West, *The Thousand Years in Both Testaments*, p. 462]

Oddly enough, Isaac Newton did some date setting about the Lord’s return—writing over 4,500 pages about it [Watson, 2017]. Although it’s natural to be curious and excited about the Lord’s return, dispensationalists generally refrain from date setting because Christ said that no one would know the day or the hour of His return. That probably means that if someone claims to know the day, then we have a pretty good idea that that’s *not* going to be the day. On this theme, Christian apologist Ron Rhodes urges people not to set dates, but to be aware of the general timeframe when the Lord could return (technically, that would mean any day). Remember, Christ was not happy when the Jews

did not recognize the time of His first coming (circa 5 BC); so, the Lord expects us to be eagerly waiting for His return.

I will always continue to warn people against the folly of date-setting (Acts 1:7), but I will also urge people to be thoughtful observers of the times (see Matthew 16:1-3; Luke 21:29-33) who seek to understand how certain current events may relate to the fulfillment of end-time prophecies. For example, the current events in Russia, Iran, and other Muslim nations may be setting the stage for an eventual invasion into Israel by a northern military coalition, as predicted by the prophet Ezekiel 2600 years ago. [Rhodes, 2008, p. 14]

The following verses are sometimes used regarding the Rapture; however, they probably apply to Jewish unbelievers during the Tribulation, prior to the Second Coming of Christ [Kelley, 2017b]. People might know when the Tribulation will end (given the events listed in Scripture), but they won't know the exact hour or even day of His return.

Matthew 24:42 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

Luke 12:40 You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."

Regarding the start of the Millennium, Jesus told the disciples (prior to His ascension to Heaven):

Acts 1:7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority."

Even the disciples were thinking that Christ might return in their lifetime, that is, before the Apostle John would pass away:

John 21:22-23: Jesus answered, "If I want him [John] to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me." Because of this, the rumor spread among the believers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?"

Chuck Missler believes that part of the reason for not providing more clues about timing—is to catch Satan by surprise [Missler, 2006]. For example, Missler thinks that *the* (or *an*) antichrist is alive today, but he also believes that an antichrist was alive hundreds of years ago. In other words, Satan always seems to have someone ready to go.

Some of those who guess at dates begin with a base year of 1948—which is the year Israel became an independent nation for the first time in over 2,000 years. They also quote Jesus in Matthew 24:

Matthew 24:32-34 "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come

out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see **all these things**, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, **this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.**

Most dispensationalists agree that date setting (with respect to the Rapture) is dangerous. For example, a calculation that some dispensationalists have used for the Rapture is as follows. Assuming that one generation is taken to be 40 years, and since $1948 + 40 = 1988$, and since we need to subtract 7 years for the Rapture, we get to the year 1981—which, of course, was wrong. An extension of this idea was presented when Israel captured the Temple Mount in Jerusalem in 1967: $1967 + 40 = 2007$, less 7 years for the Rapture, etc. There has been additional debate about the length of a generation: is it 50 years? ... 70 years? ... 120 years?

Psalm 90:10 Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures; yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away.

Consider the following passage that is taken by some preterists to be a prophecy that was fulfilled in the first century AD:

Matthew 16:27-28 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done. I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

The apostle John saw Christ coming in glory, when John received the Revelation of Jesus Christ. The book of Revelation was written in 95 AD.

Most preterists think that this passage is about the coming of Christ in judgment in 70 AD. Some dispensationalists argue that it's actually about the *transfiguration of Christ*, also involving Moses and Elijah, fulfilled during Christ's earthly ministry, and witnessed by the disciples Peter, James, and John. In other words, it could be a temporary, visible manifestation of Christ in His glory [Sproul, 1998]. Note that Jesus said that John the Baptist came in the spirit of Elijah (and thus John the Baptist would have fulfilled the passage in Malachi about Elijah arriving before the Messiah comes at the great and dreadful day of the Lord)—that is, had the Jews accepted Christ.

Malachi 4:5 "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes.

Matthew 11:14 And if you are willing to accept it, he [John the Baptist] is the Elijah who was to come.

As for Christ's return, *if* we were to know the start of the 7-year Tribulation (i.e., by living to it) and witnessing the first part of the Tribulation (which can

	<p>easily be confirmed at the 3½ year mark), <i>then</i> we would easily be able to calculate when the seven years end (i.e., when Christ returns at the Battle of Armageddon). Dave Hunt believes that the date being spoken of (i.e., not knowing the day or the hour) has to be the Rapture. If it were not, and we hear about the Antichrist, or the signing of a 7-year covenant, or the desecration of the Temple in the middle of the Tribulation, then we would be able to count down the days to Christ’s Second Coming [Hunt & DeMar, 1998].</p>
<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>We shouldn’t set dates—period. Dispensationalists often make claims that Christ is soon to return and that the Rapture is just around the corner. For example, given the events of 1948, some dispensationalists said that the Rapture can’t be more than (40 – 7 = 33) years away—in other words: 1981. It didn’t happen, so they changed the date by applying another “significant event” (e.g., Six Day War: 1967 + 40 years = 2000), then subtracting 7 years for the Tribulation, and getting the year 2000. Coincidentally, the year 2000 or Y2K was another “significant event” (actually, it turned out to be a non-event) that, unfortunately, added more “evidence” to the fruitlessness of timing the Rapture. There have been other cases. Such date setting is an embarrassment to Christianity. Preterists argue that calculations such as these are nonsense because the Tribulation took place on or before 70 AD.</p> <p>The year 1967 not only reinvigorated the faith of Christian Zionists, it renewed their fascination with timing the two-pronged return of Christ. This time the math was downright magical. Add forty to 1967, then subtract seven, and 2000 emerges as the new date of destiny. Chuck Smith saw this as more than accidental. ‘I think it is more than coincidental that it was just about six thousand years ago that Adam and Eve disobeyed God and sold the world into slavery. According to biblical chronology, it was roughly 4000 BC when Adam first ate of the forbidden fruit. That means the world is coming very close to entering the “seventh year” of its captivity.’ Smith subsequently recalibrated the date to not later than 2014—this, said Smith, is ‘the maximum.’</p> <p>While dispensationalists have come up with a variety of formulas to explain away the fact that Christ has not yet returned, 1967, the year ‘the Jews took Jerusalem,’ has retained its significance. Jack Van Impe, for one, recalculated a generation to be 50 years—51.45 to be exact. ‘Add 51.4 to 1967 when the Jews took Jerusalem and you come out to 2018,’ says Van Impe. ‘Add the extra six months because it happened in June of 67 and the 4/10ths and you come out to 2019 years and take away the seven from that and you come out to 2012.’ ...</p> <p>As dates come and go, one thing remains unchanged. For Christian Zionists, 1967 is a definitive date of destiny. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 188-189]</p> <p>In 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul is writing to believers to give them comfort of the eventual (simultaneous) resurrection of <i>all</i> believers (i.e., all at one time). There is no evidence of a secret pretribulation rapture. Far from being secret or quiet, 1 Thessalonians 4 claims that it is “with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God”, that the Rapture (resurrection) takes place; and it occurs at the end of time, not seven or more</p>

	<p>years before the physical return of Christ to Earth. Christ does not come back to secretly rapture believers, then reverse His direction, and finally come back seven or more years later for the rest.</p> <p>In Revelation 11, the Temple is still standing. That’s because the time of writing of the book of Revelation was prior to 70 AD. Dispensationalists claim that the Temple is a rebuilt/future Temple, yet there is no verse in Scripture that indicates that this Temple is going to be a rebuilt Temple [DeMar, 1997].</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">John 21:22: Jesus answered, "If I want him [John] to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me."</p> <p>In Luke 21:22, Jesus was asked by Peter about what would happen to John. Interestingly, John wrote the book of Revelation, and he would have been present during the coming of Christ in judgment in 70 A.D. [Gentry, 1998b].</p> <p>The Great White Throne judgment takes place at the end of time, that is, after everyone has been resurrected. The “separation of the sheep and the goats” refers to this judgment. The key question is: What did each person do with Jesus Christ. <i>There is one judgment; not separate judgments for separate groups.</i> There are degrees of reward, and degrees of punishment. What we do now counts for all eternity. All people—saved and unsaved—will be resurrected. It is just a matter of <i>where</i> these individuals will spend eternity (i.e., Heaven or Hell).</p> <p>Unlike premillennialists, postmillennialists believe that Christ returns at the end of the millennial period, and only then is there a judgment, and the judgment is of both the saved and the unsaved—at the same time, not separated by 1,000 years or more. The unsaved go into the Lake of Fire. Scriptures used to support the single judgment concept include:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Matthew 25:31-40 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">John 5:28-29 "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out -- those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.</p>
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Topic/ Question	What does the eschatological phrase “two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left” refer to? Is it about the Rapture? Similarly, what about: “two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the
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	<p>other left"? Are the following passages, which are found in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 17, referring to the same events?</p> <p>Matthew 24:37-42 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. [Then] Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.</p> <p>Mark 13:24-27 [Jesus said:] "But in those days, following that distress, "'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'" At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.</p> <p>Luke 17:26-37 [Jesus said:] "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.</p> <p>"It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.</p> <p>"It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. On that day no one who is on the housetop, with possessions inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. Remember Lot's wife! Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it. I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left."</p> <p>[Verse 36 is a footnote in the NIV translation because some translators don't include it. The NIV claims a verse "similar" to Matthew 24:40, and Matthew 24:40 reads as follows. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left.]</p> <p>"Where, Lord?" they asked. He replied, "Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather."</p>
<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>Dispensationalists take different views on these verses, but the context suggests that these are <i>not</i> Rapture passages, but rather Second Coming passages. In other words, all of Matthew 24 is about the time leading up to Christ's Second</p>

Coming, and not the first coming, and not the lead-up to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD.

That said, some dispensationalists claim that the above passages could refer to either the Rapture or the Second Coming—or both. The context of these passages suggests that it speaks of people being taken away *to judgment* (i.e., just after the Second Coming); however, the “no one knows” part of it suggests the *Rapture* (which occurs 7 or more years before the Second Coming). Therefore, at first glance, it is possible that *both* events are included here.

Matthew 24:30-31 "Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. **And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.**

The trumpet mentioned here is not the same as the trumpet mentioned for the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18. This trumpet is the one for the gathering of the Jews (God’s chosen or elect people) [Showers, 1995]:

Isaiah 11:12 He will raise a banner for the nations and **gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth.**

Isaiah 27:12-13 In that day [the day of the Lord] the LORD will thresh from the flowing Euphrates to the Wadi of Egypt, and you, Israel, will be gathered up one by one. **And in that day a great trumpet will sound.** Those who were perishing in Assyria and those who were exiled in Egypt will come and worship the LORD [after His Second Coming] on the holy mountain [location of the Millennial Temple] in Jerusalem.

Matthew 24:37 and Matthew 24:39 each include the Greek word *parousia* in the text, and John Hart—who makes the case that the Rapture *is* contained in the Olivet Discourse—argues that *parousia* specifically refers to the Second Coming (i.e., “arrival”, “presence”, “coming”) rather than the Rapture [Hart, 2011b]. Normally, this would be the end of the argument, and we can conclude that this is a Second Coming passage; however, there is one twist, and that involves verses 38-39.

Matthew 24:37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming [*parousia*] of the Son of Man.

Matthew 24:38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark;

Matthew 24:39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came [*erchomai*] and took [*airo*]

them all away [airo]. That is how it will be at the coming [parousia] of the Son of Man.

At the time of Noah's Flood, people went about their daily business, eating and drinking, and giving in marriage. Since the Rapture is an *imminent* event, it lines up with the "business as usual" argument. But, some argue that this would hardly be the case in the days and months—and even the 7 years—leading up to Christ's Second Coming, because the Tribulation will have been taking place during those 7 years. During the Tribulation, there will be plenty of signs of Christ's return—at least for those people who have been paying attention. Remember, although people were warned about the Flood through many years of Noah's preaching (possibly 120 years), the Flood came *suddenly*, and by then, it was too late.

In the days of Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot and his family were removed by angels before destruction came. Although they are posttribulationists, Michael Brown and Craig Keener admit that this is an argument in favour of the pretribulationist position [Brown & Keener, 2019]. One of the angels who took Lot and his family from Sodom met with some resistance from Lot, and an angel told Lot that he *cannot* do anything (i.e., destroy Sodom and Gomorrah) until Lot reaches safety. This supports a pretribulationist rapture. Furthermore, when we read about Lot in Scripture, there seems to be some indication that Lot lived a carnal lifestyle. For example, he was ready to give up his daughters to criminals (Genesis 19:8), he hesitated to leave Sodom and thus the angels had to take him out by the hand (Genesis 19:16), he got drunk (Genesis 19:32), and his daughters got into an incestuous relationship with him (Genesis 19:30-38). However, as a believer in God, he was "positionally righteous" before God, and therefore he needed to be removed before judgment occurred [Woods, 2020d]. This is also an argument against the notion of a partial rapture (where only "strong" Christians are raptured). Woods notes that the Corinthian church had some carnal believers doing some things that Paul had to warn them about, yet 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 uses the phrase "we will *all* be changed" (transformed, raptured; my emphasis).

Parousia always refers to the *actual presence* of Christ.

The leading Greek Lexicon of our day says *parousia* means "arrival as the first stage in presence, *coming, advent,*" and "of Christ, and nearly always of his Messianic Advent in glory to judge the world at the end of this age." The Lexicon cites all four uses of *parousia* in Matthew 24 as a reference to Christ's second advent. In fact, the Lexicon does not even recognize [Gary] DeMar's stated meaning of a "non-presence coming" through the Roman Army as a possible category. The mother of all Greek word study tools, *Kittel's Dictionary*, in concert with the Greek Lexicon, tells us that the core idea of the word means "to be present," "denotes esp. active presence," "appearing". Kittel's describes *parousia* as a technical term "for the 'coming' of Christ in Messianic glory". Thus, *parousia* carries the idea of a "presence coming," contra the preterist notion of a "non-presence coming,"

an invisible coming. Our Lord's use of *parousia* demands His physical, bodily presence. [Ice, 2012b]

Of the four gospels, the word *parousia* only appears in the book of Matthew, and in particular in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 where it appears four times (verses 3, 27, 37, and 39). The Olivet Discourse appears in three of the four gospels—all except John. Interestingly, the Upper Room Discourse, also given by Jesus Christ, is only found in the gospel of John.

A 70 AD “coming” of Christ cannot be what is intended by the text. Preterists claim that Matthew 24:4-35 refers to the past, and that starting with verse 36, it is in the future (i.e., the Second Coming of Christ). But the usage of the Greek word *parousia* is the same in verse 39 as in the earlier verses (i.e., “the coming of the son of man”); so, there should be consistency. The term “son of man” is a term that seems to be used exclusively in terms of Israel and a connection to the Jewish people, rather than to the Church (e.g., Mark 14:61-64) [Woods & McGowan, 2019b].

In 1 Thessalonians 5:3, Paul writes about how the day of the Lord will arrive at a time when people don't expect Christ. It is a time of “peace and safety”; and at first glance, this hardly describes the Tribulation (and hence the Second Coming):

1 Thessalonians 5:3 While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

Some argue that people will be able to calculate the day of Christ's return: 7 years after the Antichrist signs the major peace treaty at the start of the 7-year Tribulation, and 3½ years after the mid-point of the Tribulation when the Antichrist sets up the Abomination of Desolation. Andy Woods counters that maybe it's the *unbelievers* who won't know the day or the hour; they will be caught completely off guard [Woods & McGowan, 2019c].

1 Thessalonians 5:1-5 Now, brothers and sisters [i.e., believers], about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.

Revelation 16:15 "Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed."

Next, let us drill down on some Greek words. Two different Greek verbs are used for “taken”: *airo* and *paralambano*.

In Matthew 24:39, the verb *airo* is used. It means “take up”, “take away or remove”, “take”, or even “remove with no suggestion of lifting up” [Bauer, 1979; Strong, 1996]—such as being taken in judgment (i.e., losing one’s life) during Noah’s Flood. In John 19:15, when the angry crowd wanted Jesus to be taken away for crucifixion, the same word *airo* was used, twice. At first, it appears that *airo* is used in a “negative” sense in these cases, since it refers to being taken in judgment:

Matthew 24:37-39 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming [*parousia*] of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took [*airo*] them all away [*airo*]. That is how it will be at the coming [*parousia*] of the Son of Man.

John 19:15 But they shouted, "Take him away! [*airo*] Take him away! [*airo*] Crucify him!" "Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked. "We have no king but Caesar," the chief priests answered.

In Matthew 24:40-42, however, a different Greek verb—*paralambano*—is used, twice. It also appears to be used in a judgment context; so, we expected the same verb *airo*. *Paralambano* means “take”, “receive”, “take to oneself”, or “take with, or along with” (a person) [Bauer, 1979; Strong, 2016], such as the Rapture described in John 14:3. *Paralambano* is used in a positive sense in John 14:3; however, it appears to be used in a negative sense in Matthew 24:40-42 because there, the people appear to be taken away in judgment, whereas the saved individuals are left behind to enter the Millennium:

Matthew 24:40-42 [Then] Two men will be in the field; one will be taken [*paralambano*] and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken [*paralambano*] and the other left. "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

John 14:2-3 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take [*paralambano*] you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

Luke 17:34-35 I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken [*paralambano*] and the other left. Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken [*paralambano*] and the other left."

Note also that the Greek word *tote* is used at the start of Matthew 24:40. It means “then”, implying a connection to verse 39. Thus, it does not appear that two of the verses would be Rapture verses, while the other two would be Second Coming verses.

A possible reason for the switch in Greek words from *airo* to *paralambano* is due to the *agency* of delivery: *airo* when the agent is water (Noah's Flood), and *paralambano* when the agent is personal (angels) [Showers, 1995]. However, even then, there is an exception because *airo* is personal in John 19:15 (see above); therefore, there must be another reason for why the Lord chose to use two different Greek words. It is not clear what that reason is; but that reason must be significant, otherwise the Lord would have used the same word. Remember, every word in the original languages in the Bible, was carefully chosen by the writer who was under the inspiration of God.

Because the Olivet Discourse is aimed at a Jewish audience, Christ was talking about the Second Coming in Matthew 24:39; but, some authors argue that perhaps a paragraph break should occur between verses 39 and 40, at which point Christ begins speaking about the Rapture. Many well-known pretribulationists believe that the Rapture is implied in verses 40 and 41 [Woods & McGowan, 2019c]. Such people include Gary Hamrick, Dave Hunt, Hal Lindsey, Chuck Smith, and Amir Tsarfati. During the 1970s, the Christian movie *A Thief in the Night* used Matthew 24:40-41 as a rapture passage. However, Andy Woods argues that Matthew chapters 24 and 25 do not mention anything about the Rapture; so, we should not try to read the Rapture into them. They are about Christ's Second Coming. Period.

The words "one taken, the other left" do *not* refer to the Rapture; but, rather, they are analogous to the Flood, and apply to Christ's Second Coming. The ones who are "taken" are unbelievers who are *taken away in judgment*. The ones who are "left" are believers; they enter the Millennium in their natural bodies. This is similar to the way that unbelievers were taken away in judgment during Noah's Flood, that is, they were surprised and caught off guard by the sudden destruction of the Flood—even though Noah and his family had repeatedly warned them about an impending judgment.

Thomas Ice thinks that the majority of those currently believing in a pretribulationist rapture think that the Rapture *is* mentioned in Matthew 24 [Ice, 2021g]. Ice claims that at Dallas Theological Seminary in the 1970s, however, only one professor saw the Church represented in Matthew 24. Basically, all of the professors believed that the church age is *not* mentioned in the Olivet Discourse.

Although the Greek word *paralambano* can be used in both positive and negative ways (e.g., Matthew 12:45; Matthew 27:27; and Matthew 4:4,8), *paralambano* is *not* a *technical* word. A *technical* word is one that always means the same thing every time that it is used [Woods & McGowan, 2019c]. In English, for example, the word "run" is *not* a technical word because it could refer to: the operating status of a piece of machinery (e.g., a car engine), the execution of a computer program, physical exercise, a sequence of cards in cribbage, a distortion in a stocking, the dripping of wet paint, etc. The *context* of a non-technical word determines which interpretation makes the most sense.

In other words, by examining the words and sentences around the text in question, one can get a better understanding of what is meant. If a word is only used once in Scripture, and it is not a technical word, then we may need to consult external sources from the same timeframe to get more information. These are reasons for why Biblical interpretation is so important, and why some scholars have devoted their lives to Biblical interpretation. It is a large field of study. References to external and ancient documents, and an understanding of the culture at the time, can reveal insights into the meaning of a Greek or Hebrew word, and its context.

Roy Zuck reminds us that when interpreting a Scripture passage, we need to consider the following [Zuck, 1991, pp. 121-122]:

- The words used:
 - By the same writer of the same book of the Bible
 - By the same writer of other books of the Bible
 - By other writers in the Bible
 - By other writers outside the Bible
- The context:
 - The immediate context
 - The context of the paragraph and the chapter
 - The context of the book of the Bible
 - The context of parallel passages
 - The context of the entire Bible

To all this, we should add: What would the passage have meant to the audience of that day? [Gentry, 1998b]

Next, let us consider a parallel passage to Matthew 24:40-41, namely Luke 17:34-37. The fact that a *vulture* is mentioned in Luke 17:37 and Matthew 24:28, and the fact that vultures are flesh-eating, unclean birds, suggests death. We know that flesh-eating birds will appear at Armageddon (Revelation 19:17-18). But, the Rapture is a joyous occasion because we are gathered to Christ. Therefore, the “taken” event in Matthew 24 and Luke 17 cannot be the Rapture because when Christ appears at the Rapture, He will certainly not be likened to a vulture or flesh-eating bird, nor would the raptured church (Christ’s bride) be compared to a rotting corpse. The “Father’s house” in Heaven does not have vultures or corpses [Woods & McGowan, 2019c]. Also, Jesus’ disciples knew the location of where the other person who was *not* taken away would be—that part is obvious: one will remain in the bed, or one will remain in the field. The one who was taken, however, was taken to judgment, and this prompted the disciple’s question: “Where, Lord?”

Luke 17:34-35,37 I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken [*paralambano*] and the other left [*aphiemi*]. Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken [*paralambano*] and the other left [*aphiemi*]." ... "Where, Lord?" they asked. He

replied, "Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather."

Next, let us deviate from the traditional explanations for “taken” and “left” (mentioned in the pages above) and instead consider an alternative explanation that uses the same Greek words, but in a different context. Let us also explore the Greek word *aphiemi* which is used the following ways in other parts of Scripture: “leave” (e.g., leave behind, or not take along), “forgive”, “suffer”, “let”, “forsake”, “send away”, “put away”, etc. [Strong, 1996; Kelley, 2016]. Recall that the Greek word *paralambano* means to “take”, “receive”, “take to oneself” or “take with, or along with” (a person). Instead of *taking the unbelievers away to judgment*, let us consider the possibility that Jesus, at His Second Coming, is *taking* (or receiving) *the believers to Himself*—and these are the saved individuals who will enter the Millennium. Then, the ones who are “left” (*aphiemi*) are the ones who will be left for judgment—and at Christ’s Second Coming (after Armageddon), they are the ones who will perish and are thus are left initially for the vultures and then judgment. So, in Luke 17:34-35,37 (quoted above), the question “Where?” doesn’t refer to the location where Jesus is, but rather the location of those who are left. In other words, if the believers go to be with Jesus, then where do the others go (and what is their disposition)?

"Where, Lord?" they asked. He replied, "Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather."

Noah, Noah’s wife, their 3 sons, and their 3 daughters-in law were “taken”; and the rest of the people were “left” behind to face judgment . Lot and his two daughters were “taken”, but Lot’s wife and the residents of Sodom & Gomorrah were “left” behind in judgment.

In summary, with respect to Matthew 24:40-42: (a) it is still not a Rapture passage, (b) we still have the separation of believers from unbelievers in preparation for the Millennium, and (c) the explanation is consistent with the rest of the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 25:31-46—namely the passage about the separation of the sheep and the goats following Christ’s return at Armageddon. In that passage, the order is: first the saved (“taken”), and then the unsaved (“left”).

Matthew 25:31-34,41,46 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. . . . "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. . . . "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

	<p>In fairness, let us mention two passages earlier in the book of Matthew, where we see the opposite order after Christ’s Second Coming: first, the unbelievers are taken away in judgment; and then the believers are taken into the Millennial Kingdom. In particular, Matthew 13:24-30 and 36-43 give the parable of the wheat and the tares (weeds). Christ says that the wheat and the tares will grow in the same field, until the time of the “harvest” (return of Christ). The wheat represents the saved, whereas the tares represent the unsaved. At Christ’s return (after the Tribulation), the angels will first gather the tares to be burned; but then the wheat will be gathered into the Master’s barn, which refers to the Millennial Kingdom.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Matthew 13:30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"</p> <p>Matthew 13:47-50 gives the parable of the dragnet, where once again, the angels will separate the unbelievers from the believers, in that order—at the end of the age.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Matthew 13:47-50 "Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.</p> <p>So, is the order important? Furthermore, when we examine Matthew 13, are we talking about people who are <i>alive</i> at Christ’s Second Coming, or are we talking about people who have already passed away?</p> <p>In summary, there will be more debate and word study about the various passages and their Greek words. Every time we think we have another clue to end the debate, we find a counterexample.</p> <p>Nevertheless, the Olivet Discourse appears to be directed to a Jewish audience, and the church is not mentioned in it. The best interpretation of Matthew 24:37-41 is that the passage is <i>not</i> about the Rapture, but rather, it is about the Second Coming.</p>
<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>In this context, you don’t want to be the one <i>taken</i>. Just like in the days of Noah, people were taken away—in this case, by the Flood—and they perished.</p> <p>Some dispensationalists look at this passage as a rapture passage (being taken away in the air), but this is not a resurrection or rapture passage. Instead, it is about the judgment that takes place at the end of the age.</p>

Even given pretribulational presuppositions, the literal sense of the parable of the weeds suggests that the wicked will be judged prior to the wheat being gathered, not the other way round (Matthew 13:24-30). Likewise, in the Olivet Discourse, the unjust are 'taken' in judgment while the righteous are left behind, not vice versa (Matthew 24:36-41). During his earthly sojourn, our Lord fervently petitioned his heavenly Father not to rapture his bride out of the world, but to protect them from the evil one while they were in the world (John 17:15). [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 60-61]

Matthew 13:24-30 Jesus told them another parable: "**The kingdom of heaven is like** a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' "An enemy did this,' he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' "No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. **Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.**"

Matthew 24:37-41 **As it was in the days of Noah**, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. **That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.**

In the Matthew 13 passage, note the ordering: *first* the weeds (analogy: unsaved individuals) were gathered together in bundles to be burned, and *then* the wheat (analogy: saved individuals) was gathered together. This contradicts the ordering found in a pretribulational rapture; therefore, these verses cannot be a rapture passage. Similarly, with the two men who are in the field: one will be taken, the other left behind. (By the way, the harvesters in the parable refer to angels.)

Secondly, in the Matthew 24 passage, reference is made to the "days of Noah". In the days of Noah, who were the people who were taken away? They were *unsaved* individuals. The Flood was a judgment against sin. "Taken" means "taken in judgment". Thus, we conclude that this is *not* a rapture passage.

R.C. Sproul concurs that the word *parousia* is most closely associated with the physical return of Jesus Christ:

Partial preterists make a sharp distinction between (1) the judgment-coming of Christ to the Jews at the end of the Jewish age and (2) his *parousia* and final coming to the world at the end of history. For the full preterist the great

	resurrection and the rapture occurred in the past. For the partial preterist they remain in the future. [Sproul, 1998, p. 170]
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Chapter 10: The Tribulation (the 70th Week of Daniel) and the Antichrist

Topic/ Question	<p>Will there be a future 7-year <i>Tribulation</i> period (or 3½-year <i>Great Tribulation</i> period), that is, “a time of great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now, and never to be equaled again” [Matthew 24:21-22]? Or, has the above passage (and all of Matthew 24, for that matter) been fulfilled on or before 70 AD?</p> <p>If there is a Tribulation, how do we know that it will be 7 years long?</p>
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>There will be a 7-year Tribulation. The latter half of the Tribulation is often called “the Great Tribulation” (3½ years). The revealing of Antichrist is still to come, but he may well be alive today, even though he may not know his future role.</p> <p>The following sets of scripture verses are related, and refer to the Tribulation, also known as “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jeremiah 30:7) or the “70th week of Daniel” (see elsewhere in this book). In Hebrew, a “week” in this context means a “week” of years (i.e., 7 years). This period is split into two halves of 1,260 days (i.e., 42 months or 3½ years).</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Jeremiah 30:3-9 The days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will bring my people Israel and Judah back from captivity and restore them to the land I gave their forefathers to possess,' says the LORD." These are the words the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah: "This is what the LORD says: "'Cries of fear are heard -- terror, not peace. Ask and see: Can a man bear children? Then why do I see every strong man with his hands on his stomach like a woman in labor, every face turned deathly pale? How awful that day will be! None will be like it. It will be a time of trouble for Jacob [Israel], but he will be saved out of it. "In that day,' declares the LORD Almighty, 'I will break the yoke off their necks and will tear off their bonds; no longer will foreigners enslave them. Instead, they will serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Matthew 24:21-22 For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now -- and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Daniel 12:1 "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people -- everyone whose name is found written in the book -- will be delivered.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Daniel 9:27 He [Antichrist] will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he</p>

will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him."

Daniel 7:25 He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for **a time, times and half a time** [i.e., 3½ years].

Revelation 11:2 But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for **42 months**.

Revelation 12:6 The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for **1,260 days**.

Revelation 12:14 The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for **a time, times and half a time**, out of the serpent's reach.

Revelation 13:5 The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for **forty-two months**.

First of all, note that the above scriptures seem to suggest a correlated event: a time when all will be saved, and when King David will rise from the dead (Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 37:24-25). This places the time of Jacob's trouble in the end times, rather than circa 70 AD as suggested by preterists. Second, the events of Revelation don't seem to describe a series of *localized* terror (e.g., Romans versus Jews around 60-70 AD). Rather, they appear to describe *worldwide* terror. It is the final call of a gracious God to encourage *everyone* to repent and come to Christ, and therefore gain everlasting life. Third, these and other passages in Jeremiah, Daniel, and Revelation infer a period of 7 years, with the latter half being the most intense time.

The book of Revelation was written around 95 AD by the Apostle John, the last living disciple of Jesus Christ. All of the other disciples, including the apostle Paul, died before 70 AD [Ice, 2021d]. John was likely the youngest of the disciples. John also wrote four other New Testament books: John, 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John.

Tim LaHaye calls the dating of Revelation to prior to 70 AD "historically ridiculous". If Revelation were indeed written in 95 AD—or for that matter anytime after about 68-70 AD—then it certainly couldn't have applied to Nero, or to the destruction of the second temple in 70 AD. Furthermore, John was instructed to write about *future* events; so, a 95 AD writing about a future, third temple would not require any mention of the destruction of the second temple.

Even if Revelation were written before 70 AD, it doesn't negate the fact that most of Revelation is still future. For example, if the second temple were still

standing (i.e., prior to 70 AD), and if God's message about the temple applied to the far future, say 1900-2000 years later, then it doesn't negate the fact that there will be a third temple.

The greatest tribulation "ever" is still future. One cannot say that the Jews' tribulation of 70 AD was the greatest tribulation ever, since far more Jews were killed by Hitler in the Holocaust in the 1940s. Preterists might argue that the events of 70 AD occurred in Israel. But, in Matthew 24:21-22, the events are not confined to Israel. Christ said that "if those days had not been cut short, no one would survive". This does not mean that the Great Tribulation will be shorter than 3.5 years, but rather, it is stating that if Christ were not to return at that time, then no one would be left because mankind would wipe out mankind.

The extinguishing of all flesh was not a threat in 70 AD (with the primitive weapons at the time); but today it could happen (because of nuclear weapons in the hands of many countries, including politically unstable countries). It is reasonable to assume that the Great Tribulation did not occur in the first century.

Recall that the prophet Daniel said the 70 weeks of years, including the final "week" (still future), would focus on Israel and Jerusalem:

Daniel 9:24 **"Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city** to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy Place.

Christ said that His Coming would be like "a thief in the night" (Matthew 24:42-43) to many people; however, we are also warned in Scripture that believers are not children of the night (1 Thessalonians 5:4-5). In fact, we are not here for the "night" because we belong to the day [Walvoord & Hitchcock, 2012]. Thus, we should be prepared for Christ's return at any time. Then, we won't be surprised. There will be plenty of warnings during the Tribulation, just as there were plenty of warnings about the Roman invasion of 70 AD. For example, there was a lengthy revolution, and a long build-up. The Roman invasion took months.

Incidentally, the analogy of a thief is not present in the Old Testament or in other Jewish literature. This suggests that Peter and Paul drew from Christ's words directly.

Noah's Flood was a time when much of the world perished (all except 8 people, the animals in the ark, and marine creatures). David Levy reminds us that if the Tribulation were to go any longer than 2,520 days (7 years), no flesh on Earth would be saved:

...all flesh outside of the ark died, but the vegetation survived, [and] the earth was not completely destroyed. The Great Tribulation will be greater in its effect on all of creation, especially in the duration of pain and suffering which man will undergo. In fact, Jesus said, “And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened [cut off]” (Matthew 24:22). He was saying, If the Tribulation were any longer than seven years, nothing would live—man, animal or vegetation. [Levy, 1987, p. 20]

Full preterist Ed Stevens is among those who recognize a lack of support for the preterist viewpoint’s presence in the early church. He asks, “How could it be that some of the apostles and their traveling companions lived through the events of A.D. 70 without recognizing the significance of it and saying something about it? This is the single most significant factor shaping the history of eschatological study that I am aware of.” In other words, if the preterist contention that the prophecies of the Olivet Discourse and Revelation were fulfilled in the first century is true, then why is there no evidence that the early church understood these prophecies in this way? [Ice, 2003b, p. 39]

Ron Rhodes writes:

Scripture is graphically clear that this period will be characterized by wrath (Zephaniah 1:15,18), judgment (Revelation 14:7), indignation (Isaiah 26:20-21), trial (Revelation 3:10), trouble (Jeremiah 30:7), destruction (Joel 1:15), darkness (Amos 5:18), desolation (Daniel 9:27), overturning (Isaiah 24:1-4), and punishment (Isaiah 24:20-21) ...

The tribulation is the focus of Revelation 4-18, where we read about the seal judgments, the trumpet judgments, and the bowl judgments that will be poured out on human kind in steadily increasing intensity. The suffering will be immense; the death toll immeasurable. [Rhodes, 2008, p. 17]

Zechariah 14:2-4 I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city. Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.

Thomas Ice writes:

The text in Zechariah 14:3 makes it clear the Lord is not only defending His people, but that “the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle.” When did the Lord fight against and defeat the Roman army in A.D. 70? Preterists teach rightly that the A.D. 70 event was a time when God used the Romans, as He had done previously with the Babylonians, to bring judgment upon national Israel. However, Gentry’s tortured interpretation of Zechariah 14:1-2, does not fit the broad features of the passage, let alone the details.

... When in A.D. 70 did the Romans have their flesh rot while they stood on their feet, and their eyes rot in their sockets, and their tongue rot in their mouth? Did Josephus describe such an event?" When, as a result of the siege in A.D. 70, did the wealth of all the surrounding nations stream into Jerusalem in great abundance? Of course, the obvious answer is that *it did not happen*. [Ice, 2003g, p. 415]

Isaiah 24:1-27:13 has been called the *Little Apocalypse* [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. Just before these three chapters, Isaiah 13-23 deals with judgments upon *individual* Gentile nations, and following that, Isaiah shifts his focus to the entire earth—and this is similar to the destruction found in the book of Revelation.

Isaiah 24:1-3 See, the LORD is going to lay waste the earth and devastate it; he will ruin its face and scatter its inhabitants -- it will be the same for priest as for people, for master as for servant, for mistress as for maid, for seller as for buyer, for borrower as for lender, for debtor as for creditor. The earth will be completely laid waste and totally plundered. The LORD has spoken this word.

Isaiah 26:19-21 But your dead will live, LORD; their bodies will rise -- let those who dwell in the dust wake up and shout for joy -- your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead. Go, my people, enter your rooms and shut the doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until his wrath has passed by. See, the LORD is coming out of his dwelling to punish the people of the earth for their sins. The earth will disclose the blood shed on it; the earth will conceal its slain no longer.

Daniel 12:1-2 "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress [Tribulation] such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time [end of the Tribulation] your people -- everyone whose name is found written in the book -- will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt."

Zephaniah 2:3 Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the LORD's anger.

To counter arguments from preterists, Dave Hunt emphasizes that the Roman armies did not represent Christ's "coming in judgment", nor did any of the Jews understand that Christ came in judgment [Hunt & DeMar, 1998]. A 70 AD fulfillment of this event is out of the question because:

- The Jews didn't look upon Christ as "the one they have pierced", nor did they "mourn for him", as required by Zechariah 12:10.

- His feet didn't touch the Mount of Olives, as required by Zechariah 14:4.
- No saints came with Christ, as required by Zechariah 14:5.
- Two were not sleeping in a bed, and one was taken; nor were nor were two grinding with a hand mill, and one was taken; as required by Matthew 24:40-41.
- He didn't return in the same way He left, as required by Acts 1:11.
- Every eye did not see him, as required by Revelation 1:7.
- The Battle of Armageddon did not take place, as required by Revelation 16:16.
- If Christ is currently ruling from Jerusalem, then almost nobody is following Him. Recall that Christ will rule from Jerusalem, from the Throne of David.

Hunt argues that there are at least 6 major problems with preterism [Hunt & DeMar, 1998]:

1. It forces itself on the Bible by trying to find events that line up with a past fulfillment.
2. Preterism preaches some of the opposite "fulfillments". For example:
 - a. Instead of Christ fighting against Jerusalem's invading armies and preserving Jerusalem, Christ destroys Jerusalem (in 70 AD) through a proxy: the Roman army.
 - b. Instead of "every eye will see Him", no one did; but, we're supposed to "understand" that the Roman Armies were representing Christ and His visitation of judgment.
 - c. The Jews seem to be getting all the curses, but none of the blessings.
 - d. When the Church becomes Israel, it reaps the benefits, but escapes the curses.
 - e. The land that was promised to Israel doesn't take effect.
3. It has an unreal view of the world, and gives false expectations. For example, it assumes:
 - a. We're in the new heavens and earth.
 - b. Satan is already chained up.
 - c. The Church is taking over the world. But, in John 15, Christ states that, "the world hates you", and Luke 18:8 asks: "when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"
4. While criticizing futurism with its 2,000-year history (so far), a 7-year Tribulation, and a 1,000-year Millennium, it offers an even longer version than futurism: a takeover of the world by the Church could take tens of thousands of years (e.g., "a thousand generations").
5. Preterists don't deal with the "until" passages.
 - a. "This do, **until** I come." Does that mean that we should stop having communion?

	<p>b. Luke 21:24b says: “Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” Then, there is restoration.</p> <p>c. Luke 13:35 says: “Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”</p> <p>6. By saying that Christ came in 70 AD, it robs Christians of what to look forward to, such as imminence and rewards. We should be constantly motivated to live Godly lives.</p> <p>Instead of trying to find ways to explain away events, that is, referring to them as past events—by allegorizing or spiritualizing various Scripture passages—preterists should consider taking things more literally.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>There is no future 7-year tribulation. There are no Scripture verses that explicitly mention a pretribulational rapture or a 7-year tribulation period. Gap theology, such as placing a 2,000-year gap into Daniel 9:24-27, is wrong. It’s reading into the Scripture something that’s not there, claims Hank Hanegraaff.</p> <p>The Tribulation, or Great Tribulation, is history. It occurred within 40 years of Christ’s ministry, and refers to the persecution of Christians by the “Beast” of the Roman empire. One such example is Nero circa 64-68 AD. “It began shortly after the Great Fire, when Nero laid the blame for it on the Christians, and continues with their horrible public executions.” [Brouwer & Hanegraaff, 2004, p. 340]. Josephus and some other historians concur.</p> <p>Note that the Jews had 40 years to repent during the period 30 AD to 70 AD [DeMar, 1997]. By comparison, ancient Nineveh had 40 days.</p> <p>Acts 3:17-20 "Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you - - even Jesus.</p> <p>The generation of Jews who lived between A.D. 30 and 70 compounded and elevated their sin by assaulting His Bride, the church. [DeMar, 1997, p. 116]</p> <p>Although, in this world, Christians will have some tribulation in their lives; the Tribulation and Great Tribulation are not events in the future. In particular, the Great Tribulation referred to the early church, which Satan tried to wipe out shortly after it started. This happened pre-70 AD. The church, obviously, survived.</p> <p>Jesus established the time frame for Jerusalem’s destruction—it would occur within a generation. Before forty years passed, Jerusalem would be “trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be</p>

fulfilled” (Luke 21:24). The “times of the Gentiles” obviously refers to the four kingdom nations depicted in Daniel 2. Rome is obviously the fourth and final kingdom to oppress the Jews. With the Destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem, the “time of the Gentiles” is completed.

Last days madness can be halted once the church recognizes that the Great Tribulation is a past event. [DeMar, 1997, p. 124]

Ancient writing is full of *hyperbole*. Here are some examples of prophetic hyperbole in the Bible:

- Jesus commented about a future tribulation that is so great that nothing can parallel it (i.e., “never to be equaled again”). The destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC—some say 587 BC, but most sources go with 586 BC—at the time of the Babylonian exile, was described in Ezekiel 5:8-9 as the greatest tribulation to date—and in the future. So, how could there be *another* greatest tribulation? Furthermore, surely Noah’s Flood was a time of “great distress”, and even the horror of Armageddon will leave more survivors than the time of Noah’s Flood, when there were only 8 survivors!
- Jesus indicated that the “stars would fall” from the sky to the earth. This phrase was also used in the Old Testament to describe the Medes’ conquest of Babylon.
- Isaiah 13:6-8 describes the terror that accompanies “the day of the Lord” including the phrase, “They will look aghast at each other, their faces aflame”.
- Exodus 10 talks about the locust plague that came on Egypt (that didn’t occur before, and never will occur again) ... but many years later, a similar locust plague is described in Joel 2, in the same terms. These appear to be two different locust plagues.
- Solomon was to be the richest and wisest man ever ... but today there appear to be people who are even richer. Furthermore, Christ was wiser!
- Regarding King Hezekiah, 2 Kings 18:5 says “Hezekiah trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him.” Yet, something similar was said about King Josiah in 2 Kings 23:25: “Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the LORD as he did—with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses.”

The point here is that such hyperboles are figures of speech. The take-home message of “unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again” is that the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple would *severely* impact the Jewish people.

Kenneth Gentry, quoted in [Ice, 2003a, p. 30] writes:

1,100,000 Jews perished in the siege of Jerusalem ... ‘through the whole history of the human race, we meet with but few, if any instances of slaughter and devastation at all to be compared with this.’ ... as awful as the Jewish loss of life was, the utter devastation of Jerusalem, the final destruction of the temple, and the conclusive cessation of the sacrificial system were lamented even more. The covenantal significance of the loss of the temple stands as the most dramatic outcome of the War. Hence, any Jewish calamity after A.D. 70 would pale in comparison to the redemptive-historical significance of the loss of the temple”.

Have there not been greater tribulations? In terms of the reasons given for the tribulation period of A.D. 70, there have been no greater tribulations. If this tribulation was localized, which the text indicates, then *national* Israel will never experience another one like it. Any supposed tribulation the Jews experience in other countries is not in view here. Hitler’s killing six million Jews did not take place in the land of Israel. The Great Tribulation is a description of what happened to Jews living in Israel in the first century. Over one million Jews died at the hands of the Romans. Nothing will ever compare to it. [DeMar, 1997, pp. 117-118]

We know that not even the predicted future Great Tribulation of dispensationalism would be greater than the flood that left only eight people alive (Genesis 8:8-12). Jesus is using a figure of speech—hyperbole—common to the Jewish ear to stress His point of certain destruction. [DeMar, 1997, pp. 119-120].

Hank Hanegraaff frequently refers to the importance of proper interpretation of Scripture, in the context of its original language, culture, and time. Hermeneutics is the art and science of proper Biblical interpretation: “It’s an *art* in that the more you do it, the better you get at it; but it’s a *science* in that certain rules apply.” [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, July 21, 2010] In dealing with prophecy, especially Revelation, Hanegraaff coined the phrase *exegetical eschatology*. *Exegesis* means getting *out* of Scripture what the original author intended, as opposed to *eisegesis*, which means reading something *into* the text (i.e., something that’s not in the text, to begin with). “Learn to read Scripture for all it’s worth,” says Hanegraaff. “All of the Bible was written *for* us; but remember, not all of the Bible was written *to* us.” Hank does not like “false eschatological paradigms” (e.g., those teachings failing to recognize 70 AD as the fulfillment of most of the parts of Revelation, and this includes dispensationalism).

When reading Scripture, it is better to begin by asking how Old Testament prophecies and apocalyptic texts were understood by the original recipients than to speculate about how they might be fulfilled in our future. [Irwin & Perry, 2023, p. 286]

Gary DeMar adds that God used the Babylonians and Romans to execute judgment on His behalf. God said that “this” generation would not pass away

before His coming in judgment. The hearers of Christ's statement surely believed that they would be the people alive at that time of judgment.

The "world" mentioned in Matthew 24 refers to the Roman Empire [DeMar & Hanegraaff, 2023]. For example, at the time of Christ's birth, the "whole world" was to take part in a census. This meant the Roman Empire. Matthew 24 mentions Judea and "the land"—not the whole world. The audience of Matthew 24 is "those who are in Judea" because they would see the abomination that causes desolation—so they'd have to be near by. Furthermore, if it meant the "whole world" at some distant/future point of time, then what would be the point of fleeing to the mountains, if the whole world were to be in tribulation?

Acts 11:28 speaks of a famine that occurred "throughout all the world" (KJV) or "the entire Roman world" (NIV). The word *oikoumene* in the Greek is used to denote "world" [Hunt & DeMar, 1998]. Mary and Joseph were involved in a previous reference to "all the world" (KJV) or "all the Roman world" (NIV) being taxed. This is the Christmas story mentioned in Luke 2:1 and beyond.

In Colossians 1:23, Paul states that the gospel was preached to "every creature under heaven". This was in the first century. It appears to fulfill Matthew 24:14: "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."

All the covenant promises have been fulfilled by the Church, which began with Jewish people. "Church" means "congregation of God"—which at the time meant the Jews. The book of Romans talks of certain branches being broken off the "olive tree" (the tree is a symbol of all believers in God).

Matthew 16:27-28 comments on the Son of Man coming in glory.

[Matthew 16:27-28] For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done. "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

Surely this meant that the event would take place in the not too distant future—distant enough that not everyone there might be alive—but rather that some people would still be alive. The events would be "the *end* of the temple system and ceremonial era ... which is brought about by the *beginning* of the new covenant era, the establishing of the kingdom of heaven [Gentry in [Ice & Gentry, 1999]]. This suggests a first century fulfillment. Verse 28 does *not* use the Greek word *parousia* (physical appearance of Christ). This suggests that Christ's coming was in judgment.

Matthew 10:23 When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish

going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes [Greek verb: *erchomai*].

Revelation 12 contains symbolic language: the woman with the stars, sun, and moon. Judgment upon Babylon occurs when the sun, stars, and moon “fall”. Some of the Old Testament prophets used such language, that is, the darkening or falling of the sun, moon, and stars to describe upcoming judgment upon ruling authorities [Eberle & Trench, 2021]. Thus, this kind of symbolic language is not “allegorizing” or “spiritualizing” away the words of Revelation; rather, this is the way the Old Testament was written. It is apocalyptic language. We need to understand how the Old Testament was written, and then apply it to Revelation.

One of the genres that the Bible was written in is apocalyptic language. Matthew is using apocalyptic language. It wasn’t taken literally at the time, and is similar to the way we use English phrases like, “I weigh a ton” or “It’s raining cats and dogs”. It’s not literal, but the expression gets the point across to the intended audience. Hanegraaff writes:

Rather than viewing all of Scripture through the opaque lens of wooden literalism, the careful student of the Bible recognizes and accurately interprets *form, figurative language, and fantasy imagery*.

Form. To interpret the Bible literally, we must first pay special attention to what is known as *form* or *genre*. ... Just as a legal brief differs in form from a prophetic oracle, so too there is a difference in genre between Leviticus and Revelation. Recognizing the genre is particularly important when considering writings that are difficult to categorize, such as Genesis, which is largely a historical narrative interlaced with symbolism and repetitive poetic structure.

If Genesis were reduced to an allegory conveying merely abstract ideas about temptation, sin, and redemption, devoid of any correlation with actual events in history, the very foundation of Christianity would be destroyed. If the historical Adam and Eve did not eat the forbidden fruit and descend into a life of habitual sin resulting in death, there is no need for redemption. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 20-21]

In apocalyptic genre, numbers need not be taken literally [Eberle & Trench, 2021]. Thus, figures like 144,000, one thousand, one-third of the earth, etc. should not be taken as exact figures but used indicators of large or small amounts, in relative terms.

Furthermore, the Greek word *ge*, for example, could refer to “earth”, “ground”, or “land”. Thus, in Revelation, when we read that “a third of the earth” was burned up, this could well be a third of the land of Israel [Eberle & Trench, 2021]. (The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and the translators used *ge* as meaning Israel.)

	<p>Figurative language includes literary terms such as similes, metaphors, and hyperboles.</p> <p>Fantasy imagery includes phrases such as, “an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns”, “locusts with human faces, women’s hair, and lions’ teeth”, “the beast”, etc. These are not meant to be taken literally, but rather to paint an impactful image in one’s mind that one can associate with an underlying biblical principle.</p> <p>Not all authors agree about how to interpret the duration of 42 months. Some claim that it is not meant to be taken literally, but rather figuratively. For example, 42 months is a symbol for both: (a) how long it took for Israel to travel from Egypt to the Promised Land, (b) how long it will take for the Church to “travel” from the crucifixion to the City of God [Johnson, 2004].</p>
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Topic/ Question	What is the purpose of the Tribulation?
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>The Tribulation largely applies to Israel, but the whole world will learn lessons from it—and people all over the world will put their faith in Jesus Christ because of it. Its purposes are multifold [House & Price, 2003]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To finish the discipline upon Israel and the Jews for their unbelief over the centuries, and especially for their rejection of the Messiah at His first coming • To produce a longing for the Messiah, and in particular, to get Israel to call upon the name of the Lord, and plead for the return of the Messiah (Zechariah 12:9-13:2) • To end the Times of the Gentiles and deliver the Jewish people from Gentile domination • To purge the earth of wickedness, and prepare to usher in the Messiah and the Millennial Kingdom <p>God’s purposes for bringing the Antichrist on the world scene are to punish Israel for its rejection of its good Shepherd (Messiah) in His first coming; to shatter Israel’s rebellion and bring them to repentance; to judge the lawless world by giving it the kind of lawless ruler it deserves; to expose the world’s unbelief and thereby demonstrate the necessity of the world’s judgment; to instigate the final showdown between Christ and Satan’s forces; and to defeat those forces. [Showers, 1995, p. 122]</p>
Preterist Position	There will be no future 7-year “Tribulation” period; therefore, the question is irrelevant.

Topic/ Question	Because the book of Daniel is so accurate in its prophecies, some skeptics question the authenticity of the book. When was the book of Daniel written?
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	Is it possible that the book of Daniel was written <i>after</i> the “prophesied” events took place?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>The book of Daniel was written well before the prophecies came true. Daniel is the most authenticated book in the Bible for a number of reasons: (1) accuracy of the many prophecies that have now been fulfilled, (2) evidence from archeology, (3) secular writings from Babylon, and (4) the fact that Jesus confirmed that Daniel was a prophet (Matthew 24:15). Reason number (4) should settle the matter. “If you believe in Jesus Christ, you have no problem about the authenticity or the reliability of the book of Daniel. If you don’t believe in Jesus Christ, then you got bigger problems than the authenticity of the book of Daniel.” [Missler, 2005]</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Matthew 24:15-16 "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel -- let the reader understand - - then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.</p> <p>Rob Lindsted says that if you want to prove to someone that the Bible is the Word of God, then direct that person to the book of Daniel because there is a lot evidence confirming the fulfillment of prophecy exactly as it was written in the book of Daniel [Lindsted, 1989].</p> <p>Skeptics often try to discredit the books of Genesis and Daniel because their historical and predictive passages cause skeptics concern due of the accuracy of those Scriptures. If they were to accept the history and prophecies found in these two books, much of their skepticism would fade away.</p> <p>Daniel was written well before most of the events were fulfilled. The Septuagint was written about 300 years before Christ. It is the Greek translation of the (Hebrew and Aramaic) Old Testament. The translation took place in Alexandria, Egypt, beginning around the time of Alexander the Great. At this point, many of the prophecies of Daniel were still unfulfilled, but later became fulfilled. Thus, Daniel was not written “after the fact”. In fact, its authenticity was not challenged until the third century AD, and more so 1,300 years later with the rise of modern liberalism [Walvoord, 1990].</p> <p>By the way, the prophet Isaiah mentions King Cyrus <i>by name</i> (Isaiah 45:1,13) about 150 years ahead of time (even before the book of Daniel was written):</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Isaiah 44:27-28 who says to the watery deep, 'Be dry, and I will dry up your streams,' who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, "Let it be rebuilt," and of the temple, "Let its foundations be laid."'</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Isaiah 45:1 "This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut:</p>

Isaiah 45:4 For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen, **I summon you by name** and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me.

Isaiah 45:11-13 "This is what the LORD says -- the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker: **Concerning things to come**, do you question me about my children, or give me orders about the work of my hands? It is I who made the earth and created mankind upon it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts. **I will raise up Cyrus** in my righteousness: I will make all his ways straight. **He will rebuild my city and set my exiles free, but not for a price or reward**, says the LORD Almighty."

It is possible that Darius was either another name for Cyrus, or that Cyrus the Great had appointed Darius as viceroy or king of Babylon [Walvoord, *et al.*, 2012]. Are Cyrus and Darius the same person? Probably not. Here is a summary of some of the leaders of the Medes and Persians. Cyrus II and Darius I are mentioned in the book of Daniel:

The son of Teispes was Cyrus I who came in contact with the Assyrians as the leader of the Persians. The son of Cyrus I was Cambyses who married the daughter of the Median king Astyges. Their son of Cyrus I was Cambyses who married the daughter of the Median king Astyges. Their son was Cyrus II, known in history as Cyrus the Great (559–530 B.C.), the first great and dominant king of ancient Persia. Cyrus II also conquered the Medes, and defeated his grandfather Astyges, and made the Median capital of Ecbatana his own capital. Cyrus also invaded Asia Minor and defeated Croesus, king of Lydia. He also captured Babylon in 539 B.C. (the official date of the fall of the Babylonian Empire) with little resistance.

The son of Cyrus II was Cambyses II (529–522 B.C.) who conquered Egypt. Cambyses II was succeeded by Darius I, known as Darius the Great (522–486 B.C.) and as Darius Hystaspes (his father was one of the satraps of the Persian Empire). Darius created 20 satrapies (provinces) in order to administrate effectively the growing strength of the Persian Empire. Darius I also moved the capital from Pasagadae to Persepolis. He was a follower of Zoroaster and a worshiper of Ahura Mazda (also followed by Xerxes and Artaxerxes of Biblical history). This is the same king mentioned in the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah. The Temple project was completed by the Jews in 516 B.C. during his reign.

Darius I was succeeded by his son Xerxes (485–465 B.C.). An inscription at Persepolis lists the nations under his control. He is also the same King Ahashuerus mentioned in the Book of [Esther]. Following his reign, Artaxerxes Longimanus I came to power (465–424 B.C.) and it was in the 20th year of his reign that the decree to restore the wall of Jerusalem was given to Nehemiah (Nehemiah 2:1). [Hocking, 2012]

As a side note, King Josiah was also mentioned by name, about 300 years before he was born (1 Kings 13:2). Also, the books of Daniel (written between 607-534 BC) and Zechariah (circa 520 BC) make reference to Alexander the Great who lived around 333 BC.

Time of Writing of the Book of Daniel: It was completed around 530 BC, but was probably written starting around 586 BC. For example, Chapter 9 was written around 539-538 BC.

Languages: Aramaic was used in Daniel 2:4-7:28. Aramaic was the Gentile language of that part of the world, at that time.

Writers: Daniel (chapters 1-3, 5-12), King Nebuchadnezzar (Chapter 4). Note that Chapter 4 is King Nebuchadnezzar’s personal testimony; some scholars believe that he will be in Heaven. King Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 BC [Walvoord, 1990].

Chronology of the Chapters: 1-4, 7, 8, 5, 9, 6, 10-12

Key Fulfilled Prophecies: These include the interpretation of dreams and visions, the unfolding of Babylon’s history, the description of future world empires, Antiochus Epiphanes, and the first 69 of the 70 “weeks” of years of Daniel (i.e., up to the time of Christ—500-600 years in the future).

Key Unfulfilled Prophecies: These include the 70th “week” of Daniel (i.e., the 7-year Tribulation), including the rise of Antichrist, the setting up of the Abomination of Desolation, and the fall of Antichrist.

Here are the prophecies of world empires, as per Nebuchadnezzar’s dream about the statue, and Daniel’s visions and interpretations [LaHaye, *et al.*, 2001; Lindsted, 1989; Missler, 2005]. Different scholars use slightly different dates for the empires.

Statue (Dan. 2)	Empire	Beasts (Dan. 7)	Beasts (Dan. 8)	Identification/ Leadership
Gold (head)	Babylon (606 BC to 539 BC)	Winged lion; plucking of wings; man’s heart		Nebuchadnezzar; the plucking of wings refers to his insanity, and the man’s heart refers to his conversion
Silver (chest and arms)	Media & Persia (539 BC to 332 BC)	Bear that was raised up on one side; three ribs in its mouth	Ram with two horns	Cyrus, Darius The Persians were dominant; the Medes and Persians conquered Lydia, Babylon, and Egypt. The vision in Daniel 8 occurs

					about 14 years ahead of its fulfillment.
Bronze (belly and thighs)	Greece (332 BC to 68 BC)	Leopard (emphasizing speed), four wings and heads	Goat from the west; (four horns grew up in place of the first horn (Alexander the Great))	Alexander the Great	Following his death, the empire splits into four parts, each led by a general: Cassander (west), Lysimachus (north), Seleucus (east), and Ptolemy (south). 168 BC: Antiochus Epiphanes is a <i>type</i> of the future Antichrist.
Iron (legs)	Rome, Phase I (68 BC to 476 AD)—no one conquered it; it fell apart. The eastern leg of the Roman Empire (i.e., the Byzantine Empire) lasted longer (68 BC to 1450 AD).	Terrifying Beast			A kingdom with unequalled military strength 284 AD: Diocletian divides the empire into two. 312 AD: Constantine moves the capital to Byzantium. 476 AD: The empire breaks into pieces.
Iron Mixed with Clay (feet and toes)	Rome, Phase II (future)				Antichrist (in the latter stages) Christ destroys this kingdom and sets up his own, for eternity.

Dave Hunt notes that the fourth kingdom had two legs, which signified the division of the Roman Empire into East and West around 364 AD when Constantine moved his headquarters to Constantinople (known as Byzantium until 330 AD, but now known as Istanbul). This event left the Popes in charge of Rome in the West. Furthermore, in 1054 AD, Pope Leo IX wound up splitting the Roman Empire religiously into two parts: Roman Catholicism in

the West, and Orthodoxy in the East. The eastern leg lived about a thousand years longer than the western leg.

As for the ten toes in Nebuchadnezzar's statue, Daniel 2:44 states, "In the time of those kings, the God of Heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed ..." Hunt doesn't think there ever was a time in history when there were ten kings ruling the Roman Empire, under the leadership of Antichrist, with a mark in their right hand or forehead required for buying or selling [Hunt & DeMar, 1998].

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

A number of prophecy experts (e.g., Arnold Fruchtenbaum, Tom Hughes, and Andy Woods) believe that the 10 kings or 10 kingdoms could represent 10 *regions* around the globe, with the Antichrist coming out of Europe (which is one of those regions). This begs the question of why the revived Roman Empire would now be a worldwide empire which would encompass the US, Russia, China, etc. It might simply be a massive extension of the borders of the original Roman Empire—an empire which simply did not have the reach and communications ability that modern-day nations possess. Another possibility is that America, Russia, China, etc. are no longer as strong as they used to be, perhaps after economic collapse, social unrest, a large-scale military exchange, etc. History has shown that whenever there is a political or military vacuum, another nation moves in to fill that void. Perhaps that will be Europe. There are many possibilities here; and we can only speculate as to the implementation details.

Mark Hitchcock thinks that the 10 toes of the statue in Daniel 2, and the 10 horns in Daniel 7 are not *nations*, but rather 10 *rulers* [Hitchcock, 2021]. He bases this on the fact that the Antichrist is called "the little horn" in Daniel 7:8 that came up among the 10 horns. Thus, the other 10 horns are likely to be people, too. There will be a reuniting of the old Roman Empire, with 10 people in charge.

Mondo Gonzales thinks that the 10 toes might refer to 10 *influencers*, meaning 10 leaders with a background in one or more of finance, technology,

innovation, health care, media, international non-profit organizations, etc. [Gonzales, 2024b] For example, technocratic oligarchs could “rule through technology”. Some reasons for this are: influencers have a worldwide audience, wide media coverage, popularity, and are kings without a kingdom:

Revelation 17:12 “The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast.

Here are some eschatological *types* [Missler, 2005; LaHaye, *et al.*, 2001] to consider from the book of Daniel, with respect to King Nebuchadnezzar’s image of gold, and the fire/furnace that Daniel’s three friends—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—were thrown into:

- In the plain of Dura in the Province of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar erects a 60 cubit by 6 cubit statue of himself, and people had to worship the image or be put to death. The king exalted himself to God status.
 - Analogy: The Antichrist will declare himself to be God, and demand to be worshiped (2 Thessalonians 2:4). People everywhere will need to take his mark (666) and worship his image.
- Fire is a type of testing (a process of refinement), tribulation, or judgment.
 - Analogy: the Tribulation
- Daniel’s three friends refused to bow down and worship the image of gold. They were thrown into the furnace, but were untouched in the fire (except for the fact that their bindings were burned away); and surprisingly, a fourth person appeared in the fire (perhaps a Christophany, that is, the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ).
 - Analogy: 144,000 Jewish witnesses will be sealed and protected during the Tribulation. Because of their testimony, many people will come to Christ. Furthermore, believers will refuse to worship the Antichrist and his image—and refuse to take his mark on the right hand or the forehead.
- Daniel seems to have been removed from the scene (perhaps he was on a trip); otherwise, he surely would have protested the fiery furnace ordeal—or perhaps even have been thrown into the furnace himself.
 - Analogy: the Rapture

There were actually several phases to the return of the Babylonian exiles [Missler, 2005]:

- In 538 BC, under Zerubbabel, and with the permission of King Cyrus of Persia, about 50,000 returned to Israel.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 515 BC, under Ezra, the Temple was rebuilt. (We frequently call the rebuilt Temple “the second temple”.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In 458 BC: About 2,000 Jews returned, again under Ezra. • In 445 BC, under Nehemiah, the walls and streets of Jerusalem were rebuilt. It is this event which is associated with the start of the 69 “weeks” of years. <p>Genesis 49:10 The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.</p> <p>The above verse written by Jacob, applies to the Messiah. In 7 AD, the Romans took away the authorization for capital punishment (i.e., the death penalty: “the scepter”) from the Sanhedrin (the Jews’ highest ruling council) in Judea. The Babylonian Talmud states that the high priest at the time put on sackcloth and ashes, and exclaimed, “Woe unto us for the scepter has departed from Judah and the Messiah has not come!” Chuck Missler states, “They thought the word of God had been broken. They actually thought that. What they didn’t know was that up in Nazareth, in a carpenter’s shop, was a young boy growing up ... He [the Messiah: Jesus Christ] had come” [Missler, 2005].</p> <p>Furthermore, since Daniel 9:24-27 says that the Messiah will be “cut off” and the city (Jerusalem) will be destroyed, this implies that the Messiah had to come <i>before</i> 70 AD. Thus, the Jews could look back and reckon that Jesus Christ was the Messiah. Interestingly, the orthodox Jews believe that Daniel’s 70 weeks of years ended with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD [Walvoord, <i>et al.</i>, 2012].</p> <p>For more about history and prophecy in the book of Daniel, see my study guide [Knorr, 2022].</p>
Preterist Position	<p>(same as the dispensationalist position, except for the eschatological types, and the future “revived Roman Empire”)</p> <p>Partial preterists do not believe in a future revived Roman Empire. The “rock” that crushed all the kingdoms, as per Daniel 2:44, was Jesus Christ:</p> <p>Jesus came and established the Kingdom of God during the first century when the Roman Empire was in power. God’s Kingdom has already destroyed the Empire, and there will be no future revived Roman Empire. [Eberle & Trench, 2021, Kindle edition, location 5368]</p> <p>The kingdom of God came to Earth with Jesus’ first coming; it will not arrive in some future coming. [Newton, 2012, p. 8]</p> <p>We are in the kingdom and have been for over 2,000 years, and we will continue to be there for a long time. [Newton, 2012, p. 70]</p>

	<p>Thus, the 4th kingdom of the 4 kingdoms referred to in the book of Daniel was Rome, and the 5th kingdom that crushed it was Christ’s kingdom [Newton, 2012]. Rome was defeated at the cross; but, it took several more centuries for Rome to eventually disappear as a world power.</p> <p>Furthermore, partial preterists believe that Daniel’s 70th week has already occurred. This is described in the next section.</p>
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<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>Regarding the seventy weeks in the book of Daniel, what is the correct interpretation of the “70th week of Daniel” (also known as “seventy sevens”, “70 weeks of years”, or simply the Tribulation)—in light of the Second Coming? Is the 70th week still future, or was it fulfilled by 70 AD? Is there a gap of time between the conclusion of the 69th week and the start of the 70th week?</p> <p>Daniel’s 70th week is summarized in Daniel 9:24-27, with some dispensationalist commentary in square brackets:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Daniel 9:24-27 "Seventy 'sevens' [70 × 7 = 490 years] are decreed for your people [the Jews] and your holy city [Jerusalem] to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, [Jesus Christ, the Messiah] comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens' [i.e., (7 + 62) × 7 = 69 × 7 = 483 years]. It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One [Jesus Christ] will be cut off [literally “executed”] and will have nothing. The people [Romans] of the ruler who will come [Antichrist] will destroy the city [Jerusalem] and the sanctuary [the Temple in 70 AD]. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He [Antichrist] will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven'. In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the [rebuilt] temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him."</p>
<p>Dispensa- tionalist Position</p>	<p>Probably no single prophetic utterance is more crucial in the fields of Biblical Interpretation, Apologetics, and Eschatology [than Daniel 9:24-27].</p> <p>... the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks has an immense evidential value as a witness to the truth of Scripture. That part of the prophecy relating to the first sixty-nine weeks has already been accurately fulfilled ... And in this remarkable fulfillment we have an unanswerable argument for the divine inspiration of the Bible. It is, in fact, nothing less than a mathematical demonstration. For only an omniscient God could have foretold over five hundred years in advance the very day on which the Messiah would ride into</p>

Jerusalem and present Himself as the “Prince” of Israel. [McClain, 1969, p. 9]

Note that Daniel 9 is focused on Israel and the Jews, and not the Church:

Unlike the prophecies of Daniel 2, 7, and 8, which primarily related to the Gentiles, this chapter is specifically God’s program for the people of Israel. To make this equivalent to the church composed of both Jews and Gentiles is to read into the passage something foreign to Daniel’s whole thinking. The church as such has no relation to the city of Jerusalem, or to the promises given specifically to Israel relating to their restoration and repossession of the land. [Walvoord, *et al.*, 2012, pp. 270-271]

The 70th week of Daniel will begin with the signing, strengthening, or confirmation of a 7-year covenant or peace treaty between Israel and either its neighbors or the whole world. The coming world leader—the Antichrist—is the person who signs, confirms, establishes, or enforces the covenant. This marks the beginning of the final seven years of human history leading up to the physical return of Jesus Christ at Armageddon. It is only because Christ returns that mankind will survive. In the words of Jesus Christ, circa 30 AD:

Matthew 24:21-22 For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now -- and never to be equalled again. **If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive**, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.

Note that Daniel 9:24-27 (above) is addressed to Daniel (via the angel Gabriel) and mentions “your people” (the Jewish people) and “the holy city” (Jerusalem). It indicates that there are 69 “blocks” of 7-year periods (i.e., 69 × 7 years × 360 days/Biblical year), from the giving of the order to rebuild *the walls and the streets* of Jerusalem, until the coming of the King.

360 days/year is used in Scripture as the basis for a Biblical year (e.g., see the book of Esther), and may have been the actual length of a year prior to the Flood. Chuck Missler remarks that all ancient calendars used 360 days/year. Also, the books of Daniel and Revelation refer to times such as 3½ years, half of seven years, 1,260 days, 42 months, etc. These are reasons for the 360-day year used in prophecy.

Note the sentence: “The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.” The Romans destroyed the city and the temple in 70 AD. *This implies that the Messiah had to have come before 70 AD.* The “ruler who will come” refers to the Antichrist. This also means that the Antichrist cannot be a Muslim, nor can he be Jewish (although the False Prophet can be) [Ice, 2014d]. In other words, the Antichrist will come out of the revived Roman Empire.

Verse 24 provides the overview of the 70 weeks of years for the Jews and Jerusalem. It states that the 6 purposes of this time period are “to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy [place]”. Some scholars argue that the first 3 purposes have been fulfilled in the first coming, and that the second 3 purposes are in the future. So, at least 3 of them—and therefore Daniel 9:24 as a whole—await a future fulfillment. Let us explore all 6 of these purposes, and we will see that all of them will be fulfilled after Christ’s Second Coming.

1. “The transgression” is sometimes rendered “the rebellion”. The Hebrew text includes a definite article, which is translated in English as the word “the”. This refers to the rejection of the Messiah (Jesus) [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. We know that shortly before the Second Coming of Christ, all Jews alive in Israel will be looking for their Messiah, recognizing that the same Jesus whom they rejected at His first coming, is their Messiah.
2. Arnold Fruchtenbaum argues that “to put an end to sin” refers to the end of sin, in general, in Israel. Even though Gentile nations will sin during the Millennial Kingdom, “in the Kingdom there will be no sin in Israel” [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 190].
3. “To atone for wickedness” means “to make reconciliation for iniquity”, where “iniquity” refers to the *sin nature*. While Christians realize that Christ has made reconciliation through His atoning sacrifice, and therefore this purpose has been fulfilled, the Jewish people have yet to acknowledge Christ and accept His atonement.
4. “Everlasting righteousness” refers to the Millennial Kingdom and the Eternal State.
5. “To seal up vision and prophecy” means to bring prophecy to a complete fulfillment. This will take place during the Millennial Kingdom.
6. Lastly, in Hebrew, “to anoint the most holy” should be rendered “to anoint a most holy place”, which would be the fourth temple: the Messianic Temple, as per Ezekiel 40-48. The Shekinah Glory which was present in the Tabernacle and in Solomon’s Temple will return (Ezekiel 43:1-6). (Some Christians believe that Jesus will be anointed as “the most holy”.)

Verse 25 deals with the first 69 weeks, verse 26 deals with the gap of time between the 69th and 70th weeks, and verse 27 deals with the 70th week.

Why the distinction between the first 7 weeks and the next 62 weeks? Some authors think that the first 7 weeks (i.e., 49 years) is the period beginning with the decree issued by King Artaxerxes for Nehemiah to rebuild the streets and wall of Jerusalem, and in particular, to clear out the debris from the ruins of Jerusalem and restore it as a thriving city [Ice, 2003f]. There is no gap between the 7 weeks and the 62 weeks; however, there is a gap between the 69 weeks and the final 70th week because of the Jews' rejection of Jesus Christ.

The most quoted interpretation of the 7 + 62 “weeks of years” prophecy is due to Sir Robert Anderson [Anderson, 1984]. It is instructive; but, there are two other models that have merit, and use different starting and ending points, yet all use the same framework of 69×7 years = 483 years.

Important note: There is a great deal of inconsistency among authors—and on the Internet—regarding the equivalent dates in the Hebrew and Gregorian calendars. This author has many books in his personal library, and has visited numerous web sites, and for any given year in the range 30-33 AD, there are different days of the week quoted for Nisan 14—and each of those authors tries to sound authoritative. This makes things very challenging, and you may need to do your own investigation. Future research, including the discovery and research of ancient documents, may bring more clarity and authority to the calculations.

Let us consider 3 models that work out the prophetic fulfillment of the arrival of the Messiah, as per Daniel 9:24-27. Each of these models claims to fulfill Daniel's prophecy to the exact day. Because Jesus said that he fulfilled prophecy “on this day”, we can assume that one of these models (or perhaps a variation of one) is correct:

Luke 19:41-44 As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known **on this day** what would bring you peace -- but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, **because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you.**"

To begin, there were 4 decrees to rebuild Jerusalem (Temple), but only one to rebuild the walls and streets (city) of Jerusalem—the last decree. The following quotations are from [Hoehner, 1977, pp. 121-126]:

1. The decree of King Cyrus in 539 BC: “(2 Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4;6:3-5). This decree concerned the return of the captives [from Babylon] and the rebuilding of the temple but not a complete restoration of the city.”

2. The decree of King Darius in 519-518 BC: “Darius had a search made of Cyrus’ decree and then issued a decree himself about 519/518 B.C. to confirm Cyrus’ original decree (Ezra 6:1-12).”
3. The decree of King Artaxerxes to Ezra in 457 BC: “It encouraged the return of more exiles with Ezra, the further enhancement of the temple ... (Ezra 7:11-26) ... [but] not a word about the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem ...”
4. The decree of King Artaxerxes to Nehemiah in 444-445 BC: “The final decree is that of Artaxerxes to Nehemiah in 444 B.C. to rebuild the city of Jerusalem (Neh. 2:18-8).”

Model 1, for example, claims that King Artaxerxes Longimanus gave the order to rebuild the walls and streets of Jerusalem in the 20th year of his reign, which, according to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, would be March 14, 445 BC. Nehemiah 2:1 says this was “In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes”. Since no day is given, Jewish custom takes the day as being the first of the month (Nisan) [McClain, 1969]. King Artaxerxes’ accession was in July 465 BC, and thus Nisan of his first year would be in March 464 BC; and Nisan of his 20th year would be in March 445 BC.

Let us continue with Model 1 for the time being. It and the other two models will be described in more detail below. Sir Robert Anderson writes that if we map the terminal date of the 69 weeks of years onto an extended Gregorian calendar, we come up with the date Sunday, April 6, 32 AD (Palm Sunday), which Anderson claims equates to Nisan 10 on the Jewish (Hebrew) calendar, when Christ—our Passover Lamb—rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, publicly declaring Himself to be the Messiah. Note that the following verses appear to have a time-out in the middle of them, referring to something that will finish in the future.

Zechariah 9:9-10 Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, **your king comes to you**, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding **on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey**. [A time-out occurs here since the next part refers to the future, including Christ’s Millennial reign.] I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the warhorses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Recall that Daniel 9:25 indicated that the Messiah would present Himself to Israel at 69 times 7 years (i.e., 483 years) after the decree to rebuild the walls and streets of Jerusalem. This is a period of 173,880 days. The Jews did not realize the time of Christ’s visitation (i.e., birth, life, and death), and this is why Israel has experienced a time of “blindness”. This blindness of Israel led to the

dispersion of Israel, and the hardships that have come upon its people. Blindness will be removed at the Second Coming when the Jews will see and acknowledge Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah:

Romans 11:25 I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: **Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved**, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.

Zechariah 12:10 "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.

The (approximately) 2,000-year gap is part of *the times of the Gentiles* which began with Israel's Babylonian exile under King Nebuchadnezzar (i.e., with the end of Israel's theocracy occurring in 586 BC with the deposition of King Zedekiah), and extends to the physical return of Jesus Christ at the Battle of Armageddon (i.e., the Second Coming), shortly before the start of the Millennium [Pentecost, 1958; Woods, 2012e]. It refers to the time when no king was on David's throne in Israel/Judah. Jesus Christ will gain the throne upon His return. (Some authors believe the times of the Gentiles began in 605 BC when King Nebuchadnezzar took the first Jewish captives to Babylon [Walvoord, 1990]. Note that even during the times when Jesus lived in Israel, Jerusalem was under Gentile control.)

Luke 21:24 "... Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the **times of the Gentiles** are fulfilled."

Revelation 11:2-3 But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the **Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.** And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth."

Some authors distinguish *the times of the Gentiles* from *the fullness of the Gentiles*. The latter period is said to have begun with the start of the Church on the Day of Pentecost, as per Acts 2 [Missler, 2006] because the fullness of the Gentiles represents the Body of Christ, that is, the Christian Church. In Romans 11:25, Paul equates the fullness of the Gentiles to the *number* of Gentiles who become part of the Church (i.e., believers in Jesus Christ):

Romans 11:25 I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part **until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.**

The Greek word for “fullness” represents “a set number” [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. Note that even though the Christian Church ends with the Rapture, people can still be saved *after* the Rapture.

Thus, by the time of Christ, the nation [Israel] had been back in the Promised Land for over five centuries. However, such long residency in the land did not mean that the Times of the Gentiles had concluded. During all of this time, Israel still had no reigning king upon David’s Throne. Moreover, as Daniel predicted (Dan. 2; 7), Israel continued to be under the domination of various Gentile powers. Those powers included Persia, which was followed by Greece, and finally Rome. By the time Christ was born, the Roman Empire occupied the Promised Land, placed Israel under an enormous tax burden, and usurped from the Jews the right to execute their own criminals. [Woods, 2012c]

It was incumbent upon first-century Israel to enthrone Christ in order to enter into all of her covenantal blessings (Deut. 17:15). The opportunity for first-century Israel to enthrone Christ thereby bringing in the kingdom is known as “the offer of the kingdom.” This idea is captured in the expression, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” as proclaimed to the nation by John (Matt. 3:1-2), Christ (Matt. 4:17), the Twelve (Matt. 10:5-7), and the Seventy (Luke 10:1,9). ... In Matthew 10:5-7, He instructed the twelve: “Do not go in *the* way of *the* Gentiles, and do not enter *any* city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” Such a national limitation on the offer of the kingdom conveys that it was only for first-century Israel. Had first-century Israel enthroned Christ, the earthly kingdom would have become a reality for the nation and the entire world. Israel’s covenants would have been fulfilled, and the Times of the Gentiles would have terminated. Despite the unprecedented opportunity for the establishment of the messianic kingdom due to the presence of the rightful king among the first-century Jews, Israel rejected the kingdom offer (Matt. 12:24) leading to the kingdom’s postponement.

... The entire Gentile world could become Christian. Yet, if tiny Israel remains in unbelief, the kingdom cannot materialize. Conversely, the entire Gentile world could reject Christ. Yet, if Israel fulfills the condition stated in Matthew 23:37-39 by accepting Jesus as the Messiah, the kingdom will materialize upon the earth. Because the Olivet Discourse and related passages teach that the condition of Jewish national acceptance of the Messiah will not be satisfied until the events surrounding the future Tribulation period have occurred, the kingdom will remain in a state of postponement until that time.

... the fact that God knew that Israel would reject the kingdom offer thereby ushering in His eternal purpose for the interim age in no way implies that the offer to national Israel was not a genuine or bonafide offer. [Woods, 2012d, pp. 6-7]

When determining the day and year of Christ’s death, and trying to compute the termination of Daniel’s 69 weeks of years (i.e., Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem), and trying to line up events with the Jewish holy days (Nisan 14, 15, and 17), here are some things to think about, which show one reason for

why there are alternative views (described in detail in Models 1, 2, and 3 below):

- Exodus 12:3-10 state that:
 - Nisan 10 is the day when the Passover lamb was set apart.
 - Nisan 14 is the day when the Passover lambs were killed (late in the afternoon).
 - The Passover supper was in the evening, that is, after the sacrifice of the Passover lamb several hours earlier.
- Christ entered Jerusalem on a donkey on Nisan 10, to publicly declare Himself as the Messiah.
- Christ is said to be our Passover lamb.
- Jesus held the Last Supper (eating a Passover lamb and unleavened bread) the night before He was crucified. This is also when He gave the Upper Room Discourse.
- Nisan 17 is the Feast of Firstfruits.
- Christ rose from the dead early in the morning on the first day of the week (Sunday).
- Christ is said to be the firstfruits from the dead (i.e., the first to be resurrected with a glorified body, and never to die again).
- In Jesus' day, the Galileans and Pharisees used *sunrise to sunrise* to mark the duration of a day [Hoehner, 1977]. However, the Judeans and Sadducees used *sunset to sunset* to mark the duration of a day.

Model 1. Let us look more closely at Sir Robert Anderson's research, using Sunday, April 6, 32 AD as the date of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, on a donkey, on Palm Sunday. Floyd Nolan Jones [Jones, 2004] claims that, in Anderson's model (Model 2, below), Nisan 10 would not have been *Sunday*, April 6, 32 AD, but rather *Wednesday*, April 9, 32 AD. So, if we use Nisan 10, 32 AD for Christ's entry into Jerusalem, followed 4 days later by His death (Sunday) and 3 days after that by His resurrection (Wednesday), then we have a problem. We know that Christ rose from the dead very early on a Sunday morning—the first day of the week. Many prophecy teachers accept that Christ, our Passover Lamb: (a) entered Jerusalem on a donkey on Nisan 10 (analogous to the Nisan 10 sanctification of the Passover lamb in Egypt), (b) died on Nisan 14 (the start of Passover), and (c) rose from the dead on Nisan 17 (the Feast of Firstfruits). Thus, because of the Nisan 10 problem—and more arguments below—Jones says that the 32 AD date is unlikely, and that 30 AD (i.e., Model 2, below) makes more sense.

- For comparison with the other two models, let us summarize Anderson's original calculations [Anderson, 1984, p. 128; McClain, 1969, p. 25] to see the fulfilment (to the day) of Daniel's 69 weeks of years, as per Daniel 9:24-27. Specifically, in terms of Biblical years vs. solar years, we have these calculations:
 - $69 \times 7 \text{ years} \times 360 \text{ days/Biblical year} = 173,880 \text{ days}$

- March 14, 445 BC to April 6, 32 AD =
 - (445 – 1) for the BC part; 1 for the 1 BC to 1 AD part; and (32 – 1) for the AD part = 444 + 1 + 31 = 476 solar years
 - 476 years × 365 days/year = 173,740 days
 - Add 24 days for the period March 14 to April 6 (inclusive, argues Anderson) = 24 days
 - Add 116 days for leap years, with the rationale:

To divide 476 by 4 would give 119 leap-years. But since century-years are not leap-years unless divisible by 400 and since 476 years involve four centuries, it follows that only one of the four century-years would be a true leap-year. Therefore, it is necessary to subtract 3 from 119 to get the exact number of extra leap-year days in 476 years. [McClain, 1969, p. 25]
 - 173,740 days + 24 days + 116 days = 173,880 days
- This model is perhaps the most well-known one, and is often referenced in prophecy books.

Model 2. Instead, consider the following model that uses the date of Sunday, March 31, 30 AD for the triumphal entry into Jerusalem [Jones, 2004]. Some evidence suggests that Artaxerxes (the king who gave the order to rebuild the streets and wall (or streets and trench, in some translations) of Jerusalem) rose to power in 473 BC. The 20th year of his reign would be 454 BC, which is the same year used by Archbishop Ussher (who, incidentally, wrote of a 4004 BC creation date) [Ussher, *et al.*, 2003]. In Anderson’s model (Model 1, above), the years are “prophetic” years consisting of 360 days each. Jones writes that the 365.2422-day solar year began with Noah’s Flood, and therefore there is no need to override this with a prophetic year of 360 days (which possibly may be restored during the Millennium). Jones claims that Nisan 10, 30 AD fell on Sunday, March 31, 30 AD, which would be Palm Sunday. Christ would have died on Nisan 14, 30 AD, which is Thursday, April 4, 30 AD. More specifically, He died at 3 PM, and that is also when the Passover lambs are sacrificed. Friday would be a special Sabbath (the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread) and Saturday would be a regular Sabbath. If Christ had died on Thursday afternoon, then He would have been in the grave for 3 days and 3 nights, similar to the biographical narrative of the prophet Jonah. Thus, Christ rose from the dead on Sunday, April 7, 30 AD.

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

Lastly, the city of Jerusalem and its temple would be destroyed 40 years later on Av 9, 70 AD—that is, August 6, 70 AD. (The number “40” is often used in

Scripture as a time of testing; so, this is interesting from the perspective of Model 2's timeline.)

In summary, Jones' extensive research argues that:

- Christ was probably born in either December 5 BC or January 4 BC.
- He began His ministry in either the summer or fall of 27 AD, which would make Him 30 years of age at the beginning of His ministry, and 33 years of age at the end of His ministry.
- His public ministry lasted about 2½ years.
- Christ died at Passover, 30 AD. Specifically:
 - Christ's triumphal entry, with Him riding on a donkey into Jerusalem, was on Sunday, March 31 in 30 AD (Nisan 10).
 - The Last Supper was on Wednesday evening, April 3 (which would be the *start* of Nisan 14). Recall that the Jewish day goes from one sundown to the next sundown—meaning that Nisan 14 started on Wednesday evening, and went to sundown on Thursday.
 - Christ was crucified at 3 PM on Thursday, April 4 (Nisan 14 during the day).
 - Christ rose from the dead early in the morning on Sunday, April 7 (Nisan 17).
 - Arnold Fruchtenbaum agrees that Wednesday evening marked the start of Nisan 14 (in 30 AD, but also in 33 AD); thus, if Christ died on Thursday afternoon, it was on Nisan 14 [Fruchtenbaum, 2019, pp. 110-111]. This means Nisan 17 (the Feast of Firstfruits, also known as *Hag Habikkurim*) started on Saturday evening. Christ rose from the dead on Nisan 17.
- If we simply assume that a Biblical year equates to a solar year, and ignore calculations involving numbers of days, we have these calculations [Jones, 2004, pp. 253-254]:
 - $69 \times 7 \text{ years} = 483 \text{ years}$
 - 454 BC to 30 AD =
 - $(454 - 1)$ for the BC part; 1 for the 1 BC to 1 AD part; and $(30 - 1)$ for the AD part = $453 + 1 + 29 = 483$ years

Model 3. Dr. Harold Hoehner, who held 2 doctorates, came up with a calculation that uses: (a) March 5, 444 BC (Nisan 1) as the start of Artaxerxes' 20th year; (b) Monday, March 30, 33 AD (Nisan 10) for Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem; and (c) Friday, April 3, 33 AD (Nisan 14) for the crucifixion [Hoehner, 1977]. This puts Jesus' resurrection on Nisan 16. Some prophecy experts prefer this model (e.g., [Walvoord, 1990; Hitchcock, 2010; Ice, 2021b]). It uses the methodology of Model 1, but solves some problems

associated with it. Like Model 1, this set of dates also claims to span 173,880 days, and ends with Jesus Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Hoehner's extensive research argues that:

- Christ was probably born in either December 5 BC or January 4 BC.
- He began His ministry in either the summer or fall of 29 AD, which would make Him 32 years of age at the beginning of His ministry, and 36 years of age at the end of His ministry.
- His ministry lasted about 3½ years.
- Christ died at Passover, 33 AD. Specifically:
 - Christ's triumphal entry while riding a donkey into Jerusalem was on Monday, March 30, 33 AD (Nisan 10).
 - The Last Supper was on Thursday evening, April 2 (which is the start of Nisan 14).
 - Christ was crucified at 3 PM on Friday, April 3 (Nisan 14 during the day).
 - Christ rose from the dead early in the morning on Sunday, April 5 (Nisan 16), 33 AD.
 - Arnold Fruchtenbaum argues that Thursday evening marked the start of Nisan 15 (in 33 AD); thus, if Christ died on Friday afternoon, it was on Nisan 15 [Fruchtenbaum, 2019, pp. 110-111]. Christ rose from the dead on Nisan 17.
- In terms of Biblical years vs. solar years, we have these calculations [Hoehner, 1977, p. 138]:
 - $69 \times 7 \text{ years} \times 360 \text{ days/Biblical year} = 173,880 \text{ days}$
 - March 5, 444 BC to March 30, 33 AD =
 - $(444 - 1)$ for the BC part; 1 for the 1 BC to 1 AD part; and 32 for the AD part $(33 - 1) = 443 + 1 + 32 = 476$ solar years
 - $476 \text{ years} \times 365.24219879 \text{ days/year} = 173,855 \text{ days}$
 - Add 25 days for the period March 5 to March 30 = 25 days
 - $173,855 \text{ days} + 25 \text{ days} = 173,880 \text{ days}$

Here are some additional notes about Model 3, assuming the use of the modern-day Jewish calendar:

- In Jesus' day, for the Galileans and Pharisees, Nisan 14 ran from sunrise on Thursday through the whole day and evening—to early morning on Friday [Hoehner, 1977].
- In Jesus' day, for the Judeans and Sadducees, Nisan 14 started on Thursday evening at sunset, and ran through to Friday just before sunset [Hoehner, 1977].
- Jesus held the Last Supper on the night before He was crucified. This is also when He gave the Upper Room Discourse.

- The Galileans and Pharisees ate the Passover lamb and the unleavened bread on Thursday evening, with the Passover lamb for the meal having been killed on Thursday afternoon between 3-5 PM [Hoehner, 1977, pp. 86-90]. So, all of this happened on Nisan 14. Thus, the Last Supper, which Christ ate with His disciples, was on Thursday evening. Christ was crucified on the next day (Nisan 15).
- The Judeans and Sadducees, however, ate the Passover lamb and the unleavened bread on Friday evening (i.e., on Nisan 15), with the Passover lamb having been killed on Friday afternoon between 3-5 PM (i.e., during the latter part of Nisan 14).
- Note that by combining the last two bullet points, we have a reference to Christ both eating the Passover supper and being the Passover lamb.

A difficulty with using Friday as the crucifixion day (for any year) is that we cannot fit “three days and three nights” into such a model, even for those who argue that any part of the day counts as a day. You will get only get 2 nights out of this, no matter how you work it.

Each of Models 1, 2, and 3 makes some assumptions. *More research is needed* to confirm these starting and ending points in history. Two common themes are: a starting point of King Artaxerxes’ decree to rebuild the walls and the streets of Jerusalem, as per Nehemiah 2:1-8; and an ending point of Jesus Christ riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, presenting Himself publicly as the Messiah for the first time—this occurring just a few days before His crucifixion.

There is also the assumption of matching the Biblical events of Nisan 10, 14, 15, and 17 to specific days of the Passion week. There is a lot of inconsistency in identifying which day of the week is Nisan 10, etc., when considering the above 3 models. Some of this may be resolved by discoveries in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Dr. Ken Johnson has been conducting research into the writings of the Dead Sea Scrolls, including writings about the *Dead Sea Scroll calendar* (also known as the Essene calendar) which is a 364-day calendar that uses the solar calendar system (i.e., 360 days + 1 day between each of the seasons, with an allowance for leap years) [Johnson, 2020a; Johnson, 2021a; Peck, 2020]). Johnson writes that this calendar should be used *instead of the lunar-based calendar system* used by the Pharisees (also called the modern-day Jewish calendar, which has a 354-day year, with each month starting on a new moon, and with a leap month every 3-5 years to keep the seasons in sync). The solar-based calendar is found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, and was used by the Qumran Community (Essenes). The Essenes believed that this calendar was the correct one, *and was the calendar that had been used for thousands of years* going back to Adam. The Zadok priests (who eventually settled in Qumran) relied on this calendar to determine precisely when the temple sacrifices were to take place. These specific days were important; otherwise, the sacrifices would not be performed at their proper times. However, around 200 BC, “when the Greek Seleucid Empire forced the nation of Israel to adopt their pagan lunar calendar”

[Johnson, 2021a, p. 17]. The Pharisees started using it, and it is still is use to this day. Johnson believes that a return to the Dead Sea Scroll calendar can clear up a lot of controversy and confusion with respect to dates and prophecy. With the Dead Sea Scroll calendar, Nisan 14 (Passover), for example, falls on the *same day of the week* (Tuesday) *regardless of which year it is*. In terms of days of the week, this means that each of Models 1, 2, and 3 above would have Nisan 14 *beginning on Tuesday evening* (i.e., at dusk on what we would call “Tuesday” on our standard midnight-to-midnight Gregorian calendar) [Johnson, 2023]. Furthermore, Johnson believes that April 6, 32 AD is the correct date. This suggests that Model 2 may be the best fit, with some modifications made due to the Essene calendar.

Let us briefly learn some background about the Zadok priesthood [Johnson, 2020b]. From the time of Jacob (renamed Israel), kings were to come from the line of Judah, and priests from the line of Levi. After a series of problems and apostasies, it was further narrowed down to: kings were to come through the line of David, and priests were to come through the line of Aaron. But, there was more apostasy. Because Zadok was faithful, priests were to come through his line. Zadok was a descendent of Aaron, who was a descendent of Levi. During the Millennium, the Zadok line will continue to administer the priesthood (see Ezekiel 44:10,15). The people who ran the School of the Prophets in Qumran were the Zadok priests, and they kept the old ways.

Using the Dead Sea Scroll calendar, regardless of the specific year, we have the following sequence of events [Johnson, 2023]:

- Nisan 14 would have begun on the Tuesday evening, which is when Jesus celebrated The Last Supper with His disciples.
- That same evening, Jesus was arrested.
- He was crucified during the day on Wednesday, and He died around 3 PM (and this is still Nisan 14 since Nisan 14 runs from Tuesday evening to just before Wednesday evening). Christ’s body had to be removed from the cross before Wednesday evening because that was the start of a high holy day (Day 1 of the Feast of Unleavened Bread).
- Jesus was in the grave (tomb) for all of Wednesday night (Day 1, Nisan 15).
- Jesus was in the grave for all of Thursday during the day (still Day 1, Nisan 15).
- Jesus was in the grave for all of Thursday night (Day 2, Nisan 16).
- Jesus was in the grave for all of Friday during the day (still Day 2, Nisan 16).
- Jesus was in the grave for all of Friday night (Day 3, Nisan 17).
- Jesus was in the grave for all of Saturday during the day (still Day 3, Nisan 17).
- Jesus rose from the dead sometime after dusk on Saturday (Nisan 18) ... and this would still fulfill “3 days and 3 nights”:

Matthew 12:40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

- Recall that very early on Sunday morning, visitors to the tomb found the tomb empty.

If we accept that Nisan 14 starts very early on Tuesday evening, then the next puzzle to be solved is the *year* of Christ's crucifixion. Was it 30 AD, 32 AD, 33 AD ... or possibly some other year? Each of the above models has some disadvantage or inconsistency, and perhaps this will be resolved with more insight into the Dead Sea Scroll calendar.

There are some numerical patterns in Scripture that "fit better" with a crucifixion during **30 AD (Model 2)** rather than 32 AD (Model 1) or 33 AD (Model 3). For example, in Scripture, "40" is the number of testing. Many biblical events are associated with this timeframe:

Examples of "forties" abound: Israel in the wilderness [during the Exodus], Israel under Philistine dominion (Judges 13:1), Moses in Midian, Moses on Mt. Sinai, Jonah's preaching of judgment on Nineveh, the span the 12 spies searched out Canaan, Elijah's fasting while fleeing from Jezebel, the span Goliath challenged Israel for a champion, the period of our Lord's being tempted by Satan, the length of days [before] He showed himself to the disciples after the resurrection, etc.

Thus, it is deemed reasonable that God gave Israel a 40-year period from the crucifixion to reconsider, repent, and receive their long-awaited Messiah before bringing the judgment under Titus down upon them.

... As Titus' destruction of the temple is firmly fixed at 70 AD, Eusebius places our Lord's death in AD 30 by writing: "For forty whole years it (i.e., God's Providence) suspended their (the Jews) destruction, after their crime against the Christ".

Even the Jewish sages, who certainly have no reason to assist us in this determination, imply an AD 30 crucifixion. The Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds tell us that every night for 40 years before the destruction of the temple the middle or chief light on the golden candlestick would simply go out and that the great brass temple-gates which were closed each evening were seen to swing open every night of their own accord. Josephus tells us these doors were so massive that it took 20 men to close them (*Wars*, vi, 5, 3.).

The 40 years of Judah's iniquity and its association to a siege of Jerusalem in Ezekiel 4:4-7 is herewith offered as a double reference prophecy with its second fulfillment being the span from the crucifixion to the ending of the sacrifice system by Titus' AD 70 destruction of the temple and its altar (after all, the OT is about Christ, Luke 24:27, 44-45).

Moreover, Titus began the siege of Jerusalem on 14 Nisan AD 70. Are we to actually believe it is a mere coincidence that this was 40 years to the very day from a 14 Nisan AD 30 crucifixion? [Jones, 2004, pp. 237-238]

The destruction of both the second temple and Jerusalem occurred on Av 9 in 70 AD. Similarly, Av 9 is the anniversary day of the destruction of the first temple in 586 BC. The Bar Kochba revolt was crushed on this same day in 135 AD. It is also the anniversary day of when England expelled the Jews in 1260, and when Spain expelled the Jews in 1492. Lastly, it also marked the day when World War I broke out, that is, when Germany declared war on Russia on August 1, 1914. “This act of aggression caused untold horrors to Jewish communities in Europe, as it was the catalyst for World War II.” [Fruchtenbaum, 2019, p. 390] Jews acknowledge all these tragic events via the fast of *Tisha B’Av* on Av 9 each year.

Model 2 is appealing, though not without its critics. In summary, Jones argues that the 32 AD crucifixion date is impossible, and that the 20th year of King Artaxerxes is 454 BC, not 445 BC. Under Model 2, **Christ was born in 4 BC; began His public ministry in 27 AD** when He read from the scroll of Isaiah 61:1-2a in the synagogue (see Luke 4:18-19); **rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, March 31, 30 AD (which corresponds to Nisan 10 in the modern-day Jewish calendar); died four days later: mid-afternoon on Passover day, Nisan 14 (which corresponds to about 3:00 PM on Thursday, April 4, 30 AD); and rose from the dead on Nisan 17 (early morning on Sunday, April 7, 30 AD).** Jones also argues that the fall of 27 AD was the start of a Year of Jubilee. John the Baptist started his ministry in 26 AD. Jesus was baptized in 26 AD, and was tempted for 40 days in the wilderness after this; but, He began His *public* ministry in 27 AD [Jones, 2004]. (Jones adds that 28 AD is often mistakenly given as the 15th year of Tiberius, which would place the start of Jesus’ ministry at 30 AD, and His death and resurrection in 33 AD.)

As a side note, James Ussher compiled a lengthy book (originally published in 1658—two years after his death) on key dates in history, based on input from a very large number of sources—“more than twelve thousand footnotes from secular sources and over two thousand quotes from the Bible or the Apocrypha” [Ussher, *et al.*, 2003; p. 5]. He traced the date of creation back to October 23, 4004 BC. Ussher used multiple date formats: AD (years from the start of the Christian era) and BC (years before the start of the Christian era), JP (Julian Period years, that theoretically start at January 1, 4713 BC), and AM (years since creation). As a summary of some key dates—and again, note that there is some disagreement with some of the dates above—Ussher writes:

- 5 BC: Birth of Christ
- 26 AD: 30th year of Jubilee since its institution; John the Baptist’s ministry begins
- 27 AD: Jesus was baptized by John
- 30 AD: Christ’s public ministry begins, at age 33

- 33 AD:
 - Friday, April 3 (Nisan 14, according to the modern-day Jewish calendar): Good Friday
 - Thus, Christ would have died at age 36.
 - Sunday, April 5 (Nisan 16) – Christ’s resurrection

Daniel’s 70 weeks of years are $7 \times 70 = 490$ years. Are there other 490-year intervals in Scripture? Yes. Clarence Larkin noted that there are three other such periods before this [Larkin, 1929]. In his calculations, he excluded certain years:

- From the birth of Abraham to the Exodus (less 15 years when Ishmael was the usurper, accounting for the time between the conception of Ishmael and the birth of Isaac) = 505 years – 15 years = 490 years
- From the Exodus to the building and dedication of the first temple (less the years of the servitudes of the Judges when the Children of Israel were subjected to the rule of the Mesopotamians, Moabites, Canaanites, Midianites, Ammonites, and Philistines) = 601 years – 111 years = 490 years
- From the dedication of the first temple to the decree of King Artaxerxes to rebuild the walls and the streets of Jerusalem (less the 70 years of the Babylonian captivity) = (1005 BC to 445 BC) – 70 years = 560 years – 70 years = 490 years
- And, as already mentioned, from the decree of King Artaxerxes to the first and second comings of Christ = 69 weeks + (ignore gap) + 7 future years = 70×7 years = 490 years

Let us say more about the 70 weeks of years. From the establishment of a covenant between Israel and the coming world leader (Antichrist), there is a period of 7 years \times 360 days/year until Jesus Christ returns at Armageddon. This 7-year period is called the Tribulation, “the 70th Week of Daniel”, or “the time of Jacob’s Trouble”. The second half of this 7-year period is marked by the Antichrist taking control of the rebuilt Temple, declaring himself to be God, and breaking the 7-year covenant made earlier.

Daniel specifically draws reference to the first 69 weeks, separating the 70th week from the first 69. He also states that the Messiah will be “cut off”—literally “executed” (“put to death” in the newest NIV)—this happened at the cross. The passage in Daniel 9:24-27 includes the phrase “to anoint the Most Holy”. We know that Christ was not anointed as King or Lord, but rather, He was rejected; therefore, the 70th week appears to be in the future—after Christ’s Second Coming. Furthermore, the Hebrew renders it “to anoint a most holy place” which implies the anointing of the Messianic Temple during the Millennium, over which Christ presides.

Who is the “prince that shall come” mentioned in Daniel 9:26? This is ambiguous. Some scholars think this refers to General Titus of Rome whose army destroyed the second temple in 70 AD, and which fulfilled Christ’s prophecy about the great Temple: “not one stone here will be left on another” (Matthew 24:2). Others think it refers to the future Antichrist. Because the Romans destroyed the second temple, they are the *people* of prince that shall come. Equivalently, this would mean that the future Antichrist will have a Roman connection—under this scenario. Verse 27 starts with “He will confirm a covenant”. The word “He” refers to the immediately preceding reference to a person: “the prince that shall come”. This implies that the “prince that shall come” is in fact the Antichrist. Thus, in both cases, it appears to refer to a Roman empire. The fact that there is a distinction between “the people of” and “the prince that shall come” suggests that there is a gap in time between the two personalities (i.e., 70 AD versus well into the future (Antichrist)). The Antichrist is likely to be a Gentile of Roman origin [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. Furthermore, because verse 26 states that “he will destroy the city and the sanctuary”, and because verse 27 refers to events at “the temple”, this implies that the Second Temple which was destroyed in 70 AD has to be rebuilt in the future.

The “he” being mentioned in verse 27 is definitely not Jesus Christ, as some preterists suggest, for at least 4 reasons: (a) grammatically, this would be incorrect; (b) why would Christ’s sacrifice/covenant only be good for 7 years; (c) what existing covenant did Christ confirm or strengthen; and (d) why would Christ break a covenant 3½ years later? With respect to the last point, we note that the Temple sacrifices and services did not stop at the 3½ year mark, but continued for about 40 more years, until 70 AD. Thus, the notion of a future 7-year covenant initiated by the Antichrist, and breaking it at the 3½ year mark, seems to be the more logical fit. Incidentally, John Whitcomb notes that the “sacrifice and offering” that the Antichrist will put an end to, are the blood sacrifice (*zabah*) and the non-blood sacrifice (*minhah*, grain offering) [Ice, 2003f].

What is meant by the words: “the end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed” (Daniel 9:26)? Symbolically, the term *flood* in Scripture refers to a military invasion [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. Parts of Jerusalem—and all of the Temple—were destroyed by Roman military action in 70 AD. War will also be occurring, on a grand scale, during the future reign of Antichrist ... and it is well known that many wars have taken place throughout the world over the past 20 centuries (and before that).

Lastly, Daniel speaks of 70 years of exile. Daniel figured, based on the writings of Jeremiah (e.g., Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10-14), circa 597 BC, that the 70 years of exile would end in his day; but, that was not going to be the case. Unlike many of his brethren who had been exiled to Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar, Jeremiah was exiled to Egypt where he later died.

The first phase of the Babylonian exile began in 606 BC or 605 BC, with the major deportation occurring in 597 BC [Walvoord, *et al.*, 2012]. The Temple was destroyed in 586 BC; therefore, the time of Daniel's writing (circa 540 BC) was close to 70 years after the start of the exile.

Jeremiah 25:11-12 This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations **will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.** "But **when the seventy years are fulfilled,** I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt," declares the LORD, "and will make it desolate forever.

Jeremiah 29:10 This is what the LORD says: "**When seventy years are completed for Babylon,** I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place.

The Bible states that Israel fulfilled its initial 70 years of exile in order to fulfill the word of the Lord given through the prophet Jeremiah. In other words, this was the 70 years of letting the land enjoy its sabbaths. After this time, King Cyrus (circa 539 BC—almost 70 years after the initial exile) let some of the Jews return; however, only a small number (e.g., 50,000) returned to Israel, which displeased the Lord. Perhaps they were too accustomed to the Babylonian lifestyle and didn't want to return. Note that Jeremiah 25:12 states that Babylon will be "desolate forever". This part has been put on hold, but will be fulfilled in the future. In fact, later in Jeremiah 25, we read about judgment on other nations, including God's judgment on all mankind, which will occur at the Second Coming of Christ [Walvoord, 1990].

After Daniel sought the Lord in prayer, the angel Gabriel came to explain that *another* penalty was to take effect. This penalty was a *future 70 weeks of years* (from which the ultimate return from exile, and the end of sin, would occur). Recall that a "week" of years means "seven" years; therefore, Daniel's 70 weeks of years really meant $70 \times 7 = 490$ years. As mentioned, the starting point of these 70 weeks of years would be in the future (at the start of King Artaxerxes' 20th year of rule). The time from that point until Christ's *first* coming marked the end of the first 69 weeks of years; but, *if* we look at the seven years after His death (which technically would have been the 70th and final week of Daniel's 70 weeks of years), it becomes apparent that the 70th week was put on hold (because of Israel's rejection of Jesus Christ at His first coming). Therefore, we assume that the final week of years is still in the future. Israel will return from exile (i.e., from all over the world) at Christ's *Second* Coming, which would mark the end of the 70 weeks of years.

So, what about Jeremiah's "seventy years"? Does it mean there is *another* 70-year period in Scripture that relates to the 70 years in exile, with respect to Babylon? Yes and no; the two are related. The words of Jeremiah likely refer to the fact that the nation of Israel did not allow the land to "enjoy its sabbaths"

70 times since they came into the land circa 1400 BC [Ice, 2003f]. Under Levitical law, Israel had certain obligations which it did not fulfill:

Leviticus 25:1-6 The LORD said to Moses on Mount Sinai, "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the LORD. For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. **But in the seventh year the land is to have a sabbath of rest, a sabbath to the LORD.** Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest. Whatever the land yields during the sabbath year will be food for you -- for yourself, your manservant and maidservant, and the hired worker and temporary resident who live among you,

But, Israel did not obey the Lord for some of the time between entering the land and the time of the Babylonian exile. Thus, the Lord sent Israel into exile (in Babylon) until the 70 missing sabbath years had been accounted for. Furthermore, after letting the land rest for 70 years, if Israel continued to be disobedient (which it was), God would multiply their punishment by 7.

Leviticus 26:14-18 "'But if you will not listen to me and carry out all these commands, and if you reject my decrees and abhor my laws and fail to carry out all my commands and so violate my covenant, then I will do this to you: I will bring upon you sudden terror, wasting diseases and fever that will destroy your sight and drain away your life. You will plant seed in vain, because your enemies will eat it. I will set my face against you so that you will be defeated by your enemies; those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee even when no one is pursuing you. **"If after all this you will not listen to me, I will punish you for your sins seven times over.**

Leviticus 26:21 "'If you remain hostile toward me and refuse to listen to me, I will multiply your afflictions **seven times over,** as your sins deserve.

Leviticus 26:23-24 "'If in spite of these things you do not accept my correction but continue to be hostile toward me, I myself will be hostile toward you and will afflict you for your sins **seven times over.**

Leviticus 26:27-28 "'If in spite of this you still do not listen to me but continue to be hostile toward me, then in my anger I will be hostile toward you, and I myself will punish you for your sins **seven times over.**

Leviticus 26:33-35 **I will scatter you among the nations** and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins. **Then the land will enjoy its sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths.** All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the sabbaths you lived in it.

2 Chronicles 36:16-23 But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until **the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy. He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians**, who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and spared neither young man nor young woman, old man or aged. God handed all of them over to **Nebuchadnezzar**. He carried to Babylon all the articles from the temple of God, both large and small, and the treasures of the LORD'S temple and the treasures of the king and his officials. They set fire to God's temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there. **He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant**, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. **The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah. In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing: "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: "'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you -- may the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.'"**

For the 70 “weeks” of years to be continuous (i.e., 490 literal years, without a gap), we would require that Daniel’s prophecy end a few years after Christ’s crucifixion—but still well before 70 AD. There are no major events that occurred within a few years after Christ’s death and resurrection that would line up with this prophecy. Therefore, we must conclude that the 70th week of Daniel was *not* fulfilled by Christ’s earthly ministry, crucifixion, resurrection, or ascension. Similarly, the Day of Pentecost cannot be a fulfillment of this prophecy. Instead, the 483 years ended with Jesus Christ’s public declaration as the Messiah at the start of Passion Week, which confirmed the rejection of Christ as Messiah by the leaders and many of the people.

If the 70th week were intended to be fulfilled with Christ’s entry/rejection, then the text should use the Hebrew word for “during” or “in the midst of”, but that is not the case, states Randall Price [Ice, 2012b].

Upon Christ’s entry into Jerusalem on Nisan 10, there was a break or gap that extends to the present age. That gap exists because the Jews rejected Jesus Christ, and He was crucified. The gap is similar to a referee blowing the whistle at a sporting event: the clock doesn’t resume until play resumes.

Prophetic scriptures about the Messiah can come in various forms of focus. There are prophecies that deal solely with Christ’s first coming, deal solely with Christ’s Second Coming (Isaiah 63:1-6), deal with both (e.g., Zechariah

9:9-10), or deal with a wider span encompassing all of: the first coming, a gap of time, the Second Coming, and the Messianic Kingdom [Fruchtenbaum, 1998].

And where, in Scripture, is there evidence of a gap of many years between the start of a prophecy being fulfilled, and its ultimate fulfillment? Scriptural support for a gap is found in verses such as the following. The implication is that Jesus Christ's first coming is separated from his Second Coming by an unspecified amount of time; but, after Christ's Second Coming (at Armageddon), He will be accepted as ruler and king—and He will rule forever.

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

Luke 4:18-21 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." **Then he [Jesus] rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down.** The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Isaiah 9:6-7 **For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders.** And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. **Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.** The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

Luke 1:31-33 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God **will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.**"

Revelation 12:5 She gave birth to a son, a male child, **who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.**

Luke 21:24 They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. **Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.**

The following set of verses refers to Jesus Christ entering Jerusalem on a donkey on Nisan 10 (only to be rejected, and days later, crucified):

	<p>Luke 19:41-44 As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace -- but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."</p> <p>In Scripture, Jesus wept twice: first, when his friend Lazarus died. Here, the Greek word for “wept” (<i>darkyo</i>) implies some tears. The second time, Jesus wept over Jerusalem. Here, the Greek word for “wept” (<i>klaio</i>) implies a stronger emotion with much more weeping. Jesus knew the future of Jerusalem and that within a generation it would be destroyed, the Temple would lie in ruins (“not one stone here will be left on another”), and large numbers of Jews would be killed.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>The 70 weeks of Daniel are over. The time does not apply to a future Antichrist. The “70 weeks” are 70 times 7 years—in other words, 490 years in all.</p> <p>Steve Gregg says that these years began with either the first decree of Artaxerxes, the second decree of Artaxerxes, or the decree of Cyrus (there were 3 decrees in all); however, <i>which one</i> is subject to debate. Nevertheless, the key thing is the 70th of the 70 weeks of years (i.e., the <i>last 7 years</i> of the 490 years) began with <i>Christ’s</i> ministry—and is not pointing to a future Antichrist’s rule on planet Earth. Three and a half years into Christ’s ministry, He was “cut off”. This is when the “sacrifice and the offering” ceased. It is the “midst of the week” that Daniel spoke of, and therefore, the 70th week would have ended some 3½ years after Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection.</p> <p>Gregg says the view that’s <i>not</i> credible is the one held by dispensationalists, who believe that the 70th week is still future. The 490 years are consecutive. He remarks that there is no 7-year period mentioned in Revelation, but there is a three-and-a-half year period (actually, twice).</p> <p>Furthermore, there is no need for a “gap” between the 69th and 70th weeks, as proposed by dispensationalists. There is nothing in the context that says, or even suggests, that an arbitrary period of time (e.g., 2,000 years) must go here. Similarly, there is no “gap” between Matthew 24:2 & 24:4+ (“not one stone here will be left ... watch that no one deceives you ... many will come in my name”).</p> <p>Gary DeMar writes:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">There is no <i>biblical</i> warrant for stopping Daniel’s prophecy of the seventy weeks after the sixty-ninth week. <i>The idea of separation and the placement of an indeterminable gap between the two sets of weeks is one of the most unnatural and nonliteral interpretations of Scripture found in any eschatological system.</i> This interpretation is taught by those who insist on a</p>

literal hermeneutic. If dispensationalists were consistent in their literalism, they would never manipulate Scripture to fit an already established prophetic system. [DeMar, 1997, pp. 81-82]

Hank Hanegraaff has a different viewpoint than Steve Gregg. He doesn't think the passage of the 70 weeks has anything to do with Jesus Christ's first coming. In other words, the 70 weeks (490 years) do not refer to Christ riding into Jerusalem on a donkey declaring Himself to be the Messiah. Hanegraaff states that the prophet Jeremiah was calling for 70 years of exile. The angel Gabriel confirmed this. The prophet Daniel acknowledged it, as he was contemplating the writings of Jeremiah. Jerusalem would experience a partial restoration after 70 years of exile, but the return from exile was just a *type*. In particular, it was "a type of the antitypical freedom that would be experienced through Judas Maccabeus" several centuries later (i.e., 165 BC), which in turn was symbolic of ultimate freedom to be experienced under Jesus Christ in the far future [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, September 13, 2010].

After Antiochus IV Epiphanes desecrated the Temple and abolished the daily sacrifice, Judas Maccabeus's army re-captured the Temple Mount, cleansed the sanctuary, and restored the sacrifice. The "great tribulation" in the Old Testament is the 70th week of Daniel (i.e., a 7-year tribulation), argues Hanegraaff [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, June 24, 2015]. This event is remembered through the annual Jewish holiday called *Hanukkah*.

That said, in the New Testament, Jesus warned about *another* 7-year tribulation that would occur, and that took place around 70 AD. In that tribulation, the Temple in Jerusalem was set ablaze by Roman infidels on August 30, 70 AD (7 years after the start of the Tribulation); and by September 26, 70 AD, all of Jerusalem was ablaze [Hanegraaff, 2020]. *Many* people were killed during this tragedy. During this event, the Holy of Holies was not just desecrated by a pagan god, but was destroyed.

There is, however, no reason to expect another 7-year tribulation after that one; but, that doesn't mean that there won't be other "tribulations" (e.g., tragic events around the world on smaller scales) [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, June 24, 2015]. For example, in the 21st century (circa 2015), Christians in Syria, Nigeria, and Iraq were undergoing tribulation and persecution—and continue until this day.

In summary, the last "seven" of the "seventy sevens" has nothing to do with an "Antichrist" in the 21st century breaking a peace treaty in the middle of it. Daniel's vision of the "seventy sevens" is simply a *symbolic period of extended exile for the Jews*. Note that Scripture says that we are to forgive others "seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:22). The seventy 'sevens' [i.e., 70×7 years = 490 years] are also synonymous with ten Jubilee eras ($10 \times 49 = 490$), which is symbolic of the return of Jesus Christ "to end transgression", etc. Recall that the Year of Jubilee was a time of redemption. It was when all debts

were cancelled, slaves were set free, and land was returned to its original owners.

Hanegraaff argues that numbers in Scriptures like “the cattle on a thousand hills” are not necessarily literal. The term “seventy times seven” is being used in a metaphoric sense. Here, “thousands” and “cattle” combine to form a metaphor having to do with the fact that God owns *everything*. Thus, the term “thousand years” can refer to a general period of time, such as the days since 70 AD. Hanegraaff states, “The way you break the code of Revelation is not with a newspaper in your hand, but with the Old Testament in your hand.”

And on August 30 [70 AD] the unthinkable happened. ‘The very day on which the former temple had been destroyed by the king of Babylon,’ the second temple was set ablaze. As John had prophesied, ‘In one day her plagues will overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her (Revelation 18:8). ... By September 26 all Jerusalem was in flames. ‘The total number of prisoners taken during the war was 97,000 and those who died during the siege 1,100,000.’ [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 151-152].

Hanegraaff agrees with Gregg that the 69th and 70th weeks have no gap between them. The source of the dispensationalists’ argument relates to how some people erroneously claim that there are “two distinct people [groups] with two distinct destinies, two distinct plans [for salvation] ... eventually culminating in *two* comings—a secret coming and a Second Coming—with a gap of seven years between them”. In all fairness to dispensationalists, partial preterists themselves see two comings of Christ—a “secret” coming in 70 AD, and a future Second Coming (i.e., a physical return of Christ).

Some futurists who adhere to a posttribulational Rapture believe in a gap of 40 years or less (i.e., Christ’s crucifixion to the destruction of the Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD), but reject a 2,000-year gap [Brown & Keener, 2019].

The “he” being mentioned in Daniel 9:24-27 *isn’t* Antichrist because the subject of the passage is the Messiah. Some people believe that “he” is Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Others, such as Gregg, say that “he” who confirms the *covenant* is actually the Jesus the Messiah. After Christ shed His blood, each subsequent sacrifice was considered an *abomination* (since Christ was the perfect sacrifice for all time). This would be followed with the desolation and destruction of both the Temple and Jerusalem. This happened in 70 AD. God is no longer interested in animal sacrifices and Temple worship. Christ was *the* sacrifice. “Jesus’ perfect sacrifice accomplished what the Law could not do with its temporary sacrifices.” [LaHaye, *et al.*, 2001, p. 628] Furthermore, Christ’s Church is the “temple” of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:16).

Several scholars state that the Hebrew words for Daniel 9:27 are difficult. One possible rendering is “and one who causes desolation will come upon ...” In general, there are different possibilities going from one language to a receptor

language. For example, compare these two translations of verse 27: (a) “He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven’. In the middle of the ‘seven’, he will put an end to sacrifice and offering, and on a wing of the temple, he will set up an abomination that causes desolation...” [NIV translation], and (b) “... and one who causes desolation will come upon the pinnacle of the abominable temple, until the end that is decreed is poured out on the desolated city” [alternate NIV translation, mentioned in a footnote at www.biblegateway.com].

Like Gregg, Gary DeMar also believes that *Jesus* is the “he” that is being referred to in verse 27, and not the Antichrist [Ice, 2003f]. In other words, Christ is confirming the covenant. The covenant refers to the new covenant that Christ made—namely that His own sacrifice/blood caused the old sacrifice and offering to be rendered obsolete.

Hanegraaff states that if you start counting the 490 years by using King Artaxerxes’ decree as the baseline, rather than King Cyrus’ decree, then nothing seems to line up in terms of the timeline of Daniel’s 70 weeks (490 years). The period does not end with Christ riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. The starting point is unclear; but, it doesn’t matter whether you start with the decree of Cyrus or Artaxerxes—the math still doesn’t add up. As noted above, we need to think of the “70 weeks of years” as a *metaphor*. Note also that “70 sevens” also means 10 Jubilee eras (i.e., one Year of Jubilee every 49 years, for 50 years in all). Thus, the Bible may be referring to this in a broader sense that may not have anything to do with chronology, specific timeframes, or the 21st century. The final Jubilee is a *type* of the time when Christ returns to set the captives free and redeem planet Earth.

Here is another point to consider: Had the writers of the New Testament claimed that Christ’s entry into Jerusalem on a donkey was a major fulfillment of a prophecy relating to the 70 weeks of Daniel, they most surely would have said so!

Hanegraaff believes that the interpretation of the 70 weeks that is promoted by most dispensationalists is misleading. However, rather than being bitter at dispensational teachers, it is better to recognize the difficulty involved in interpreting the various forms of writing in Scripture—and actively study and debate the issues. Hanegraaff says, “We must learn the art and science of Biblical interpretation” (i.e., hermeneutics). He emphasizes that we must become familiar with the language used. As an analogy:

I wrote to [my son] Hank Jr. about the pride I felt in watching him ‘turn a snowman into a tweeter on number seven’ the day before. Unless you were familiar with golf lingo in general or ‘Hankisms’ in particular, you would have little hope of comprehending my meaning [i.e., turning a score of ‘8’ (a snowman) into a one-under-par score (tweeter or birdie) on the 7th hole of the golf course]. [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 128]

Scripture has allegories/parables (both are extended metaphors), similes, hyperboles, idioms, symbols, figures of speech, etc. For example, Jesus said, “I am the bread of life.” Here, Jesus is using symbolic language—a metaphor. On the other hand, the story of Adam and Eve is *not* an allegory (because it is *not* a story that has external ideas (i.e., from outside the Bible) to be read into it, to help the reader make sense of it). As another example of symbolic language, recall from Genesis that Jesus symbolically (not literally) stepped on the head of the snake, and that the snake bit Jesus on the heel. The idea here is that Christ overcame Satan through Christ’s passion on the cross.

The entire Bible is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. A lot of the language of prophecy (e.g., land of promise, time of rest, restoration, Temple, New Jerusalem, the issue of no more death and mourning) points to its fulfillment in Christ.

The writer of Hebrews makes clear that the rest the descendants of Abraham experienced when they entered the land is but a type of the rest we experience when we enter an eternal relationship with the Lord. The land provided temporal rest for the *physical* descendants of Abraham, but the Lord provides eternal rest for the *spiritual* descendants of Abraham (see Hebrews 3 and 4). The land was never the focus of our Lord; instead, our Lord is forever the locus of the land.

... In the final future, the promise of the land will be fully and finally consummated when Paradise lost is reconstituted as Paradise restored. Canaan is thus typological of a renewed cosmos. Accordingly, Abraham ... viewed living in the Promised Land in the same way that a stranger would view living in a foreign country. Why? Because as the writer of Hebrews makes plain, “He was looking forward to a city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Hebrews 11:9-10). [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 182]

Eberle & Trench also believe that Daniel’s 70th week occurred right after the first 69 weeks [Eberle & Trench, 2021]. There was no gap. Furthermore, the “he” in Daniel 9:27 is not the Antichrist, but rather Jesus Christ. The 70th week began in 27 AD with the baptism of Jesus marking the start of His public ministry. At the 3½ year mark (in the spring of 31 AD), Christ put an end to the Old Testament system of sacrifices and offerings.

At the end of those three and one-half years, Jesus shared the Last Supper with His disciples, during which time He took bread and said, “*This is My body,*” and then He took the cup and said, “*This cup is the new covenant in My blood*” (1 Cor. 11:24-25). After sharing that meal, Jesus fulfilled His words by dying on the cross. At that time, He put an end to sacrifice and grain offerings. As the writer of Hebrews explained, Jesus made obsolete the Jewish religious system (Heb. 8:7-13). [Eberle & Trench, 2021, Kindle edition, location 5766]

If we add three and one-half years to the time when Jesus was crucified, we come to another historic event. Although the exact date cannot ... be proven, most partial preterists believe that the last three and one-half years bring us to the time when Stephen was stoned to death (Acts 7:59-60). After Stephen

	<p>gave a clear presentation concerning who Jesus was, the religious leaders rejected the Messiah. [Eberle & Trench, 2021, Kindle edition, location 5839]</p> <p>Stan Newton believes that the 490 years started in 457 BC and ended with Christ’s ministry and death, followed by the stoning of Stephen [Newton, 2012]. The kingdom was established, everlasting righteousness began, the end of animal sacrifices occurred, and there was a final atonement for sin. Thus, there is no gap between the 69th and 70th week of Daniel; and therefore, there is no future 7-year Tribulation that the dispensationalists claim.</p>
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Topic/ Question	What is the “abomination that causes desolation” or the “abomination of desolation”? When does this event take place?
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>Let us expand on the following Scriptures (see the inline comments):</p> <p>Daniel 9:27 He [Antichrist] will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven' [i.e., at the start of a 7-year period known as the Tribulation]. In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering [the animal sacrifices and other offerings that appear to be taking place for the first 3½ years of the Tribulation]. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation [a vile image set up to receive worship in place of God, in God’s temple], until the end that is decreed is poured out on him."</p> <p>Daniel 12:11 "From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days.</p> <p>Daniel 9:27 is really a high-level summary of the events detailed in Revelation 6-19 [Woods, 2017a].</p> <p>In Hebrew, the phrase “He will confirm a covenant” is really the equivalent of “He will make a <i>firm</i> covenant” because of the presence of the Hebrew word <i>gabar</i>. There are 3 possible interpretations of this covenant. It could be the strengthening of an existing covenant (e.g., it could make an existing covenant “superior”); it could be a forced or compelled covenant; or it could be an original covenant with strong guarantees [Ice, 2014d]. In any or all of these interpretations, the purpose would be to provide security and peace for Israel, and it may well permit the Jews to rebuild their temple.</p> <p>An “abomination” is an unholy/vile image or idol that makes something else unclean that was meant to be dedicated to God. The abomination of desolation “ends the temple’s sacrificial service” [LaHaye & Hindson, 2006, p. 256]. In the Bible, God speaks of idols that are “detestable things”. Evil and wickedness accompany the idol and are characteristic practices of the religion underlying the image/icon/statue. The abomination of desolation is “the introduction of an idolatrous image or an act of pagan sacrilege within the sanctuary that produces the highest level of ceremonial</p>

impurity, Temple profanation” [Price, 2003b]. In other words, it is a hostile insult that openly defies, insults, and dares the true God of the universe.

History records that Antiochus Epiphanes brought a pig into the Jewish temple, slaughtered it on the altar, cooked it, stuffed it into some priests’ mouths, took its broth and spread it around the temple, turned the sanctuary into a brothel, caused the daily sacrifices to God to cease, and placed a statue of Zeus Olympus in the Holy Place (i.e., in the Holy of Holies) [Hitchcock, 2013]. The statue had the facial appearance of Antiochus Epiphanes. He also outlawed Judaism, circumcision, and the reading and practice of the Law of Moses (Torah) [Fruchtenbaum, 2019]. In fact, he demanded that copies of the Law be burned. This series of events in the temple in 168 BC was called “the abomination of desolation”. The Jews refused to enter the temple after all of this. In 165 BC, under the leadership of Judas Maccabeus, some Jews rebelled, captured the Temple Mount, and cleansed the sanctuary. This led to the Jewish holiday called Hanukkah. Hanukkah also celebrates the miracle of how one day’s supply of oil kept the lamps burning in the sanctuary for 8 days.

Stanley Toussaint writes:

Because Christ specifically related the prophecy of the abomination of desolation to Daniel’s prophecy, it seems best to see some correspondence between the abomination of desolation committed by Antiochus Epiphanes and that predicted by Christ. If this is so, it would entail not only defilement on the altar by sacrifices offered with impure hearts, but also an actual worship of another God using the Temple as a means for such a dastardly act. ... This is what is anticipated in 2 Thessalonians 2. [Toussaint quoted in [Ice & Gentry, 1999, p. 138]]

In the middle of Daniel’s 70th Week, there is an image that is set up in the rebuilt Temple, specifically the part of the Temple called the “Holy of Holies”. This is the inner part of the Temple/Tabernacle where the Ark of the Covenant would have been located. It was behind the thick curtain where the high priest of Israel was to meet with God once per year—on the holiest day on the Jewish calendar: Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). The high priest sprinkled blood around the mercy seat (the Ark of the Covenant). Seven times over the mercy seat, the priest first sprinkled the blood of a bull to atone for the sins of himself and his family, and next, he sprinkled the blood of a goat to atone for the sins of the people [Fruchtenbaum, 2019].

Two goats had been brought before the high priest: one would be sacrificed, and its blood be sprinkled on the mercy seat; the other goat (the “scapegoat”) was freed and sent into the wilderness. The latter goat is a picture of the removal of Israel’s sins after the shedding of blood. Which goat would serve as the sacrifice, and which would be freed, was decided by lot. The high priest laid his hands on the scapegoat, and implicitly placed on it: Israel’s

iniquities (sin nature), Israel's transgressions (deliberate violations of the law), and Israel's sins (unwitting violations and shortcomings of righteousness) [Fruchtenbaum, 2019].

It was never true that many ways lead to God. There always was only one way. Under the Law of Moses, the one way was by means of the Yom Kippur sacrifice. Today, it is by the final sacrifice: the blood of the Messiah.

The atonement was always by blood (cf. Lev. 17:11).

There was the necessity of a mediator. Under the Law of Moses, the mediator was the high priest. [Fruchtenbaum, 2019, p. 197]

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a **high priest** who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus,

The term “abomination that causes desolation” comes from the book of Daniel. Jesus Christ confirmed that Daniel was a prophet, and that there will be an abomination that causes desolation in the Temple.

The Abomination that causes Desolation is still future, and refers to the Antichrist in the middle of Daniel's 70th Week. The second half of the Tribulation is the “Great Tribulation”, although some scholars refer to the whole Tribulation as the “Great Tribulation” [Woods & McGowan, 2021b]. For example, by the time of the fourth seal, it appears that 25% of the world's population has been killed. Andy Woods argues that the world is probably experiencing “great tribulation” throughout the 7-year period; and although Israel will also be in distress during this time, including the first 3½ years, they may be sheltered somewhat because of their agreement with the Antichrist, as per Daniel 9:27. Israel, however, will experience its most intense tribulation in the second half, beginning with the abomination that causes desolation of Matthew 24:15-16. Note Jesus' words that follow:

Matthew 24:21-22 For then there will be **great distress**, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now -- and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.

The event that happened just before this is the abomination of desolation, when the Antichrist sets up an image of himself in the Temple:

2 Thessalonians 2:4 He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is

worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

Today, the Temple Mount, or in Arabic Haram Ash-Sharif, is the location of two Mosques and is considered to be the third holiest site of Islam. The above verse [2 Thessalonians 2:4] written by the apostle Paul indicates that there will be a rebuilt Jewish Temple in Jerusalem in the future. The apostle Paul says that the Antichrist will “set himself up in God’s Temple,” or more literally, “he takes his seat in the temple of God.” This event was also taught by the early Christian Church. The early Church Father Irenaeus writes: “But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months and will sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire. [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008, p. 175]

Did the Abomination of Desolation occur in 70 AD, or shortly before that? No. Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice give the following reasons for why the Abomination of Desolation did not occur at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD [Ice, 2003e, p. 179]:

- No image set up in the holy place.
- No worship of the image required.
- No 3½ year period of time between that event and the coming of Christ. This is especially true since the destruction of Jerusalem occurred at the end of the siege by Rome. It was over in a matter of days. D. A. Carson notes, “By the time the Romans had actually desecrated the temple in A.D. 70, it was too late for anyone in the city to flee.”
- No image came to life and beckoned men to worship it.

The Roman General Titus did not enter the temple in 70 AD until *after* the sanctuary was already in flames [LaHaye & Ice, 2003]. Even an early, well-known, Church father, Irenaeus (circa 185 AD) believed that the Antichrist was still in the future, when the Antichrist would sit in the Holy Temple and declare himself to be God. Conversely, the spiritual or symbolic use of the temple did not formalize until the well-known Church father Origin did so in the 3rd century AD.

There is also no 70 AD or pre-70 AD record of the two witnesses of Revelation 11. In particular, there was no record of two witnesses causing fire to consume their enemies, creating droughts, turning water into blood, striking the earth with various plagues, being killed by the Antichrist, having their dead bodies on display for 3½ days, people sending presents to one another in celebration of their death, and the two witnesses being physically resurrected after those 3½ days.

Furthermore, in 70 AD, only Rome was attacking Jerusalem; however, in Zechariah 12-14 (a parallel eschatological passage), Jerusalem is surrounded by nations (plural) that are trying to destroy it. Zechariah 12-14

contains a lot of information about the times prior to Christ's return, and in particular, having to do with Israel and the Tribulation.

Note that the following Scripture (which also mentions the “abomination of desolation”) appears to refer to Antiochus Epiphanes and not the Antichrist of Revelation. Antiochus Epiphanes set up an abomination that caused desolation (i.e., he slaughtered a pig on the altar, dedicating the altar and sacrifice to the Greek god Zeus (note: not to himself)) in 165 BC. Antiochus Epiphanes was a foreshadowing (type) of the Antichrist who was still to come.

Daniel 11:31 "His [Antiochus Epiphanes'] armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation.

It seems confusing because Daniel 7:7-8 mentions “the little horn” (which some scholars take to mean Antiochus Epiphanes). Daniel 7 and 8 go into detail, but note that in Daniel 8:17-19, the angel Gabriel tells Daniel that the prophecy concerns “the [appointed] time of the end”. Therefore, prophecy scholars are divided among whom this refers to, but it seems like *both* Antiochus Epiphanes and the Antichrist may come into play here [Ice, 2001b]. They are two different people; but, Antiochus Epiphanes is a *type* or foreshadowing of the future Antichrist. The 10 toes of Nebuchadnezzar's statue refer to the time of the revived Roman Empire in the last days. So, when “the horn” is mentioned with 10 horns (kings or kingdoms) in Daniel 7:20, the text is likely referring to the Antichrist in the end times. Note that Daniel 8 includes some political and military events that were fulfilled before the time of Christ. (Search this book for the words “Because the book of Daniel is so accurate” to get more details.) Furthermore, Daniel 8:10 is similar to Revelation 12:3-4.

Andy Woods notes that Antiochus IV Epiphanes best personifies the Antichrist—and perhaps the next best personification of the Antichrist in Scripture is Nimrod—the world's first dictator, who built the Tower of Babel [Woods, 2017b]. This was man's first attempt at a one-world government; but, God interrupted those plans, and scattered people throughout the world (Genesis 10:8-12; 11:1-9). This was also the time when we had the origin of many languages, and eventually national boundaries instead of a global government [Woods, 2021d]. We see elements of Nimrod's character in the coming Antichrist.

Nevertheless—and this is the key part—we know that the ultimate “Abomination of Desolation” is still to come because Jesus Christ said so, around 30 AD:

Matthew 24:15-16 "So when you see standing in the holy place '**the abomination that causes desolation,**' spoken

of through the prophet Daniel -- let the reader understand -- then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Note that the Abomination of Desolation is to stand in the Holy Place, implying the existence of a temple. Also, Jesus is addressing the message to the Judeans, in particular. However, only the high priest was allowed to go into the Holy Place; so, how could the general public (in Judea) *see* this event? The answer might refer to modern communications equipment, namely television, cell phones, computers, the Internet, and all kinds of software (e.g., Google, YouTube, and Facebook)—all of which have the ability to connect large numbers of people, worldwide, in near real-time. Major events can be broadcast throughout the world (i.e., “go viral”) within minutes, if not seconds, of the event unfolding. Someone who is at work, for example, does not have to wait until the end of the day to see major events on the evening news; instead, one can see events taking place immediately.

Matthew 24:16 states, “Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath”. In winter, the roads in Judea may become impassible. Reference to the Sabbath implies that the Law is in effect, when observant Jews do not travel very far on the Sabbath.

Randall Price comments on possible past “abominations of desolation”, such as Kenneth Gentry’s preterist interpretation; however, none of these satisfy the intent of Daniel’s text:

Gentry also explains the “abomination of desolation” in light of the invading Roman army’s actions. He views the presence of these attacking soldiers—who possessed military regalia carrying standards that bore images of Tiberius Caesar and brought these images into Jerusalem and the temple precincts—as “an abomination leading to desolation.” However, the problem with proposing such an explanation is that any one of a number of similar events could also fit the historical fulfillment. Examples would include Pontius Pilate’s orders for soldiers to march with their standards into Jerusalem, Gaius Caligula’s order to place his statue in the Jewish Temple, the illegitimate service of the Zealot-sponsored high priest Phanni in the Temple, Titus and his general’s entrance into the Holy Place of the Temple, and the erection of Roman standards in the Temple court and Roman sacrifices proclaiming Titus as emperor. All of these acts could qualify as “abominations of desolation.” But, the problem with a nonspecific reference of Temple desecration is that Jesus’ hearers would have been left to choose from an assortment of possible desecration scenarios, each of which has been argued as fulfilling Jesus’ prophecy of the “abomination of desolation” by modern preteristic commentators. [Price, 2003b, p. 385]

Thomas Ice comments:

If the Tribulation is a past event, then the rapture of the church is impossible, premillennialism cannot be true, Israel does not have a future

national blessing, the current nation of Israel is not prophetically significant, and our current state of existence would have to be the millennial kingdom or new heaven and new earth. There would be no future Antichrist and false prophet, and there would be none of the Tribulation events (such as the two witnesses). [Ice & Gentry, 1999, p. 69]

When Bible prophecy is taken literally, it leads to a proper understanding of God's plan for history and the individual believer. Such an understanding provides a great hope, indeed a "blessed hope" that Christ's prophetic program for the church and Israel will yet provide some of the greatest moments of history. A futurist eschatology provides a fitting climax for history that began in a garden and concludes in a city—the new Jerusalem. Christ's church will be raptured before the Tribulation so that our Lord can complete his plan for his ancient people Israel. In fact, with the modern restoration of national Israel, Jesus is, even in our own day, preparing the stage for the Tribulation. The Tribulation is a time when God will rescue, not judge the Jews so that "all Israel will be saved." No, the tribulation is not past; rather, it is future. If it is in the past, then we have no future. *Maranatha!* [Ice & Gentry, 1999, p. 163]

Regarding Matthew 24:21-22: is the Tribulation a time of distress "unequaled from the beginning of the world until now and never to be equaled again" greater than the distress of Noah's Flood? Thomas Ice responds:

This is true as far as general tribulations are concerned. However, we are dealing specifically with the Jewish people and Jerusalem. The focus of the flood was not on the Jewish people, for Jewish history had not begun as yet. Nor was the focus on Jerusalem, for that city had not existed yet. [Ice & Gentry, 1999, p. 145]

Here is how we can interpret what Christ told the high priest, when Christ said, "you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:63-64). First, consider a similar verse:

Revelation 1:7 "Look, he is coming with the clouds," and "every eye will see him, even those who pierced him"; and all peoples on earth "will mourn because of him." So shall it be! Amen.

The Sanhedrin will see Christ's glorious return, even if it is a few thousand years after their time, just as all people of all ages will see this event, regardless of whether they are alive. Paul says the same sort of thing in Philippians 2:9-11, namely, that all will bow the knee to Christ, regardless of whether they are alive at the moment of his glorification. Paul says "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (vv. 10-11). Further, it is likely that hardly any of the Sanhedrin would have lived another forty years to see a coming of Christ in the sense

	<p>advocated by the preterists. [Thomas Ice in [Ice & Gentry, 1999, pp. 145-146]]</p>
<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>“The abomination of desolation” spoken of by Jesus, had been prophesied six centuries earlier by Daniel, who wrote, “His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation. With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him” (Daniel 11:31-32). In 167 BC Daniel’s prophecy became an unforgettable reality when Antiochus IV Epiphanes took Jerusalem by force, abolished temple sacrifices, erected an abominable altar to Zeus Olympus, and violated the Jewish covenant by outlawing Sabbath observance. [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 87]</p> <p>When Christ further spoke of the “abomination that causes desolation”, He was both looking backward and forward—backward because of the events in history surrounding Antiochus Epiphanes, and forward because of the events following his crucifixion. After Christ offered Himself as the penalty for all of mankind’s sins, any further sacrifices would be unnecessary, and in fact, would be an abomination to God. Even in Old Testament times when the Temple was in operation, the sacrifice of animals was only temporary, that is, until the next time that the priests offered the sacrifices—which was daily. All of these sacrifices pointed forward to the time of Christ—when the God of the universe would give His own life to redeem fallen creation.</p> <p>There are 4 events during or before 70 AD that may qualify as the “abomination that causes desolation” [DeMar, 1997]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Zealots. They took over the temple and temple area in the early stages of the Roman siege in 70 AD, and the profaned the temple by their aggressive tactics, much to the dismay of the priests. After this, the Zealots retreated to Masada. • The Idumeans. They were a violent group of about 20,000 that came in support of the Zealots. They killed the chief priest, Ananus. • The Romans. They burned the temple and destroyed Jerusalem. Some of the Roman soldiers even brought their standards (banners, representations of Caesar, etc.) into the temple area, and offered sacrifices to those standards, as a form of Roman worship. Some of the Jews understood this as a fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy about the abomination of desolation.

○ It has been suggested that this prophecy was fulfilled when Jerusalem was surrounded under Cestius (Gallus) in 66 AD, under Vespasian in 68 AD, and finally under Titus in 70 AD [Elwell, 1984].

- The Jews. They rejected Christ's all-sufficient sacrifice, and continued to promote animal sacrifices. This was an abomination to God.

A leprous house could be cleansed in only one way: "He shall therefore *tear down the house, its stones*, and its timbers, and all the plaster of the house, and he shall take them outside the city to an unclean place" (Leviticus 14:45). When Jesus' disciples pointed to the temple buildings after hearing of its desolation, Jesus answered: "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, *not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down*" (Matthew 24:2).

... With the true Lamb slain, the earthly temple could no longer operate as a place of sacrifice. The action of the high priest, "standing in the holy place" (24:15), continuing to offer sacrifices in the temple, was an abomination, a rejection of the work of Christ. [DeMar, 1997, p. 97]

Some preterists believe that the abomination that causes desolation may be the ensigns of the Roman army that surrounded Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD, prior to the Temple's destruction. In 70 AD, a Roman image was set up in the Temple. *This* was the Abomination of Desolation, some claim. It's doubtful there will be a third "abomination of desolation"?

Referring to the historian Josephus' writings, Ken Gentry points out the following characteristics which seem to imply an "abomination of desolation" in 70 AD: 8,500 dead bodies were in the outer temple, Roman images were forbidden in Jerusalem but were brought there, the Romans offered sacrifices to their ensigns in the temple, and finally Titus destroyed the temple in August/September of 70 AD [Ice & Gentry, 1999].

When Christ stated, "when you see these things come to pass...", He implied that that *current generation* hearing Christ's words would see its fulfillment. It does not represent a far-off fulfillment concerning an "Antichrist" in the 21st century.

When Christ told the high priest "you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:63-64), He literally meant that the high priest would *see* the events of 70 AD unfold (i.e., Christ's coming in judgment) [Adams & Cook, 2006; Gentry in [Ice & Gentry, 1999]]. It did not refer to a Tribulation event possibly two thousand or more years in the future, long after the high priest died.

	<p>Daniel 7:13 "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.</p> <p>To support this non-literal notion of “coming on the clouds of heaven”, Isaiah 19:1 says, regarding Egypt, that “the Lord rides on a swift cloud, and will come into Egypt”. This event took place in 671 BC by the Assyrian King Esarhaddon—the youngest son of King Sennacherib [Gentry in [Ice & Gentry, 1999]]. The word “see” refers to “understanding”.</p> <p>Matthew 24:21-22 For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now -- and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.</p> <p>Noah’s Flood, when only 8 people survived and most of the animals perished, would surely have been a “literal” contradiction to “great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now – and never to be equaled again.” Thus, Matthew 24:21-22 should be viewed as apocalyptic writing rather than as demanding a literal fulfillment.</p> <p>Ken Gentry concludes:</p> <p>“Thus, the Great Tribulation and all of its attendant signs belong to the first century—to the generation that cries out, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” (John 19:6) and “We have no king but Caesar!” (v. 15). This is the same generation that tragically demanded, “His blood be on us and on our children!” (Matt. 27:25). [Ice & Gentry, 1999, p. 66]</p>
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<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>Who is the king in Daniel 11:36-45? This king doesn’t seem to have a match in history. Might this be the Antichrist?</p> <p>Daniel 11:36-39 "The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place. He will show no regard for the gods of his ancestors or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any god, but will exalt himself above them all. Instead of them, he will honor a god of fortresses [military power]; a god unknown to his ancestors he will honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. He will attack the mightiest fortresses with the help of a foreign god and will greatly honor those who acknowledge him. He will make them rulers over many people and will distribute the land at a price. At the time of the end the king of the South will engage him in battle, and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He will invade many countries and</p>
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	<p>sweep through them like a flood. He will also invade the Beautiful Land [Israel]. Many countries will fall, but Edom [southern Jordan], Moab [central Jordan] and the leaders of Ammon [northern Jordan] will be delivered from his hand. He will extend his power over many countries; Egypt will not escape. He will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt, with the Libyans and Cushites [Sudan] in submission. But reports from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many. He will pitch his royal tents between the seas [the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea] at the beautiful holy mountain [Mount Zion in Jerusalem]. Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.</p>
<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>This is a ruler at the time of the end, namely, the Antichrist. The verses in Daniel 11:21-35 (just before the above passage) are a picture or <i>type</i> of the Antichrist, and were fulfilled by Antiochus Epiphanes circa 165 BC. However, nothing in history shows that verses 36-45 have been fulfilled [Hitchcock, 2013d; Lindsted, 1984]. In fact, verse 35 ends with "... until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time." Verses 36-45 in Daniel 11 go <i>beyond</i> Antiochus Epiphanes, that is, to a future fulfillment under Antichrist. Antiochus Epiphanes did not die in the way described in these verses. Note also that verse 40 states that the King of the North will move against that end-time leader, but if that leader were Antiochus Epiphanes, it would have been himself!</p> <p>Compare the first verse of Daniel 11:36-45 (above) with a very similar Scripture from the New Testament about 600 years after the book of Daniel was written:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">2 Thessalonians 2:4 He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.</p> <p>Verses 36-37 refers to the Antichrist's self-magnification; verses 38-39 refer to his military power; verses 40-43 refer to his military successes; and verses 44-45 refer to his military defeat [Woods, 2017a].</p> <p>The reference to the Antichrist in Daniel 11 may refer to the same "cruel" or "worthless" shepherd depicted in Zechariah 11. Chuck Missler conjectures that Zechariah 11:17 may have the Bible's only physical description of the Antichrist:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Zechariah 11:17 "Woe to the worthless shepherd, who deserts the flock! May the sword strike his arm and his right eye! May his arm be completely withered, his right eye totally blinded!" An Oracle</p> <p>There may be a connection between the above passage and: (a) the fatal wound of the beast in Revelation 13:3, which had been healed; and (b) the</p>

	mark of the beast (i.e., taking a mark in one’s right hand or the forehead), as per Revelation 13:16-17 [Missler, 2005].
Preterist Position	<p>There are many interpretations to this passage. Steve Gregg says that he has seen about seven different views. The timing of this passage is linked to the verse: “At that time, Michael the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of great distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until now.” It is most likely a reference to the Roman Empire, or perhaps to a Roman emperor like Nero.</p> <p>Some people have understood this figure to be Herod, or the Roman Empire, etc.</p> <p>There is a big gap between the description of Antiochus Epiphanes and this “king”, so perhaps a Roman connection (circa 70 AD) makes sense. This king is likely <i>not</i> “the Antichrist”.</p>

Topic/ Question	<p>Who is Antiochus Epiphanes, and what is his connection to Revelation, if any? Is he somehow connected to the Scripture about “the abomination that causes desolation”?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Daniel 11:31-32 "His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation. With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him.</p> <p>(Note: Search for further occurrences of “Antiochus Epiphanes” in this book.)</p>
Dispensationalist Position	<p>Antiochus Epiphanes rose to power in 175 BC [Missler, 2005]. At the time, Judea was a buffer zone between the Seleucian and Ptolemaic empires. He invaded Egypt and defeated Ptolemy VI. He made Torah reading a capital offense (deserving death). He desecrated the second temple in 165 BC when he slaughtered a pig on the altar and put an idol to Zeus in the Holy of Holies (i.e., in the most sacred place in the Temple in Jerusalem). That event is a foreshadowing of the ultimate “abomination of desolation” that Christ referred to around 30 AD as still being in the future (see Matthew 24:15); therefore, it couldn’t have referred to Antiochus Epiphanes.</p> <p>The Maccabean army (Jewish) rebelled against the Syrian army, captured the Temple Mount, and cleansed the sanctuary of the second temple in 165 BC [Jeffrey, 1988]. The Jewish feast of Hanukkah celebrates this.</p> <p>Antiochus Epiphanes is a type of the Antichrist, but he is not <i>the</i> Antichrist referred to in end-times prophecy. Scripture sometimes has double fulfillments: a short term fulfillment, and a long term (the main/intended) fulfillment. An example of this is Antiochus Epiphanes (short term: the “little horn” mentioned in Daniel 7:8, and further described in Daniel 11:21-35), and</p>

	<p>the Antichrist (long term: the “beast” from the sea in Revelation 13:1 and Daniel 11:36-45). Symbolically, the “sea” always refers to the Gentile nations in Scripture, and the “land” refers to Israel. Mark Hitchcock and Arnold Fruchtenbaum add that since Antiochus Epiphanes was both a Gentile and a <i>type</i> of the Antichrist, it follows that the Antichrist will be a Gentile as well. Interestingly, Isaiah 27:1 (KJV) refers to “the dragon that is in the sea”. Furthermore, because the “times of the Gentiles” do not end until the Second Coming of Christ, the Antichrist will be the final Gentile ruler of the world. The False Prophet may well be a Jew since Scripture says he comes out of the land.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>Hank Hanegraaff writes:</p> <p>“The abomination of desolation” spoken of by Jesus, had been prophesied six centuries earlier by Daniel. ... In 167 BC Daniel’s prophecy became an unforgettable reality when Antiochus IV Epiphanes took Jerusalem by force, abolished temple sacrifices, erected an abominable altar to Zeus Olympus, and violated the Jewish covenant by outlawing Sabbath observance.”</p> <p>“In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus had taken the quintessential Jewish nightmare and extended it to cosmic proportions. In the fullness of time, what Jesus declared desolate was desolated by Roman infidels. They destroyed the temple fortress and ended the daily sacrifice. This time the blood that desolated the sacred altar did not flow from the carcasses of unclean pigs, but from the corpses of unbelieving Pharisees. This time the Holy of Holies was not merely desecrated by the defiling statue of a pagan god, but was manifestly destroyed by the pathetic greed of despoiling soldiers. [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 88]</p>

Topic/ Question	<p>In the Olivet Discourse, what signs precede Christ’s return? What chronological (time-ordered) events precede the Tribulation?</p> <p>Matthew 24:3 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this [Temple’s destruction] happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"</p>
Dispensationalist Position	<p>In his book <i>The Footsteps of the Messiah</i>, Arnold Fruchtenbaum mentions the following <i>sequential</i> signs that precede the Tribulation [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. There are other pretribulational signs as well, but it is difficult to place them in any sequence. Because these signs are expanded upon in other parts of this book, the details are not listed here.</p> <p>Sign 1 is when “nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom”—accompanied by famines and earthquakes.</p> <p>Sign 2 is the re-establishment of Israel.</p>

Sign 3 is Jerusalem being under Israeli/Jewish control.

The other six significant, sequential signs preceding the Tribulation are in the future [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]:

Sign 4 is the Magog invasion of Ezekiel 38-39.

Sign 5 is a one-world government (Daniel 7:23-24).

Sign 6 is about the ten kingdoms mentioned in Revelation and Daniel 7:24a.

Sign 7 is the rise of Antichrist (Daniel 7:24a). Paul writes that the rise of Antichrist precedes the day of the Lord:

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that **the day of the Lord** has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day **will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.**

Sign 8 is a time of false peace and security:

1 Thessalonians 5:1-3 Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that **the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly,** as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

Sign 9 is the signing of the seven-year covenant, marking the start of the 70th week of Daniel (Daniel 9:24-27).

Jack Kelley provides the following summary of end-time events, and he works *backwards* from well-defined events, noting that only the Ezekiel 38-39 event and the Rapture are subject to a debate about timing [Kelley, 2011]:

- Eternity
- Millennial Kingdom
- Second Coming of Christ
- End of the Great Tribulation
- Abomination of Desolation (when the Antichrist declares himself to be God—in the Middle of Daniel's 70th Week)
- Start of Daniel's 70th Week
- Existence of a (Rebuilt) Temple in Jerusalem
- Need for a Temple in Jerusalem

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gog and Magog Invasion of Ezekiel 38-39 • Rapture (when the “full number of the (saved) Gentiles” has been reached) <p>There are other two battles, and their timing is unclear; however, Kelley thinks they will occur before the battle of Ezekiel 38-39:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The battles of Psalm 83 and Isaiah 17 <p>A major event must take place in order to get the Muslim world—and for that matter, the secular world—to accept the rebuilding of a Temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. It’s possible that that event will be the fulfillment of the Ezekiel 38-39 prophecy regarding the Gog & Magog invasion. After that event, Israel will be re-awakened to God, and will seek to rebuild the Temple—at a time when the amount of opposition would be relatively small.</p> <p>All the leaders of the early church now knew that once God had accomplished His goals with the church, He would turn again to Israel, and that would signal the end of the Church Age.</p> <p>There are two critical points to remember here. The first is that the Church didn’t end God’s covenant with Israel, but only interrupted it 7 years short of its scheduled completion. Those seven years, called the 70th Week of Daniel, have to be fulfilled to complete the Old Covenant.</p> <p>And the second is that the Old and New covenants, as practiced in Israel and the Church, are theologically incompatible, and therefore the two can only be on Earth at the same time while Israel is out of covenant. For Israel to return to the Lord, the Church has to be gone. [Kelley, p. 10, 2011]</p> <p>Kelley states that the only reason for a rebuilt Temple is to perform Old Testament ordinances, which include animal sacrifices. It is true that this is unnecessary because of Jesus Christ’s ultimate and personal sacrifice, but remember, the 70th Week of Daniel specifically applies to the Jews—and the 70th Week (Tribulation) is still in the future. It is only near the <i>end</i> of the 70th Week that the Jews realize that Jesus Christ has fulfilled this prophecy, and that Jesus is the Son of God.</p>
Preterist Position	The Second Coming of Christ could come at any time. The phrase “the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night” refers to the coming of Christ in judgment (on Jerusalem and the Temple) in 70 AD [DeMar, 1997; Hanegraaff, <i>Bible Answer Man</i> , June 22, 2012]. It is not meant to refer to the far future.

Topic/ Question	What other events (i.e., non-chronological events) need to take place before the beginning of the Tribulation, in the Dispensationalist model?
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<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>The events that appear to take place before the beginning of the Tribulation include: (1) the darkening of parts of the earth, (2) the return of Elijah, (3) the construction of the third temple (in unbelief), and (4) the Rapture.</p> <p>First of all, we remind the reader that “the day of the Lord” or “the day of Jehovah” refers to the Tribulation (and probably posttribulational events such as the Millennium and the eternal state). In other words, it is not a one-day event. The starting day will come unannounced—“as a thief in the night”. That said, the “great and dreadful day of the Lord may well refer to the last part of the Great Tribulation, that is, just before Christ’s Second Coming at Armageddon. This would allow the “before” and “after” prophecies of Joel 2:30-31 and Matthew 24:29 to be fulfilled, as described below.</p> <p>(1) The Bible speaks of five “blackouts” (similar to Exodus 10:21-23 and Matthew 27:45).</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Joel 2:30-31 I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Matthew 24:29 "Immediately after the distress of those days "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'</p> <p>(2) Elijah will return:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Malachi 4:5-6 "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."</p> <p>Elijah was only to come before the Tribulation, that is, prior to the Second Coming of the Messiah, and not His first coming [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. In John 1:19-23, John the Baptist specifically says that he is not Elijah, but rather “the voice of one calling in the desert” (i.e., preceding/announcing the Messiah). Had the Jews accepted Jesus Christ at His first coming, then John the Baptist would have fulfilled the role of Elijah, but they didn’t. God knew this from eternity past, and thus Elijah will indeed precede the Second Coming of Christ, and to be more specific, he will appear before the Tribulation.</p> <p>(3) There must be a third temple, but it is unclear whether this is actually present <i>before</i> the Tribulation. Given that its construction will take time, and given that the Temple must have sacrifices in effect prior to the middle of the Tribulation, there is a good chance that this temple will begin</p>
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	<p>construction prior to the Tribulation. There are four scriptures that specifically acknowledge the existence of a temple during the Tribulation: Daniel 9:27, Matthew 24:15, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, and Revelation 11:1-2. All of these necessitate the existence of a functioning temple.</p> <p>Unlike the first and second temples, this third temple will not be sanctioned by God [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. The millennial temple will be built by Christ when He returns; therefore, it will be sanctioned by God. This is the fourth and final Temple; it becomes a center of Jewish and Gentile worship during the Millennium. It supersedes the third temple which will be built by the Jews in unbelief of Jesus Christ, and which will be desecrated by the Antichrist during the midpoint of the Tribulation. The fourth temple is also <i>much</i> larger (about one square mile) and cannot be contained on the current Temple Mount, implying that physical/geographical changes will need to occur before it is built.</p> <p>(4) The Rapture. (See detailed explanations in other parts of this book.)</p>
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<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>What is the meaning of the “1,260 days” (or 42 months) mentioned in Revelation? What is the meaning of “time, times and half a time” in Daniel? Are both of these time periods referring to the same event?</p> <p>Daniel 7:23-25 "He gave me this explanation: 'The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.</p> <p>Daniel 12:7 The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, "It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed.</p> <p>Revelation 11:3 And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth."</p> <p>Revelation 12:6 The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.</p> <p>Revelation 13:5 The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months.</p>
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<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>A period of 1,260 days equals 3½ Biblical years (of 360 days per Biblical year). We get the notion of a Biblical year from: (a) Genesis 7:11,24; 8:3-4 (regarding Noah’s Flood); (b) Daniel 7:25; 12:7 (time, times and half a time; i.e., 3½ years); (c) Daniel 9:27 (middle of a week); (d) Revelation 11:3; 12:6 (1,260 days); and (e) Revelation 11:2; 13:5 (42 months) [Hoehner, 1977].</p> <p>The term “time, times and half a time” means: 1 year, 2 years, and 0.5 years, respectively—i.e., a sum of 3½ years, which equates to 1,260 days when using the notion of a Biblical year. In Hebrew, the word translated “times” (Daniel 12:7) means “two” and not an arbitrary multiple [Ice, 2021b].</p> <p>This timeframe represents one-half of the 7-year Tribulation. (The latter half of the Tribulation is often called the Great Tribulation by prophecy teachers. A notable exception is Arnold Fruchtenbaum who uses the term to describe the entire Tribulation.) It appears that the verses above (from Daniel and Revelation) refer to the <i>same</i> time periods: the latter half of the 7-year Tribulation.</p> <p>The three kings stand in the way of Antichrist’s political objectives. The kings are probably not supernatural, but are among the last rulers of human government that serve as checks and balances over the people. Might they be the last democratic governments? Might these rulers be converts, post-Rapture—given that they oppose the Antichrist?</p>
<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>The 1,260 days mentioned in Revelation (i.e., 3½ years, or 42 months) likely corresponds to the Jewish War that began in 67 AD and ended in the fall of 70 AD [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 61]. It does not refer to a future “Tribulation” period.</p> <p>David Chilton points out that the 42 months are not necessarily meant to be taken literally; however, he notes that Nero’s persecution of Christians ran from November 64 AD to June 68 AD [Gregg, 2013; Eberle & Trench, 2021]. (Nero committed suicide in June 68 AD.) So, this is another possible interpretation that seems to fit with a span of 1,260 days.</p> <p>Interestingly, dispensationalists and preterists both take the 1,260 days to be literal days. Historicists think it uses a day-for-a-year principle, and that the 1,260 days refers to a period in history during which the Roman “papacy held sway over the Western church and persecuted its dissenters (from around 532 to about 1792)” [Gregg, 2013, p. 366]. Idealists think that the period of 1,260 days is strictly symbolic.</p>

<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>What is meant by the “1,335 days” in the book of Daniel?</p>
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	<p>Note that the “1,260 days” discussed in the previous section is connected to this prophecy. Does this mean that there is a period of 75 days following the 1,260 days? If so, what happens during this 75-day period?</p> <p>Daniel 12:1-13 "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people -- everyone whose name is found written in the book -- will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge." ... "How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?" ... I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, "It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed." I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, "My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?" He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end. Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand. "From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days. "As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance."</p>
<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>The “time of distress” is the 7-year Tribulation. It is the same period that Christ spoke about in Matthew:</p> <p>Matthew 24:15-23 "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel -- let the reader understand -- then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now -- and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.</p> <p>Christ urges the Jewish remnant to flee from the intense persecution of the Antichrist. They are to leave <i>immediately</i>. He says to pray that their flight will not be required on the Sabbath (when mobility and services are virtually shut down in Israel) or in winter (presumably when many of the wadis may</p>

fill with water in mountainous terrain, making escape via those routes treacherous in the rainy season). It's been said that more people die in the desert in Israel from drowning than from thirst due to the dangerous flash floods, which can easily sweep a large vehicle off the road.

The "time, times and half a time" refers to 1,260 days or 3½ years, and appears to be the second half of the Tribulation. If we assume that the Antichrist violates the Holy of Holies in the rebuilt Temple at the midpoint of the 7-year covenant with Israel, then it is reasonable to assume that the 1,260 days represents the latter 3½ years of the Tribulation. We assume that the end of those 1,260 days is also the end of the 7-year covenant that Antichrist made, and that the end of the Tribulation is also when Christ appears at Armageddon. This leaves 30 days unaccounted for between the return of Christ at Armageddon, and the end of the 1,290 days. This time period has been the subject of some speculation. Might this be the time when Christ actually appears to the hiding remnant near Edom/Bozrah (i.e., modern-day Jordan), as per Isaiah 63:1-6? Prophecy experts are divided on this—with some thinking that Bozrah is one of his first stops during the Battle of Armageddon, rather than either one of his last stops or a post-Armageddon stop. Bozrah lies about 32 kilometres (20 miles) southeast of the Dead Sea.

Isaiah 63:1-6 Who is this coming **from** Edom, **from** Bozrah, **with his garments stained crimson?** Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save." Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress? "I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing. For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redemption has come. I looked, but there was no one to help, I was appalled that no one gave support; so my own arm worked salvation for me, and my own wrath sustained me. I trampled the nations in my anger; in my wrath I made them drunk and poured their blood on the ground."

Arnold Fruchtenbaum conjectures that the additional 30 days past the 1,260 days will be the time during which the Abomination of Desolation remains [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. Why would Christ need 30 days to remove the abomination? Well, the 30 days may include: (a) the time between Christ's initial appearance at Armageddon (Bozrah) and his arrival at Jerusalem ("... and the ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing ..." (Isaiah 35:10; Psalm 51:11)); (b) the destruction and removal of the existing Temple (i.e., perhaps the whole Temple is desecrated); (c) part of the construction of a new Temple to be dedicated at the start of the Millennium (the millennial temple is described in Ezekiel 40-48); and (d) other, unspecified events.

Isaiah 51:11 (and Isaiah 35:10) Those the LORD has rescued will return. They will enter Zion [Jerusalem] with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

The 1,335 days appears to include a stretch of 45 days after the 1,290 days. The total of 75 days that follow the return of Christ at Armageddon likely include the following events [Fruchtenbaum, 2004; Hitchcock, 2015]:

- Antichrist and False Prophet are thrown into the Lake of Fire
- Binding of Satan in the Abyss
- Removal of the Abomination of Desolation
- Judgment of the living Gentiles (i.e., the “sheep and goats” judgment referring to how each Gentile treated the Jews during the Tribulation)
- Cleansing of Jerusalem
- Taking possession of the Promised Land, from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates River
- Resurrection of Old Testament saints
- Resurrection of Tribulation saints
- Arranging the administration of the Millennium. Resurrected believers will be assigned to take charge of various administrative portfolios.

Matthew 25:21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

Luke 19:17 "'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.'

- Marriage Supper of the Lamb (this may be a multi-day event, and it may actually start at the beginning of the Millennium; note that the resurrection of Old Testament believers must occur before then).

Matthew 8:11 I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

Hitchcock notes that the numbers 1,260, 1,290, and 1,335 are too close in size to refer to symbolic things; therefore, they must be literal. The 70 weeks (70 ‘weeks’ of years) of Daniel are not symbolic: the first 69 of those weeks of years encompassed the time from Artaxerxes’ decree to Palm Sunday. From other books of the Bible, we know that the final week of years (i.e., Daniel’s 70th week) will refer to a real 7-year period of time.

	<p>Of the 7 major Jewish holy days (i.e., the feasts and fasts of Israel), recall that the Feast of Passover (aka Pesach, Nisan 14), the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Nisan 15), and the Feast of Firstfruits (Nisan 17) were fulfilled at Christ's first coming. The Christian Church started on the Day of Pentecost (Shavuot or the Feast of Weeks, Sivan 6). However, the last 3 major holy days: the Feast of Trumpets (<i>Rosh Hashanah</i>, Tishri 1), the Day of Atonement (<i>Yom Kippur</i>, Tishri 10), and the Feast of Tabernacles (<i>Sukkot</i> or the Feast of Booths, Tishri 15) are unfulfilled. Some scholars believe these will be fulfilled in end times events (e.g., Rapture, Tribulation, Second Coming, and Millennium).</p> <p>It is interesting to note that there are 75 days between the Day of Atonement (Tishri 10) and the Feast of Lights (<i>Hanukkah</i> or the Feast of Dedication, Kislev 25) [Woods, 2018f]. The Day of Atonement specifically marks a time of mourning and atonement for sin.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Zechariah 12:10 They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>There is no future 7-year "Tribulation". The 1,335 days referred to in Daniel 12:12 probably refers to the death of Antiochus Epiphanes that occurred around 165 BC [Hanegraaff, 2015].</p> <p>Gary DeMar comments on the description of a future temple, as per Ezekiel 40-48:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Some point to the temple of Ezekiel 40-48 as an example of a prophecy that is yet to be fulfilled. But this passage is simply a visionary expression of the faithful remnant that returned after the [Babylonian] exile and the glorious future they would have.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">... Ezekiel's temple is a picture of the New Covenant under which the church, made up of believing Jews and Gentiles, is the new temple. Peter, in describing the church of his day, wrote: "You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). What could be more clear? Christians—converted Jews and Gentiles from every tribe, tongue, and nation—are "living stones" being joined together in a living temple ... The call for another temple simply energizes the spreading of last days madness and denies the truth of the Bible. [DeMar, 1997, pp. 82-84]</p>

Topic/ Question	<p>What prophecy was fulfilled in Daniel 8:13-14 regarding the 2,300 evenings and mornings?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Daniel 8:13-14 Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to him, "How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled -- the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, and the surrender of the sanctuary and of the host that</p>
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	<p>will be trampled underfoot?" He said to me, "It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated."</p> <p>Daniel 8:26 "The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future."</p>
Dispensationalist Position	<p>This is a difficult prophecy to pinpoint; so, we cannot be dogmatic about it. There are several views:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View #1: The “days” are actually years. This was the view of Seventh Day Adventists. However, the years don’t add up. They start in 457 BC and end in 1844 AD, but nothing biblically significant happened around 1844. (Recall that 1 BC to 1 AD is only one year; this is how we get to 2,300 years.) • View #2: These are 1,150 days (i.e., 2,300 morning and evenings, where a morning and an evening are treated separately, possibly related to the morning and evening sacrifices). This 1,150-day view may be the best explanation of the three since the desecration of the Temple occurred in 168 BC, and the cleansing of the Temple occurred in 165 BC (on the 25th day of the Jewish month Kislev—and that day is celebrated annually as Hanukkah; it would fall sometime in our month of December). Note that 1,150 days is 3 years and about 1-2 months. This could account for the duration between 168 BC and 165 BC. • View #3: These are 2,300 literal days. In particular, the 2,300 days refer to a six-year period during 171-165 BC [LaHaye, <i>et al.</i>, 2001]. Some scholars suggest that the Temple was cleansed on December 25, 165 BC. Then, we go back in time before the desecration, and this infers that something significant happened on September 6, 171 BC. This is possibly the time that Antiochus Epiphanes started persecuting the Jews [MacArthur, 2006].
Preterist Position	<p>The phrase “2,300 evenings and mornings” refers to a period of time leading up to the desecration of the second temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, starting around 170 BC [Hanegraaff, <i>Bible Answer Man</i>, December 29, 2011]. The daily sacrifice was abolished in 168 BC, and this would represent “2,300 evenings and mornings” (i.e., 1,150 days’ worth of offerings).</p>

Topic/ Question	<p>What is meant by the following description of the Antichrist?</p> <p>Daniel 11:37 He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any god, but will exalt himself above them all.</p>
Dispensationalist Position	<p>Arnold Fruchtenbaum provides some good commentary on this matter:</p> <p>The phrase “God of his fathers” [in the KJV translation] allows for a wider interpretation. For instance, he could be a person who had Christian parents</p>

	<p>but rejects their God in this sense. It could refer to a Roman Catholic or a pagan just as easily as to a Jewish person ...</p> <p>Any student of Hebrew would see from the original text that the correct translation should be [and is in the NIV translation, among others]: “the gods of his fathers,” and not “the God of his fathers.” ... The very fact that the plural form of the word “god” is used in a context where the singular is found in the majority of cases makes this a reference to heathen deities and not a reference to the God of Israel. ... If anything, this passage implies that the Antichrist will be a Gentile rather than a Jew. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 208-210]</p>
Preterist Position	There is no future global leader called the Antichrist. Preterists believe that the Beast “of Revelation was a symbol of both Nero in particular and the Roman Empire in general.” [LaHaye & Ice, 2003]

Topic/ Question	<p>Who, or what, is the “little horn” in the book of Daniel?</p> <p>Daniel 7:7-11 "After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast ... It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns. "While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. ... "Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire.</p> <p>Daniel 7:19-26 "Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying ... I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell -- the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom. "He gave me this explanation: 'The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time. "'But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever.</p>
Dispensationalist Position	The “little horn” represents two people: Antiochus Epiphanes (circa 168 BC), and the Antichrist (still future). Thus, it has both a short-term and a long-term fulfillment.

The little horn is one of the 4 horns of the fourth beast (describing the Roman Empire). It uproots 3 of the other horns (of Alexander the Great's Greek kingdom). The first few verses of Daniel 7 describe the 4 empires following Babylon, and are confirmed by history.

The little horn also appears in the context of the end times (compare Daniel 7:19-26 (above) to Revelation 17:12):

Revelation 17:7 Then the angel said to me: "Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the **seven heads and ten horns. The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and yet will come up** out of the Abyss and go to its destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because it once was, now is not, and yet will come.

Revelation 17:10-13 They are also **seven kings**. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while. **The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king.** He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction. **"The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast.** They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast.

From the book of Daniel, we know that the Antichrist will enter the domain of the ten kings, uproot three of them, and become the leader of the remainder. However, here, the reference to the seven kings and an eighth king likely refers to political forms of government (i.e., institutions) rather than to a specific person [Walvoord, *et al.*, 2011]. In particular, we have the following historical and future powers, according to the statue envisioned by King Nebuchadnezzar, and described in the book of Daniel. Starting with Babylon, this marks "the times of the Gentiles"; however, Babylon was preceded by two ruling powers over Israel:

1. Egypt
2. Assyria
3. Babylon
4. Medo-Persia
5. Greece
6. Rome
7. Revived Rome
8. Antichrist

The first 5 fall into the category of "once was", the 6th falls into the category of "now is" (in the time that John wrote the book of Revelation: 95 AD), and

	<p>the 7th falls into the category of “is to come” (a revived Roman Empire—in the end times). The 7th empire will followed briefly by an 8th empire, namely that of the Antichrist [Walvoord, <i>et al.</i>, 2011].</p> <p>The phrase “change the set times and the laws” is a difficult one to interpret. It could refer to the removal of religious holidays, especially Christian and Jewish ones, as well as any laws that concern the worship of “God” other than the world leader himself (Antichrist) [Woods, 2020h; Lennox 2020]. These holidays would include the Christian holidays of Christmas and Easter, and the Jewish feast/holy days of Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles. Possibly, it may refer to a major change in government policies around the world, such as moving nations away from being nationalistic with a constitution based on biblical principles, and instead moving them towards a centralized, one-world government that is not based upon biblical principles [Woods & Bench, 2020].</p>
Preterist Position	<p>Reference is made in Matthew 24:15-16 to the Great Tribulation that took place in the Old Testament under Antiochus IV Epiphanes. This is correlated to what was about to come (circa 63-70 AD).</p> <p>For 7 years, Antiochus IV Epiphanes had terrorized the Jews and caused havoc in Jerusalem and the Temple. He killed the high priest. Circa 169 BC, he stole many of the vessels from the Temple. Circa 167 BC, he desecrated the Holy Temple by building a pagan altar and sacrificing unholy things on the altar. Then, for 3 years, he pillaged Jerusalem and slaughtered the Jews. Thus, there was a 3+ -year “tribulation” [Hanegraaff, <i>Bible Answer Man</i>, December 2, 2010]. In 164 BC, Antiochus IV Epiphanes died at the hands of Judas Maccabeus. The Jewish celebration of Hanukkah celebrates the liberation from Antiochus IV Epiphanes.</p> <p>In Matthew 24:15-16 (part of the Olivet Discourse), Jesus warned about the tribulation that was to come, circa 70 AD, which would be similar to what happened under Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed. Indeed, in 70 AD, prophecy was fulfilled; it was what Jesus Christ warned would happen to “this generation”.</p> <p>Why did this happen? Simply put, the Jews did not receive Jesus Christ at His first coming. They didn’t acknowledge that the ultimate sacrifice had come. Since Christ was that sacrifice, there was no longer any need for the Temple.</p>

Topic/ Question	When were “all nations” judged in the Valley of Jehoshaphat? When did “all nations” (Joel 3:2; Zechariah 12:3) come against Israel in the past?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>They didn’t—ever. LaHaye and Ice write:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">How can preterists state that Zechariah 12:3 has been fulfilled, saying that “all the nations of the world” came against Jerusalem when the Lord</p>

returned in A.D. 70, when only Rome came against Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and conquered it?

... But when did God destroy all the nations that came against Jerusalem? (Zechariah 12:9). Never—it is still a future event!

Did the Jews, as a nation, turn to Christ in A.D. 70 as Zechariah 12:10 promises? No—that is a yet future event.

Where is the evidence that two-thirds of the Jews were killed and one-third accepted their Messiah in A.D. 70, as required by Zechariah 13:8?

Zechariah 14:1-4 says the Mount of Olives will split in two at Christ's return. But that didn't happen in A.D. 70.

... And the list goes on! For example, when was Babylon destroyed “in one day” (Revelation 18:8), putting an end to the pagan religions that began in Babylon? Or when did the kings of the earth mourn over the death of Babylon? Or when was Satan bound in the bottomless pit for 1,000 years? And weren't most of those years when he supposedly couldn't tempt anyone known as “the dark ages”? How could the world become so void of Christianity and the light of the gospel while Satan was bound?

... We know that 109 Old Testament prophecies of Jesus' first coming were fulfilled literally, and that is one reason we know without question that He is the Messiah. It stands to reason, then, that the 321 prophecies regarding His second coming will also be fulfilled literally. [LaHaye & Ice, 2003]

Dave Hunt [Hunt 2001; Hunt 2006] writes that Jerusalem was in a state of ruin during the time of Zechariah; however, Zechariah (and Joel) indicated that Jerusalem would be the focus of worldwide attention, and that its neighbors would be united against Israel/Jerusalem. The climax will be at Armageddon, when the nations of the world gather for war in Northern Israel at a place called Har [mount of] Megiddo “which in the Hebrew means Armageddon” (Revelation 16:16). Jerusalem, incidentally, means “city of peace”—yet more wars have been fought over Jerusalem than any other city on Earth; however, when Christ returns, then true peace will come out of Jerusalem (because of Christ).

What is the message conveyed by these evil spirits through their host of willing oracles? [Revelation 16:13-14] It is this: “Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat” (Joel 3:9-12).

And so they come, heading towards Jerusalem ... there are great multitudes, both of professional warriors and untrained (but angry) civilians assembling in the great chain of plains and valleys on the east of Jerusalem. In desperation they are eager to do battle with Almighty God, knowing Christ and his heavenly army will shortly come to earth near Jerusalem, and He is

	<p>the one responsible for their awful sufferings. Having rejected Him as their Savior, their only hope is to destroy Him before He becomes their Judge. [Morris, 1983, pp. 313-314]</p> <p>Regarding the state of war and evil, Jeremiah 17:9 accurately characterizes what seems to be every generation since Adam, and especially today: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”</p>
Preterist Position	<p>Many preterists believe that God judged Israel in 70 AD with the destruction of Jerusalem and the second temple. There is no future point in time when “all nations” will gather against Jerusalem, or where they will literally gather for judgment in the Kidron Valley (Valley of Jehoshaphat).</p>

Chapter 11: Revelation

Topic/ Question	When was the book of Revelation written?
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>The book of Revelation was written well after 70 AD—likely between 90-96 AD; 95 AD is frequently cited. For example, Mark Hitchcock’s PhD thesis was a defense of the 95 AD writing of Revelation [Hitchcock, 2005]. Respected apologist and dispensationalist Norman Geisler concurs that John probably wrote Revelation in 95 AD. Mark Hitchcock states that, for the first 500 years of Church history, a late date for the writing of Revelation was the accepted norm. There was no evidence to suggest that the early Church ever considered a pre-70 AD writing of Revelation.</p> <p>Furthermore, even if a pre-70 AD were true, that would not rule out dispensationalism. On the other hand, if a post-70 AD date were true, then that would rule out both partial preterism and full preterism.</p> <p>There are two bodies of evidence to consider: arguments <i>internal</i> to the book of Revelation, and arguments <i>external</i> to the book of Revelation [Hitchcock, 2005].</p> <p>Let us deal with internal arguments first. An argument from the preterist camp is that Revelation couldn’t have been written this late; otherwise, the destruction of the second temple (in 70 AD) would surely be mentioned explicitly. But perhaps it was common knowledge to all, and perhaps the mention of a Temple in John’s writing of Revelation was clearly understood to mean a <i>future</i> Temple (since the second temple had been destroyed 20-26 years prior to its writing). After all, Ezekiel wrote his prophecies when there was no temple in Jerusalem; and John is writing his prophecies when there also was no temple in Jerusalem. Actually, little fulfilled prophecy of any kind is explicitly mentioned in Revelation. The book of Revelation deals primarily with prophecy, not history. Note also that Revelation was written primarily to a <i>Gentile</i> audience that lived about 800 miles away from Jerusalem [Hanegraaff & Hitchcock, 2007]. Unlike a Jewish audience, a Gentile audience would not have had much interest in a temple.</p> <p>Besides not explicitly mentioning the destruction of the Temple (and the fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecies), Revelation does not directly quote Old Testament passages either, even though it makes “at least 278 allusions to the Old Testament in the 404 verses of Revelation” [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007, p. 200].</p> <p>With respect to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, Christ’s prophecy about “not one stone standing on another” was literally fulfilled when the Romans burned the Temple, because the heat of the fire melted the gold on the</p>

walls in the Temple. Later, the Roman soldiers pried the rocks apart to get at the gold.

Biblical archaeologist and Old Testament scholar Randall Price says,

Titus had given specific orders that the Temple be left intact, but evidently a soldier acting on impulse threw a torch through an archway of the Temple and set the tapestries inside on fire. It is said that when the building burned, the decorative gold on the walls melted and ran into the seams between the stones. Afterward, in a frenzied attempt to recover the gold, the Roman soldiers tore apart the stones of the Temple's walls, resulting in a complete desolation of the Temple (see Jesus' prophecy in Luke 19:43-44). A large number of the stones of the uppermost course of the outside retaining walls of the Temple were also forcibly torn down as a show of Roman vengeance.

Make no mistake: Jesus, Israel's premier prophet, got it right, He prophesied correctly! The temple was totally destroyed in A.D. 70 just as He predicted. Not one stone was left upon another. [Hitchcock, 2010, p. 94]

There is no problem with this fulfillment and the dispensationalist model of eschatology because the Temple mentioned in Revelation is a rebuilt Temple. It will be rebuilt around the time of the 70th week of Daniel (possibly just before the 7-year Tribulation, or as part of the 7-year covenant that initiates the Tribulation). Note also that *there was no temple* when: (a) Ezekiel prophesied about the temple (Ezekiel 40-43), and (b) when Daniel gave his end-time prophecies (Daniel 9). Remember, Solomon's Temple was destroyed in 586 BC, and wasn't rebuilt until 520-516 BC. Hank Hanegraaff argues that Revelation recapitulates Ezekiel, so this precedent weakens his case [Hanegraaff & Hitchcock, 2007].

What about the external arguments?

While it is true that many scholars do hold to a pre-70 date for Revelation, it is crucial to observe that the preterist position requires more than just a pre-70 date. According to Gentry, Revelation anticipates the destruction of Jerusalem (August A.D. 70), the death of Nero (June A.D. 68), and the formal imperial engagement of the Jewish War (spring A.D. 67). Therefore, for preterists, the earliest Revelation could have been written (the *terminus a quo*) is the beginning of the Neronian persecution in November A.D. 64, and the latest possible date (the *terminus ad quem*) is spring A.D. 67. The date Gentry favors is A.D. 65. [Hitchcock, 2003, p. 125]

There is additional documentation on how some of the early Church fathers adhered to a late date. For example, Irenaeus (A.D. 120-202) wrote that Revelation was written "towards the end of Domitian's reign" (which ended in 96 AD).

It is important to note that Irenaeus was from Asia Minor (modern Turkey). The Apostle John was from Ephesus, which is also in Asia Minor. Irenaeus

was disciplined in the faith by Polycarp, who was disciplined by the Apostle John. Thus, there is a direct link between the one who wrote Revelation and Irenaeus. This link strongly supports the credibility of Irenaeus and his statement [about Domitian’s reign]. [Ice, 2001b]

John MacArthur wrote in his NASB Bible study notes:

Revelation was written in the last decade of the first century (ca. A.D. 94-96), near the end of Emperor Domitian’s reign (A.D. 81-96). Although some date it during Nero’s reign (A.D. 54-68), their arguments are unconvincing and conflict with the view of the early church. Writing in the second century, Irenaeus declared that Revelation had been written toward the end of Domitian’s reign. Later writers, such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Victorinus (who wrote one of the earliest commentaries on Revelation), Eusebius, and Jerome affirm the Domitian date.

The spiritual decline of the 7 churches (chaps. 2,3) also argues for the later date. Those churches were strong and spiritually healthy in the mid-60s, when Paul last ministered in Asia Minor. The brief time between Paul’s ministry there and the end of Nero’s reign was too short for such a decline to have occurred. The longer time gap also explains the rise of the heretical sect known as the Nicolaitans (2:6,15), who are not mentioned in Paul’s letters, not even to one or more of these same churches (Ephesians). [MacArthur, 2006, p. 1959].

Eusebius (260-340 AD), “the father of church history”, wrote in his classic work *Ecclesiastical History* that the book of Revelation was written in the reign of Domitian.

Jerome (A.D. 340-419) wrote: “In the fourteenth year then after Nero, Domitian having raised a second persecution, he [John] was banished to the island of Patmos, and wrote the Apocalypse, on which Justin Martyr and Irenaeus afterwards wrote commentaries.” [Jerome, quoted in [Hitchcock, 2003, p. 135]]

Mark Hitchcock compares late vs. early references to the dating of Revelation, in the following table taken from the debate between him and Hank Hanegraaff [Hanegraaff & Hitchcock, 2007; see also Hitchcock, 2012]. The external evidence supports a late dating of Revelation. In particular, no Biblical scholar prior to 508 AD explicitly supports a pre-70 AD dating of Revelation [Hanegraaff & Hitchcock, 2007]. Thus, the late date for Revelation is the traditionally accepted one. This is a serious blow to the preterist camp.

Supporting the 95 AD (Domitian) Date		Notes	Supporting the 65 AD (Neronic) Date	
Who?	When?		Who?	When?
Hegesippus	c. 150 AD			
Clement of Alexandria	150-215 AD			
Irenaeus	180 AD	Discipled by Polycarp, who		

		was disciplined by John		
Dio Cassius	150-235 AD			
Tertullian	160-220 AD			
Origen	185-253 AD			
Victorinus	c. 300 AD	Provided the earliest known Latin commentary on Revelation		
Eusebius	260-340 AD	The “father of Church history”		
Jerome	340-419 AD	Translated the Bible into Latin		
Sulpicius Severus	c. 400 AD			
Orosius	c. 400 AD			
			Syriac Version of the NT	508 AD & 616 AD
Primasius	c. 540 AD			
Andreas of Cappadocia	c. 600 AD			
The Acts of John	c. 650 AD			
Venerable Bede	c. 700 AD			
			Arethas	c. 850-900 AD
			Theophylact	c. 1107 AD

Further support of a late writing of Revelation is given by the condition of the seven churches:

Jesus’ statement to the church of Ephesus in Revelation 2:2 that it had guarded itself well against error does not fit what we know of this church in Nero’s day (Acts 20:29-30; 1 Tim. 1:3-7; 2 Tim. 2:17-18).

... **Moreover, Revelation 2:1-7 makes no mention of the great missionary work of Paul in Asia Minor.** On this third missionary journey Paul headquartered in Ephesus for three years and had a profound ministry there. If John wrote Revelation in AD 65 then the omission of any mention of Paul in the letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor is inexplicable. However, if John wrote thirty years later to the second generation in the churches, then the omission is easily understood.

... Apparently, **the church of Smyrna did not even exist during the ministry of Paul.** Polycarp was the bishop of Smyrna. In his letter to the Philippians (11:3), written in about AD 110, Polycarp says that the Smyrnaeans did not know the Lord during the time Paul was ministering.

... The church of Laodicea is the only one of the seven churches (and possibly Sardis) that does not have one thing to commend. In his letter to the Colossians, probably written in AD 60-62, Paul indicates that the church was

	<p>an active group (Colossians 4:13). He mentions the church there three times in his Colossian letter (2:2; 4:13,16). It would certainly take more than three to five years for the church to depart so completely from its earlier acceptable status that absolutely nothing good could be said about it.</p> <p>... Revelation 2:13 mentions the martyrdom of a man named Antipas in the city of Pergamum. According [to] church history, Antipas was martyred during the reign of Domitian in either AD 83 or 92. Since the martyrdom of Antipas is in the past when Revelation was written, Revelation could not have been written before the reign of Domitian began in AD 81. [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007, pp. 201-208, bold = my emphasis]</p> <p>Other points to consider: Laodicea experienced a severe earthquake in 60 AD, and it took close to 30 years to rebuild the city—yet Revelation states that the Laodiceans had no need of anything. This is more in line with a late dating of Revelation. Also, why would Nero execute Peter and Paul, but just banish John to the Island of Patmos? Domitian was known to banish people; Nero was not [Hitchcock, 2012]. Nero executed people.</p> <p>What about the terms “soon” and “near” that are used in Revelation? Aren’t these words supportive of a near-term (e.g., pre-70 AD) writing? Mark Hitchcock argues that these terms apply to <i>all</i> of the contents of Revelation, including Chapters 20-22 (e.g., Second Coming, Great White Throne Judgment, new heavens and new earth). None of these events have occurred yet! In Romans 16:20, Paul writes that the Lord will “soon” crush Satan. In Philippians 4:5, Paul writes that the Lord is “near”. Instead, the words “soon” and “near” speak of <i>imminence</i> [Hanegraaff & Hitchcock, 2007]. Hitchcock argues that, for consistency, people need to be either futurists or full preterists. The word translated “soon” in Revelation 1 is better translated “quickly” or “fast”—referring to the speed with which events unfold as they begin to take place [Kelley, 2017a].</p> <p>We conclude that the book of Revelation was written in 95 AD by the apostle John.</p> <p>The preterist view <i>requires</i> a date for the writing of Revelation prior to 70 AD, and probably at least several years before that. Furthermore, even if Revelation were written prior to 70 AD, it would <i>not</i> invalidate the dispensationalist view.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>Revelation was likely written in the mid-60s AD, but definitely not later than 70 AD. Why? If the Temple had been destroyed by the time of writing, then surely John would have mentioned it. For example, John would likely have said that, “this was to fulfill what was written by the prophet...” or “this was to fulfill the prophecy given by Jesus Christ”. Other books of the Bible often state words to that effect. Hank Hanegraaff calls the destruction of the Temple, “the mother of all prophecies”. Thus, the Temple likely existed at that point, making the necessity of a third temple (i.e., a future temple) irrelevant.</p>

There appears to be no historical evidence of a late writing. Kenneth Gentry argues for a late 64 AD to early 67 AD dating of Revelation [Sproul, 1998]. John Ankerberg wrote, “It is becoming an increasingly persuasive argument that all the New Testament books were before AD 70—within a single generation of the death of Christ” [Hanegraaff & Hitchcock, 2007].

Nero, a possible Antichrist, died in 68 AD, so this means that parts of Revelation were fulfilled during the time of Nero. The words of Revelation, therefore, would have had direct applicability to the people of that day. The readers would have had the *expectation* that these Scriptures applied to them; and that the prophecies would be fulfilled within a fairly short period of time, and not over thousands of years [Gentry, 1998b]. For example, Bible translations for Revelation 1:3 and Revelation 22:10 use the phrases “the time is near” or “the time is at hand”.

Even more difficult to understand is how events two or three thousand years in the future could be considered “at hand,” as per Mounce, Walvoord, and others. How could such events so remotely stretched out into the future be “at hand”? But if the expected events were to occur within a period of from one to five years—as in the case of Revelation if the book were written prior to A.D. 70—then all becomes clear. [Gentry, 1998b, p. 141]

Jesus makes an important prophecy about the destruction of the Temple (in 70 AD): not one stone would be left upon another. The Temple was an important focus of Christ’s Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21). The Olivet Discourse is a key to Bible prophecy. The readers of Revelation prior to 70 AD would recognize the destruction of the second temple as being a future event—which then would have been fulfilled in their day, thus further making Revelation all the more relevant to them. Some of what Christ was saying was directed to inhabitants of Jerusalem during and before 70 AD—to warn them to flee the city (e.g., “Let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains”). David Chilton, for example, believes that the Olivet Discourse is about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Had Revelation (or other books of the Bible) been written after 70 AD, the author would have explicitly written about the destruction of the Temple. Many of the other prophets in the Bible specifically indicated the case where a prophecy came true, so why wouldn’t John do the same? If John didn’t write Revelation until 90 AD or later, then he could have easily confirmed the fulfillment of the destruction of the second temple (as per the Olivet Discourse), but he didn’t—probably because the second temple was still standing! In other words, the year of writing Revelation was before 70 AD. Remember, John was a close follower of Christ, and he and the early Christians would likely have made explicit mention of such fulfilled prophecies. In Revelation 11, John was told to measure the Temple, so this portion of Scripture would have been a great place to comment on the destruction of the second temple, had that been the case.

Consider an analogy of America in the early 21st century. Suppose someone writing an important article about terrorism in America—or the history of New York City—avoided mentioning the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York City [DeMar & Hanegraaff, 2023]. That would imply it was written before September 11, 2001.

Consider another parallel. Imagine that you are reading a history concerning Jewish struggles in Nazi Germany and find no mention whatsoever of the Holocaust. Would it be ‘historically ridiculous,’ rather than ‘historically reasonable,’ to suppose this history was written prior to the outbreak of World War II? ... so too it is unreasonable to think that a history of the Jews in Germany would be written in the aftermath of World War II and yet make no mention of the Holocaust. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 153-154]

Scholars that hold to an early dating of Revelation include: Jay Adams, F.F. Bruce, Adam Clarke, Alfred Edersheim, Kenneth Gentry, J.B. Lightfoot, John A.T. Robinson, Philip Schaff, R.C. Sproul, Milton S. Terry, and Brooke Foss Westcott [Gregg, 2013; Hanegraaff, 2007].

Kenneth Gentry, Jr. does not accept the late date for Revelation. There is too much inconclusive evidence. He makes a case for questioning the late date claimed by Irenaeus, followed by many other commentators who actually base their opinion on Irenaeus [Gentry, 1998b]. Gentry does so by exploring the internal and external evidence for the authorship of Revelation. Irenaeus knew Polycarp, who in turn knew the Apostle John. Early church fathers such as Eusebius and Jerome depended on the accuracy of Irenaeus’ writings. But what if Irenaeus was mistaken, or what if we are not interpreting his writings correctly?

Additionally, there is the possibility that the Apostle John suffered punishment *twice* at the hands of the Romans [Gentry, 1998b]. For example, John may have been exiled pre-70 AD, and then again circa 95 AD. John may have written Revelation during the pre-70 AD exile. So, even if Domitian exiled John in 95 AD, Irenaeus might be referring to his second exile, but not in the authorship context that most commentators of Revelation are thinking of. Eusebius and Jerome both lean towards two banishments. Furthermore, it has been suggested that Tertullian (circa 160-220 AD) placed the exile of John under Nero, around the time of the martyrdom of Peter and Paul [Gentry, 1998b].

Gentry argues that *The Shepherd of Hermas* was written no later than 90 AD. The book references some of the major themes of Revelation, suggesting that the author already had access to Revelation.

If a date in the A.D. 80s be given to *The Shepherd* (as is most plausible), and if the apparent allusions to Revelation in it are expressive of its dependency upon Revelation (as certainly seems the case), then Revelation influenced

	<p>the writing of The Shepherd in the late A.D. 80s. The Shepherd was certainly written somewhere around Rome, for it mentions Clement (undoubtedly <i>the</i> Clement of Rome because of the recognition his name is expected to carry, cf. <i>Vision</i> 2:4). For John’s Revelation to have been written, to have been copied (laboriously by hand), to have made its way to Rome by the 80s, and to have influenced the writing of another work, would be strong evidence that it existed a good deal of time before A.D. 85+. It would, thus, be evidence against a date of c. A.D. 95 and supportive of a pre-A.D. 70 date. [Gentry, 1998b, pp. 91-92]</p> <p>Hanegraaff adds that we shouldn’t trust the early Church fathers on the issue of dating because they were wrong about many things that we don’t embrace today. For example, they believed in baptismal generation, the perpetual virginity of Mary, and holding all Jews responsible for the death of Christ [Hanegraaff & Hitchcock, 2007].</p> <p>Nero ruled from 54-68 AD. The Syrian version of the New Testament includes a note on its title page for Revelation stating: “The Revelation which was made by God to John the Evangelist in the island Patmos, into which he was thrown by Nero Caesar” [Eberle & Trench, 2021, Kindle edition, location 6263]. It is also possible that John was sent to the island of Patmos more than once.</p> <p>Kenneth Gentry summarizes the preterist position about Nero and Revelation:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">... many lines of evidence converge upon Nero: (1) His place as the sixth among the Roman emperors, (2) his being followed by a seventh, brief reigning emperor (Galba), (3) his name’s numerical value of 666, (4) his living while the temple still stood, (5) the prominence of his persecution in first century Christianity, and more. There is an old adage: If the shoe fits, wear it. Nero’s footprints are all over Revelation. [Gentry, 1998b, p. 352]</p>
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Topic/ Question	Should Revelation be taken literally?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>Revelation should be taken literally <i>except</i> where the context is clearly meant to be taken symbolically, or where there is prior reference to a symbol/metaphor. This includes all numbers mentioned, such as these examples: 7 lampstands, 1,000 years, 1,260 days, 42 months, etc. Recall that Daniel took them literally, and history has shown their fulfillment (e.g., the first 69 weeks of the 70 weeks of Daniel).</p> <p>For a good treatment of the literal interpretation of Revelation, see the commentary <i>The Revelation Record</i> by Henry Morris [Morris, 1983]. There were hundreds of prophecies that were literally fulfilled at Christ’s first coming, so why not take a literal approach towards the events surrounding His Second Coming? We should take a passage at its face value unless there is a clear symbolic inference.</p>

Similarly, Genesis is literal. There was a real Adam and Eve. There really was a Tower of Babel. There really was a worldwide flood. And so on.

Other excellent commentaries on Revelation that support the dispensationalist view are those by John Walvoord (revised and edited by Philip Rawley and Mark Hitchcock) [Walvoord, *et al.*, 2011] and the two-volume set by Robert Thomas [Thomas, 1992; Thomas, 1995].

The *literal* interpretation of Scripture is generally synonymous with the *grammatical-historical* approach, and stands in contrast to the *allegorical* approach used by many preterists when an event from Revelation cannot be fit into the 70 AD timeframe.

[G.B. Caird writes:] An *allegory* is a story intended by an author to convey a hidden meaning, and it is correctly interpreted when that intended meaning is perceived. To *allegorize* is to impose on a story hidden meanings which the original author neither intended nor envisaged; it is to treat as allegory that which was *not* intended as allegory. [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 29]

The literal method of interpretation is that method that gives to each word the same exact basic meaning it would have in normal, ordinary, customary usage, whether employed in writing, speaking or thinking. It is called the grammatical-historical method to emphasize the fact that the meaning is to be determined by both grammatical and historical considerations. [Pentecost, 1958, p. 9]

Bible teacher and author David L. Cooper gives a classic statement of this hermeneutical principle in his “Golden Rule of Interpretation”: “When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise.” [Ice, 2003c, p. 73]

Besides (1) *The Golden Rule of Interpretation*, Cooper proposed three other laws for Bible Study, including the interpretation of prophetic passages [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]: (2) *The Law of Double Reference*, whereby two separate events are combined into one passage without there being an indicator of a separation of time between them. For example, consider Zechariah 9:9-10: verse 9 speaks of Christ’s first coming, and verse 10 speaks of His Second Coming. (3) *The Law of Recurrence*, whereby a single passage of Scripture contains two related, shorter blocks: the first block describes an event (often in chronological sequence), and the second block describes it in greater detail. For example, consider the Magog invasion in Ezekiel 38-39: Ezekiel 38 describes the whole event, but Ezekiel 39 also describes the whole event, but provides further details. Genesis 1:1-2:3 and Genesis 2:4-25 follow a similar pattern for the Creation week. (4) *The Law of the Context* which basically states that a passage cannot be taken out of context. For example, consider Zechariah 13:6, which is often used as a passage about the Messiah. Since Zechariah 13:2-5 speaks of false prophets, some authors believe that verse 6 cannot be

about the Messiah [Fruchtenbaum, 2004], and instead refers to the wounds (possibly self-inflicted) on a false prophet.

Jerome and Alexander were advocates of the allegorical approach in the area of Bible prophecy. ... Their influence paved the way for the dominance of allegorical interpretation during much of the Middle Ages, especially when it came to Bible prophecy. Augustine developed a dual hermeneutic. On the one hand, he tended to interpret the Bible literally, but when it came to eschatology he interpreted that spiritually or allegorically. [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007, pp. 91-92]

Jerome, like Origen, allegorized Scripture; however, Jerome eventually became more literal and believed that the literal approach often yielded a deeper meaning [Zuck, 1991].

During the first 200 years of church history, two competing schools of interpretation arose. The Syrian School of Antioch championed a literal and historical interpretation, whereas a school in Alexandria, Egypt, advocated an allegorical or spiritual hermeneutic. ... Clement of Alexandria (150-215) and Origen (185-254) developed the allegorical approach to biblical interpretation in the early third century. [Ice, 2011i, p. 204]

Hitchcock and Ice urge their readers to embrace Charles Ryrie's explanation of the grammatical-historical interpretation of Scripture:

It is sometimes called the principle of *grammatical-historical* interpretation since the meaning of each word is determined by grammatical and historical considerations. The principle might also be called normal interpretation since the literal meaning of words is the *normal* approach to their understanding in all languages. It might also be designated *plain* interpretation so that no one receives the mistaken notion that the literal principle rules out figures of speech. [Charles Ryrie, in [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007, p. 73]]

Categorizing Revelation as prophetic also relates it to the Book of Daniel, which it alludes to more than any other Old Testament book. Jesus specifically referred to Daniel as a prophet (Matthew 24:15). Because Revelation's content relies so heavily upon Daniel, it stands to reason that the material found in Revelation should also be categorized as prophetic. ...

Categorizing Revelation as prophetic rather than apocalyptic significantly changes the hermeneutical landscape. If Revelation is prophecy, then we should interpret it just as we would any other prophecy. We should use the same literal, grammatical, historical method that we normally use for interpreting Scripture. [LaHaye & Hindson, 2004, p. 30]

It was not until the dawning of the Reformation that biblical interpretation began to return to the sanity of literal interpretation. ... Luther and Calvin generally returned the church to literal interpretation. Had they not done this, then Protestantism would have never been born and reformation would have never taken place.

	<p>By the 1600s most biblical scholars preferred a literal interpretation; nevertheless, a couple hundred years passed before that understanding influenced all areas of Bible interpretation, especially Bible prophecy.</p> <p>It was not until the late 1700s and early 1800s that biblical interpreters grew more consistent in applying a literal hermeneutic. ... In general, the evangelical church, especially in the English-speaking world, returned to the premillennial futurism of the early church. [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007, pp. 93-95]</p> <p>Martin Luther (1483-1546) strongly endorsed the grammatical, historical, literal approach, concluding that “Allegories are empty speculations” [Zuck, 1991]. Luther strongly insisted that the Bible be interpreted <i>literally</i> rather than <i>allegorically</i>—and this was after about 1,000 years of symbolic interpretation. Andy Woods notes that Luther took Christianity out of the “dark ages” where it was believed that people needed special enlightenment to understand Scripture [Woods, 2021j].</p> <p>John Calvin (1509-1564) has been called “one of the greatest interpreters of the Bible.” Like Luther, Calvin rejected allegorical interpretations. He said they are “frivolous games” and that Origen and many others were guilty of “torturing the Scripture, in every possible sense, from the true sense.” Calvin stressed the Christological nature of Scripture, the grammatical, historical method, exegesis rather than eisegesis (letting the text speak for itself rather than reading into the text what isn’t there) ... [Zuck, 1991, p. 47]</p> <p>The context in which a given Scripture passage is written influences how that passage is to be understood. Context includes several things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the verse(s) immediately before and after a passage • the paragraph and book in which the verses occur • the dispensation in which it was written • the message of the entire Bible • the historical-cultural environment of that time when it was written. <p>An individual’s culture includes several spheres of relationships and influences—his interpersonal relations with other individuals and groups, his role in his family, his social class, and the nation or government of which he is a part. Religion, politics, warfare, law, agriculture, architecture, business, economics, and the geography of where one lives and travels, what he and others have written and read, what he wears and the languages(s) he speaks—all these leave their mark on how he lives, and if he is an author of a Bible book, on what he wrote. [Zuck, 1991, pp. 77-79]</p>
Preterist Position	<p>Scripture should be “interpreted in the sense in which it is intended rather than in a literalistic sense. If I tell you that it is raining cats and dogs, my intent is to convey that it is raining hard—not that cats and dogs are literally falling from the sky.” [Hanegraaff, 2007]</p>

Therefore, we should take (most of) Revelation symbolically and historically, with little future fulfillment. The Preterist view claims that most of Revelation was fulfilled by 70 AD; but Revelation 20:7-21:22, in particular, will be fulfilled in the future [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007].

Revelation is deeply rooted in Old Testament history. It is important to remember this because so much of the symbolism requires Biblical literacy to interpret and understand the message. For example, what does “coming on the clouds” mean in the Old Testament? It does not mean a literal coming on/in the clouds. (Search elsewhere in this document for “coming on the clouds”.) As a second example, “blood to the [height of a] horse’s bridle” can’t possibly mean a river of blood that’s 5 feet high and 180 miles long—is there even this much blood collectively for every human in the world? As a third example, Jesus is not a lamb with 7 eyes and 7 horns.

Hank Hanegraaff argues that we need to learn how to read the Bible by having a grasp of the language used by the Old Testament prophets. For a modern comparison, if we say, “I’ve got a frog in my throat”, this isn’t to be taken literally.

The city in Revelation has “streets of gold”. Is this to be taken literally? No, it’s symbolic. For example, if we say that someone has a “heart of gold”, this means that the person is kind and caring.

John is using a “judgment language” that’s used with respect to a near future event, by taking a long-term event and applying it to the near term. Similarly, the language in passages such as Zechariah 13 or 14 is not to be taken literally. One danger in taking such passages literally is the expectation of a Jewish holocaust of greater proportions than that during WW II (e.g., Zechariah 13:8-9). Hanegraaff states that the Jews will *not* be gathered back to Israel to set them up for another holocaust. “These ideas have huge consequences ... for how we view the situation in the Middle East, how we view the Jews”.

Why aren’t today’s dispensationalists warning Jews about this coming Holocaust by encouraging them to leave Israel until the conflagration is over? Instead, we find dispensationalists supporting and encouraging the relocation of Jews to the land of Israel. For what? The future Holocaust? [DeMar, 1997, p. 449]

Hanegraaff adds that there’s no reason for us to believe that there was actually a “talking snake” in the Garden of Eden. Again, this is symbolic language—which Moses used hundreds of years after the fact, when he wrote Genesis. The snake is a symbol used to indicate cunningness or evil. Today, Satan doesn’t come around to us in the form of a *person* whispering things into our ear, or writing messages on a fogged-up bathroom mirror; rather, he talks inaudibly to people, via their minds. Eve was deceived in the same way that we can be deceived. Remember, Satan is a non-corporal being: he doesn’t have

	<p>a body. How did Christ crush the serpent? Christ triumphed over Satan, on the cross.</p> <p>Christ is called both a lion and a lamb, in Scripture. Clearly, these are metaphors.</p> <p>Preterists argue that dispensationalists selectively choose what to take literally in Revelation; and therefore, dispensationalists are less <i>consistent</i> than preterists.</p> <p>With respect to the dispensationalist model of Christ coming to rescue the Jews following the Battle of Armageddon, Zechariah 13:8-9—if taken in the dispensationalist sense whereby two-thirds of the Israelites will be destroyed—is hardly a “rescue” at all. Furthermore, if two-thirds were to be killed, wouldn’t it make more sense to encourage people to leave the land, so that as few as possible would die?</p> <p>Might some of the prophecies that preterists claim have been historically fulfilled, but which dispensationalists claim are not yet fulfilled—be part of a double fulfillment? This is called a double reference. The answer is “no”. If such a Scripture were a double reference, then the New Testament would explicitly state this. In that case, we would have a primary fulfillment and a secondary one. If there is no such indicator in the New Testament, then we can’t just assume that it’s a double reference. For example, should we look for a second Messiah [Hunt & DeMar, 1998]?</p>
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Topic/ Question	In light of the teachings in Revelation, how are we to live? For example, does <i>imminence</i> (i.e., the possibility of Christ’s return at any moment) imply a motivating factor for evangelism ... or does it suggest the opposite?
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>We are to live in society as salt and light, seeking and promoting peace, except where peace contradicts the Word of God. For example, it would be wrong to “divide the land” of Israel, or to disobey the commands of Scripture. We are to be looking forward to the imminent return of Jesus Christ, and to find comfort in escaping the “wrath to come” or “hour of trial” (1 Thessalonians 1:10; Luke 21:36; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-10; Revelation 3:10) via the pretribulational Rapture.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Luke 21:36 Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."</p> <p>Dispensationalists have been very evangelistic, and well-motivated, in preaching the message of Christ’s imminent return. They have given large sums of money to organizations that have been helping millions of people come to Christ—and to improve their living conditions. By recognizing that the Rapture could occur at any time, many such Christians live in a way that they</p>

try to make the best of the time at hand, because they know that time is short. People who are not expecting the imminent return of Christ are more likely to do nothing, thinking that there's plenty of time to fix things, so why the rush? By considering imminence, pretribulationists are among the Christians who are more likely to preach the gospel and to live each day for Christ. For example, the LaHaye/Jenkins' "Left Behind" series of books is evangelistic, and people have come to Christ by reading these novels.

Robert G. Clouse wrote, 'The early church holding this premillennial view looked for the imminent return of Christ as witnessed by the writings of Papias, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Methodus, Commodianus, and Lactantius.'

J.L. Neve declared, 'The time of the apostolic Fathers, like that of primitive Christianity, was thoroughly eschatological in tendency. Men had the consciousness that they were living in the last times. The immediate return of Jesus was anticipated. It was this expectation which held the congregations together.'

...

The Church from A.D. 325 to the Reformation

Belief in the imminent coming of Christ began to be questioned by some church leaders at the end of the second century. When persecution against the Christians stopped and the union of church and state occurred after A.D. 300, 'the hope of the church underwent a radical transformation.' As a result, belief in the imminent coming of Christ 'had ceased to be of any great influence by the fourth century.'

It continued to have little influence in the major part of organized Christendom throughout medieval times and the Renaissance until the Reformation. We are all familiar with the history of the Roman Catholic church from A.D. 325 to the Reformation. After Augustine corrupted that church by teaching them to adopt the pagan Greek philosophy of interpreting all written literature allegorically, the world went through "the dark ages" for over eleven hundred years. Except for some godly saints within the Roman Church and the many who were branded "heretics" by that church, which is what we would call the evangelical church today, the Roman Catholic doctrine of amillennialism reigned supreme. Consequently, the message of imminency was dead to them. ... Fortunately, the imminent hope of His coming was kept alive among those evangelicals who took the Bible literally and had pastor shepherds who faithfully taught it to them.

... The interesting thing is that when the common people read the Bible, they tend to take it literally ... They naturally then progress to expecting the Lord to return literally to this earth and set up His kingdom.

... That [mid-trib or post-trib] idea of looking for the Antichrist before Jesus comes to rapture His church has to have a deadening influence on the life of any Christian.

... It is a well known fact of history that whenever the imminent return of Christ for His church has had a prominent place in the heart of the Christians,

	<p>as it did in the first three centuries and during the last two, it has produced three significant effects on believers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) A desire for holy living in an unholy age 2) Greater soul winning and evangelistic zeal 3) A vision and passion for world missions and the fulfilling of the great commission. [LaHaye, 2001a] <p>Thomas Ice comments:</p> <p>Almost all of the Gentile and Jewish workers involved in Jewish evangelism were premillennial. ...</p> <p>In the almost forty-five years that I have been involved in Christian ministry, I have observed generally a sincere Christian love by premillennialists of the Jewish people and a desire to lead them to Christ, rarely seen in non-premillennial evangelicals. [Ice, 2014b]</p> <p>In summary:</p> <p>... the Rapture is imminent; He could come at any moment. Only if the Rapture comes before the Tribulation can this be true. In Midtribulationism, the Rapture is always at least 3½ years away. In Posttribulationism it is at least seven years away. It is never imminent. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 154-155]</p>
<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>In Bible times, no one would have been able to paint the whole scenario of end times. On the same basis today, no one—however intelligent—can work out what is going to happen in the “end times”. Instead, Christians are to be salt and light to our society, seeking peace, justice, and righteousness, in accordance with the Sermon on the Mount.</p> <p>Some dispensationalists are guilty of letting the world degenerate, saying “Look at how bad things are getting!”, and then doing nothing about it. This is inappropriate. There is no pretribulational rapture, so it’s a mistake to give up on this world. We need to make efforts to improve the world. Unless you have a long term perspective, says Gary DeMar, you’re just going to sit back and do nothing. Instead, we need to be proactive. For example, the public school system has degenerated somewhat in recent decades, but look at the growth in the quality of education in the 1990s due to Christian schools and homeschooling.</p> <p>It had been argued that some people who believe in the pre-trib Rapture often are unconcerned with trying to improve the world and win souls to Christ since they’re often waiting for Christ to simply take them out of the world to escape the coming Tribulation. We should not be saying “See you later” to Israel, that is, giving Jewish people (and Christians) the impression that Israel will be left on its own to face the Tribulation. David Pawson, who is not a pretribulationist, argues that we should tell Israel that it will <i>not</i> be left alone to face the coming persecution (Tribulation) [Pawson, 2002].</p>

	In various places in Scripture, the Church faced persecution, and will continue to do so. It is an insult to many persecuted Christians throughout the world to say that the Church in the western world will not have to face serious opposition.
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Topic/ Question	<p>Revelation refers to the things “what must come soon to pass”. Christ said, “Behold, I come quickly”.</p> <p>What is meant by the words “soon”, “quickly”, and “the time is near”? Wouldn’t these words indicate that the time of fulfillment was in the first century, rather than in, say, the 21st century? How should readers of Revelation interpret these words?</p>
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>The word “soon” (<i>tachos/tachus</i> in the Greek) occurs eight times in Revelation (Revelation 1:1; 2:16; 3:11; 11:14; 22:6,7,12,20) [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “what must soon take place” (1:1) • “I will soon come to you” (2:16) • “I am coming soon.” (3:11) • “The third woe is coming soon” (11:14) • “The things that must soon take place” (22:6) • “Look, I am coming soon!” (22:7) • “Look, I am coming soon!” (22:12) • “Yes, I am coming soon.” (22:20) <p>The English word “tachometer” is used to measure revolutions per minute. It measures speed-up (events in rapid succession), rather than describes a start time. The medical term “tachycardia” means the heart is beating too fast, not that the heart will beat soon [Hunt & DeMar, 1998].</p> <p>The word “near” (<i>eggys</i> in the Greek; meaning nearness of place or time) occurs twice (Revelation 1:3; 22:10):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “because the time is near” (1:3) • “because the time is near” (22:10) <p>Importantly, note that “near” and “soon” appear at the beginning of the book of Revelation <i>and at the end</i>. Thus, they encompass all of the events of Revelation. But, within this timeframe, Revelation also includes descriptions of Armageddon and the 1,000-year Millennium—leading us to conclude that “near” and “far” are relative terms, and did not terminate in 95 AD. Thus, these terms act as “bookends” to Revelation.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Yet, if Revelation was written in AD 65-66 and Rev. 1:1-20:6 was fulfilled “soon” in the events of AD 64-70 as partial preterists maintain, then the bulk</p>

of the book was already fulfilled before most Christians ever heard or read its contents. By the time the book was written by John on Patmos in AD 65-66, copied, and carried by the messengers of the seven churches, and then re-copied and widely disseminated, the prophesied events would have already occurred. The powerful prophetic message of the Apocalypse would have been one great anti-climax. By the time most people heard the message of the book, the “soon” events of AD 70 would have already occurred. Revelation would have had one of the shortest shelf-lives of any book in history. [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007]

The Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) uses the word *tachos* in Isaiah 13:22 which predicted that Babylon’s time for judgment would “soon” occur. But, Isaiah was written around 700 BC; yet, Babylon wasn’t conquered until 539 BC. In fact, the full judgment on Babylon may still be in our future. Thomas Ice writes:

But does the phrase “this generation” in Matthew 24:34 demand a first-century fulfillment? I do not believe it does. The passage in full says, “Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.”

First, I want to note that there is nothing in the Greek grammar ... that would disallow either [preterist] Dr. Gentry’s or my interpretation. This is noted because some preterists say that if Christ were referring to a future generation, He would have said “that” instead of “this” generation. Not so! The timing of a passage is determined by how words are used in a particular context. Thus, if one is talking about something that will take place in the future, it is common to speak from the time perspective of the event. [Ice & Gentry, 1999, p. 124]

I do not believe that Christ’s Olivet discourse contains a single sentence, phrase, or term that requires a first-century fulfillment, except for Luke 21:20-24, as noted earlier. [Ice & Gentry, 1999, p. 131]

Randy Price argues that *two* temples (separated by perhaps 2,000 years) are being referred to [Ice & Gentry, 1999]. His reasons include:

- The Temple mentioned in Matthew 24:15 is not necessarily destroyed, but rather, desecrated. The temple in 70 AD was destroyed, but not desecrated in the manner of Daniel 9:24-27.
- The Temple’s desecration would be a signal to the Jews to escape, and be rescued and redeemed. That didn’t happen; nor did the angels gather the elect from around the world, as per Matthew 24:31.
- Those who saw Jerusalem and the Temple’s destruction in 70 AD should have seen Christ’s “immediate” coming, as per Matthew 24:29; yet, it has been almost 2,000 years since then.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daniel 9:27 states that the person who desecrates the Temple will be destroyed. Yet, those who destroyed the Temple in 70 AD (General Titus and Emperor Vespasian) “were not destroyed but returned to Rome in triumph carrying vessels from the destroyed Temple” [Ice & Gentry, 1999, p. 126]. After Vespasian, Titus was the emperor for 18 years; so, he couldn’t have fulfilled the prophecy. • A worldwide Tribulation was to occur; it hasn’t happened yet. All the nations of world will come against Jerusalem at the end of the Tribulation. That hasn’t happened. <p>We conclude that “soon” refers to the speed of an event’s fulfillment as things start to unfold. In terms of eschatology, there will be a rapid fulfillment of prophecies as Christ’s Second Coming approaches.</p> <p>The coming of Christ is still future, and is increasingly relevant for us today. Many of the lessons in Revelation provide hope for the future, but they also provide a picture of the terrors that await those who reject Christ, or who make war against Christ.</p> <p>Partial preterists claim that everything up to, and including, Revelation 19 was soon to pass (e.g., 70 AD), and that we are currently in the “Millennium” (i.e., the period between 70 AD and (in the future) the final judgment and the renewed Heavens and Earth). They argue that there is no gap between Revelation 3 and 4, that is, between the letters to the seven churches and a supposed Rapture. If we are in the Millennium already, then there is not much hope that the Church can radically improve earthly conditions and bring everyone to a form of utopia, before the return of Christ. Scripture says that even under Christ’s rule on Earth during the Millennium, there will still be a rebellion at the end of that period. So, if people won’t turn to Christ when He’s present on Earth, then it’s unlikely that people would turn to Christ when the Church is present but Christ is physically absent [Hunt & DeMar, 1998].</p>
Preterist Position	<p>The beast was somebody the early Christians could identify. In fact, Jesus said that that “generation will not pass away” before these things would come true.</p> <p>In the book of Daniel, Daniel was told to <i>seal up</i> the words. In Revelation, John is <i>unveiling</i> the things which will “soon” take place. Futurists (including dispensationalists) do a disservice to Christianity by claiming that the information contained in Revelation is only relevant to a future generation.</p> <p>Revelation was written for every generation to learn from. It was written prior to 70 AD; thus, people in Nero’s day could understand that he was <i>the</i> beast of Revelation. Nero committed suicide in 68 AD; so, if Nero was a beast in Revelation, this pegs a date of 68 AD or earlier for the writing of the book of Revelation.</p>

There was indeed a “soon” coming of Christ, and this is associated with the coming of Christ in judgment in 70 AD. Christ’s words were fulfilled within one generation. He is speaking in the language and manner of the Old Testament prophets. For example, in Isaiah 11:6 and 65:25, the prophet speaks of the wolf lying down with the lamb, in association with the coming judgment on Assyria (as per Isaiah 10-11).

Topic/ Question Consider the seven churches of Revelation 2-3. Does this portion of Revelation apply to *seven actual churches* that were contemporary to John when writing the book of Revelation ... or does it apply to *seven eras of church history* since then ... or does it apply to *seven, concurrent, types of churches* that are active today, and for that matter, at any point in time since Revelation was written?

Dispensationalist Position All three. The message Christ gave in Revelation 2-3 applied to seven *specific* churches contemporary to John (but not necessarily prior to 70 AD—see below); however, they also apply to the *kinds* of churches (or church ages) between then and now, *and* they are indicative of the kinds of churches that are present at any given time in church history. Furthermore, in the case of church ages or eras, they’re given in order. Seven is the number of completion in Scripture; so, this further suggests that these seven churches are representative churches throughout the centuries.

The letters serve as commendations in some cases, and warnings in other cases. Note the plural word “churches” in the following Scripture, that is found seven times in Revelation 2-3 (once for each church), implying that the reader/listener should listen to the message given to *all* the churches:

Revelation 2:29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

[Walvoord, *et al.*, 2011] summarize the key characteristics of each of the seven churches:

Church	Key Characteristic(s)
Ephesus	The orthodox, but lost-love church
Smyrna	The suffering church
Pergamum	The compromising church
Thyatira	The tolerant, permissive church
Sardis	The dead church
Philadelphia	The faithful church
Laodicea	The lukewarm, useless church

The following table is from [Missler, 2006]:

	Eph.	Smyr.	Perg.	Thya.	Sard.	Phil.	Laod.
Named?	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Titled?	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Commended?	x	x	x	x	no	x	no
Concerns about?	x	no	x	x	x	no	x
Exhorted? (i.e., Urged to ...)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
A Promise Given to the Overcomer?	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

J. Dwight Pentecost argues for three applications of the letters [Pentecost, 1958]:

- Application to the seven specific congregations to which the letters were initially addressed and circulated
- Application to the various kinds of churches and individuals throughout the following centuries, including modern times, during which all of these kinds of churches and individuals exist *concurrently*
- Application to the characteristic sequential *phases* that the Church was to pass, from the time of John to modern times. Thus, while the seven kinds of churches exist concurrently in any given period of time, one of the churches dominates a given period.

M.R. De Haan comments on the church ages [De Haan, 1946, p. 21]:

- “Ephesus was the Church of the first century.
- Smyrna was the persecuted Church of the second and third centuries.
- Pergamos [also written as Pergamum] was the church from about 312 A.D. to 500 A.D.
- Thyatira represents the Church of the Dark Ages, to the sixteenth century.
- Sardis is the Church of the Renaissance and the Reformation.
- Philadelphia is the Church of the Revival of the nineteenth century. (Note: Some say that the Philadelphia age of the church started in 1730.)
- Laodicea is the end-time Church of apostasy.”

Ephesus means “desirable one”.

Smyrna means “myrrh”—a fragrant spice that was crushed or beaten to fully release its fragrance. Besides its use as a perfume, it is used for embalming and as an ingredient in the holy anointing oil used in the tabernacle in the Old Testament [Walvoord, *et al.*, 2011].

Pergamos means “married”, and this church age reflects an unholy union with the world, when the church became wealthy and worldly; it was a time of compromise. Tolerance of non-biblical spiritual views in the church is not a

virtue; however, the church is inclusive in the sense that all people are welcome [Johnson, 2004].

Thyatira means “a continual sacrifice” and describes a time when “the finished work of Christ was denied, and to it were added works, ceremonies, ritual and sacrifices” [De Haan, 1946].

The name *Sardis* means “remnant or that which remained”. During this time, the printing press was discovered and the Reformation took course (e.g., Martin Luther, who rebelled against ecclesiastical hierarchies). But still, there wasn’t much spiritual growth.

Philadelphia means “brotherly love”. This church age was a time of missionary movement. Broadcasting was introduced as a technology.

The seventh church, *Laodicea*, is marked by lukewarmness or indifference. Laodicea was located six miles from Hierapolis, known for its hot springs, which had therapeutic properties; and near Colossae, which had refreshing cold springs [Johnson, 2004]. The city had no natural source of water; instead, the waters were brought in via stone pipes. By the time the waters got to Laodicea, they were neither hot nor cold. Some other qualities of Laodicea: it was wealthy, it was known for its garment industry, and it developed an eye salve which was claimed to help with vision problems. Ironically, in His letter to the church, Jesus said that the church was poor, blind, and naked. Lastly, Christ appears to be shut out of the church of Laodicea: “I stand at the door, and knock”.

It is not clear that the seven churches existed prior to 70 AD; therefore, the events of 70 AD do not appear to be a fulfillment of the prophecies given to these seven churches. For example, Polycarp was the bishop at Smyrna, and in his letter to the Philippians (circa 110 AD), Polycarp claims that the residents of Smyrna did not know the Lord during this time [LaHaye & Ice, 2003]. Furthermore, Nero’s persecution of the Christians preceded the letter to the church of Smyrna. Also, Christ commended the church at Ephesus in Revelation; however, the church described does not appear to characterize Ephesus in Paul’s day (pre-70 AD).

Who are the Nicolaitans? The Greek name means “rulers of the people”. There is no mention of this group in church history. Arnold Fruchtenbaum conjectures that this implies an unnatural division of the clergy and the lay people, and perhaps interference of the clergy in the personal lives of its members [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. It may also refer to the notion of the clergy ruling over the laity [Missler, 2005].

John MacArthur comments that Ephesus was the gateway to Asia because of the 4 trade routes that passed through it [MacArthur, 2006]. It provided a nice

harbor. The apostle Paul lived and ministered there for 3 years. Timothy, John, and Tychicus also ministered there. John was arrested by Domitian and sent to the island of Patmos, about 80 kilometres from Ephesus. Ephesus was where the Greeks worshiped the goddess Artemis (or the Romans worshiped Diana). That temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

With respect to the “ten days” of persecution associated with the church of Smyrna, there is also no evidence of fulfillment of this in church history.

Constantine made Christianity the official state religion in the Roman Empire in 313 AD (Pergamos era); thus, the church was “married” to the state. Interestingly, under Constantine, Christianity went from being persecuted to being promoted [Woods, 2021a].

Christ mentions that Pergamos is where Satan’s throne is, where Satan dwells, and where the teachings of Balaam hold.

Balaam, in Numbers 22-24, was a seer of Mesopotamia. He was hired by Balak, the king of Moab, in league with the Midianites, to pronounce a prophetic curse on Israel. Although on four different occasions he tried to curse the Jews, God took control of the seer so that on all four occasions he pronounced a blessing on the Jews instead. With the failure of pronouncing a prophetic curse on Israel, Balaam used a different tactic to have Israel cursed by God. At his recommendation, the females of Moab and Midian were sent out to entice the Jewish men sexually. Part of the enticement included the worship of the gods of Moab and Midian. The plot worked, Israel was cursed, and many died in a plague. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 55]

Overcomers in Pergamum are promised a white stone and a new name. Sometimes in Scripture a new name was given to a person after spiritual victories (e.g., Jacob became Israel, Abram became Abraham):

In the ancient world there were two ways that one received a white stone. One way was when a person was found innocent in a trial; he was given a white stone as a symbol of acquittal. Another way was when a person was to be received into the membership of a private club; he would be given a white stone which was a symbol of his acceptance. ... *Third*, the promise is that he will be given a new name written on the stone which only he will know. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 56-57]

Christ’s comments to the church of Thyatira included anger over practices due to Queen Jezebel. She introduced Baal worship (idolatry and spiritual fornication) into Israel in Old Testament times. Baal worship (or the worship of Tammuz—because Baal and Tammuz are often identified as being the same person) was one of the false religions in Canaan [Walvoord, 1990]. Incidentally, the name Jezebel means “without a husband” [Ice, 2015c]. Arnold Fruchtenbaum argues that such practices laid the foundation for some of the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church during the Dark Ages. He argues that the Roman Catholic Church will go through the Tribulation period (Revelation 2:22), and may actually play a role during the Tribulation:

It was during this period [Thyatira] that ten false doctrines were introduced into the church:

1. Justification by works—Not simply by grace through faith;
2. Baptismal regeneration—That a person is saved by baptism;
3. Worship of images;
4. Celibacy—Forbidding priests to marry, a further distinction between clergy and laity;
5. Confessionalism—Where sins are confessed to a priest who then declares absolution of those sins;
6. Purgatory—A place of confinement which is neither Heaven nor Hell, but a place where one has to be refined before going into Heaven, and so sanctification was not complete at death;
7. Transubstantiation—The concept of the continual and perpetual sacrifice of Jesus;
8. Indulgences—Where through the giving of money, a person's time in purgatory could be reduced;
9. Penance—Involving the torment of one's body in order to reduce time in purgatory; and
10. Mariolatry—The worship of the virgin Mary, her elevation as the mother of God, and the declaration of her deity. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 59-60]

The church of Sardis, known for its idolatry, is associated with the time leading up to the Reformation period. During the Reformation, some churches broke away from the Roman Catholic Church. However, many of them remained state churches (e.g., Lutheran churches in Germany and Scandinavia, Anglican churches in England, Presbyterian churches in Scotland).

In Revelation 3:10, Christ tells the church of Philadelphia that he will keep them “from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth”. John uses the Greek words *tereo* and *ek*. The word *tereo* means “keep, preserve, protect”, and *ek* means “out of”. However, when *tereo* is used with the word *en*, it means “to cause one to persevere or stand firm in a thing” [Pentecost, 1958; Hitchcock, 2011c]. The phrase “to test those who live on the earth” seems to refer to the Tribulation, and the implication is that the Church is not there.

Pentecost adds that since the presence of one righteous man in Sodom prevented judgment on Sodom, the Lord will remove the church prior to outpouring of judgment on the earth during the Tribulation. Since the time of the original Philadelphia church has passed, and since the age in which the Philadelphia church dominated has passed, this suggests that characteristics of all seven churches will be present up to the time of the Rapture. Furthermore, there is no evidence that Revelation 3:10 (a worldwide trial) found its fulfillment in the early church. Scripture seems to indicate that God would keep the Philadelphia church from “the hour” or the *time* of testing—still future. Note that if the Philadelphia church is only viewed as a relatively modern, missions-oriented church ... and if the Philadelphia church was be

spared from the Tribulation via the Rapture, then this poses a problem with the doctrine of imminence for believers prior to that church age [Beshore, 2013].

Some scholars believe that Christians today are living in the age of the Laodicean church—the seventh church listed in Revelation: a kind of church that is not “suffering” to the extent of the earlier churches, but rather a church that appears to be indifferent, and not recognizing that it itself is in need. In this age of apostasy, there have been many church *splits* (i.e., one new church, one remaining church) due to differences in teachings because preachers deviate from Scripture. In some cases, these splits have occurred over disputable, but non-essential, issues, in which case the members should respectfully disagree with one another, but not divide over [Hanegraaff, 2003+].

Isaiah 8:20 To the law and to the testimony: if they speak **not according to this word**, it is because there is no light in them.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 **All Scripture** is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be **thoroughly equipped** for every good work.

Acts 17:11 Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and **examined the Scriptures** every day to see if what Paul said was true.

Recall that Christ validated most of the Old Testament authors by quoting scripture verses from them. The “law and the testimony” refer to Moses and the prophets, and “this word” refers to Scripture.

The phrase “angels of the seven churches” suggests that individual angels are assigned to guide or watch out for individual churches [Morris, 1983]. Had John meant “pastors” instead of “angels”, he likely would have said so.

Since the last four churches—Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea—appear to survive until the return of Christ, then that would imply that the churches represent *stages* of church development over the ages. Furthermore, since the “hour of trial” (Tribulation) did not occur in the historical Philadelphia church, it is conjectured that the Rapture and the characteristics of the Philadelphia church apply to a future time period.

A rough correlation between periods in church history is given in the following table [Morris, 1983, p. 66]:

Church	Period in Church History	When?
Ephesus	Apostolic age	Before 100 AD
Smyrna	Age of persecution	100-313 AD

	<table border="1" data-bbox="542 191 1276 384"> <tr> <td>Pergamos</td> <td>Imperial church age</td> <td>313-590 AD</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Thyatira</td> <td>Age of papacy</td> <td>590-1517</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sardis</td> <td>Reformation</td> <td>1517-1730</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Philadelphia</td> <td>Missionary age</td> <td>1730-1900</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Laodicea</td> <td>Age of apostasy</td> <td>1900-</td> </tr> </table> <p>Note, however, that not all churches throughout the world would fit well into these periods of time. For example, some churches might have been wealthy and carefree at a given time; but other churches around the world might have been poor and suffering at the same time.</p>	Pergamos	Imperial church age	313-590 AD	Thyatira	Age of papacy	590-1517	Sardis	Reformation	1517-1730	Philadelphia	Missionary age	1730-1900	Laodicea	Age of apostasy	1900-
Pergamos	Imperial church age	313-590 AD														
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Sardis	Reformation	1517-1730														
Philadelphia	Missionary age	1730-1900														
Laodicea	Age of apostasy	1900-														
Preterist Position	<p>This has a first-century context and fulfillment. It is not a twenty-first century prophecy; it has nothing to do with the Second Coming or the Rapture. For example, Christ would not be making a promise to a church in Philadelphia—in Asia Minor—about a twenty-first century fulfillment. It was specifically written to the Church in Philadelphia in the first century; however, we can still apply some of the teachings to us today.</p> <p>Jesus was obviously speaking of a fore-future event when he encouraged the church in Smyrna with the words, ‘Do not be afraid of what <i>you</i> are <i>about</i> to suffer. I tell <i>you</i>, the devil will put some of <i>you</i> in prison to test <i>you</i>, and <i>you</i> will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give <i>you</i> the crown of life’ (Revelation 2:10). ... Make no mistake: while our Lord’s words apply to us, they were written to a first-century church about to face the mother of all tribulations.</p> <p>As with the church at Smyrna, Jesus says to the church of Philadelphia, ‘I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth’ (Revelation 3:10). It is incredible to suppose that Jesus is telling this first-century church that he is going to protect them from an hour of trial that is going to take place sometime between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 91-92]</p> <p>There were actually seven churches in Asia Minor (also known as the Province of Asia) that were the recipients of John’s letter (Revelation) [Gentry, 1998b]. The seven churches were being warned and encouraged with the message of Revelation and the ultimate future plans that God has for all believers who stand firm in the faith. Since this was written before 70 AD, it would give them information and strength about a near-future calamity and judgment upon Jerusalem. With the tribulation going on around them, and people claiming, “We have no king but Caesar”, the seven churches got special strength from the messages of Revelation.</p> <p>Some authors state that there is no reason to believe that the seven churches of Revelation are symbolic of seven stages of Church history [Johnson, 2004]. For example, the church of Thyatira does not refer to the papacy, and Sardis does not refer to the Protestant Reformation [Hanegraaff, 2007]. Revelation specifically mentions that the events described are “soon” to take place. This rules out a modern-day fulfillment.</p>															

	<p>Christ would not have deluded first-century believers by saying, “I will also keep <i>you</i> from the hour of trial (Revelation 3:10) when the <i>you</i> intended were twenty-first-century believers. It is inconceivable that our Lord was informing a persecuted first-century church that twenty centuries later the church would be spared persecution via a pretribulational rapture invented by nineteenth-century believers. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 159-160]</p> <p>Some of the terms used in the letters to the seven churches have direct connections to the Old Testament [Hanegraaff, 2007]. Indeed, the Old Testament language and imagery would be familiar to them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tree of life appeared in Genesis • The ten days of fasting appeared in Daniel • The heavenly manna appeared in Exodus • Jezebel, who promoted, idolatry appeared in Kings • The seven spirits appeared in Zechariah • The key of David appeared in Isaiah • Christ’s rebuke appeared in Proverbs • The sevenfold judgment (that appears four times in Revelation) appeared in Leviticus <p>We would be wise to study the Old Testament to give us greater insight into Revelation, and this is the focus of Hank Hanegraaff’s work in exegetical eschatology.</p>
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Topic/ Question	The four horsemen of the Apocalypse are mentioned in Revelation 6:1-8. Who are the horsemen, and what do they represent?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>The first horseman rides a white horse, and traditionally he is said to be the Antichrist—who goes out to conquer. He has a bow, but no arrows. This suggests that the Antichrist will rise to power while initially proclaiming peace and solutions to society’s ills. This horseman is followed by bad news, as the remaining 3 horsemen wind up destroying many people. Since the Antichrist is being restrained by the Holy Spirit acting through the Church (2 Thessalonians 2:6-7), and since the Church is currently on earth, that implies that the first seal has not yet been opened.</p> <p>A minority of scholars (e.g., [Morris, 1983]) have argued that the first horseman is Jesus Christ ... because He is the only horseman wearing a crown, and it is the victor’s crown (<i>stephanos</i> in the Greek). The first horseman may be a symbolic introduction to Christ, since Christ is again riding a horse in Revelation 19:11,19 when He returns at Armageddon. The fact that this horseman goes out “to conquer” is why many scholars equate the rider to the Antichrist. However, Morris points out that the word “conquer” is the same as the word “overcome” used in Christ’s comments to the seven churches in</p>

Revelation 2-3. That said, we note that Christ is the one who is actually opening the 7-sealed scroll; so, he is unlikely to be the rider on the white horse.

The second horseman rides a red horse and seems to initiate wars in the end times.

The third horseman rides a black horse and seems to initiate food shortages and inflation in the end times. Many people will be working all day just to pay for very basic food supplies.

The fourth horseman rides a pale horse and seems to bring death by sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts (or possibly micro-organisms or transfers of diseases from wild animals to people, according to some scholars [e.g., Hitchcock, 2020]). Approximately one-quarter of the earth's population is affected by the fourth horseman. Bill Salus argues that the pale horseman (or horsemen) have power over one-quarter of the world, but don't necessarily kill one-quarter of the world's population [Salus, 2019].

Revelation 6:7-8 When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

If one-quarter of the earth's population is killed via the 4th seal, this is an argument that some scholars have for placing the 4th seal within the Great Tribulation (i.e., the second half of the Tribulation).

Here is a table (repeated in part, from earlier) comparing Christ's Olivet Discourse to the 7 seal judgments of Revelation 6-7, highlighting the parallels between these 2 sets of judgments [Walvoord, *et al.*, 2011, p. 120]:

Olivet Discourse	Revelation 6-7
False Christs (Matthew 24:4-5)	Rider on the white horse (Revelation 6:1-2)
Wars and rumors of wars (Matthew 24:6-7)	Rider on the red horse (Revelation 6:3-4)
Famines and earthquakes (Matthew 24:7)	Rider on the black horse (Revelation 6:5-6)
Famines and plagues (Matthew 24:7; Luke 21:11)	Rider on the pale horse (Revelation 6:7-8)
Persecution and martyrdom (Matthew 24:9-10)	Martyrs (Revelation 6:9-11)
Terrors and great cosmic signs (Luke 21:11)	Terror (Revelation 6:12-17)

Worldwide preaching of the gospel (Matthew 24:14)	Ministry of the 144,000 (Revelation 7:1-8)
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Mark Hitchcock thinks that the rider on the white horse could be a *series* of false Christs [Hitchcock, 2020]. The final false Christ will be the Antichrist.

Lastly, here is a table showing how the book of Revelation shifts between earth and heaven—sometimes for only a few verses, and sometimes for several chapters at a time [Walvoord, *et al.*, 2011, p. 121]:

Location	Chapters and Verses
Earth	Revelation 1-3
Heaven	Revelation 4-5
Earth	Revelation 6:1-8
Heaven	Revelation 6:9-11
Earth	Revelation 6:12-16
Heaven	Revelation 7:1 to 8:6
Earth	Revelation 8:7 to 11:14
Heaven	Revelation 11:15 to 12:4
Earth	Revelation 12:5 to 14:20
Heaven	Revelation 15:1-8
Earth	Revelation 16-18
Heaven	Revelation 19:1-10
Earth	Revelation 19:11 to 20:10
Heaven	Revelation 20:11 to 22:21

Preterist Position

Although the rider on the white horse in Revelation 19 is indisputably Jesus, there is division among scholars about the rider of the white horse in Revelation 6 [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, August 4, 2011]. The context suggests that the rider in Revelation 6 is an Antichrist figure because of the subsequent horses described in the text, and because the first horseman may be a parody of Christ. Also, similar language is used (i.e., “conquer”) in Revelation 13:7 to describe an action of the beast. We know that Satan is a deceiver.

The first horse is the power of evil, imitating Jesus—white, crown, etc.—seeking to conquer.

Evil is not in charge. Evil is not on the throne. Evil is on a leash. [Johnson, 2004, p. 171]

There are at least 3 paths of thought about the rider on the white horse. Some preterists view the rider on the white horse in Revelation 6:1-2 to be the Romans marching towards Jerusalem in 67 AD [Gentry, 1998a]. Other preterists believe that the rider on the white horse is either Vespasian or Titus of the Roman army [Gregg, 2013]. Yet others think that it is Jesus who is about to go to war against those who rejected and killed Him [Gregg, 2013].

	<p>What similarities are there to Jesus Christ? First, in Revelation 6, the rider carries a bow. Recall from Habakkuk 3:9 that the Lord or warrior-king carries a bow. Second, he goes out to “conquer”. Third, the rider wears a crown—again, a similarity to Jesus Christ.</p> <p>The second horseman takes peace from the land, which is Israel (Luke 19:42). The first century had civil wars among the Jews [Gregg, 2013]. The third horseman represents food shortages which occurred during first century Israel. Josephus wrote of food shortages. The fourth horseman is the rider of the pale horse. He brings death via sword, hunger, pestilence and the beasts of the earth. Josephus also wrote about the many dead, decomposing bodies and their stench.</p>
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Topic/ Question	Consider the phrase “signs in the heavens”, that is, the sun being darkened, the moon not giving its light, and the stars falling from the sky. Revelation 6:13 speaks of stars falling to the earth. Is this literal?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>The word “star” (<i>aster</i> in the Greek) is used to refer to any celestial body other than the sun or moon [Morris, 1983]. The darkening of the sun, and the moon not giving its light, can be interpreted literally. For example, it might be that thick smoke in the air may be due to volcanic activity, war, massive fires (e.g., consider the oil and gas fires in Kuwait and Iraq in the 1990s). Stars falling from the sky might refer to meteor showers because the Hebrew language does not differentiate between stars and meteors.</p> <p>Stars are also a metaphor for angels in Scripture [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. For example, Revelation 12:3-6 and Isaiah 14:9-14 are passages that use this term.</p> <p>As a general rule, events that don’t seem to make any sense could well be symbolic. All other things should be considered to be literal, unless there is a clear reason not to do so—perhaps due to an earlier reference in Scripture. Be aware that there may be both a symbolic and a literal interpretation that are valid for the same event.</p> <p>Note the events that <i>follow</i> the Tribulation:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Mark 13:24-27 [NKJV] "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; "the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. "And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven.</p>
Preterist Position	It is not literal. Stars being flung to Earth make no sense since a single star could swallow up the earth.

Note that *Israel* is described in Scripture as being the sun, moon, and stars (see Genesis 37 and Revelation 12).

In the Hebrew tradition, when God declared judgment upon a nation, be it Israel or surrounding people's, apocalyptic language was used. A common theme was a collapsing universe. When people heard the prophets speak about the sun and moon losing their lights and about stars falling from heaven, everyone knew judgment was coming. No one stared at the sky for falling stars; they knew it was not literal. The lights represent authorities, and these powers were about to fall ... [Newton, 2012, p. 149]

In the Old Testament, figures of speech were used that were not meant to be taken literally. For example, in Isaiah 13:10, the fall of Babylon (to the Medes) is described: "the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall":

Isaiah 13:9-10 See, the day of the LORD is coming -- a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger -- to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light.

Surely no one supposes that the stars went into supernova when Isaiah pronounced judgment on Babylon in 539 BC. Instead, as Isaiah used the sun, moon, and stars as judgment metaphors against Babylon, our Lord used them as judgment images against Jerusalem. Indeed, only when we interpret Scripture in light of Scripture rather than Scripture in light of the daily newspaper do we perceive its perspicuous meaning. [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 233]

This language is similar to the judgment language used by Jesus. It is not allegorizing or spiritualizing; instead, it is descriptive language about a nation falling [Hunt & DeMar, 1998]. Similar language is used in Isaiah 34 regarding the fall of Edom, or Ezekiel 32 regarding the fall of Egypt.

Interestingly, some preterists indicate that there is the possibility of real signs appearing in the sky in association with some of these judgments:

We cannot be certain what those signs were, but we do know that both Josephus and Tacitus described several signs that appeared in the sky before the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem during the reign of Nero. [Eberle & Trench, 2021, Kindle edition, location 11799]

Josephus records strange events that occurred in the days of and preceding Jerusalem's destruction: a "star resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year ... on the eight[h] day of the month Nisan, and at the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone around the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day time, which lasted for half an hour." [Josephus, *The Works of Josephus*, cited in [Newton, 2012, p. 151]]

Topic/ Question	Revelation 6:14 mentions that every mountain and island were moved out of their places. Is this literal?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>This is a more difficult passage to interpret than the one about possible meteors entering the earth's atmosphere or meteorites striking the earth (Revelation 6:13). It literally may be a massive natural catastrophe. The effect of earthquakes and continental drift (of significant magnitude) could satisfy the prophecy of verse 14 [Morris, 1983]. Note that islands are partially submerged mountains.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">But then, amazingly, even this would pass. After these few terrifying days, the stars stopped falling and the terrible shakings ceased. The survivors emerged from their shelters and began again to rationalize their resistance to God. After all, these awful calamities could be explained scientifically, so perhaps they had been too quick to attribute them to God's wrath. They quickly set about rebuilding their damaged structures and became more resolute than ever in their opposition to the gospel of Christ. [Morris, 1983, p. 124]</p>
Preterist Position	It is not literal.

Topic/ Question	Who are the 144,000 in Revelation 7, and do they literally have a mark on their foreheads? When do the 144,000 witnesses begin their ministry? When do the 2 witnesses begin their ministry?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>The fact that God is using the 2 witnesses and the 144,000 in the book of Revelation is a good indicator that the church is not present for any of the 7-year Tribulation; otherwise, the church would be doing a lot of the evangelism.</p> <p>The 144,000 are real people: 12,000 descended from each of the 12 tribes of Israel, as described in Revelation 7. They will witness to a large number of non-believers, attempting to draw them to Jesus Christ. They are virgins, they don't lie, and they are "blameless" (Revelation 14:4-5). They have God's grace upon them, as did Noah, who "was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God" (Genesis 6:9).</p> <p>The 144,000 saints are sealed and protected at the start of their ministry. They preach the gospel after the Rapture of the Church. They are specifically enumerated into 12 groups of 12,000. The innumerable saints that are mentioned in Revelation are unsealed martyrs "from every nation, tribe, people, and language" (Revelation 13:7). Thus, these two groups are different; the latter are Gentiles.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">During the seventieth week the church must be absent, for out of the saved remnant in Israel God seals 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from each tribe, according to Revelation 7:14. The fact that God is again dealing with</p>

Israel on this national relationship, setting them apart to national identities, and sending them as special representatives to the nations in place of the witness of the church, indicates that the church must no longer be on earth. [Pentecost, 1958, p. 214]

When does the ministry of the 144,000 take place? The 144,000 are sealed shortly before the first 3 trumpet judgments. This suggests that their ministry begins near the middle of the Tribulation. Thomas Ice believes that the ministry of the 144,000 begins even earlier: at the start of the first half of the Tribulation [Ice, 2021f].

The two witnesses, on the other hand, limit their ministry to Israel, and more specifically, to Jerusalem—probably in the first half of the Tribulation. Some scholars, however, think that the two witnesses will prophesy in the second half of the Tribulation (e.g., John Walvoord and Mark Hitchcock [Salus, 2019]); but, those scholars are likely in the minority. Hitchcock argues that the trumpet judgments take place in the second half of the Tribulation, and this would imply that the two witnesses minister in the second half, as well. One problem with this reasoning is that the 3½ days of celebrations by unbelievers are unlikely to take place in the days leading up to, or after, Armageddon. Also, there is no statement in Scripture that requires their 3½ years of ministry *to align with* the midpoint of the Tribulation. Thus, we infer that their ministry begins earlier. Most prophecy teachers (e.g., Tim LaHaye, Ron Rhodes) think their ministry is mostly, if not totally, in the first half of the Tribulation.

Bill Salus argues: If the ministry of the two witnesses takes place in the second half of the Tribulation, then they are in defiance of God’s order for the Jews to flee to the mountains after seeing the abomination of desolation (Matthew 24:15-16) [Salus, 2019]. Also, the Antichrist is unlikely to let the two witnesses continue their ministry when he is taking control of the world. Regarding the 3½-day problem mentioned above: Salus argues that those 3½ days would extend past Armageddon. Armageddon would hardly be a time for the inhabitants of the earth, who are hostile to God’s message, to rejoice and send each other gifts. Note also that the two witnesses are resurrected before the seventh trumpet sounds (Revelation 11:15). All the bowl judgments are still to come.

Thus, the two witnesses probably minister in the first half of the Tribulation. In fact, the two witnesses might even provide “cover” for the Jews against any opposition as they rebuild the temple [Ice, 2014d]. Recall that the two witnesses can call down fire from heaven (Revelation 11:5-7). After they are killed at about the midpoint of the Tribulation, the protection that the two witnesses provided is no longer there, and perhaps this is why the Antichrist now goes full steam ahead in invading the Temple and declaring himself to be God.

	<p>It's possible that the 144,000 take over from where the two witnesses left off.</p> <p>In summary, Salus argues that: (a) the first 5 seal judgments occur in the gap between the Rapture and the Tribulation, (b) the 6th and 7th seal judgments and the first 6 trumpet judgments take place during the first half of the Tribulation, and (c) the 7th trumpet judgment and all 7 bowl judgments take place during the second half of the Tribulation [Salus, 2019]. Andy Woods concurs. His rationale for this is that the seal and trumpet judgments end around Revelation 11, which is where the third temple is described. The temple is desecrated shortly thereafter, and that would be the midpoint of the Tribulation.</p> <p>Lastly, we know that the remnant of Jews described in Romans 11:26 are not converted to Christ until just before the Second Coming. The 144,000 are part of Israel, and the 144,000 are saved. It is true that all that remain of Israel (i.e., the “remnant”) will be saved—and there will be many saved. It is believed that the 144,000 are instrumental in bringing these Jews to Christ. This may be why they are called “firstfruits” in Revelation 14:4, that is, they are representative of many more to come.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>The number 144,000 is probably representative of a large multitude of individuals: $12 \times 12 \times 1,000$. The number “12” is used to represent the 12 apostles (disciples), and the 12 tribes of Israel. Times “10” refers to a large quantity; 10 times 10 is many times larger; and 10 times 10 times 10 is a very large number. We know that the word “thousand” is used in many places in Scripture to indicate a large number. The 144,000 may represent “true Israel”—a number too large to count—a purified people from all nations and languages [Hanegraaff, 2003+; Johnson, 2004].</p> <p>The 144,000 do not have the name “The Lamb” or “The Father” literally written on their foreheads; rather, John is using <i>symbolic</i> language.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The virginity of this company is not with reference to their physical singleness, but rather to their refusal to associate with the harlot (Jerusalem or Rome ...) [Gregg, 2013, p. 374]</p> <p>The 144,000 is the “great multitude” in Revelation, albeit from different viewpoints. For example, the “lion” and the “lamb” both refer to Jesus, yet with different viewpoints; both of these terms are also used in Revelation. The 144,000 people refer to the purified bride of Christ, and 144,000 is likely a figurative number meaning a very large number of people who are redeemed through Christ. This group is called “true Israel”. It has nothing to do with what the Jehovah’s Witnesses call the 144,000 (which is a select group that has been closed off to membership, many years ago).</p>

True Israel is made up of Jews and Gentiles, male and female. There is no need to think of this group as being 144,000 men from the 12 tribes of Israel. “God is neither racist nor sexist”, writes Hank Hanegraaff.

Indeed, the 144,000 are “*a great multitude* that no one can count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne and to the Lamb’” (Revelation 7:9-10). ...

Literarily, the 144,000 and the great multitude are comparable to the Lion and the Lamb. Just as John is *told* about a Lion and turns to *see* a Lamb (Revelation 5:5-6), so he is *told* about the 144,000 and turns to *see* a great multitude (Revelation 7). Thus, the 144,000 are to the great multitude what the Lion is to the Lamb, namely, the same entity seen from two different vantage points. From one vantage point, the purified bride is numbered; from another, she is innumerable—a great multitude that no none can count. ...

It is far more likely that 144,000 is a number that represents the twelve apostles of the Lamb multiplied by the twelve tribes of Israel, times one thousand. The figurative use of the number twelve and its multiples is well established in biblical history. ... The figurative use of the whole number one thousand is virtually ubiquitous in Old Testament usage. For example, God increased the number of the Israelites a thousand times (Deuteronomy 1:11); God keeps his covenant to a thousand generations (Psalm 50:10); the least of Zion will become a thousand and the smallest a mighty nation (Isaiah 60:22); a day in God’s sight is better than a thousand elsewhere (Psalm 84:10) ... [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp.125-127]

Ken Gentry believes that the 144,000 “represent the firstfruits of the gospel from Jewish converts in Israel ... they are the beginning of the new covenant phase of the church” [Gentry, 1998a, p. 57].

The 144,000 cannot be interpreted as Jews who will some day escape persecution in a yet future age. In no intelligible sense could such a group of Jews be considered “firstfruits.” Historically, the firstfruits of the Christian church were among the Jews—in fact among the very Jews who are here mentioned: those in Jerusalem, who escaped the destruction in 70 AD. How artificial to twist “firstfruits” into the very *last* fruits of the Christian era! [Jay Adams quoted in [Gregg, 2013, p. 376]]

The normative view among evangelical *preterists* is that this 144,000 is a symbolic number representing the full number of Jewish Christians who escaped the doomed city [Jerusalem] before its destruction [in 70 AD]. [Gregg, 2013, p. 178]

Eberle and Trench claim that the 144,000 sealed people in Revelation 7:4-8 are not the same as the 144,000 in Revelation 14 because the latter group are Christians who had already died at the time of writing, and were therefore already in Heaven [Eberle & Trench, 2021].

Topic/ Question	Why is the tribe of Dan (one of the 12 sons of Jacob) left out in Revelation 7? (Dan is the only one of the 12 tribes that is left out in Revelation 7.) Who, or what, are the 12 tribes of Israel, from which the 144,000 sealed Israelites come?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>The 12 tribes/sons of Jacob are listed 20 times in Scripture. The 12 sons of Jacob are: Gad and Asher (both born by Zilpah); Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun (all born by Leah); Joseph and Benjamin (both born to Rachel); and Dan and Naphtali (both born to Bilhah).</p> <p>Ezekiel 48 describes the allocation of land, in essentially horizontal strips, to the 12 tribes during the Millennium. Israel’s land will be bounded by the Mediterranean Sea in the west; a large part of Syria well north of Damascus in the north; the Euphrates River in the east, and a river in Egypt (south of Gaza) in the south. Jesus said that the 12 disciples will rule the 12 tribes of Israel. The 12 gates of Jerusalem will be named after each of Jacob’s sons.</p> <p>Dan is absent from the book of Revelation. This is a mystery, and probably no accident; God is trying to tell us something [Johnson, 2020b]. Some scholars conjecture that it is because of the tribe of Dan’s unwillingness to go to battle, and instead “linger by the ships” in a time of trouble (Judges 5:17). Others speculate that the Antichrist may come from the tribe of Dan (though this is unlikely as the Antichrist is likely to be a Gentile—see also the section about “the gods of his fathers”).</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">One notable omission from the 144,000 is the tribe of Dan. Even though he was the son of Bilhah, Rachel’s servant (Gen. 30:4-6), some scholars have thought that the Antichrist would come from this tribe, perhaps because of their history of idolatry; when golden calves were set up for worship in Israel, they were located in Dan and in Bethel ... Scripture refers to Dan as a serpent (Gen. 49:17) and a lion (Deut. 33:22). The only other being who is associated with both animals is Satan. [Jeremiah, 2016, p. 1846]</p> <p>Gary Stearman conjectures:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Jesus sprang from the tribe of Judah. But another lion is coming, this time from Dan. He will be a pretender to the messianic throne who will claim to fight for Judah and Jerusalem. This lion—the Antichrist—will spring from Bashan, the fertile territory east of the Sea of Galilee, and northward to Mount Hermon and Damascus. ...</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Bashan lies in this territory! Through this prophecy, Moses affirms that the Antichrist will leap from the dynasty of the Seleucids. [Stearman, 2020, p. 17]</p> <p>Nevertheless, Dan is present in the list of tribes in the Millennial division of lands in Ezekiel 48, which, by the way, is different than the division of tribes in the book of Joshua. We shouldn’t read much into the absence of Dan since there is no other mention of it in Scripture and, as mentioned, the tribe of Dan</p>

	<p>appears in the Millennium [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. The Millennial Jerusalem is about ten miles long on each side, i.e., about 10 miles squared, or about 100 square miles. The 12 gates will be named after the 12 sons of Jacob. Gentile nations will bring tribute into the city. In particular, the Feast of Tabernacles will be respected and celebrated by the Gentiles during the Millennium; otherwise, the offending Gentile nations will not receive rainfall (Zechariah 14:16-19).</p>
Preterist Position	<p>The number 12,000 does not necessarily refer to 12,000 literal individuals from every tribe of Israel. Ten of the 12 tribes lost their national identity during the Assyrian exile almost 1,000 years before Christ. The two remaining tribes—Judah and Benjamin—were almost annihilated during the Roman empire about 2,000 years ago.</p> <p>The bottom line is that “true Israel” is innumerable, and is made up of those who believe in Jesus Christ. This includes Rahab (a Canaanite) and Ruth (a Moabite), who were not Jews, but are part of true Israel. True Israel is not a matter of <i>physical</i> Israel, but rather all those who have expressed faith in Jesus Christ (or in the Old Testament, believed in the God of Israel) [Hanegraff, <i>Bible Answer Man</i>, February 22, 2011].</p> <p>In the Old Testament, people looked forward through types and shadows. Jesus Christ came in the New Testament. God does not draw a distinction between ethnicity and race: all who come to God through faith are considered to be “true Israel”.</p>

Topic/ Question	<p>What is meant by Revelation 9:6, which states: “During those days, men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.” The context is: locusts torturing men in the latter days—for 5 months. Are these literal locusts?</p> <p>What is the connection, if any, between the locusts of Revelation 9 and the mounted army of 200,000,000 mentioned later in that chapter? Both of those entities have the “appearance” of horses.</p>
Dispensationalist Position	<p>There are two parts to this prophecy of locusts in Revelation 9. First, we find that this army of locusts that has come from the Abyss (part of Hades) has a king ruling over them. The king’s name is “Abaddon” in Hebrew and “Apollyon” in Greek, both meaning “destroyer”. It is not clear if the king of the demons in the Abyss is Satan himself; but recall that elsewhere in Scripture, Satan is considered to be the prince of demons (Matthew 9:34; 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:51), and since Genesis 3, Satan has been on a destructive and murderous path (John 8:44) [Page, 1995]. Note also that the king is likely different than the “star” or angel that has the key to the Abyss in Revelation 9:1, especially when considering a similar angelic role in Revelation 20:1 [Heiser, 2018]. In other words, the angels in Revelation 9:1-2 and Revelation 20:1 are good angels—possibly the same one.</p>

Second, the locusts torment—but do not kill—mankind for 5 months. This is the fifth trumpet judgment. The locusts described here are most likely demons who assume a locust-like form. They are not literal locusts for several reasons [Hitchcock, 2010; Hitchcock 2015c; Thomas, 1995]:

- a) Their leader is a demon. In Proverbs 30:27, we read that literal locusts have no leader/king.
- b) They come from the Abyss, where demons are temporarily imprisoned. They may have been demons that have been confined to the Abyss for thousands of years.
- c) Their object of attack is not vegetation; but rather, people.
- d) They only torture those who do *not* belong to God, as per Revelation 9:4. Their intent is to spread as much misery as possible. It is possible that they simply want to torture *everybody*. However, throughout Scripture, we find that demons cannot indwell believers; so, this would be consistent with that teaching. The Holy Spirit indwells believers, and this leaves no room for demons.
- e) Their appearance does not equate to any currently known creature, and is frightening.
- f) Demonic beings can materialize themselves in human or animal form.

It is not clear why demonic beings would torture people who are *not* followers of God. Perhaps they want to attack *everyone*, but God supernaturally protects the believers. Note that the Hebrews were spared from the effects of some of the plagues that fell upon the Egyptians prior to the Exodus.

Recall from Jesus' miracles that there was not one example of a believer being afflicted by demons. People who are afflicted by demons seem to lose control of their free will [Walvoord, *et al.*, 2011].

Some have identified this king of the abyss as Satan himself; however, Satan's domain is the heavenly places, not the underworld. In Scripture, Satan has no connection with the abyss until he is cast there in Revelation 20:1-3. It is better to identify this king as an unnamed, unidentified fallen angel who is in charge of the abyss. He could be described as Satan's hellish "Michael the Archangel." This terrifying terminator will lead the satanic special forces in their all-out invasion of planet Earth in the last days. [Hitchcock, 2010, p. 141]

David Levy writes:

To those who faced and fought the locust plague in Judah, it seemed like a living hell on earth. But this was a vivid type of a more vicious locust plague which will descend on the whole earth during the Great Tribulation. In that day, the fifth trumpet of judgment will be blown (Revelation 9:1) and with it will be opened the bottomless pit, out of which will emerge smoke so dense that it will darken the atmosphere, blotting out the light of day (Revelation

9:2). Coming out of this black pit of Hell will be a swarm of locusts (Revelation 9:3) which almost defies description. ...

Are these real locusts? No, since they will not feed on grass or any green thing, but will sting men like scorpions for five months—those who are without the seal of God in their foreheads (Revelation 9:4).

Then who are they? They are demonic spirits which will take on this strange body, so vile and wretched that they will have been chained in the bottomless pit for centuries (Jude 6), so vile and wicked that they could not be allowed freedom to roam the earth. Their king will be ... called *Abaddon* in Hebrew and *Apollyon* in Greek (Revelation 9:11), meaning the *destroyer*.

... Here is the picture of the final Hell that awaits them in eternity! Men will be tormented without relief, desiring to die, only to find their suffering to be eternal.

Notice, this horrible locust plague, as well as the sixth trumpet judgment (Revelation 9:13-20), will not bring repentance! In fact, mankind will become more vile, manifesting his wickedness without restraint. [Levy, 1987, pp. 21-23]

Locusts were a form of judgment in the Old Testament. Swarms of locusts have a track record of destroying everything in their path; so, this may be why God is using the term “locusts”.

Amos 7:1 also speaks of locusts, and the Septuagint translation of that verse says that “... a swarm of locusts were coming, and behold, one of the young devastating locusts was Gog the King.” This is interesting because at the end of the Millennium “Gog” is mentioned again—and this is presumably over 1,000 years after the events of Ezekiel 38-39 (which involve Gog, the leader of the northern army). According to Proverbs 30:27, locusts have no king. Contrast this with the king over the locusts in Revelation 9:3,11. Thus, Gog appears to be a *demonic* leader. This also explains how Gog could survive 1,000 years [Missler, 2005].

A few verses later in Revelation 9:15,18, when the sixth trumpet sounds, four fallen angels that have been bound at the Euphrates River are released, and are accompanied by 200 million mounted troops. These four fallen angels appear to be separate from the class of demons led by Abaddon from the Abyss in Revelation 9:1-11 [Morris, 1983]. The fact that these angels were bound implies that they are demons. Recall that the demons/locusts from the Abyss tortured people but didn’t kill them, whereas the mounted army kills one-third of mankind. We do not know the source location of the 200 million mounted troops. Also, it is the horses that do the damage, rather than the riders [Thomas, 1995]. These reasons suggest that this army is demonic rather than human.

Revelation 9:16-20 **The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million.** I heard their number. The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as

sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur. **A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury.** The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood -- idols that cannot see or hear or walk.

Morris believes that the 200 million “man” army of Revelation 9, which is mounted on horses, is supernatural. In other words, they are 200 million demons that kill one-third of humanity. Furthermore, the perfect tense is used in this passage in Greek, implying that they are constantly ready [Mounce, 1998].

Like the scorpion-locusts under the preceding trumpet, this will be a demonic legion of nightmarish animals indwelt by evil spirits, hitherto bound up in the Euphrates with their four evil overlords. It must be that these frightful “horses” and “horsemen” are demon-possessed creatures whose bodies are specially created by God for the awful judgment which they are thereby enabled to inflict upon mankind. Their bodies are real physical bodies, capable of generating physical fire and brimstone and causing the physical death of those men and women whom they attack. This suggests that the bodies are specially created right at the time of the release of the unclean spirits from their prison, and are then immediately taken over by the ascending spirits. ...

They are not horses, but their bodies are “like” horses, and their heads are said to be “as” the heads of lions. ...

Whether they are then herded back to some pit in Hades or allowed to roam the earth as disembodied spirits through the remainder of the tribulation has not been revealed.

But the human carnage left in their train is almost incredible. One-third of the world’s population at the time will be dead. [Morris, 1983, pp. 169-170]

A parallel passage to Revelation 9:7-9 appears in Joel 1:6; 2:5,8; and again, the army described does not appear to be human.

To summarize why these two hundred million are demons and not [a human army from the far east], four things should be noted: *first*, they are led by four fallen angels; *second*, the location of the army is stated to be the Euphrates, where Babylon is located (which in the future will be the headquarters of the counterfeit trinity); *third*, the description given in the text rules out this army’s being human; and *fourth*, the kings of the east are not connected with this at all. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 229]

For ages they [nations of the far east] have been dominated by religions (Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, and others) which are fundamentally

	<p>evolutionary religions. That is, they all envision an eternal universe, with no concept of a transcendent, omnipotent, personal God who created all things. Their emphasis is solely on present behaviour. To them history consists mostly of interminable cycles, without beginning or ending.</p> <p>Associated with these pantheistic systems was (and is) always the worship of spirits. Whether these are understood as spirits of ancestors or as the spirits of trees and other natural objects, such worship is in reality worship of demons, or fallen angels. Such religions thus are also commonly associated with idolatry. This eastern religion—whatever specific form it may assume in a particular time or place—is essentially the same old worship of idols which God’s prophets continually condemned. Comprising a monstrous complex of evolutionary, pantheistic, polytheistic, idolatrous, astrological, animistic humanism, it is merely a variant of the primeval religion introduced by Nimrod at Babel and promulgated throughout the world by the confusion of tongues and subsequent worldwide dispersion from Babel.</p> <p>By its very nature, it lends itself to control of its devotees by demonic influence. Nevertheless, through the centuries, many have been won to Christ out of these pagan religions, much gospel seed has been sown, and it is probably that a great harvest of souls will be gathered from them to Christ during the tribulation times.</p> <p>Those who are not so converted, however, will become more subject to demon influence and manipulation than ever, and will quickly follow the evil spirits to Armageddon when the time comes. [Morris, 1983, pp. 310-311].</p> <p>Some authors who believe that the army of 200 million are <i>human</i> include Ed Hindson, John Walvoord, David Jeremiah, Hal Lindsey, and Ray Stedman [Hitchcock, 2014c]. But, there is a precedence of “supernatural cavalry”. In 2 Kings 6:15-17, Elisha prayed for the Lord to open the eyes of Elisha’s servant at Dothan, and a vast array of (good) angelic beings were displayed. However, in the case of the 200 million of Revelation, the weapons are fire, brimstone, and smoke—supernatural weapons, often associated with hell.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>Locusts with stingers in their tails do <i>not</i> refer to Cobra or Apache Attack helicopters, as some dispensational prophecy teachers suggest.</p> <p>This is apocalyptic writing that is common to the Old Testament. In fact, the language of the vision—lions’ teeth, tails with stingers, fire, smoke, and sulfur—argue for an army of demonic origin [Mounce, 1998]. Such apocalyptic writing is merely an indicator of how horrible the judgment is going to be. It also reminds us of the judgment that fell upon Sodom and Gomorrah.</p> <p>Locust plagues or swarms are sometimes used to describe judgment. Judgment is so severe that the idea of death is more palatable, says Hank Hanegraaff, but in eternity there is no escape from judgment.</p>

<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>Who are the 2 witnesses in Revelation 11? And when do they die? (Or, who were the 2 witnesses, and when did they die and rise again?)</p> <p>Revelation 11:3-12 And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth." These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want. Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth. But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on.</p>
<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>Dispensationalists believe that the two witnesses are actual people. Zechariah 4 is the Old Testament reference to Revelation 11. Zechariah speaks of a lampstand and an olive tree—two witnesses who are actual people: Zerubbabel (the civil leader) and Joshua (the religious leader) [Hitchcock, 2012]. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the two witnesses in Revelation 11 are also real people. In fact, we would be reading something into the text of Revelation 11 if we assume the opposite, given the connection to Zechariah 4.</p> <p>Although some dispensationalists do not think that the two witnesses will be people from the past, many believe that they will be either Moses and Elijah, or Elijah and Enoch. The former two are the most popular candidates because they are Israel’s greatest prophets in the Old Testament, and both appeared with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. The appeal of the latter two is that they are the only two people in the Bible who went to Heaven without dying. Also, the latter pair was favored by the early church [Ice, 2010c].</p> <p>Some of the miracles that are performed in Revelation 11 are similar to those performed by Moses and Elijah in the Old Testament.</p> <p>Regardless, the two witnesses are real people who return to the earth to preach to the Jewish people (and ultimately to the world), and turn many hearts to Christ. They will minister in Jerusalem which is figuratively called “Sodom and Egypt”, but Jerusalem is certain because it is identified as the city in which</p>

Christ was crucified. The witnesses arrive on the scene prior to the return of Jesus Christ, and probably prior to the start of the second half of the Tribulation—and maybe even at the start of the Tribulation. Their work has some similarity to the work of Moses and Aaron in Egypt prior to the Exodus, including turning waters into blood (Revelation 11:6).

It is interesting to note that Moses and Elijah are mentioned in the last three verses of the Old Testament, lending some support to the case of their literal return:

Malachi 4:4-6 "Remember the law of my servant **Moses**, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel. "See, **I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD** [i.e., the Great Tribulation] comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."

Hippolytus, around 200-235 BC, was the Bishop of Rome, and he wrote about the Antichrist and the two witnesses of Revelation 11 [Hitchcock, 2012]. Like Tertullian (also circa 200 BC), Hippolytus believed that the witnesses would be Enoch and Elijah [Gregg, 2013]. Note, however, that Enoch does not really have a connection to Israel (i.e., he is not Jewish), since his earthly life was before the Flood. This suggests that Moses and Elijah would be a better fit for the two witnesses to Israel in the last days. Moses will fulfill his role in bringing people into the "Promised Land".

Enoch and Elijah never died. It is unclear whether they currently have resurrected bodies, but if Enoch and Elijah already have resurrected bodies, then they cannot die [Whitcomb, 2014]. That would rule both of them out as the two witnesses of Revelation 11. Could they have gone to Heaven if they had physical, but non-glorified, bodies? Conversely, if either of them is one of the two witnesses, then that would imply that he has an intermediate, but non-glorified, body.

Jesus was likely the first to rise from the dead with a physically resurrected body. If Enoch and Elijah are the two witnesses in Revelation, then it would be consistent with the statement "man is destined to die *once*" (Hebrews 9:27) because, according to Revelation 11, the two witnesses will die during the Tribulation. Moses has already died; therefore, he would die twice if he were to be one of the two witnesses. Thus, Enoch and Elijah deserve consideration as the two witnesses.

John Whitcomb argues that *only* Christ is the "firstfruits" from the dead; therefore, no one prior to Christ's resurrection has a resurrected body. When people die, their soul/spirit goes to be with God in Heaven, and they "rest from their labors" (Revelation 14:13). In other words, they are not currently doing anything; and therefore, they do not yet need resurrected bodies. Thus, we

conclude that Enoch and Elijah—both of whom were raptured—have intermediate bodies and not resurrected bodies. Whitcomb argues that they were taken “into the realm of the righteous dead to await resurrection” (p. 27). When Christ rose from the dead, he took the souls/spirits of the saved dead (but not their bodies) from Sheol to Heaven. Thus, if either Enoch or Elijah is one of the two witnesses of Revelation 11, they could still die. Another example is the apostle Paul, who apparently was taken up to the third Heaven (where God exists—see 2 Corinthians 12:1-4), yet he did not get a resurrected body; but he did die, later on. Thus, there is the possibility of existing in Heaven for a period of time, presumably with some kind of intermediate body [Whitcomb, 2014]. We are also reminded of Lazarus, who was dead for 4 days, then was resuscitated (rather than being resurrected in a glorified body) through one of Jesus’ miracles (John 11:41-44); and presumably, Lazarus died again.

Whitcomb makes a good point in quoting Luke 13:33: “It cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.” Both Moses and Elijah were prophets, and neither died in Jerusalem. The two witnesses, however, will die in Jerusalem.

Malachi 4:1 actually makes reference to a “messenger”, who would turn out to be John the Baptist:

Malachi 3:1 "See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty.

Isaiah 40:3-4 is a parallel passage of John the Baptist ... This passage provides the predicted role for John the Baptist to play as the one who would precede and prepare the way for Jesus at His first coming (Matt. 3:1-6). Elijah will prepare the way for Israel before Christ’s second coming, since Israel rejected Jesus at His first coming.

There are some who teach that the ministry of John the Baptist was a fulfillment of the prediction of the coming of Elijah from Malachi 4:5 at Christ’s first coming. This is not the case. John the Baptist fulfilled a different prediction, that of Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3-5. Yet, John the Baptist was said to be “a forerunner” who would come “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17). Christ told His disciples concerning John the Baptist “If you care to accept it, he himself is Elijah, who was to come” (Matt. 11:14). But Israel did not accept Jesus as their Messiah at His first coming and therefore the kingdom did not arrive. In fact, when John the Baptist was asked directly, “Are you Elijah?” he clearly said, “I am not” (John 1:21). Thus, because of Israel’s rejection, John the Baptist was John the Baptist (My messenger) and not Elijah. So Elijah is still to come. [Ice, 2010c]

Revelation speaks about people giving gifts to each other after the (temporary) death of these two witnesses, and rejoicing over their death. This event has not happened in history; thus, Revelation 11 has not been fulfilled, and this is

further evidence that many events in Revelation could not have been fulfilled by 70 AD, as preterists claim.

The two witnesses die during the Tribulation, probably during the *second half* of the Tribulation because they preach for 1,260 days before they die, and we assume that their preaching begins no sooner than the start of the Tribulation. It is not clear when in the second half they die.

Some commentaries place the ministry of the two witnesses during the second half of the Tribulation [Dean, 2009]; however, this leaves some questions. Why would the ministry of the two witnesses take place in Jerusalem, if the Lord had told the Jews to flee at the midpoint of the Tribulation? When do the three-and-a-half days of partying by unbelievers occur, if the witnesses minister up to the end of the Tribulation (i.e., at Armageddon, and the return of Christ)? Thus, some scholars believe that the two witnesses do most—if not all—of their ministry in the first half of the Tribulation—at a time when many Jews are worshiping in the rebuilt temple.

Mark Hitchcock believes that the ministry of the two witnesses overlaps the trumpet judgments. The trumpet judgments likely occur in the second half of the Tribulation. The rebuilt temple will be trampled by the nations for 42 months, and this could coincide with the 42 months (1,260 days or 3½ years) of the witnesses' testimony. Incidentally, the trumpet judgments are judgments on the unbelieving world, and have nothing to do with "the last trumpet" announcing the Rapture of the Church in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52.

The two witnesses' ministry is based in Jerusalem. Contrast this to the ministry of the 144,000 Jews from the tribes of Israel—who appear to have a worldwide focus.

Note the detail that Revelation 11:3-12 (above) uses to describe the two witnesses and events surrounding their lives. This is strong evidence to suggest that all the events are "real" (literal and not simply symbolic).

One of the main problems with using Moses as one of the witnesses is that Moses died and was buried. Thus, as Henry Morris notes [Morris, 1983], he would be dying twice, which seems to contradict Hebrews 9:27: "It is appointed unto men once to die" [KJV]. A supporting Scripture for using Enoch as one of the two witnesses (Elijah the other) is 1 Corinthians 15:22: "For as in Adam all die..." [KJV]. Morris comments that Enoch and Elijah currently wait, in heaven, in their natural bodies. Enoch's message before the Flood is remarkably similar to what would be required in the end times:

Jude 14-15 Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have

done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

Morris adds:

Although it is obviously speculation, it seems possible that they may even have stood by Him [Jesus] when He came to earth, or at least at the climax of that visit when He died and rose again. On the morning of the empty tomb, it is remarkable that there were two men standing by ... (Luke 24:3,4)."

Note that there appear to be exceptions to the "one death per person" rule; but we should probably view these exceptions as resuscitations rather than resurrections [Stewart, 2015b]. Examples include the following:

- Elijah raised a young boy to life (1 Kings 17:22).
- Elisha raised a young boy to life (2 Kings 4:32-33).
- When a body was thrown into Elisha's tomb, and it made contact with Elisha's bones, the person came to life (2 Kings 13:20-21).
- Christ raised Lazarus from the dead, after Lazarus had been dead for 4 days (John 11:41-44).
- Jesus raised Jairus's daughter to life (Luke 8:52-55).
- Jesus raised the son of the widow from Nain to life (Luke 7:14-15).
- Peter raised Dorcas (Tabitha) to life (Acts 9:40-41).
- Paul raised Eutychus to life after the young man fell asleep and fell out of a window (Acts 20:9-11).

Most dispensationalists believe that Christ was the very first person to rise from the dead *with a perfected body*; therefore, the first 6 examples may well be along the lines of resuscitation than translation to a perfected body, since a perfected body is not subject to death or decay, and we assume that these individuals died some time after their resuscitation.

Some dispensationalists argue that Enoch and Elijah, who were raptured, each got a resurrected body—and this, of course, would be pre-Christ. But, we don't know if they actually got a resurrected body. Enoch or Elijah likely won't be "downgrading" to become one of the two witnesses in Revelation 11—and then die again. Some authors argue that the two witnesses are likely to be two Jewish prophets chosen by God during the Tribulation, rather than two historical figures, especially since they are not mentioned by name in the book of Revelation [Walvoord, 1990; Fruchtenbaum, 2004].

Furthermore, we note that modern technology (television, Internet) can allow the world to see or hear the ministry and testimony of the two witnesses. A worldwide audience would not have been possible prior to the 20th century.

Although most futurists focus on the two witnesses being two individuals, usually Moses and Elijah, other research focuses on the metaphors of the two

	<p>witnesses of Revelation 11 as being “two olive trees” and “two lampstands”. Here, we have both symbolic and literal future events. The creators of <i>The Two Witnesses Movie</i> conclude that the two witnesses are not individuals, but rather collectives: Israel and the church [AoC, 2018]. The writers of this work trace the metaphors to clues found in Zechariah 4, Romans 11, Jeremiah 11, etc.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Revelation 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Revelation 11:3-4 And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth." They are "the two olive trees" and the two lampstands, and "they stand before the Lord of the earth."</p> <p>We read that the two witnesses are called two <i>lampstands</i> in Revelation 11:3-4. However, earlier, in Revelation 1:20, we read that there are actually <i>seven</i> lampstands and it is stated that the lampstands are the <i>seven churches</i>. When Christ commented on the works and characteristics of the seven churches in Revelation 2-3, five of the churches were reprimanded, and two of them were commended (positively acclaimed). In <i>The Two Witnesses Movie 2</i> [AoC, 2019], the writers suggest that the two witnesses are the two churches that Christ commended. The claim is that the people belonging to these two kinds of churches are going to be empowered in the end times, and they will be a testimony to the world. Their work will be accompanied by literal signs and wonders, as per Joel 2:28-31. The signs they produce, such as, fire and plagues coming down from heaven, will be a judgment against the people of the earth, with a call to repentance. After the two witnesses die, the world will be celebrating for 3½ days, but then the people of those churches will be resurrected.</p> <p>A final observation here is that the spiritual world <i>is</i> the real world. There is much more to our life than our physical existence. The soul carries on, after death; and the body will be resurrected. We are body, soul, and spirit. Compare an analogy of two dimensions (e.g., two insects travelling across a sheet of paper) versus three dimensions (e.g., a human can see the bigger picture from above). More dimensions are superior. Physicists model the universe in many dimensions—perhaps 10 or more [Missler, 2008b]. Our current bodies may just be subsets of a larger number of dimensions; so, who knows what God has prepared for us. Perhaps our resurrected bodies will have more than three dimensions (plus time). Recall that Christ could pass through walls in his resurrected body, yet He still had flesh and bones. He could relate to, and communicate with, others; and He even ate food.</p>
Preterist Position	Gary DeMar has consulted about 20 commentaries on Revelation and they come up with about 20 different interpretations of the two witnesses; so, it’s not clear who these two witnesses were [Hunt & DeMar, 1998].

Hank Hanegraaff argues that the two witnesses are probably not people. Rather they are metaphors or symbols. The Old Testament provides clues about the metaphors. Like Christ, they are “killed” and later vindicated. This is a model of everyone who comes to Christ (i.e., a symbolic transformation). There is a lot of symbolism in Revelation 11 (fire from their mouths, olive trees from Zechariah 4:3, plagues in the Old Testament (especially from Exodus), a 3½-year ministry like Christ had, etc.) Do not think of the two witnesses as having a flame-thrower in their mouths, because this passage is not to be taken literally. The two witnesses are representative of all of the Hebrew prophets that pronounced judgment on Israel for its idolatry and wickedness [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, March 1, 2011].

Equally significant is the fact that the two witnesses are described as two olive trees and two lampstands. The imagery harks back to a familiar Old Testament passage in which Zechariah sees two olive trees on the right and the left of a lampstand that symbolize ‘the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth’ (Zechariah 4:14). In Zechariah’s day the two witnesses were Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah who returned to Jerusalem to lay the foundation of a second temple, and Joshua, the high priest commissioned to preside over its altar. In Revelation this imagery is invested in two witnesses who, as literary characters in the apocalyptic narrative, represent the entire line of Hebrew prophets in testifying against apostate Israel and preside over the soon-coming judgment and destruction of Jerusalem and the second temple. Like Moses the witnesses have power to turn water into blood and to strike the earth with plagues (Exodus 7:17ff; 1 Samuel 4:8; Revelation 11:6). And like Elijah, they have power to call down fire from heaven to consume their enemies and to shut up the sky so that it will not rain for three and a half years (1 Kings 18; Luke 4:25; Revelation 11:6). [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 131]

Here is an example of their parallel imagery [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, March 6, 2011]: Their resurrection after 3½ days parallels that of Christ. The two witnesses have a 3½-year ministry, similar to that of Christ. They are clothed in sackcloth which is representative of the Hebrew prophets from Elijah to John the Baptist. The purpose of the ministry of the two witnesses is to warn the people of the coming judgment upon Jerusalem and the Temple ... because the people failed to recognize the fulfillment of the Temple, priest, and sacrifice (i.e., Jesus Christ).

David Chilton believes that the two witnesses represent all the prophets from Old Testament times right through to John the Baptist, whereas James Stuart Russell believes that the two witnesses are James and Peter—two of Jesus’ disciples [Gregg, 2013]. But, note that none of these people were left unburied or rose from the dead.

Other authors between that the two witnesses are: the Law and the Prophets [Eberle & Trench, 2021]. When Revelation 11:11 states that the breath of God came into the two “prophets” after 3½ days, this refers to the “voices of the two witnesses” which were “transferred from the Jews to the Church” so that “the

	<p>Law and prophets continued sounding forth the voice of God!” [Eberle & Trench, 2021, Kindle edition, location 7027].</p> <p>In Revelation 11, the two witnesses die and are resurrected. There is no evidence of any such physical resurrection in the events of 70 AD. Therefore, one may conclude that the witnesses are not real people, but rather they represent institutions: the royal house and the priesthood [Newton, 2012]. In the book of Zechariah in the Old Testament, we read about two olive trees and lampstands that acted in an analogous way. They are Zerubbabel (representing the royal house) and Joshua (representing the priesthood).</p> <p>Darrell Johnson believes the two witnesses are the Church: the body of believers [Johnson, 2004]. He argues that Jesus Christ is on trial, and that we are witnesses to give testimony of transformed lives, and freedom from the powers of evil, sin, and death. In Acts 1:8, Jesus tells his disciples that they will be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and all the earth. When Revelation 11:10 speaks of the witnesses “tormenting” those on the earth, Johnson argues that such torment involves pricking the conscience of sinful man, and exposing idolatry—actions which make people uncomfortable.</p>
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<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>Does the woman in Revelation 12:3-6 actually represent Israel? Is this passage referring to the end times?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Revelation 12:3-6 Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.</p>
<p>Dispensa- tionalist Position</p>	<p>It has both historical and future aspects. Historically, the child is Jesus, the mother is Mary (symbolically representing Israel—she was a Jew and the mother of Christ)—and the dragon is Satan. From other parts of Scripture, there is no question about Christ being the child, and the dragon being Satan. The woman <i>cannot</i> be the Church, since this would reverse the roles of Christ and the Church, which essentially had its birth at Pentecost (i.e., after Christ’s death and resurrection). Obviously, the Church did not give birth to Christ. Secondly, the woman is pregnant; and the Church is described in Scripture as being a virgin bride (2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 19:7, 21:2,9) [Missler, 2008b]. “Stars” are metaphors for “angels” (in this case, fallen angels).</p> <p>Note that the Church is not present in this picture. Most dispensationalists agree that this occurs at the midpoint of the Tribulation, possibly in conjunction</p>

with the fifth trumpet judgment [Gregg, 2013]. After the middle of the Tribulation, Israel flees to the wilderness or desert for the remaining 3½ years of the tribulation. This is $3\frac{1}{2} \times 360$ days = 1,260 days.

The dragon has 7 heads and 10 horns and 7 crowns, suggesting that Satan is manifesting his evil through 7 people/leaders and 10 institutions. It is not known who or what these entities are. No such rulers can be identified in history [Walvoord, 1990].

Some consider the seven heads as successive phases of governmental and political history during this period. Others believe that they are simultaneous kings who are sub-rulers under the beast. The successive idea seems to be borne out by Revelation 17:10-13, where the heads are indicated to be successive rulers. The difficulty can be resolved by regarding the heads as successive, referring to kings or emperors, and the horns as kings who will reign while receiving their power from the beast (cf. Rev. 17:12). John may be seeing the beast in both its historic and prophetic characters. [Walvoord, *et al.*, 2011, p. 204]

... the seven heads apparently referring to forms of government that are successive, and the ten horns to kings who reign simultaneously in the end time. [Walvoord, *et al.*, 2011, p. 255]

Henry Morris notes that the woman should include not only Israel but Eve herself because of the first prophecy about the coming Redeemer [Morris, 1983]:

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

The prophecy "so that he might devour her child the moment it was born" likely refers to King Herod's attempts to kill male infants and toddlers in and around Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16).

The reference to the child being "snatched up to God" uses the Greek word *harpazo* which is the same word for the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

The "desert" (or "wilderness" in the KJV) is likely the destination of Jesus' command to "flee to the mountains" (as a path of escape) in Matthew 24:15-16. Since Daniel 11 states that Edom, Moab, and Ammon (modern day Jordan and northern Saudi Arabia) will not fall into the domain of the Antichrist, these areas may be the same general location. Some scholars think that Petra is likely to be one specific destination within this broad area.

Appropriately enough, this is the very middle verse of the book of Revelation [Revelation 12:9], and the event it describes marks again the middle of the tribulation period. The rapture of the two witnesses, the breaking of the Jewish temple treaty by the beast, the flight of Israel, the casting out of Satan and the appropriation of world power by the beast must all occur within a

	<p>few days of each other at this midpoint of the tribulation. [Morris, 1983, p. 225]</p> <p>As the forty years in the wilderness prepared the people of Israel in olden times to enter the land of Canaan, so these three-and-a-half years in the wilderness will make them ready to receive Christ and enter the glorious kingdom age of the millennium. [Morris, 1983, p. 230]</p>
<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>Revelation 12:14 states, “The woman was given two wings of a great eagle ...” The timing of this is <i>not</i> in the future. Scripture goes on to say, “She bore a male child.” This was a long time ago. “1,260 days” likely refers to the time of the Jewish remnant. After the Messiah died, “the woman fled into the wilderness”. The church in Jerusalem (viewed as spiritual Israel) received a warning before 70 AD, and they fled to the wilderness—to Pella, Jordan. The “flight of the woman into the wilderness after Christ’s ascension represents the escape of the Jewish believers from the doomed city prior to its destruction” [Gregg, 2013, p. 314].</p> <p>David Chilton writes:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Preterist commentators have traditionally seen this passage in terms of the escape of the Judean Church from the Edomite and Roman invasions during the Jewish War, when, in obedience to Christ’s commands (Matt. 24:15-28), the Christians escaped to shelter in the caves of the desert. [Gregg, 2013, p. 326]</p> <p>David Pawson comments that Satan is in Heaven today, and it’s only at some point in the future that Satan is kicked out of Heaven to join his proxies on Earth, that is, to join the demons that have already been sent to Earth, and to join the human leaders that are spreading evil over the earth [Pawson, 2004].</p> <p>Interestingly, Pawson believes that the woman is <i>not</i> Israel. We know that the woman is clothed with the sun, she’s standing on the moon, and she has 12 stars around her head. In Genesis, Joseph had a dream where the moon, sun, and 11 stars bowed down to him; however, there does not seem to be a connection to Revelation. For example, in Revelation 12, there is nothing to say that the woman is Israel. Pawson believes the woman is the <i>Church</i>, and this includes Jewish and Gentile believers, and that the dragon is after the [male] leaders of the Church. Pawson acknowledges that the woman could be Israel, but prefers the Church. He strongly feels that the Church will <i>not</i> be snatched up to Heaven; therefore, this is not a rapture passage. In fact, Pawson believes that a pretribulational rapture is nonsense.</p> <p>Harold Eberle and Martin Trench state that the woman of Revelation 12:3-6 is Mary, the mother of Jesus; however, they extend this to include the Church: “the Church is ... the Mother who has authority through Her Seed” [Eberle & Trench, 2021].</p>

	<p>Some preterists connect the casting out of the dragon to the time of the death and resurrection of Christ [Gregg, 2013].</p> <p>Also, some preterists believe that the “seven heads and ten horns” apply to all the Gentile world powers described by Daniel. The 4 beasts in Daniel 7 include the Greek empire which is described with 4 heads—thus making 7 heads in total; and the 10 horns refer explicitly to the fourth beast (Rome) [Gregg, 2013]. Kenneth Gentry believes that “the Beast’s seven heads represent both the seven hills of Rome and the succession of seven emperors from the time of Julius (cf. Rev. 17:9,10)” [Gentry, 1998b, p. 254].</p>
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Topic/ Question	(a) Is the first beast in Revelation 13 the same as the “man of sin” in 2 Thessalonians 2? (b) Is this beast the same as the fourth beast in Daniel 7? (c) Who, or what, is the “beast” of Revelation?
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>(a) Yes. (b) Yes. (c) Most scholars refer to the first beast in Revelation as the Antichrist. He is a real person—whom Satan indwells—to thwart God’s plan for the redemption of mankind (i.e., to destroy not only Israel but the whole world). The Antichrist will appear on Earth before Christ returns physically to the earth.</p> <p>Many interesting parallels exist between [the beast of Revelation 13 and the beast of Daniel 7] ... For example, both have a worldwide empire (Daniel 7:7,23; Revelation 13:8), both rule for three-and-one-half years (Daniel 7:25; Revelation 13:5), both dominate the saints for three-and-one-half-years (Daniel 7:25; Revelation 12:14; 13:7), and both are characterized by their arrogant and blasphemous words (Daniel 7:8,11,20,25; Revelation 13:5).</p> <p>...many of the details regarding the fourth beast of Daniel 7 have obviously not yet come to pass. For example, ancient Rome never crushed the entire earth (Daniel 7:23), never came to power through the assistance of a ten-king confederacy (Daniel 7:7,24), never experienced instantaneous destruction (Daniel 7:11,26), and was never immediately replaced by a subsequent eternal political kingdom following its sudden demise (Daniel 7:27). Because these details do not fit the known facts of history, they obviously await a future fulfillment. [Woods, 2003, p. 238]</p> <p>The wording in Revelation 20:4 describes the same beast/image as in Revelation 13. Revelation 20:4 is acknowledged by both dispensationalists and partial preterists (but not full preterists) as a future event because it occurs after the physical return of Christ. Furthermore, because the two beasts of Revelation spend eternity in the Lake of Fire, the two appear to have eternal souls. This cannot be true of an institution.</p> <p>Furthermore, some commentators have observed the connection between the false prophet (second beast of Revelation) and Elijah. Just as Elijah called down fire from heaven (1 Kings 18:38; 2 Kings 1:10-12), the false prophet will imitate Elijah’s miracle by also calling down fire from heaven (Revelation 13:3). If this comparison is correct, then it stands to reason that</p>

the false prophet's miracle will be just as genuine as Elijah's miracle was. [Woods, 2003, p. 249]

Has there ever been a “mark of the beast” in history? No; nothing like this has been recorded by any historian (e.g., Josephus) [Hanegraaff & Hitchcock, 2007]. Even the Romans and the Roman army of the first century did not require anyone to take a physical mark.

... although there are many examples of people receiving a mark in the first century, none of these instances fully satisfies the details of Revelation 13:16-17. ... At any rate, none of the first-century examples of people receiving a mark comes even close to matching the description in Revelation 13:16-17. [Woods, 2003, pp. 249-250]

The word “mark” in the Greek (*charagma*) refers to a *literal* mark—such as a tattoo, brand, or etching. Since this apocalyptic “mark” didn't appear in the first century, and not to this day, it only makes sense that this refers to a future fulfillment. Furthermore, some scholars believe that it will be clear to those people taking the mark of the beast that this is a pledge of allegiance to the world leader (Antichrist).

Could Nero have been the Antichrist? No, because:

He was never in Jerusalem, he did not desecrate the temple, nor was he destroyed by the “breath of His [Christ's] mouth at ... the appearance of His coming” as Paul promised in 2 Thessalonians 2:8.

... [He was not] the king who makes a covenant with Israel for seven years and breaks it in three and one half years (Daniel 9:26-27). Nor could he be called the “man of sin” or “the son of perdition” mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-8. And, as we have seen, Nero was not destroyed by the coming of Christ, but committed suicide by cutting his own throat in A.D. 68. To make him the Antichrist takes intellectual gymnastics that makes a mockery out of both biblical and historical scholarship, for he died two years before the destruction of Jerusalem occurred, which is when preterists claim Christ returned. [LaHaye & Ice, 2003, pp. 12-13]

There is little to no evidence to suggest that there was a Roman empire-wide persecution of Christians under either Nero or Domitian; but, there is evidence of persecution in selected parts of Asia Minor in 92 AD under Domitian [Hanegraaff & Hitchcock, 2007]. Also, it wasn't until at least 350 years after the writing of the book of Revelation that people began to write about Nero being the Antichrist [Hitchcock, 2012]. One wonders why it would have taken so long to make the connection, if there was a connection.

Although preterists will argue that Nero was the first beast of Revelation 13, they do not have a good answer about whom the second beast of Revelation was [Gregg, 2013]. Dispensationalists believe that this is the future False Prophet. Similarly, preterists have no good explanation for the “image of the beast” or “666”.

	<p>When Nero(n) Caesar is transcribed in Hebrew letters (rather than Latin or Greek), the numerical value comes to 666. This identification, according to Zahn, was first suggested by Fritzsche in 1831. At least Irenaeus in the third century, when discussing the various conjectures known to him, did not even mention Nero as a possibility. [Mounce, 1998, p. 20]</p> <p>No verse in Revelation has received more attention than this one [Revelation 13:18] with its cryptic reference to the number of the beast. Although the verse opens with the declaration, “This calls for wisdom,” the history of interpretation demonstrates that no consensus has been reached on who or what John had in mind. ...</p> <p>The solution most commonly accepted today is that 666 is the numerical equivalent of Nero Caesar. It is held to be supported by the variant reading 616, which also yields the name of Nero when the Latinized spelling is followed. What is not generally stressed is that this solution asks us to calculate a Hebrew transliteration of the Greek form of a Latin name, and that with a defective spelling. A shift to Hebrew letters is unlikely in that Revelation is written in Greek and there is no indication that the riddle is to be solved by transposing it into another language. Further, the name of Nero was apparently never suggested by the ancient commentators even though his persecuting zeal made him a model of the Antichrist. [Mounce, 1998, pp. 261-262]</p>
Preterist Position	<p>(a) Yes. (b) Yes. (c) The beast of Revelation should be interpreted as a complex entity (e.g., nation, empire), rather than a person. <i>The man of sin</i> is not Nero, but Nero was the reigning <i>member of the beast</i> at the time that Revelation was written. The man of sin is not necessarily the same as the beast of Revelation.</p> <p>Nero was <i>an</i> antichrist, probably the greatest antichrist of that time. He had a very evil lifestyle, and was the personification of evil. Ken Gentry believes that Nero is the beast of Revelation (i.e., the Antichrist) [Sproul, 1998]. Gentry argues that a first-century spelling of Nero’s name (<i>Nrwn Qsr</i> or “Neron Kaiser”) has the sum of the values of the individual Hebrew letters equal to 666.</p> <p>Hank Hanegraaff documents that Nero:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • had his mother murdered • castrated a young boy, married him, and consummated the marriage • kicked his pregnant wife to death • had other female and male lovers • cruelly murdered many people • impaled Christians on a stake • set Christians on fire • wore animal skins and then attacked Christians who were bound to a stake, violating their private parts

- had a 100+-foot statute made of himself and placed in the Temple of Mars
- wanted to be deified while he was alive
- was incredibly greedy
- lived in such extravagance that he bankrupted the Empire

Thus, Nero can easily be pictured as a “beast”, and is likely *the* beast of Revelation. Christians in the 64-70 AD timeframe were indeed subjected to great tribulation. The “beast” wasn’t just Nero, but the Roman Empire that oppressed Christians and others. Nero subjected the church to 3½ years of persecution:

Only with Nero Caesar’s death, June 9, AD 68, did the carnage against the bride of Christ [the young Christian church] finally cease. Not only is there a direct correspondence between the name Nero and the number of his name (666), as noted above, but the ‘forty-two months’ he was given ‘to make war against the saints’ (Revelation 13:5-7) is emblematic of the time period during which the Beast wreaked havoc on the Bride. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 148-149]

During 70 AD and before, other candidates for the “beast” or “the man of lawlessness” include another representative of the Roman government, a religious figure such as Phannias or other member of the priesthood, or a Zealot such as John Levi of Gischala [DeMar, 1997].

The book of Acts, and 1 Corinthians 4:9, speaks of the persecution of Christians. Even today, many Christians throughout the world (especially those in countries that don’t experience freedom of religion, such as those in Islamic nations) are suffering greatly.

1 Corinthians 4:9 For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men.

The temple of God mentioned in 2 Thessalonians should be understood to be the Church, rather than the Jewish Temple. So, when Paul says that the man of sin is sitting in the temple of God (1 Corinthians 6:12; 2 Corinthians 6:12), he’s likely referring to the Church. Paul also calls the Church “the Israel of God”. Douglas Moo argues that when prophecies are given to “the Israel of God”, that would include the Church [Moo, 1996].

Some authors believe that the two beasts of Revelation are evil spiritual beings who were associated with Rome and the Roman Empire and who “influenced the seven Caesars and ten kings of the Roman Empire” [Eberle & Trench, 2021, Kindle edition, location 7501]. They believe that Nero carried out the works of the two beasts, and the numeric value of his name equates to 666.

	As far as “the mark of the beast” goes, there was no physical mark during the first century—and there will not be one in the future. The mark is neither a tattoo nor a microchip implant, argues Hank Hanegraaff. Believers have the “mark” of Christ. This is not a microchip implant. The right hand and the forehead are symbolic of what we do and what we believe, respectively. People should be able to identify us as believers, by what they observe about us. That is what the “mark” is referring to.
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Topic/ Question	Will the Antichrist be a Jew? Revelation says that the first beast (Antichrist) will come from the “sea”, and the second beast (False Prophet) will come from the “land”? Are the terms “sea” and “land” meant to be taken literally? What can we say about the possible identification of the Antichrist and the False Prophet?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>A minority of scholars (e.g., [Pitterson, 2021]) think that the Antichrist will be Jewish because the Jewish people will be looking for a descendant of David; otherwise, how would the Jewish people accept that ruler as their “Messiah”? Most scholars, however, think the Antichrist is likely to be a Gentile [Hitchcock, 2012] because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Old Testament type of the Antichrist was a Gentile, namely Antiochus Epiphanes. • He is identified as coming from the “sea” which is symbolic of the Gentile nations. The “land” is symbolic of Israel. • He is the world’s final Gentile world power. Having a Jew lead this world power doesn’t make sense. • He will persecute the Jewish people. <p>God “set apart” Israel from the rest of the nations. The intent was to use Israel as an example of how God blesses the nations that proclaim Him as the one true God; however, much of Israel disobeyed God over the centuries. God will still bless the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; He is not through with Israel yet.</p> <p>Symbolically, the first beast (the Antichrist) rises from a nation other than Israel, and the second beast (the False Prophet) rises from Israel. These false leaders will appear to do good things at first; however, they will ultimately try to destroy both Israel and the world. They will try to destroy many people through a false peace.</p> <p>1 Thessalonians 5:1-4 Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety", destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief.</p>

Some Bible scholars think that the religious leader may come out of Israel, and that the Antichrist might come out of the revived Roman Empire (greater Europe). Others think the False Prophet might come out of the Roman Catholic church. For example, the late Pope John Paul feared that an ungodly leader, perhaps even the Antichrist, may someday come from the Roman Catholic church.

David Pawson thinks that the first beast might be an Arab Muslim, representing 7 nations and 10 armies [Pawson, 2004]. Note that Israel is desperate for peace today—peace at almost any price. Pawson remarks that this would put a Muslim and a Jew together to achieve “peace”—and much of the world would rejoice and support their plan. He adds that Islam is the only religion in the world that has built into it a denial of the fundamental truths of Christianity (e.g., that Jesus is the Christ—God’s Son).

According to the prophet Daniel, the Antichrist will make (or strengthen) a 7-year peace treaty with Israel. (The square brackets delimit my comments, for clarification purposes. The dates are from [Jones, 2004].)

Daniel 9:24-27 "Seventy 'sevens' [70 × 7 = 490 years] are decreed for your people and your holy city [Jerusalem] to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy [place]. "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem [King Artaxerxes' order on Nisan 14, 454 BC] until the Anointed One, the ruler, [Jesus Christ, the Messiah] comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens' [i.e., Nisan 10, 30 AD (i.e., Palm Sunday, March 31, 30 AD)]. It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off [literally “executed”] and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He [Antichrist] will confirm a covenant [peace treaty] with many for one 'seven' [7 years]. In the middle of the 'seven' [at the three and one-half year mark] he will put an end to sacrifice and offering [in the rebuilt Temple]. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation [a vile image blasphemous to God], until the end that is decreed is poured out on him."

Remember, people today are desperate for peace in a world that seems to grow more chaotic and unstable each day.

In more recent times, events such as COVID-19 have many people calling for global solutions, global leadership, a global tracking system, and even a global economy [Hitchcock, 2020]. We don't know how all these things will be

implemented; but, it appears that the stage is rapidly being set for the rise of the world's final Gentile leader: the Antichrist.

The False Prophet will try to get the world to worship the Antichrist. In one of Revelation's most famous prophecies (still future), the False Prophet will cause all of mankind to receive a mark on (or in) their right hand or their forehead in order to receive some kind of a "mark" (chip?) in order to buy or sell. Only those who worship the Antichrist or his image will be permitted to receive the mark. Revelation really appears to describe a cashless society. This is not at all surprising in today's world, with the emphasis on electronic commerce, credit cards, online banking, etc.; and especially so, given the amount of financial fraud that goes on, including counterfeiting, identity theft, and other forms of financial crime. In many nations today, there are few effective deterrents or penalties for financial crimes. Furthermore, many financial payments and transactions today go through computers (e.g., online transactions in a store, or even transactions from home, over the Web)—and do not involve the physical transfer of cash.

Revelation 13:16-18 He [the False Prophet] also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, **to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark,** which is the name of the beast [Antichrist] or the number of his name. This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.

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

We probably won't be able to tell who the Antichrist and the False Prophet are before they actually come to power, but whoever they are, it appears that they will cause much harm and destruction, as described in Revelation.

Charles Dyer comments on the role of the Antichrist in the end times scenario:

"What is this 'covenant' that the Antichrist will make with Israel? Daniel does not specify its content, but he does indicate that it will extend for seven years. During the first half of this time Israel feels at peace and secure, so the covenant must provide some guarantee for Israel's national security. Very likely the covenant will allow Israel to be at peace with her Arab neighbors. One result of the covenant is that Israel will be allowed to rebuild her temple in Jerusalem ...

The Antichrist will come with the olive branch of peace in his hand. He will come on the scene and accomplish what was considered impossible. He will

	<p>solve the Middle Eastern peace puzzle. He will rid the world of terrorism. He will be hailed as the greatest peacemaker who has ever lived.</p> <p>You can just see it now. He will be Time Magazine's Person of the Year. He will win the Nobel Peace Prize. [Hitchcock, 2006, pp. 134-135]</p> <p>(See also the section in this book on the "mark of the beast".)</p>
Preterist Position	<p>Did Nero rise from the sea? Did Rome rise from the sea? The beast is both Nero and Rome. Even when Nero no longer rules, the beast will exist. Rome is west of Judea, across the Mediterranean, and it seems that armies from Rome came from the sea. The sea is symbolic of sin (e.g., crashing of the waves; dark depth, chaos, restlessness). This also describes the nations.</p> <p>We should not be playing "pin the tail on the Antichrist" (i.e., let's not try to guess names).</p> <p>The second beast in Revelation is difficult to pinpoint, especially the attributes relating to forced worship of the first beast, including the worship of his statue or image [Gregg, 2013]. Some preterists believe that the second beast refers to the Jewish leaders, who joined forces with Rome, to persecute the Christian church.</p>

Topic/ Question	<p>Will the Antichrist be able to raise himself from the dead? Is this a fake resurrection?</p> <p>Revelation 13:3 One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast.</p>
Dispensationalist Position	<p>It's unclear whether the Antichrist actually suffers a fatal wound, dies, and is raised to life again; and what the power source is for the apparent resurrection. Note the word "seemed" in the phrase "seemed to have a fatal wound". Some scholars think that the Antichrist will rise from the dead, and that he will use that as a mechanism to convince would-be followers that he is the "Christ". Others think that the Antichrist cannot be resurrected at that time because the unsaved dead are resurrected at the Great White Throne judgment following the Millennium [Pentecost, 1958].</p> <p>Dave Hunt writes:</p> <p>I agree that Antichrist will not be killed and rise from the dead (Rv 13:1-3). Only <i>one</i> of his <i>seven</i> heads was "<i>as it were</i> wounded unto death" and "his deadly wound was <i>healed</i>..." [KJV, emphasis added by Hunt] This was <i>not a resurrection</i> but a <i>healing</i> that will cause all the world to "wonder" (Rv 13:3). I don't know why so many prophecy teachers claim that Antichrist will be resurrected. Physical resurrection comes only to those who belong to Christ and participate in "the power of his resurrection..." (Phil 3:10). [Hunt, 2008c]</p>

Arnold Fruchtenbaum disagrees:

It is apparently during this conflict [with the ten kings] that the Antichrist is killed. Daniel 11:45b states:

Yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.

In Revelation 13:3 the death of the Antichrist is stated as:

And I saw one of his heads as though it had been smitten unto death; and this death-stroke was healed: and the whole earth wondered after the beast; ...

The seventh head, which is the Antichrist, is smitten unto death. The phrase, *as though it had been smitten unto death*, does not simply mean apparent death, for it is also used of Messiah in Revelation 5:6. This is simply an idiom for a resurrected individual and real death is involved.

So in the course of this conflict between the Antichrist and the other ten kings, the Antichrist is killed. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 240-241]

John Whitcomb has a different viewpoint:

I believe the explanation for the first death of the final Beast-King who was “wounded by the sword” (Rev. 13:14) is in Daniel. As the King of the North sweeps through “the Glorious Land” (Dan. 11:41) on his way to northeast Africa, he apparently kills the Beast. Then the Lord destroys the King of the North with fire from heaven (cf. Ezek. 38:22) as the King of the North attempts to kill the Beast who has risen from death to mortal life again (Dan. 11:45). This leaves the Beast-King as the eighth and final oppressor of Israel, with no further threats to come from earthly kingdoms (Rev. 13:4,13). [Whitcomb, 2001]

Thomas Ice argues that Satan cannot raise the dead, and conjectures that God may raise the Antichrist from the dead, perhaps to send people “a powerful delusion” (2 Thessalonians 2:11).

Hitchcock and Ice quote Tim LaHaye:

As far as I know, this will be the first time that Satan has ever been able to raise the dead. His power and control of man is limited by God, but according to His wise providence He will permit Satan on this one occasion to have the power to raise the dead. When studied in the light of 2 Thessalonians 2, it may well be the tool he will use to deceive men. [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007, p. 103]

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them **a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie** and so that

all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

It is possible that “the lie” may be the “resurrection” of the Antichrist. Some authors, however, argue that the “powerful delusion” may mean that people who “knew” about God but were *not* taken in the Rapture may not have a second chance of being saved ... because they will receive a strong delusion “so that they will believe the lie”.

The Greek phrase used in verses 3 and 12 describes the fatal wound to the Beast. ... We believe that the text supports the actual death and resurrection of the Beast. ... Revelation 5:6 describes the Lamb ‘as if slain [*hos esphagmenen*],’ the same words used of the wound received by the Beast (*hos esphagmenen*, 13:3).” Because of this close similarity Charles Ryrie concludes, “If Christ died actually, then it appears that this ruler will also actually die. But his wound would be healed, which can only mean restoration to life.”

Those of us who agree with LaHaye’s understanding of these matters do not necessarily believe that Satan is the source of these miraculous events. [See 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12] [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007, pp. 109-112]

The same Greek words used for Christ’s resurrection are also used for the Antichrist’s resurrection [Hitchcock, 2012]. This would explain why the world is shocked at that time. Hitchcock believes that the Antichrist’s resurrection will occur near the middle of the Tribulation.

Some authors conjecture that “the lie” might be statements about: (a) molecules-to-man evolution (and, in particular, the non-existence of God), and/or (b) a false god/religion in place of the God of the Bible (who alone is the omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient Creator of the Universe). For example, (b) may well be “acceptance of the ‘big lie’ of the Antichrist’s self-proclaimed deity and the submission to the worship of him by means of taking the mark of the Beast” [Fruchtenbaum, 2008, p. 255].

Both lost men and fallen angels had rejected God as Creator, deceiving themselves into believing that the universe itself was the only eternal reality, worshiping and serving “the creature more than the Creator” (Romans 1:25). Having deceived themselves with this monstrous lie, they have ever since taught this falsehood to all who would hear until, as the Scripture says, Satan has deceived “the whole world” (Revelation 12:9). And if Christ is not the Creator, He can hardly be the Savior or the coming King. These men of the last days must first be called back to believe in a true creation and therefore a real Creator God before they can ever be constrained to come to Him as Savior.

... Paul, for example, always began with the Scriptures when he witnessed to his fellow Jews, who already knew and believed the Scriptures, needing only to convince them that Jesus was the Messiah promised in the Scriptures. When he witnessed to pagans, however, he first preached the gospel of creation (Acts 14:14-17; 17:22-30). This approach, whether for this or other reasons, was also the approach of the mighty flying angel [Revelation 14:7],

	<p>who gave forth a final urgent call to the lost multitudes on earth, urging them to turn back in simple faith to the one who had created them, trusting Him to save them. [Morris, 1983, pp. 265-266]</p> <p>Contrary to traditional dispensationalist views of eschatology, Shoebat and Richardson take a different approach about the “fatal wound”. They conjecture that the fatal wound may refer to Islam, in part because the words “head”, “mountains”, and even “beast” are sometimes used as metaphors for <i>empires</i>, in the Bible. For example, the term “beast” in Daniel is used as a metaphor for the successive empires beginning with Nebuchadnezzar (see Daniel 7:5-7,11,19,23). Note also that the term “horn” is a metaphor for <i>leader</i>.</p> <p>... it will be the revival of a previously great empire that will have suffered what the Bible calls a “fatal head wound.”</p> <p>[It is] not the Antichrist as commonly understood by Western prophecy analysts. This empire is the Islamic Ottoman Empire which replaced the Roman Empire after the fall of its’ [sic] remaining Eastern section, and was one of the world’s greatest empires. But it was also the head of history’s most anti-Christian empire. Ultimately it was dismantled and broken up by the Christian West ... on March 3rd, 1924.</p> <p>... Islam is rising from the ashes of its past in order to claim its place as the most dominant world power. Islamists the world over are now seeking to return to the triumphant days when Muslims ruled the Middle East and non-Muslims were subservient. [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008, pp. 81-82]</p> <p>Historically, our Protestant theologians and ministers have interpreted the “Revised Roman Empire” as an expression of the end-time ascension of the Roman Catholic Church, with the Pope as the Antichrist. ...</p> <p>... the Christian community has completely left out the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire was a Turkish Islamic kingdom established in AD 1299 and that lasted until AD 1922. ...</p> <p>Is it possible that the two “legs of iron” represent two peoples with one esoteric flow—the Roman Empire and the Ottoman Empire? After the fall of both empires, their principles continued in religious institutions: for Rome, it was the Roman Catholic Church and for the Ottoman Empire, it was the continuation of Islam (the Ottoman Empire was Sharia-based). [Lake, 2014, p. 118]</p> <p>Lastly, some authors think that the “fatal wound” may symbolically refer to the Roman Empire which has long been dormant, and may someday come back to life.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>Hank Hanegraaff argues that the idea of an Antichrist rising from the dead is silly. If so, then “he could have masqueraded as the resurrected Christ”.</p> <p>Note that only one of the seven heads seems to have been fatally wounded. This suggests the fatal wound is symbolic, and does not necessarily mean that</p>

	<p>the Antichrist rises from the dead. Note that the beast is “like” a leopard, bear, and lion. We shouldn’t take these symbols literally. Christ had the power to lay down His life, and take it up again; however, Satan cannot lay down his own life and take it up again.</p> <p>In Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins’ <i>Left Behind</i> book series, the fictional character Nicolai Carpathia (the Antichrist) dies, and raises himself from the dead after three days. He does so to try to convince the world that he is God.</p> <p>Hanegraaff urges his listeners and readers to become familiar with Biblical interpretation—to avoid such arguments. He says that it is important “to learn the art and science of Biblical interpretation”. Satan can try to mimic the deity and work of Christ; but, mimicking is all he can do, in this context.</p> <p>Remember, that the audience of John’s day knew that “666” marked the Antichrist of that time. If it had really meant the number/name of some future Antichrist, then it would be silly to tell them to look for someone whose name equates with 666.</p> <p>The Great Tribulation under Nero is <i>symbolic</i> of every kind of tribulation that future believers would face.</p> <p>Gary DeMar summarizes some of the acts of persecution going on in the years leading up to 70 AD, which are described in the judgment visions of Revelation 4-19:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">This turmoil would include the first Roman persecution of Christianity (A.D. 64-68), the Jewish War with Rome (A.D. 67-70) as described in detail by the Jewish historian for the Romans, Flavius Josephus, the death of Christianity’s most infamous persecutor, Nero Caesar, in A.D. 68, the Roman Civil Wars (A.D. 68-69), and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70. [DeMar, 1997, pp. 242-243]</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The Beast is a political figure, like Nero Caesar. Nowhere does John use the word <i>Antichrist</i> in Revelation to describe the Beast. In addition, Paul’s “man of lawlessness” was clearly his contemporary (2 Thessalonians 2), present in the world at the time of Paul’s writing. The “man of lawlessness” is not identified either by Paul or John as the Beast or Antichrist. Putting all of this together, we can conclude that the modern construction of the Antichrist doctrine is unbiblical. [DeMar, 1997, pp. 245-246]</p>
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Topic/ Question	What is the “mark of the beast”?
Dispensa- tionalist Position	The mark of the beast is a “mark” of some sort literally placed on, or in, the right hand or forehead. The King James Version (KJV) of the Bible states that the mark is “in” the right hand or the forehead. The “mark” appears to facilitate a cashless society in the end times:

	<p>Revelation 13:16-18 And he [the False Prophet] causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast [Antichrist], or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six [666].</p> <p>According to Revelation 14:9-11, whoever takes the mark of the beast will suffer an eternity in hell:</p> <p>Revelation 14:9-11 A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name."</p> <p>Mark Hitchcock states that people need not worry about accidentally taking the mark of the beast because those who take it will do so intentionally with the understanding that they are pledging allegiance and ownership to the world dictator and his regime [Hitchcock, 2012]. But, those who take the mark are doomed to hell.</p> <p>The mark of the beast <i>may</i> be a computer chip used to facilitate a cashless society, whereby financial trading is done through marks and numbers, partly for "security" reasons, and partly through some kind of "pledge of allegiance" to the Antichrist. It is believed that the technology to do this currently exists.</p> <p>Given the current state of computer technology, the reduction in ethics all around the world, the growth of evil and immorality on television and in the movies, the soaring crime rate, the lack of privacy, increased fear, endless security concerns, identity theft, etc., it seems likely that some form of chip implant will be used in a cashless society.</p> <p>Ryan Pitterson speculates that the mark of the beast will have both an economic component and a genetic component. The latter may be a DNA-altering component that will connect humans with the Nephilim. He argues that that is why anyone who takes the mark of the beast cannot be redeemed (because they will no longer be "human") [Pitterson, 2021, p. 321]. "As it was in the days of Noah ..." (Matthew 24:37a).</p>
Preterist Position	Some preterists equate the second beast to Gessius Florus, the governor of Judea during Nero's reign, although there is no evidence about any marks and numbers, or miracles done [Hitchcock, 2012].

Being sealed with the Holy Spirit is being “marked”, and thus there is no need to speculate on some barcode, computer chip, or other technology. No “Antichrist” figure will be shoving a microchip under your skin. This is not what is meant by Revelation 13:16-17. All Christians are marked already; thus, there is no need to worry about receiving the “mark of the beast”. The mark on the right hand or the forehead is a Biblical symbol of being sealed (i.e., saved), and has parallels in other areas of Scripture. According to Steve Gregg and Hank Hanegraaff, there is no way that the mark could be an implantable microchip, since a microchip is not a “mark”.

The Greek preposition *epi* is used in Revelation 13:13, not *ev*, to describe where the mark was to be placed. *Epi* is best translated as “on” or “upon.” This is why the passage states of the mark is to be given “*on* their right hand, or *on* their forehead” (13:16), not “*in* their right hand, or *in* their forehead.” If Jesus had wanted to say “in,” He would have used the Greek preposition *en*. [DeMar, 1997, p. 427]

Slaves in Bible times had a mark (tattoo or brand) on their bodies, signifying their respective owners. Reflect on your own life, and see whose servant you are. Is God your master, or is Satan? The way you act in your life identifies the master that you are following.

God promises that He will write, on the foreheads of believing overcomers’ foreheads: the name of God, the city of God, and “a new name”. This is symbolic language. Jesus is not running around “with a magic marker in His hand”, argues Hank Hanegraaff.

Is John saying that one can look at the “sealed servants” and literally see on their foreheads the names “Jesus” and “Father”? No. For in the Bible “name” is a way of saying, “character” or “personality.” ... To be sealed with the Lamb is to have the character of the Lamb written into the fabric of our being. On the “forehead” implies that this new character is obvious to on-lookers. People can see something different about us. [Johnson, 2004, p. 188]

God wanted the Jews to bind His laws between their eyes and on their hands. They did so, literally, with their phylacteries (little boxes that they tied to their forehead and hand). It is unlikely that this is what God meant. On the other hand, symbolically, the forehead could represent *thoughts*, and the hand could represent *actions*. A “mark” on the forehead is symbolic of what you *think* or *believe*; a mark on the right hand is symbolic of what you *do*. Thus, the mark would be associated with your worldview. If you are a believer, you do not need to have a physical mark on your body to indicate this; others should be able to see that you are a Christian by what you *say* and *do*. Thus, it will be clear *who* you belong to.

In the first century, if you knew a person’s name, you knew a person’s character. The mark of Jesus Christ is the character of Jesus Christ sealed on us and in us by the Holy Spirit whom he sends to live on us and in us.

	<p>So, too, the mark of the beast. It is not a tattoo on the forehead or on the right hand nor a micro-chip embedded under the skin. It is the character of the beast embedded under the skin. ... I like what G.K. Beale says: “The ‘forehead’ represents ideological commitment and the ‘hand’ the practical outworking of that commitment.” [Johnson, 2004, p. 246]</p> <p>Hanegraaff and Johnson, among other scholars, say that a cashless society is unlikely to be the picture here. Technology is always changing. Dispensationalists have been thinking that the mark of the beast might be a credit card, universal product code, barcode, or microchip—depending on the technology of the day.</p> <p>“Sunday worship” is not the mark of the beast, either.</p> <p>At the time of John, he was writing about things that were “soon to pass”—meaning in the lifetime of much of his audience (circa 70 AD). This includes the Scripture about the mark. John was <i>not</i> writing to a 21st century audience.</p> <p>As for the notion of a “cashless society”, or being unable to buy and sell (unless they had the “mark”), the explanation may be as simple as follows. Jews who became Christians had a great deal of difficulty buying from, or selling to, Jews—once it was known that they were Christians.</p> <p>Finally, the words of Revelation 14:9-11 should be taken symbolically, rather than literally, although it does mean that one is shut out from the presence of the Lord, permanently [Hanegraaff, <i>Bible Answer Man</i>, November 9, 2010]. Note that being shut out from the presence of God implies continual existence.</p>
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Topic/ Question	What is the meaning of the number(s) “666”, that is, “the mark of the beast”?
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>666 will be the number corresponding to the letters (either Hebrew or Greek, but not English or most other languages) of the name of the Antichrist.</p> <p>It is interesting to note that the early church fathers did not correlate “666” with Nero [LaHaye & Ice, 2003]. For example, Irenaeus wrote about “666” as being a future fulfillment of “the man of sin” with Rome eventually being divided into 10 kingdoms [Gregg, 2013].</p>
Preterist Position	<p>666 is the number corresponding to the letters of the name of a specific Roman Emperor—an Antichrist. In particular, “Nero Caesar” or “Caesar Nero” (when written in Hebrew) is 666 (“six hundred and sixty-six”, not “six-six-six”). When the numerical values of the 7 letters in Hebrew are added up, we get $50 + 200 + 6 + 50 + 100 + 60 + 200 = 666$ [Gregg, 2013]. Preterists tend to be in agreement with this, and there is no other candidate than Nero. In Latin (i.e., Roman numerals), Nero Caesar is 616; in Greek, it’s 1005. John, however, was</p>

	<p>referring to the Hebrew language, even though the book of Revelation was written in Greek.</p> <p>The intended audience was the first century Christians, and many such individuals knew that John was referring to Nero. Such a person was told (in Revelation) that, with wisdom, he/she would be able to calculate the number of the beast. So, if 666 didn't apply to an antichrist (or <i>the</i> Antichrist) until the 21st century, then what was the point of telling this to a first century audience? It makes more sense to consider this a first century, historical, fulfillment.</p> <p>Revelation records the first all-out assault of the Beast against the Bride, lasting approximately three and a half years. Prior to AD 64, the church was persecuted by the woman who rides the beast (apostate Israel), but shortly after the Great Fire of Rome, the beast unleashed its full fury against a fledgling Christian church. That Nero started the Great Fire of Rome is historically debatable. That Nero used it as the catalyst for the first state assault against the emerging Christian church is not.</p> <p>... Only with Nero Caesar's death, June 9, AD 68, did the carnage against the bride of Christ finally cease. Not only is there a direct correspondence between the name Nero and the number of his name (666), as noted above, but the "forty-two months" he was given "to make war against the saints" (Revelation 13:5-7) is emblematic of the time period during which the Beast wreaked havoc on the Bride. ...</p> <p>Moreover, it is no mere coincidence that within a year of Nero's suicide, June 9, AD 68, the Roman Empire suffered a near-fatal wound. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, a dynasty that had resided in the Julio-Claudian line of Roman Caesars for a century disappeared from the face of the earth. In fact, AD 69 would go down in history as the year of the four emperors—Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 147-149]</p>
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Topic/ Question	What is the "image of the beast"?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>In Daniel 3, King Nebuchadnezzar had the world bow down to his image (a 90-foot tall statue), and those who did not do so, would pay with their life. Could something like this happen again in the future? Absolutely; it will happen all over again, albeit in a more sinister context.</p> <p>Revelation 13:11-17 Then I saw another beast [the False Prophet], coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. He exercised all the authority of the first beast [Antichrist] on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. He</p>

	<p>was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.</p> <p>Revelation 14:9-11 A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name."</p> <p>Revelation 20:4 I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.</p> <p>People will need to decide <i>who</i> they'll worship. The False Prophet will set up an image of the Antichrist, and whoever does not worship the image, will be killed.</p> <p>Although it remains to be seen how the image of the beast will be implemented, we can speculate using technology that we already have. For example, the implementation could be the rendering of a life-like, 3-D image with voice synthesis and synchronization—using computer vision (cameras) and other sensors as input, possibly coupled with speech recognition, image recognition, and decision-making software (e.g., artificial intelligence). The system could even be a global, integrated system. And, of course, computer technology keeps getting better.</p>
Preterist Position	The "image of the beast" might be symbolic since there does not appear to be any such feature that was implemented in Israel or in the Roman Empire in the years leading up to, and including, 70 AD. It is possible that it "can simply refer to the Jews' general homage to Rome's authority, as [David] Chilton observes" [Gregg, 2013, p. 356].

Topic/ Question	Comment on the role that artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, computer security, privacy, and ethics play in shaping our society, and which may come into play in Bible prophecy. How might these tools be used in the hands of a world dictator?
Both Positions	Advances in artificial intelligence including machine learning, computer vision, pattern recognition, etc., have caused scholars to express serious concern for possible abuses of the technology [Russell, 2019; Lennox, 2020].

This is of relevance to Bible prophecy because it is easy to see how a coming world dictator could use technology (e.g., surveillance, facial recognition, people-tracking, and electronic commerce) to control the masses, as described by Revelation 13.

Regarding artificial intelligence, Russian President Vladimir Putin stated in a broadcast to students, “Whoever becomes the leader in this sphere will become the ruler of the world.” [Vincent, 2017] Furthermore, Putin thinks that future wars will be fought by countries using drones, sometimes called unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) which use cameras and either onboard computers or remote control to navigate and find their targets.

Let us compare regular artificial intelligence (AI) with artificial general intelligence (AGI). The former is the ability for a machine (or software) to do a specific task, repetitively, subject to certain rules (e.g., an algorithm) but not requiring any creative, original thinking. Robots on assembly lines do this well. Boston Dynamics is a company that produces and sells some amazing robots with multiple functionality that do this very well. Machine learning applications running neural networks (including deep learning) for pattern recognition, or software performing complex data analysis on large datasets to determine correlations, trends, or outliers also do this very well; as do programs processing sensor-based input to make decisions in control systems such as the power grid, oil and gas plants, pipelines, etc. AGI, however, involves *general* intelligence whereby a machine can actually learn new, unrelated tasks on its own—and “think” creatively. It would be the point at which a machine can equal or outperform a human in general intellectual tasks. This is very hard to do. We are a long way from AGI. AI expert Nick Bostrom predicts a median date of 2040 for AGI, but Kai-Fu Lee, Andrew Ng, and Rodney Brooks think AGI is probably much further away [Lee, 2018]. And, of course, general AI may not be needed to fulfill any prophecies.

Machine learning is used to gather insight (e.g., trends, predictions, explanations) from data—often from large amounts of information. The input data doesn’t have to be numeric or alphanumeric; it can include images and video. Interestingly, countries all around the world have been using more and more cameras (including cameras mounted on drones) to monitor public spaces. Homes and businesses are finding security cameras to be indispensable. Many cars have dash-cams, which some drivers find useful when engaged in an insurance claim following an accident. Dash-cams can be helpful in solving crimes because they capture video images of activity in the neighbourhoods that one is driving through. Facial recognition software, such as that from Clearview AI, allows a person’s photo to be uploaded for comparison with public images on the Internet, to search for matches and possibly identify the person’s name, location, workplace, friends, associates, etc. [Hill, 2020] Police organizations have found this to be useful; however, there are privacy concerns, and some organizations will not use such tools, or

at least greatly limit their use. These technologies could be used by a future Antichrist to monitor and control the world's population.

Right now, the world leaders in artificial intelligence and machine learning are China and the United States [Lee, 2018]. Ultimately, China may have the edge because so much personal data is linked in China: financial records, health records, payment records (including heavy use of mobile payment systems), surveillance records, social credit scores, etc. In the United States, many of these systems are separate for privacy and legal reasons. Furthermore, China has a very large population, an increasingly well-educated workforce, fewer legal obstacles, and a strong work ethic. In fact, employees in its tech sectors are known for working longer hours than employees in Silicon Valley [Lee, 2018].

It's been said that it's no longer an issue of whether or not we'll lose our privacy, it's just a matter of how we'll wind up negotiating the terms of the surrender of our privacy. Everyone has a price. Sometimes, that price equates to the words "free" and "convenient".

Some estimates for the percentage of human workers whose current work could be taken over by a machine/robot are about 50% by 2030 [Lee, 2018; Lennox, 2020]. More creative tasks would remain in the domain of humans, including a significant amount of in-person caregiving. Work gives many people meaning and purpose in life; so, there will be a void if many people become unemployed, even if they get some kind of a guaranteed "universal basic income" to meet their living expenses.

Computer security is used to achieve privacy when trust is difficult to obtain. Related to these concepts is the notion of ethics which includes, among other things, "doing the right thing", promoting fairness, respecting privacy, protecting a user's data, upholding the Terms of Service (e.g., not using data for other than its intended purpose), and maintaining a person's *dignity*.

Ethical considerations are paramount; however, we need a *standard* to determine what is ethical, since different people have different ideas about ethics. Historically, in some countries, the Bible has been that standard. Even people who wanted nothing to do with God have used at least some Biblical values to determine what is deemed to be "ethical" (e.g., laws dealing with crime, justice, and relationships).

AI computer systems have no conscience, and so the morality of any decisions they make will reflect the morality of the computer programmers—and that is where the difficulties start. How can we be sure that the programmers will build in a morality that is benevolent and humane? [Lennox, 2020, p. 145]

The study of ethics is important because decisions that are made by machines could benefit some people, but harm others. For example, *algorithmic bias* in machine learning or data mining software could result in inappropriate or unfair decisions regarding college admissions, hiring, loans, insurance, policing, sentencing, etc. [O’Neil, 2016] Inappropriate decisions might be made based on race, sex, age, religion, credit scores, etc. For example, consider the use of credit scores when hiring. Highly qualified candidates might be excluded because of low credit scores, when those low credit scores might be due to medical bills or unemployment. Sometimes very good employees lose their jobs through no fault of their own, such as a downturn in the economy, or because their employer went bankrupt. People who are unemployed may be pushed into poverty, which further reduces their credit score, and makes them even less likely to become employed if the software uses credit scores to make hiring decisions.

Taking the idea of automation one step further, one can imagine a government that monitors its population, and engages in *deliberate* bias. In this case, the software gives positive scores to those who obey the government’s rules (and note that these rules might be unethical or unfair), and negative scores for those who do not obey the rules. People would have to be obedient in order to gain favour with the government, and to be able to function effectively within that society. We see this type of scenario unfolding with the future Antichrist who will attempt to control the entire world. There is no doubt that the Antichrist will exploit technology to try to achieve his goals—to the detriment of untold millions, or even billions, of people.

This section wouldn’t be complete without writing something about *cybersecurity*. It also plays a role in Bible prophecy. We have been seeing cybersecurity attacks all over the world including attacks by Israel, Iran, the United States, Russia, North Korea, and many other nations. Rather than sending people or missiles into enemy territory, action can be taken against military sites, nuclear facilities (e.g., Stuxnet in 2010), infrastructure, shipping/ports, oil and gas production, chemical plants, etc. from afar. This is done by exploiting bugs in software, perhaps Zero-Day attacks, which are unreported bugs in software that someone (military intelligence, hackers, NSA, Mossad, etc.) has discovered, but is keeping secret for their own future use, so that they can infiltrate and control another computer system [Schneier, 2015]. Insiders and social engineering techniques are other ways to gain access to sensitive and important computer systems

Security breaches are becoming commonplace, and security is often an afterthought in many software systems. We need to engineer *security by design* into products, right from the start [Schneier, 2018]. Security expert Bruce Schneier argues that *complexity* is the worst enemy of security. In particular, the more complex a system is, the less secure it is. With the rise of the Internet of Things, that is, with lots of digital devices (sensors, cameras, appliances,

	<p>phones, gadgets, etc.) communicating with one another, there is an even greater risk of a security breach. Security is only as strong as the weakest link in a chain; and hackers have been exploiting weaknesses in systems for decades.</p> <p>We can reduce the risk of privacy breaches and the misuse of personal information by employing best practices in computer security, such as using encryption, regularly applying software patches, keeping anti-virus and anti-malware protection up-to-date, using strong passwords, not clicking on suspicious links, being aware of social engineering tricks, etc. Concern for privacy has led to technologies such as Blockchain and cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin. The more secure and private our information is, the less likely it can be used against us. However, as we know too well, if we don't give up some level of privacy, anonymity, and security, it becomes difficult to function in society. Opting out is often not a practical option. Users frequently trade security for convenience. Many individuals voluntarily or involuntarily provide personal information about themselves for convenient access to online resources, financial gain, entertainment, etc. Think about your use of social media, search engines, smartphones, cashless payment systems, recommender systems (e.g., Amazon.com), etc. Many of these systems offer benefits to their users. However, if something is "free" or "convenient", <i>you</i> may be the product. In other words, your personal information, preferences, buying decisions, online viewing habits, etc. might be sold—or given—to companies and governments.</p>
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<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>Are the hailstones in Revelation <i>literal</i> hailstones?</p> <p>Revelation 16:21 From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.</p>
<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>Yes, the hailstones are literal. There is no evidence to suggest this occurred in 70 AD. Two precedents occurred in the Old Testament, and we can assume that the events of Revelation will be fulfilled, literally, as well:</p> <p>Exodus 9:22-26 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that hail will fall all over Egypt -- on men and animals and on everything growing in the fields of Egypt." When Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, the LORD sent thunder and hail, and lightning flashed down to the ground. So the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt; hail fell and lightning flashed back and forth. It was the worst storm in all the land of Egypt since it had become a nation. Throughout Egypt hail struck everything in the fields -- both men and animals; it beat down everything growing in the fields and stripped every tree. The only place it did not hail was the land of Goshen, where the Israelites were.</p>

	<p>Joshua 10:11 As they fled before Israel on the road down from Beth Horon to Azekah, the LORD hurled large hailstones down on them from the sky, and more of them died from the hailstones than were killed by the swords of the Israelites.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>Kenneth Gentry says that the Roman Tenth Legion hurled large boulders against Jerusalem, via catapults, and that this may have fulfilled the prophecy [LaHaye & Ice, 2003].</p> <p>Hank Hanegraaff argues against both the dispensationalist position and the preterist position by noting that “hundred pound hailstones” are simply judgment language, apocalyptic language, or figurative language. In other words, the phrase is not literal, but rather, <i>apocalyptic imagery</i> [Hanegraaff, <i>Bible Answer Man</i>, August 30, 2010]. The same applies to the blood at Armageddon that’s supposedly “as deep as the horses’ bridles”. Partial preterists try to find fulfillment using a history book, whereas dispensationalists try to find fulfillment using a newspaper. When the Bible uses a metaphor, we want to read it as such.</p>

Topic/ Question	<p>Who are the seven (or eight kings) referred to in Revelation 17:9-11?</p> <p>Revelation 17:9-11 "This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while. The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.</p> <p>How do the beasts in Daniel relate to these kings, if at all; and how do the beasts in Daniel relate to the beast in Revelation?</p>
Dispensationalist Position	<p>Revelation 17:9-10 states that the 7 heads represent <i>both</i> hills (or mountains) and kings. The term <i>mountain</i> is often a symbol for <i>kingdom</i> in Scripture, so this may be referring to the same thing. Some scholars argue that because Rome is sometimes said to be a city built on 7 hills, that Rome may be the entity being referred to; however, the phrase “five have fallen” makes the explanation of Rome unsatisfactory.</p> <p>The best explanation seems to be that the 8 kings refer to successive, historical kingdoms that have persecuted Israel. Five of the kings refer to the 5 major empires that ruled the world before Rome, 1 is current (i.e., Rome), and 2 are future (i.e., a revived Roman Empire that may be broken into 2 parts: the initial rule of Antichrist along with other kings/leaders, and more significantly, a second phase under the full control of Antichrist):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Egypt—In the time of the Pharaohs, they enslaved Israel.

2. Assyria—They took the northern kingdom of Israel into exile in 722 BC.
3. Babylon—Under Nebuchadnezzar, they took the southern kingdom of Judah into exile beginning around 606 BC.
4. Medo-Persia—This alliance of Medes and Persians conquered Babylon.
5. Greece—They conquered Medo-Persia. Significant leaders included Alexander the Great, and later Antiochus Epiphanes who was a *type* of the future Antichrist
6. Rome was the world power at the time that Revelation was written. Recall that the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the second temple. “Rome” was the sixth king; note the words “one is” in Revelation 17:10.
7. The seventh king refers to a future, revived, but brief, Roman Empire (at the time of the end). This revived Roman Empire is believed to include most of modern-day Europe. The seventh kingdom may include the first part of Antichrist’s reign—and the eighth kingdom may refer to the second part of Antichrist’s reign (following his resurrection (or fake resurrection), when he is indwelt by Satan) [Ice, 2015a].
8. The eighth king refers to the final kingdom of Antichrist, which comes out of the seventh (or one of the prior empires). It will be a brief kingdom.

Note that Daniel 7 mentions 4 beasts: a lion (Babylon), a bear (Medo-Persia), a leopard (Greece), and a ten-horned beast (Rome?) Thus, we have a precedent and argument for considering successive, historical kingdoms. The ordering of the beasts in Daniel 7 looks *forward* from the time of Daniel. In Revelation 13, the same beasts are mentioned by the apostle John, looking *backwards*.

Revelation 13:1-2 And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.

There are 5 kingdoms listed by John when going backwards because he also includes the Assyrian and Egyptian empires as being the respective predecessors of the Babylonian empire of Daniel’s time.

Daniel 7:23 states that the fourth empire “devours the whole earth”, and some scholars debate whether this has actually taken place, or whether it applies to the future. Fruchtenbaum argues that it will be a future fulfillment, and will usher in the era of Antichrist. Furthermore, unlike most scholars, he argues that the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar’s statue represent a partitioning of worldwide power—not just Europe or a “revived Roman Empire”. Europe may

well be *one* of the ten toes, but not all ten, according to Fruchtenbaum. This would be consistent with the Club of Rome’s proposal of dividing the earth into 10 geographic regions (e.g., Europe, North American, South & Central America, etc.)—see the section on *globalism* below [e.g., Franz, 2008]).

Revelation 13 focuses on the fourth empire, and in particular, the stage involving the Antichrist. It appears to be a worldwide system. Current political, economic, and social trends are rapidly leading us towards globalism.

Unlike most other prophecy scholars, Arnold Fruchtenbaum explains the seven heads/mountains/kings in terms of the progression of the Roman Empire and imperialism [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]:

Head #	Name	Dates
1	Tarquin Kings	753-510 BC
2	Counsulors	510-494 BC
3	Plebian or Dictators	494-390 BC
4	Republicans or Decimvers (Oligarchy of Ten)	390-59 BC
5	Triumvirate	59-27 BC
6	Roman Empire	27 BC to present
7	Antichrist stage	Future, 3½-year duration

With respect to this interpretation, note that we are living in the days of the sixth head, and that the sixth head aggregates these four stages (enumerated above): United stage, Two Division stage, One World government stage, and Ten Kingdom stage. The 7th king (Antichrist) is also spoken of as an 8th king because he uproots 3 of the 10 horns (kings) before him. In other words, 7 of those 10 kings submit to his authority. At this point in time, the Antichrist rules with absolute authority (i.e., a dictatorship). The rise of the Antichrist in Europe may well be facilitated by the fall of the armies/nations of Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 38-39). As of the year 2000, there were 25 nations in the European union; therefore, some consolidation or reconstruction must take place to reach the stage of having 10 nations in the forefront.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum divides the beasts and kingdoms of Daniel 2, Daniel 7, Revelation 13, and Revelation 17 into the following categories and subcategories [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]:

1. Babylonian Empire
2. Medo-Persian Empire
3. Greek Empire
 - a. United Stage
 - b. Four Division Stage
4. Fourth Empire (Imperialism)
 - a. United Stage (Roman Empire)—63 BC to 364 AD

- b. Two Division Stage—364 AD (when Emperor Valentinian divided the Roman Empire into eastern and western entities) and this is up to the present day (e.g., the western division is represented by the democratic nations of western Europe)
 - c. One World Government Stage—future
 - d. Ten Division Stage—i.e., the “ten kingdoms”, future
 - e. Antichrist Stage—absolute imperialism, future
5. Messianic Kingdom—future, after the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Rome began a new system called *imperialism*. This is what made the Fourth Empire *diverse* from all the others. When Rome conquered, Romans were sent in to rule (e.g., Pontius Pilate, Felix, Festus). This was the policy of imperialism. Thus, a better name for the Fourth Empire would be “imperialism” rather than Rome, for Rome was merely the first of five stages of the Fourth Empire of Imperialism. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 33]

[The Messianic or Millennial Kingdom] is a literal, earthly kingdom in which the Messiah will rule over Israel and the Gentile nations from the Throne of David and from Jerusalem.

... The Messianic Kingdom is rooted in the Davidic Covenant, and it is a major subset of Old Testament prophecy.

In the New Testament, it is this Kingdom that was proclaimed to be at hand by John the Baptist, and this Kingdom was offered to Israel by Jesus, only to be rejected in Matthew 12. As a result of the rejection by Israel, the offer of the Kingdom was rescinded and revoked from that generation. From a human perspective, then, it could be said that the Messianic Kingdom was postponed; from a divine perspective, it was part of God’s divine plan, and there was no postponement whatsoever. It was the means by which the Messiah would die and provide atonement, already prophesied in Isaiah 52:13-53:12. It was also the means by which the gospel would extend to the Gentiles (Is. 49:1-13). The Kingdom is destined to be re-offered to the Jewish generation of the Tribulation, and that generation will accept it. The Messianic Kingdom will then be established. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 664]

And of course, Jesus Christ returns to destroy the Antichrist, his system, and his followers; and He establishes the final kingdom: a kingdom of justice, righteousness, and peace.

Ryan Pitterson provides an alternate explanation of the seven kings [Pitterson, 2021]. He thinks they can all be identified as individuals connected to the Nephilim, and they are a preview of the future Antichrist. In particular, they are “seven vessels for the fallen angelic spirit of the Assyrian, or Apollyon, who reappears throughout biblical history. This is the same angelic spirit that will indwell the Antichrist at the opening of the Abyss in Revelation chapter 9” [Pitterson, 2021, p. 209]. The 7 kings are:

1. *Nimrod* – the world’s first dictator, who led the effort to build the Tower of Babel in the land of Shinar (Babylon). He was a post-Flood *gibborim* (“mighty one”), albeit not a Nephilim. The Septuagint refers to him as a “giant” and “giant hunter”. (Although Pitterson thinks that “Babylon” is symbolic of Jerusalem, other scholars maintain that Babylon will be rebuilt in the end times (Revelation 17-18; Isaiah 13-14; Jeremiah 50-51).)

2. *Pharaoh* during the time of Moses and the Exodus – Many of the plagues during the time of the Exodus are repeated during the Tribulation: water becoming blood (Revelation 8:8; 16:3-6); frogs (Revelation 16:12-14); darkness (Revelation 16:10-11); sores/boils (Revelation 16:10-11); and hail and fire (Revelation 8:6-7). The Song of Moses, sung during the Exodus, is also sung in Revelation 15:1-4. Pharaoh is connected to “the Assyrian” (a term sometimes used of the Antichrist) via a proud cedar in Lebanon (Ezekiel 31:2-3).

3. *King Sennacherib* – of Assyria. After conquering the Northern Kingdom of Israel, he oppressed the people of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Sennacherib was willing to make (temporary) peace with Judah if King Hezekiah of Judah paid him with gold and silver. He blasphemed God, and planned to conquer Jerusalem. However, an angel killed 185,000 men in his army overnight. Similarly, the Antichrist will pretend to bring peace, will blaspheme God, and will attack Jerusalem; but, he and the invading armies will be destroyed upon Christ’s return.

4. *King Nebuchadnezzar* – the proud and aggressive king of Babylon. He took Judah captive and desecrated and destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem. Antichrist will desecrate the rebuilt Temple during the Tribulation. King Nebuchadnezzar set up an image of gold (a large statue), and demanded that everyone worship him, or else face the death penalty. During the Tribulation, there will also be an image of the Antichrist, and everyone is to worship him as God, under the penalty of death. Also, King Nebuchadnezzar was compared to a very tall tree in Lebanon (Ezekiel 31) that was “exalted above all the trees of the field” (symbolic of Satan’s pride). The Antichrist will be indwelt by Satan.

5. *Antiochus Epiphanes* – circa 165 BC, who was predicted in detail in the prophetic messages in the book of Daniel. He is a foreshadowing of the Antichrist. Antiochus Epiphanes attacked the Jewish people, and set up an “abomination of desolation” in the Temple in 168 BC. He also stopped the daily sacrifice. The Antichrist will do these things too, but on a larger scale, as predicted by the prophet Daniel

(Daniel 11:36-45), and confirmed by Jesus Christ in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:15-16).

6. *Domitian* – who ruled the Roman Empire from 81-96 AD. Pitterson admits this king is the most difficult of the 7 kings to identify.

Revelation 17:10-11 They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for only a little while. The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.

At the time of writing the book of Revelation, the Apostle John was banished to a prison on the isle of Patmos by the Roman Emperor Domitian. The timeframe points to Domitian. Domitian built a temple to the Roman god Jupiter, which in mythology is the same as the Greek god Zeus, which is believed to be another name for Satan and Baal [Gilbert, 2021].

7. *Gog* – of Ezekiel 38-39, whom Pitterson equates with the Antichrist who attempts to conquer Israel and the Jewish people in the end times, albeit in two conflicts separated in time. Somewhat surprisingly, Pitterson thinks that Ezekiel 39 refers to the Antichrist near the start of the Tribulation, and Ezekiel 38 refers to the “Gog and Magog” army of Revelation 20:8. He argues that it is only during the Millennium that Israel is “dwelling safely” and “without bars” (Ezekiel 38:8-14).

Lastly, Pitterson echoes the sentiments of Clarence Larkin in stating that the Antichrist (also known as “the Assyrian”) will be the “final Nephilim” who would have genetic roots in Satan, in order to fulfill the Genesis 3:15 “seed” prophecy [Pitterson, 2021, p. 222].

Walid Shoebat and Joel Richardson provide yet another viewpoint, albeit a less likely one: an argument about how the kingdoms in question refer to Islamic kingdoms over the course of history, and that the final kingdom is also Islamic [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008]. The successive empires are the following, starting with the oldest: (1) Egyptian, (2) Assyrian, (3) Babylonian, (4) Persian, (5) Greek, (6) Roman (which includes some of the Middle East, Northern Africa, and much of Europe during the time John wrote the book of Revelation), and then comes (7) the unnamed empire, and finally (8) will be a revival/extension of (7).

The Roman Empire didn’t actually completely fall until the eastern portion of the Empire finally collapsed in 1453 A.D. to the Muslim Turks led by Mehemet II.

... the Christian world leveled a significant blow to Islam in 1924, after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. The Office of the Caliph was abolished. So while it was the Islamic Empire that ultimately succeeded the Roman Empire, it was the Christian West that offered Islam a series of defeats that led to the severing of its head, the office of the Caliph in 1924. The only empire that fulfills the patterns necessary to be considered the seventh empire is the Islamic Empire that culminated with the Turkish/Ottoman Empire. [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008, pp. 304-305]

So, if this is the case, how does Daniel's prophecy concerning the statue of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2, and the four beasts described in Daniel 7, tie in to the Roman Empire, if at all? Also, how do the four beasts in Daniel 7 relate to the 8 kingdoms in Revelation 17? Bible scholars have traditionally referred to the fourth kingdom in Daniel 7—and the legs of Nebuchadnezzar's statue in Daniel 2—as the Roman Empire.

Daniel 2:36-44 "This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. **You, O king** [Nebuchadnezzar], are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. **You are that head of gold. "After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron -- for iron breaks and smashes everything -- and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others.** Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom ... the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay. **"In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.**

Revelation 13:4b "Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?"

Shoebat and Richardson argue:

Did the Roman Empire crush ancient Babylon/modern Iraq? No. Only for a few months in A.D. 116 under Emperor Trajan did the Roman Empire ever extend its territory toward Babylon. But they were almost immediately beaten back.

... The four Empires described in this passage are not what western students think, they are:

1. Babylonian Empire
2. Medo-Persian Empire
3. Greek Empire, (or possibly the Greco-Roman Empire)
4. Islamic Empire

... While the Roman Empire did not fulfill the necessary requirements to be considered as the fourth empire of Daniel 2, there was an empire that did. The Islamic Empire fulfilled these requirements completely. Islam conquered all of the three previous empires—Babylonian, Medo-Persian, and the Grecian. Bear in mind, Islam also conquered the Roman Empire, which had ceased to exist in Europe. Revelation 13 insists that the fourth beast constitutes the three previous empires. This must exclude Europe. Islam conquered the entire eastern Byzantine Roman Empire and large portions of what was the Western Roman Empire. That included Iraq (Babylon), and Iran (Persia). The Roman Empire cannot make this claim and thus only Islam meets the biblical criterion of Daniel 2:40.

... While the Grecian Empire extended all the way to India, the Roman Empire's furthest Eastern expansion barely reached the Euphrates River. [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008, pp. 310-311, 315, 333]

Note the description of the fourth kingdom in Daniel 2 (above): “the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom ... the people will be a mixture and will not remain united”. Might this be a mixture of Sunni/Shiite, Arab/Persian, or other groups? The fact that iron is mentioned suggests that there is a Roman connection.

Ezekiel 38:21 I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Sovereign LORD. Every man's sword will be against his brother.

... the Last-Days Empire is also said to be a divided (*peleg*) empire. The division, of course, that this passage speaks of is truly an appropriate description of the Islamic world, as it has existed from its earliest days until modern times with its various sectarian divisions. [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008, p. 318]

Phillip Goodman also believes there will be an Assyrian connection tied to the “land of Nimrod”—and that the 7 empires are Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, and *the Ottoman Empire* [Goodman, 2003]. He notes that there are only 7 heads in Revelation 13:1 and 17:3,7,9,11, and therefore concludes that the 8th head has a double existence (i.e., is one of the earlier 7, with its roots in ancient Assyria today known as Syria-Iraq). Iraq “re-emerged” as a nation, that is, it achieved modern-day independence in 1922; and Syria in 1938.

Consider these unfulfilled prophecies:

Micah 5:5-6 And he will be their peace. When **the Assyrian** invades our land and marches through our fortresses, we will raise against him **seven shepherds, even eight leaders of men**. They will rule the **land of Assyria** with the sword, the **land of Nimrod** with drawn sword. He will deliver us from **the Assyrian** when he invades our land and marches into our borders.

Revelation 13:1 And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had

ten horns and **seven heads**, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name.

Revelation 17:3 Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had **seven heads** and ten horns.

Revelation 17:7 Then the angel said to me: "Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the **seven heads** and ten horns.

Revelation 17:9-11 "This calls for a mind with wisdom. The **seven heads** are **seven hills** on which the woman sits. **They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while.** The beast who once was, and now is not, is an **eighth king. He belongs to the seven** and is going to his destruction.

Goodman argues that only the Assyrian empire disappeared during the time of the writing of Revelation; the others lived on. Thus, only Assyria qualifies as the kingdom that will be "reincarnated" (i.e., whose "fatal wound had been healed" (Revelation 13:12)):

... the demon spirit known as the prince of Assyria, who once ruled over that ancient empire, will ascend from the Abyss in the latter days. He will inhabit and possess a man whom the world will behold in wonder as the reincarnated Assyrian. [Goodman, 2003, p. 120]

In summary, Goodman states that the end times will see a revived Roman Empire, but it will be headed by a restored Assyria (which in turn was part of the Greek empire). The eight empires are therefore: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, the Ottoman Empire, and a revived Roman Empire whose roots are in ancient Assyria. Furthermore, present-day Iraq and Syria (Mesopotamia) will be home to the Antichrist, whose kingdom will attain global preeminence and acceptance.

Greece will re-emerge at the end of the age in an "empire within an empire" relationship to a similarly revived New Rome, where it will occupy the same basic geographic outline as did its ancient prototype. This future fourfold division will include the territories of modern day Greece, Turkey, Egypt, and Syria-Iraq.

... [Daniel] Chapters 8 and 11 shift ... from a panoramic view of latter-day Rome in general to a close up of latter-day Greece in particular. The focus on New Rome is narrowed to the "empire within an empire," Greece. As one reads through these chapters, the focus further narrows in a series of steps. First, the two middle kingdoms of the fourfold Grecian empire are isolated. Then the emphasis further narrows to the northern kingdom, Seleucia (Syria-Iraq). The focus is next tightened to lift out from the northern kingdom a single personality—the antichrist type, Antiochus Epiphanes. The goal of the progressively narrowing scope in these visions is finally attained when this blasphemous Seleucian king is then projected to the end

time. There his image emerges with his “clone,” the ultimate blasphemer, the Antichrist himself. [Goodman, 2003, pp. 54-55]

Historical confirmation of Antiochus’s career ceases with verse 35 [in Daniel chapter 11]. There are numerous contradictions with known facts of his reign beginning in verse 36. Though there may be some secondary application to Antiochus in verses 36-39, he is totally out of view in the final section beginning with verse 40 because the last verse records the death of this vile person as taking place in the Holy Land, whereas Antiochus died in Persia. [Goodman, 2003, p. 63]

The king of the north is believed to be the Antichrist. Note that modern-day Syria-Iraq (Assyria) is one of the four regions corresponding to the ancient Greek Empire. Note also that ancient Assyria contained Nineveh, the wicked city that temporarily repented after the preaching of Jonah around 760 BC. After its destruction in 612 BC, almost all traces of Nineveh seemed to have disappeared, having only been unearthed by archaeologists in the 1800s.

Today, just as Israel has been reborn, the ghost of Assyria awaits its prophetic cue from beneath the sands of Syria and Iraq to assume center stage as the head of the world’s last and greatest empire, and as the domain of the Antichrist—the preeminent kingdom at the end time. [Goodman, 2003, p. 1]

The following verses suggest that the Antichrist will be an Assyrian. In fact, the term “the Assyrian” is used in Scripture to describe the Antichrist:

Isaiah 14:25-26 I will crush **the Assyrian** in my land; on my mountains I will trample him down. His yoke will be taken from my people, and his burden removed from their shoulders." This is the plan determined for the whole world; this is the hand stretched out over all nations.

Micah 5:3-6,15 Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor gives birth and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites. He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will be their peace. When **the Assyrian** invades our land and marches through our fortresses, we will raise against him seven shepherds, even eight leaders of men. They will rule the land of Assyria with the sword, the land of Nimrod with drawn sword. He will deliver us from **the Assyrian** when he invades our land and marches into our borders. ... I will take vengeance in anger and wrath upon the nations that have not obeyed me."

There is good news that comes out of the above scenario, though. After the Lord Jesus Christ returns, there will be peace and rejoicing, and even Egypt and Assyria will rejoice and be blessed:

Isaiah 19:23-25 In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the

Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The LORD Almighty will bless them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance."

Yet another viewpoint is provided by Marvin Rosenfeld, who believes that all 7 kings refer to nations that have persecuted, and attempted to destroy, the Jews [Rosenfeld, 2009]. The ones that had fallen by John's day include:

1. Egypt and the pharaoh "which knew not Joseph"—around the time of the Exodus
2. Assyria and King Tiglath-Pileser who took the ten northern tribes of Israel into captivity
3. Babylon and King Nebuchadnezzar who attacked Jerusalem, destroyed the first (Solomon's) Temple, and led many Jews captive to Babylon
4. Medo-Persia in the time of Queen Esther, when Haman plotted to destroy the Jews
5. Greece, which under the leadership of Antiochus Epiphanes attempted to destroy Jewish worship

... and the king that "is" (in John's day):

6. Rome, which killed many Jews, destroyed the second temple, and dispersed the Jewish people all over the world

The seventh kingdom which had not yet come, and would appear for only a brief time, is said to be:

7. Germany, which under Adolf Hitler, attempted to destroy the Jews

In his hypothesis, Rosenfeld adds that the eighth king will be:

8. Antichrist, who is likely to be a Gentile (like the seven kings who went before him); and, like his predecessors, he will be demonically inspired to try to destroy the Jewish people. His partner, the False Prophet, will be a Jew.

Thus, we see quite a range of interpretations about the $7 + 1 = 8$ kings. Nevertheless, the most common interpretation is: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, Rome (revived), and finally the Antichrist.

<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>The seven hills of Rome are Capitoline, Palatine, Esquiline, Aventine, Caelian, Viminal, and Quirinal. These are the hills that the apostle John was referring to, in Revelation [Gentry, 1998b]. Many scholars—both dispensationalist and preterist—associate these hills with Rome, which is sometimes called “the City of Seven Hills”.</p> <p>Daniel 7:24 The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings.</p> <p>John 19:14-15 It was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about noon. "Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews. But they shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!" "Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked. "We have no king but Caesar," the chief priests answered.</p> <p>Preterists view the 7 kings as emperors (Caesars) of Rome. The first 5 were Julius (Caesar), Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius—and all had died before Nero ruled in 54-68 AD. By the way, Julius Caesar was the first “Caesar”; Caesar was his family name. The sixth emperor (i.e., the current one at the time that Revelation was written) was Nero. Following Nero, we have Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian. Galba is the 7th Caesar and “he must remain for a little while”, as per Revelation 17:10-11. He reigned for only 7 months, during the period June 68 AD to January 69 AD.</p> <p>From Jupiter Julius, the father of the Roman Empire who was voted by the senate into the hierarchy of gods as “divine Julius,” to Nero Claudius Caesar who was worshipped as “Almighty God” and “Savior,” the Caesars deified themselves as gods. Octavius, successor to Julius Caesar, took on the moniker Augustus meaning “worthy of reverence and worship.” A two-headed coin bearing the image of Julius on one side and Augustus on the other rendered Octavius “The divine Caesar—and the Son of God.” Upon the death of Tiberius—the third Roman Caesar—the city of Smyrna was awarded the privilege of erecting a temple in which to worship him as god. Caligula, who succeeded Tiberius, was so convinced of his own divinity that he purposed to have a colossal image of himself erected in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. Only death prevented his perverted ambition to be enshrined as god in the holy of holies. For Claudius, the fifth Caesar, the spiritual supremacy of the state was paramount. His philosophy was summed up in the phrase “Caesar is Lord.” [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 111]</p> <p>Note, however, that other preterists may have different views because it’s unclear who should be the first emperor when starting counting. For example, the Roman Empire was officially established under Augustus. Should all emperors be counted—or just the emperors who were deified by Senate? Josephus began the counting with Julius Caesar [Gentry, 1998b].</p> <p>The interpretation of the seven heads of the beast set forth in 17:10-11 is also presented as favoring the early date. Here again the divergence of opinion regarding this figure precludes the advisability of attempting to build a</p>
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chronology on it. The five kings who “have fallen” (if they are to be taken literally ...) would probably be Augustus (27 B.C. - A.D. 14) through Nero (A.D. 54-68). But who is the one who is? If the three minor claimants who ruled in 68 and 69 are to be counted, Galba becomes the ruler at the time of composition of Revelation. But this would make Vitellius the dreaded eighth who “belongs to the seven” (v. 11), the beast of the Apocalypse! On the other hand, if the three are skipped and Vespasian is counted as the sixth, then Domitian would be the eighth. [Mounce, 1998, pp. 20-21]

Gentry and other preterist interpreters, in order to support their view of the date of Revelation, have to begin with Julius Caesar to arrive at Nero as the sixth king. But, as already noted, the counting can begin with Julius Caesar, Augustus, or even Caligula. Beginning with Caligula makes Domitian the sixth King. We must also remember that there was a 13-year gap between the death of Julius Caesar and the beginning of Augustus’ reign. [Hitchcock, 2012, p. 199]

Kenneth Gentry notes that the first 7 kings in Revelation 17 are referred to with the definite article “the”; however, the 8th king is referred to by the indefinite article “an”—that is, “an eighth king”, suggesting that it refers to an attribute or classification of the subsequent ruler, rather than to a specific individual [Gentry, 1998b]:

Revelation 17:9-13 "This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for only a little while. The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction. "The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast.

But John does note that a particular emperor is coming, who will act as a resurrecting force (hence, the number eight [symbolizing new beginnings]) to give life to the whole empire. [Gentry, 1998b, p. xxxii]

Gentry enumerates the Roman emperors as follows, stating that emperor worship began with Julius Caesar [Gentry, 1998b, p. 158]. Gentry draws attention to Nero as the sixth king, followed by Galba who ruled for only a short time:

	Emperor	Years
1	Julius Caesar	49-44 BC
2	Augustus	31 BC – 14 AD
3	Tiberius	14-37 AD
4	Gaius, also known as Caligula	37-41 AD
5	Claudius	41-54 AD
6	Nero	54-68 AD
7	Galba	68-69 AD

8	Otho	69 AD
9	Vitellius	69 AD
10	Vespasian	69-79 AD

Harold Eberle and Martin Trench believe that the 7 Caesars are Julius Caesar, his son Augustine, and 5 members of Augustine’s family who ruled until 68 AD [Eberle & Trench, 2021]. They argue that the “beast” of Revelation is not just one Caesar, but several generations of Caesars. They add that the 10 horns are the 10 provinces (and therefore kings) of the Roman Empire.

Any modern Christian who has studied the life of the Roman emperors and believes in the possibility of demonic possession would suspect some of the Caesars of being demon-possessed, especially those known for their evil ways, such as Nero, Caligula, and Decius.

Several Roman emperors demanded worship. Every Roman citizen had to come into the temple of Caesar on a certain day of each year, burn a pinch of incense, and then declare, “Caesar is Lord.” Temples to the godhead of the emperor were constructed throughout the Empire. [Eberle & Trench, 2021, Kindle edition, location 7304]

Preterists believe that “a beast coming out of the sea” refers symbolically to a Gentile power, and in particular, Rome under Nero [Gregg, 2013]. This Gentile power would come from the west because John stood in Israel on the seashore [Adams & Cook, 2006]. The “beast” refers to both Nero and Rome, considered together. When Nero died, it was considered a mortal wound to the beast, but the Roman Empire continued. In fact, some of the early church leaders believed that Nero was the beast of Revelation because of his evil nature [Eberle & Trench, 2021].

Another possibility is that the “mortal wound” belonged to Caligula because he recovered from a serious illness [Mounce, 1998]. Premillennialist and non-dispensationalist Robert Mounce adds that most writers believe it refers to Nero rather than Caligula. Nevertheless, Caligula tried to set up a statue of himself in the Jewish temple, and he allowed altars to be erected in honor of himself. These are obvious forms of blasphemy. Mounce adds:

A basic problem with identifying the slain head as Nero (or any specific emperor) is that the text does not say that the *head* was restored. It was the *beast* who recovered from the death stroke upon one of his heads. ... Since the beast is the Roman Empire in its persecution of the church, its recovery from a mortal wound could refer to the reestablishment of order under Vespasian (A.D. 69-79) following the chaotic and bloody revolution that had begun less than two years before with the death of Nero and extended through the abortive reigns of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius. [Mounce, 1998, p. 248]

<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>What is meant by the “ten horns” in Revelation? Are the 10 horns “kingdoms” (or “kings”)? Do the 10 horns refer to: a European “revived Roman Empire”, a worldwide empire, or a Middle Eastern empire?</p> <p>First, some background is in order about the 10 horns. There are many passages in the Bible that refer to “ten horns”, “ten kings”, or “ten kingdoms”. They are from the books of Revelation and Daniel. The terms “seven heads”, “ten horns”, and “seven crowns” often appear together.</p> <p>Revelation 12:3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads.</p> <p>Revelation 13:1 And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name.</p> <p>Revelation 17:3 Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.</p> <p>Revelation 17:7 Then the angel said to me: "Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the seven heads and ten horns.</p> <p>Revelation 17:12 "The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast.</p> <p>Revelation 17:16 The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire.</p> <p>Daniel 7:7 "After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast -- terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.</p> <p>Daniel 7:19-25 "Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying, with its iron teeth and bronze claws -- the beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell -- the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom. "He gave me this explanation: 'The fourth beast is a</p>
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	<p>fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.</p>
<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>The identification of the 10 horns is difficult to pinpoint, but we can try to put the puzzle together using scriptures from the books of Daniel and Revelation. Interestingly, images of gods in ancient Mesopotamia sometimes showed the gods (e.g., Enlil) wearing crowns with 10 horns [Hamp, 2021].</p> <p>Whereas the 7 heads refer to successive empires, the 10 horns appear to rule concurrently. The “seven heads” are likely the major Gentile empires throughout history: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and soon-to-be: the revived Roman Empire.</p> <p>Revelation 17:9-11 "This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while. The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.</p> <p>The metaphor “horn” is sometimes used in Scripture to represent <i>strength</i>, as in the strength of nations—perhaps militarily, perhaps economically. Daniel 7:24 and Revelation 17:12 specifically state that the ten horns are ten <i>kings</i>.</p> <p>The focus appears to be the 10 kingdoms; but an 11th (led by the Antichrist) will arise to subsequently displace, or kick out, 3. Are these the kings that are referred to in Daniel 11:40-45?</p> <p>In his war against the ten kings, the Antichrist moves out in all directions in conquest. He is seen moving against the north (vv. 40,44), the south (vv. 40,42-43), and the east (v. 44). The three kings he will succeed in killing (Dan. 7:8,20,24) will be the king of the north (Syria), the king of the south (Egypt) and the king of the east (Mesopotamia). His conquest of Egypt opens the door for his conquest of Africa (vv. 42-43). He will also invade Israel, the glorious land (v. 41 and also mentioned in Rev. 11:1-2), setting the stage for the Abomination of Desolation ...</p> <p>Although eventually the Antichrist will gain political control of the whole world, three countries will escape his domination: Edom, Moab, and Ammon (v. 41). All of these three ancient nations are under one government today: the Kingdom of Jordan. ...</p> <p>In verse 45, Daniel states where the Antichrist will plant his headquarters during this Midtribulation war. ... It is set up <i>between the seas</i>, meaning between the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea. Furthermore, it is <i>at the</i></p>

glorious holy mountain, meaning the Temple Mount, or Mount Moriah or Mount Zion. ...

It is apparently during this conflict [with the ten kings] that the Antichrist is killed. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 240-241]

The attempt of the Antichrist to gain political control will be interrupted by his death. But after his resurrection, the second world war of the Tribulation will continue until three of the ten kings are killed. ... Daniel 7:24:

And as for the ten horns, out of this kingdom shall ten kings arise: and another shall arise after them; and he shall be diverse from the former, and he shall put down three kings.

[Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 244]

Dispensationalists often think that the 10 horns or kingdoms are European nations that form a “revived Roman Empire”. These nations allow the Antichrist [the first beast, i.e., the beast from the sea] to establish a power base from which to rule. The “sea” is often used to refer to Gentile nations; thus, the Antichrist will likely be a Gentile. He uses the False Prophet [the second beast, i.e., the beast from the land] to come to power. Later, however, the Antichrist has no need for the False Prophet’s religion (see Revelation 17:10); and it appears that the casting aside of the “woman” which represents false religion (spiritual adultery) takes place at about the midpoint of the Tribulation. Up until then, there is some religious freedom, and that is probably why the Jewish people are allowed to rebuild their temple in the first half of the Tribulation. Note that false religion opposes the one true God of the universe, and is often branded with metaphors like “prostitute” with which the kings of the earth commit “fornication”. This metaphor appears many times in Scripture.

The 10 nations are: the 10 toes on the statue described in Daniel 2, as well as the 10 horns on the beast described in Daniel 7. We don’t know what the nations are; however, in the final form of the revived Roman Empire, there appear to be 10 nations or kings that dominate. Right now, there are more than 10 nations in the European Union (EU), sometimes called the European Community (EC) or the European Common Market (ECM). In fact, as of 2004, there were 25 member nations that signed the EU constitution [Hitchcock, 2006]. Furthermore, more nations want into the EU. As of 2008, there are 27 countries in the EU, and 3 more are seeking admission. This casts some doubt on the European country model, especially as geopolitical boundaries and alliances change.

Another viewpoint is that these 10 nations do not simply represent the European community or the “revived Roman Empire”, but rather they are 10 *worldwide* political and economic regions. In other words, *globalism* is replacing a localized interpretation of the 10 horns [Franz, 2008]:

Region	Countries (some examples)
North America	Canada, United States, Mexico
Europe	European nations
Africa	African nations
ASEAN (acronym for Association of Southeast Asian Nations)	Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Cambodia
Australia	Australia, New Zealand
Middle East	Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, breakaway Muslim countries of the former Soviet Union
South America	South American countries
Russia	Russia
China	China
India	India

The argument is that the Antichrist will eventually attempt to take control of not just a “revived Roman Empire” but of the whole world, climaxing in a world government, world religion, and a single, unified currency. Recent geopolitical and economic upheaval certainly seems to provide some strength to this hypothesis.

Yet another alternative hypothesis to the traditional “revived Roman Empire” model of eschatology is the notion that the “ten horns” in Daniel and in Revelation may in fact represent successive powers that focus on Babylon, Israel, and much of the Middle East. For example, the 10 horns could be made up of these kingdoms/powers throughout history: Egyptian (accounts for 1 horn), Assyrian (1), Babylonian (1), Medo-Persian (1), Macedonian Greek (4—because four generals divided the empire after Alexander the Greek (see Daniel 8:8), Roman (1), and Islamic (1) [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008]. It is not clear, however, which 3 empires would be uprooted by the Antichrist.

As a side note about Europe’s current spiritual condition:

- Less than 1% of Europe is evangelical Christian
- Church attendance is declining
- Morality is declining
- Religious symbols are being removed
- There are more mosques than churches in the UK
 - Some churches are being turned into mosques
- There are more Muslims in mosques on Fridays, than Christians in church on Sundays [Bennett, 2016].

<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>The idea that the European Union represents the 10 nations (“horns” or kingdoms) in Revelation is nonsense. The problem with “newspaper eschatology” is that people try to map current events to the Bible—and they often get it wrong. Dispensationalists were counting off the 10 nations of the European Common Market: 1, 2, ..., 10; but then the number of nations in the ECM went beyond 10. So, now what do you do?</p> <p>Hank Hanegraaff states that the vision of the 10 horns was given to Daniel, and they concern the future, several centuries after Daniel. The first large horn belongs to Alexander the Great, who died at the age of 32. From him, the large horn (his empire) was broken off, and there came four horns, and they were the four generals that came after Alexander the Great. The Mediterranean area was parceled out among them.</p> <p>Out of one of these horns, came a nightmare for the Jewish people. In particular, the “10-horn” Seleucid empire controlled the Jewish state, and is likely what is referred to in the “ten horns” prophecy [Mounce, 1998]. One of these horns is Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who caused great destruction among the Jewish people around 168 BC.</p> <p>Thus, the 10 horns are a fulfilled prophecy, not a future prophecy.</p> <p>James Stuart Russell adds that the number 10, like the number 7 for the heads in Revelation 17:12-18, is not meant to indicate a precise number of kings, but it may be “mystic or symbolic” [Gregg, 2013].</p>
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<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>When, in history, were the judgments of the seven seals, trumpets, and vials (bowls) fulfilled? When were other key events in Revelation fulfilled?</p>
<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>They weren’t fulfilled.</p> <p>Consider the events in—and leading up to—70 AD. Did all eyes see Christ? Did He defend Jerusalem? Did He defend the armies? Did they look on Him whom they have pierced? The answer is clearly “no” to all of the above.</p> <p>Furthermore, many of the seal, trumpet, and vial (bowl) judgments of Revelation have specific, quantitative effects, such as the largest earthquake in history, a war that wipes out one-quarter of mankind, and three “plagues” in Revelation 9 that destroy another third of the population. When did these events occur in history? They didn’t.</p> <p>Even if they are metaphors, when did such a major series of events occur that, historically, can be mapped into a series of trumpets, bowls, and seals? Remember that some of these judgments are specially listed as being <i>worldwide</i> in scope, not just local to Israel or its neighboring countries.</p>

	<p>Furthermore, none of the following major prophecies were fulfilled in, or around, 70 AD [Reagan, 2005]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abomination of Desolation—Titus and his army made no attempt to set up an Abomination of Desolation. • Mark of the Beast—Nothing was implemented to control commerce • Great distress “never to be equaled again”—The Nazi Holocaust likely exceeded the events of 70 AD. • The threat that the earth would be destroyed at that time—or that mankind would wipe itself out—unless Christ were to return. There was no such threat. • A record of two witnesses preaching in Jerusalem, as per Revelation 11. No such individuals came on the scene. • No Antichrist ruled the world—Nero certainly didn’t. • There was no “false prophet”, either. • The headquarters of the Antichrist weren’t destroyed in one hour. • Christ did not return visibly and physically, as required by Acts 1:10-11. <p>We conclude that all these prophecies are awaiting a future fulfillment.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>The seals, trumpets, and bowls were written using <i>judgment language</i>. The language is similar to that found in Isaiah concerning the judgment of Babylon, which the Medes and Persians executed [Hanegraaff, <i>Bible Answer Man</i>, August 20, 2010]. It is not meant to be taken literally. It is not even figurative language.</p> <p>We know that the Temple fell in 70 AD. In Revelation, John is told to measure the Temple. Is this a future Temple? Dispensationalists believe so; but, nowhere in the New Testament, including Revelation, is there any writing about the fallen Temple, or any mention about a rebuilt Temple. Thus, the Temple was still standing when John was told to measure it; and therefore, Revelation must have been written <i>before</i> 70 AD. And if Revelation was written before 70 AD, then the judgments are symbolic, and are therefore fulfilled.</p> <p>To study the issue, Gary DeMar recommends the book by Ken Gentry titled <i>Before Jerusalem Fell</i> [Gentry, 1998b].</p>

Topic/ Question	Regarding Revelation 19:11-21, will Christ come back to Earth riding on a white horse (literally), and having a sword in His mouth (literally)?
Dispensationalist Position	These images could be symbolic or they could be literal. The sword is likely symbolic, and it has a reference in Hebrews 4:12 that indicates it is symbolic of the Word of God. Ancient conquerors rode a white horse after their military victory [Hitchcock, 2012]. However, recall from 2 Kings 2:11 that a chariot of

	<p>fire and horses of fire took Elijah to heaven. We learn that horses and chariots of fire protected Elisha in 2 Kings 6:17. So, it may well be literal.</p> <p>The armies that follow Christ on white horses are likely the raptured church, but may include angels. Some commentators also suggest that it may include the Tribulation saints and the Old Testament saints, although the latter are likely excluded because Daniel 12:11-13 says that Daniel—an Old Testament saint—will be resurrected “at the end of the days”, meaning the end of the Tribulation, and maybe even as late as 75 days past the Tribulation because of the reference to 1,335 days (instead of 1,260 days) in that Scripture passage.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>The white horse and the sword are both symbolic. The Church has been God’s vehicle to preach the Word (i.e., the Bible). The two-edged sword that comes out of Christ’s mouth is symbolic of preaching the gospel to the world (but not with violence, of course, since that was not Christ’s method in the four gospels). Christ proclaimed the message peacefully, and we are to do the same.</p> <p>Jay Adams writes:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">That this does not describe a physical coming such as the second advent is apparent from at least two facts: first, Christ is nowhere else said to return upon a <i>horse</i>. He did not ascend this way, and he is to return <i>as he ascended</i>. ... Secondly, the conflict described here is spiritual, not physical (unlike that which will transpire at the second advent). This is a battle waged and won by the <i>Word of God</i>. This is clear from the reference to the Word as the weapon which issues from the mouth of the Savior—cf. verses 15 and 21. [Jay Adams, cited in [Gregg, 2013, p. 506]]</p>

Topic/ Question	What are the parallels between the book of Revelation and the book of Joshua (plus the related book of Judges)?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>There are a number of parallels [Missler, 2005]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a 7-year timeframe associated with each (i.e., the Tribulation in the book of Revelation, and the seven year conquest of Canaan in Joshua and Judges). • The Levites are involved (see Revelation 7:7 and various parts of Joshua, especially with respect to the allocation of land). • Two special “witnesses” are sent (the two witnesses in Revelation 11, and the two good spies in Judges). • Seven trumpets are involved in each case (the seven trumpet judgments in Revelation, and the blowing of a trumpet during the Israelites’ procession around the city of Jericho for seven days). • Hailstones and fire come down from heaven (Revelation 16:21, Joshua 10:11) in the form of judgment. • There are signs in the sun and the moon (Revelation 6:12 and 8:12; and Joshua 10:13 when the sun stood still and the moon did not rise).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The leader in each book is a military commander who comes to take claim of the land from its occupiers (Jesus Christ in Revelation, and Joshua in the book of Joshua). • The name <i>Joshua</i> is a variant of the Aramaic/Hebrew name <i>Yeshua</i> (often translated as <i>Jesus</i> in English).
Preterist Position	n/a

Topic/ Question	What does the 7-sealed scroll represent in the book of Revelation?
Dispensationalist Position	The scroll in Revelation appears to be either the title deed to the earth or a legal will. Jesus Christ is the kinsman-redeemer. John MacArthur states that Romans sealed their wills seven times [MacArthur, 2006]. Mark Hitchcock also argues for a will because a will “was the only document in the first-century world that was closed with seven seals” [Hitchcock, 2012, p. 114]. Renald Showers [Showers, 1995] and Thomas Ice believe that the scroll is the title deed to the earth.
Preterist Position	<p>What does the scroll represent? “To some preterists it is the sentence of the judge being handed down for execution, and to others it is the document representing the New Covenant.” [Gregg, 2013, p. 189]</p> <p>Many preterists see the fulfillment of the breaking of the 7 seals in the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD and the years leading up to the fall. There are similarities between the breaking of seals and the events in the Olivet Discourse.</p> <p>Some preterists (e.g., Kenneth Gentry, Jr.) believe that the sealed scroll is God’s “certificate of divorce” given to the Jewish people [Eberle & Trench, 2021].</p>

Topic/ Question	What is the chronology of the judgments in the book of Revelation? In particular, are the seals, trumpets, and bowls/vials: (a) sequential, (b) interleaving, or (c) concurrent/parallel? What is the relative timing of the midpoint of the Tribulation with respect to these septet (sets of 7) judgments?						
Dispensationalist Position	<p>These questions are the subject of considerable debate. All dispensational viewpoints claim that the events <i>within</i> a class of judgments are chronological. In other words, the first seal judgment is fulfilled before the second seal judgment is fulfilled, etc.</p> <p>Here is a summary of the septet judgments [Pentecost, 1958]:</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: 40px;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Judgment</th> <th>Scripture</th> <th>Effects</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1st Seal</td> <td>Rev. 6:1-2</td> <td>White Horse: False Messiah (Antichrist)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Judgment	Scripture	Effects	1 st Seal	Rev. 6:1-2	White Horse: False Messiah (Antichrist)
Judgment	Scripture	Effects					
1 st Seal	Rev. 6:1-2	White Horse: False Messiah (Antichrist)					

	2 nd Seal	Rev. 6:3-4	Red Horse: War
	3 rd Seal	Rev. 6:5-6	Black Horse: Inflation
	4 th Seal	Rev. 6:7-8	Pale Horse: Sword, famine, plagues, & wild beasts; ¼ of the world's population will be killed through these
	5 th Seal	Rev. 6:9-11	Souls of the slain cry for justice
	6 th Seal	Rev. 6:12-17	A great earthquake, and signs in the heavens
	7 th Seal	Rev. 8:1	Silence in Heaven for ½ hour; note that the 7 th seal judgment initiates the 7 trumpet judgments
	1 st Trumpet	Rev. 8:7	Hailstones, fire, & blood; one-third of the Earth, trees, & green grass are burned up
	2 nd Trumpet	Rev. 8:8-9	A large meteorite or asteroid (?) strikes the sea; one-third of the sea is turned to blood, one-third of the sea creatures die, and one-third of the ships are destroyed (tsunami?)
	3 rd Trumpet	Rev. 8:10-11	Ball of fire (meteor? comet? nuclear event?) affects into one-third of the springs and rivers; "Wormwood" event: many people die from the "bitter" waters
	4 th Trumpet	Rev. 8:12	One-third of the day and night are without light (i.e., sun, moon, and stars are affected; or perhaps light is filtered out)
	5 th Trumpet	Rev. 9:1-11	Locust-like creatures (demons) come from the Abyss
	6 th Trumpet	Rev. 9:14-19	4 fallen angels that were bound at the Euphrates River are released to kill one-third of mankind via an army of size 200 million (possibly demons)
	7 th Trumpet	Rev. 11:15-19	Worship in heaven; thunder, rumblings, lightning, earthquake, and a great hailstorm; the "third woe"
	1 st Bowl	Rev. 16:2	Ugly and painful sores break out
	2 nd Bowl	Rev. 16:3	Everything in the sea dies
	3 rd Bowl	Rev. 16:4	River and springs turn to blood
	4 th Bowl	Rev. 16:8-9	Intense heat of the sun
	5 th Bowl	Rev. 16:10-11	Darkness in the kingdom of the Beast
	6 th Bowl	Rev. 16:12-16	Euphrates River is dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East to enable them to come to Armageddon

7 th Bowl	Rev. 16:17-21	Thunder, lightning, etc.; the world's greatest earthquake; hailstones of one hundred pounds each
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When we combine the 4th seal and the 6th trumpet, we see that one-quarter of the world's population dies via the 4th seal judgment, and then one-third of the remaining $\frac{3}{4}$ die through the 6th trumpet judgment. This sums to one-half of the world's population—just via these two judgments.

Let us partition the viewpoints with respect to the midpoint of the Tribulation. There are at least 3 general chronological models of the seals, trumpets, and bowls of Revelation within dispensationalism [Dean, 2009]:

1. **The first 6 seal judgments occur in the first half of the Tribulation**, and the rest of the judgments occur in the second half.
 - Mark Hitchcock adheres to this view because the Great Tribulation doesn't start until the second half of the 7-year Tribulation, and if the first six trumpets appear in the first half, that already means that half of the world's population would be wiped out [Hitchcock, 2012]. This would not seem to line up with Jesus' comments about the Great Tribulation in Matthew 24:21-22 which would take place after the sounding of the seventh trumpet.
 - A variant of this is that the first half of the Tribulation includes the first 5 seals, and the sixth comes at—or slightly after—the midpoint of the Tribulation.
 - J. Dwight Pentecost believes that the seal judgments occur in the first half; the trumpet judgments occur in the second half; and the bowl judgments occur late in the second half, just prior to Christ's Second Coming [Pentecost, 1958].

2. **All 7 seal and 6 trumpet judgments occur in the first half of the Tribulation**, but the bowl judgments occur in the second half.
 - Here, the first half of the Tribulation includes the 7 seals and the first 6 trumpets (which are part of the seventh seal) [De Haan, 1946; Fruchtenbaum, 2004].
 - Note: Since the sixth trumpet includes the resurrection of the two witnesses, and since some prophecy teachers think that the ministry of the two witnesses ends at the midpoint of the Tribulation, one could argue that the sixth trumpet actually takes place just past the midpoint of the Tribulation.
 - Other scholars who believe that the seal judgments and the 6 (or possibly 5 or 7) trumpet judgments occur in the first half of the Tribulation include Ed Hindson, Thomas Ice, Tim LaHaye, David Reagan, Ron Rhodes, Warren Wiersbe, and Andy Woods [Salus, 2019; Woods, 2019a].

3. All 3 sets of septet judgments occur in the *second* half of the Tribulation, that is, during the Great Tribulation.

- The late John Walvoord held this position.
- He believed that the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments were concentrated in the latter half of the Tribulation [Walvoord, *et al.*, 2011].

There are some further variants. For example, Bill Salus thinks that the first 5 seal judgments—“the beginning of sorrows” could occur in the gap *between* the Rapture and the Tribulation [Salus, 2019]. In other words, these 5 seal judgments might take place *before* the Tribulation begins. He places the Magog Invasion and the emergence of the 144,000 Jewish witnesses (but not the 2 Temple Mount witnesses) there, as well. Salus places the opening of the 6th and 7th seals, and the first 6 trumpet judgments, in the first half of the Tribulation. He believes that Matthew 24:4-8 precede the Tribulation; and that verse 9 begins the Tribulation. One of his reasons for the later start of the Tribulation in Matthew 24 concerns the martyred saints. Salus argues that they would have been able to count the days, if they were already in the 7-year Tribulation.

Revelation 6:9-10 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?”

Salus thinks that the remaining 2 seal judgments and the first 6 trumpet judgments take place during the first half of the Tribulation, and the seventh trumpet judgment and all 7 bowl judgments take place during the second half. Salus argues that Revelation 4-5 deal with events in Heaven just after the Rapture. The Rapture is implied in Revelation 4:1 and there is reference to a “trumpet call of God” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17):

Revelation 4:1 After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.”

James Kaddis and Don Stewart believe that the first 4 seals (i.e., the 4 horsemen of the apocalypse) occur *before* the start of the Tribulation [Hughes & Kaddis, 2021]. For example, the first seal releases the Antichrist, and it can be assumed that the Antichrist needs time to set up his power base before he is accepted by the world, and especially by Israel if he is going to be the one who confirms the 7-year covenant with Israel to mark the start of the Tribulation.

Dennis James Woods puts forth the case that the fifth, sixth, and seventh seals are visionary statements that describe what will take place in the rest of the book of Revelation, that is, before Christ's Second Coming [Woods, 2022f]. In other words, the fifth, sixth, and seventh seals are *not* point-in-time events that can be placed on a timeline since they more broadly describe what is going to take place in the second half of the Tribulation. Thus, we can think of them as being a big picture preview of what is to come. These particular seals include: the souls under the altar, the cosmic events and the raising of the two witnesses, and the unleashing of the seven trumpet judgments. All of these events seem to be distributed across various times in the book of Revelation. In particular, note that the sixth trumpet includes the death and subsequent ascension of the two witnesses. This would take place no earlier than 3-4 days into the second half of the Tribulation, and that would be under the assumption that the two witnesses align the start of their ministry with the start of the 7-year Tribulation. Because of the cosmic events that seem to be part of the sixth seal and the sixth trumpet, one could argue that the sixth seal and the sixth trumpet overlap. There is the possibility that some events related to the sixth seal will not take place until well into the second half of the Tribulation (i.e., well past the Abomination of Desolation), namely events such as the sun turning to darkness and the moon into blood (e.g., Joel 2:30-31; Acts 2:19-20; Revelation 6:12); the mountains and islands moving out of their places (Revelation 6:14; 16:20); and the kings of the earth crying to the mountains and rocks to "fall on us" (Revelation 6:12-17; 16:16-21) [Woods, 2022f]. Woods places the cosmic disturbances just before the bowl judgments, but because of the preceding arguments, he states that the sixth *seal* simply cannot be placed this far into the Tribulation. This provides the rationale for considering the sixth seal to be a preview or vision, rather than a single point-in-time event that occurs later on.

Many commentators place the two witnesses in the first half, with their ministry ending around the midpoint of the Tribulation. In my opinion, the two witnesses could begin their ministry partway through the first half of the Tribulation. This would place their death and ascension partway through the second half of the Tribulation. Like the timing of the mark of the beast prophecy (various opinions abound), it is difficult to pinpoint when the two witnesses begin and end their ministry, but it is 3½ years long.

Revelation 15:1 and 21:9 indicate that the bowl judgments are "the seven last plagues". This argues against concurrency. However, because earthquakes are associated with the sixth seal, seventh trumpet, and seventh bowl, some authors believe that the septet judgments—or significant parts of them—may be concurrent. The chronological view of Revelation has the seal judgments being followed by the trumpet judgments, which in turn are followed by the bowl judgments. However, it may be that the Apostle John wrote down the visions in the order that He saw them, and with different levels of detail. In other words, they were not meant to be strictly chronological, but rather have

thematic revelation and interpretation [Hamp, 2022]. Douglas Hamp, for example, notes that the language used in Revelation 6, Revelation 16, Isaiah 2, Isaiah 24, Ezekiel 38, and Habakkuk 3 all deals with “Day of the Lord” judgments, and in particular, the latter part of the Day of the Lord (e.g., earthquakes, caves for protection, and mountains and islands moved).

Furthermore, there are judgments other than the seals, trumpets, and bowls; and some of those run concurrently. For example, other kinds of events that may run concurrently with some of the seal judgments include the government system (10 kings), the ministry of God’s 2 special witnesses, and the religious system called ecclesiastical Babylon [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. However, the timing of those other events is also a matter of debate. If we knew when they were to occur, then we would be able to narrow down the chronology of the septet judgments. The notion of concurrency would also give some additional support to the suggestion made above by Dennis James Woods.

The final 3 trumpet judgments are called “the woe judgments” because they are severe. The fifth and sixth trumpet judgments are likely demonic invasions, whereas the seventh trumpet judgment contains the bowl judgments. There are actually 19 judgments: 7 seal judgments, 7 trumpet judgments, and 7 bowl judgments—but the seventh seal judgment contains the 7 trumpet judgments, and the seventh trumpet judgment contains the 7 bowl judgments [Hitchcock, 2011c].

Next, we will consider some examples of the difficulty of determining when the septet judgments occur.

Men struggle with the handling of the sixth seal because they are married to the notion that the judgments in Revelation occur in non-overlapping chronological order. The sixth seal can be exactly what it appears to be, the second coming, if each of the series of judgments ends at the second coming. [Brainard, 2022b, p. 119]

There are reasons for concluding that the cosmic disturbances related to the beginning of the Joel 3 Day of the Lord and the Second Coming of Christ ... are not the same as those of the sixth seal. First, the cosmic disturbances of Joel 3 will occur when the armies of the nations have gathered for war in Israel. Those armies will not begin to gather for war until the sixth bowl has been poured out (Rev. 16:12-16), long after the sixth seal—one seal, seven trumpets, and five bowls after the cosmic disturbances of the sixth seal. Thus, the cosmic disturbances of the sixth seal will occur long before the armies of the nations start to gather for war in Israel.

... The Scriptures teach that other cosmic disturbances will occur after those of the sixth seal. A third of the sun, moon, and stars will be darkened at the fourth trumpet (Rev. 8:12); the sun will be darkened by smoke from the abyss at the fifth trumpet (Rev. 9:1-2); the sun will scorch people on the earth with fire and fierce heat when the fourth bowl is poured out (Rev. 16:8-9).

The fact that there will be further cosmic disturbances after the sixth seal indicates that the darkening of the heavenly luminous bodies of the sixth seal will be temporary. [Showers, 1995, p. 67]

There is a distinction between the fifth and sixth trumpet judgments, and there is a gap in time between these judgments, as per Revelation 9:12. In the fifth trumpet judgment, the source of the army is from the Abyss and the army appears to be demonic (i.e., non-human). This army tortures the inhabitants of earth—unbelievers—for 5 months. During this time, believers are supernaturally protected by God. In the sixth trumpet judgment, it is unclear whether the army is human or demonic—or both. The army consists of 200 million soldiers, led by 4 fallen angels who have been kept bound at the Euphrates River up to then. Instead of torturing mankind for 5 months, this army kills one-third of mankind. This looks like Armageddon, but it is not; Armageddon is not described until Revelation 16 and the sixth bowl judgment.

The fourth bowl judgment may cause the ice caps and glaciers to melt, and thus facilitate the sixth bowl. In particular, the headwaters of the Euphrates River are in the mountains of Ararat, and there may be no snow/ice left. It is interesting to note that the fifth bowl uses light and darkness as metaphors to compare God to Satan. Because God says that the bowl judgments are “the final plagues”, this suggests that the bowl judgments follow the seal and trumpet judgments [Hitchcock, 2012]. Furthermore, many of the trumpet judgments only affect one-third of the earth, but the bowl judgments affect the entire earth.

Note that God’s wrath is displayed in the entire 7-year Tribulation. One of the purposes of God’s wrath is to bring people to repentance and salvation.

Although there is almost certainly some symbolism in the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments, many dispensationalists lean towards the literal side of their fulfillment, even if the actual events cannot be explained right now. It might be that God supernaturally sends judgments on the world, similar to the way He has done in the past. For example, many dispensationalists view the trumpet judgments as literal, similar to the judgments that God poured out on Egypt before the Exodus. John Walvoord and Charles Ryrie remark that it would be inconsistent to treat the Egyptian plagues and judgments as being literal, and the ones in Revelation as not being literal [Gregg, 2013].

Let us consider some highlights of the *first* general chronological model (from above) in more detail:

- *The first 5 seal judgments take place during the first half of the Tribulation, and the rest of the judgments take place in the second half.*

- The opening of the first seal releases the false Messiah (Antichrist).
- These 5 seals appear to have a parallel in Matthew 24:4-14. In particular, the seal judgments appear to parallel the beginning of birth pains (e.g., verses 4-8, but see also Jeremiah 30:3-9). Matthew 24:15 mentions the “abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel”. Verses up to—and including—verse 41 describe more of the Tribulation, in parallel. The birth pains increase as the Tribulation continues—up to the point of Christ’s return.
- John MacArthur puts the first 5 seals in the first half of the Tribulation. He notes that the first 5 seals result from “human activity” and then God takes over from there with “direct intervention” to begin the second half, which MacArthur calls the “full fury of the Day of the Lord which will begin with the sixth seal” [MacArthur, 2006, p. 1971].
- Some authors (e.g., [Hindson, 2021]) place the sixth seal 21 months into the Tribulation—at the one-quarter mark of the Tribulation; and then the trumpet judgments take place in the next 21 months, taking us to the middle of the Tribulation. Others claim that the sixth seal occurs at the time of the Abomination of Desolation, which marks the midpoint of the seven-year Tribulation (or comes slightly after the midpoint). It also marks the start of the Great Tribulation. Some authors (e.g., [Reagan, 2005]) place the seventh seal at the midpoint of the Tribulation.
- The seventh seal and all the trumpet and bowl judgments take place during the second half of the Tribulation. Mark Hitchcock agrees with this view because of the extent of the devastation from the trumpet judgments. The bowl judgments come late in the Tribulation, and seem to focus on unbelievers.

Robert Dean argues in favor of the *second* general model shown above (i.e., *all 7 seal and 6 trumpet judgments occur in the first half of the Tribulation, but the bowl judgments occur in the second half*).

The clear chronological events are the seals (ch. 6), the trumpets (ch. 8-9), [and] the vials (ch. 14-16). Then we must determine how the interlude events described between these chapters relate chronologically to the chapters preceding them. ...

Though no definitive passage has been found, it has been argued that the chronological crux is found in Rev. 11 which indicates the great difficulty of having both the [complete ministry of the] two witnesses and the trumpet judgments in the second half. Since the second woe ends with the ascension of the two witnesses, and since the two witnesses serve for 1,260 days, it is not possible for this to take place in the second half of the Tribulation. Therefore, the view with the least problems places the two witnesses and the

trumpet judgments in the first half of Daniel's seventieth week. [Dean, 2009, pp. 21-22, 25]

The assumption here is that the 1,260 days of ministry by the two witnesses doesn't span the two halves of the Tribulation, that is, their ministry is exclusively in either the first half or the second half of the Tribulation. Although other scholars think that the two witnesses minister and prophesy in the second half of the Tribulation (e.g., [Walvoord, *et al.*, 2011]), it is possible that their ministry overlaps the two halves. Note that there are 3½ days of celebration following the death of the two witnesses; and this would be hard to fit in if their death coincided with the return of Christ.

Revelation also speaks of seven thunders:

Revelation 10:4 And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down."

None of the eschatological literature comments on the seven thunders. Suffice it to say that they must have some significance; otherwise, God would not have mentioned them. Perhaps we will learn this in Heaven, someday.

John Walvoord notes that the book of Revelation is mostly chronological; but, there are several intermissions, interludes, or "parenthetical revelations" that summarize things before they are presented in more detail later on in Revelation [Walvoord, 1990]. These include Revelation 7:1-8 and Chapters 10-14. For example, Revelation 12 deals with symbolism (e.g., a dragon, 7 heads, 10 horns, 7 crowns, a woman giving birth to a male child, Satan's oppression, and Israel fleeing to the wilderness). Revelation 13 deals with world government, world commerce, the False Prophet, and the Antichrist. Revelation 14:14-20 describes Armageddon, which is explained in more detail in Chapter 16 (another parenthetical revelation) and Chapter 19. Revelation 17-18 is yet another parenthetical revelation—concerning Babylon in the end times, with Revelation 17 describing the religious aspect of Babylon (probably during the first half of the Tribulation), and with Revelation 18 describing the commercial aspect of Babylon (probably during the entire Tribulation). Recall that the Antichrist has no more need of religious Babylon after he demands the worship of the entire world—probably at the middle of the Tribulation.

Andy Woods summarizes these 5 non-chronological, parenthetical divisions as follows [Woods, 2021i]:

- Revelation 7 – The 144,000 Jewish witnesses
- Revelation 10:1-11:13 – The announcement of no more delays; the introduction of the 2 witnesses
- Revelation 12-14 – Israel's flight, 2 beasts, and 6 scenes of hope
- Revelation 16:13-16 – The gathering of the nations to Armageddon

- Revelation 17:1-19:6 – Babylon’s fall

Just like how Genesis 2 drills down on Day 6 of creation and provides more information, we see a sidebar of details or explanations after the sixth seal, sixth trumpet, and sixth bowl. There is another sidebar after the seventh trumpet and seventh bowl—making 5 explanations in all.

The sixth bowl in Revelation has received a lot of attention because it refers to events leading up to the Battle of Armageddon. Dispensationalists believe that this is a real battle, with armies gathered at the hill or Mount of Megiddo—but also in other locations including around Jerusalem (Zechariah 12:3,9) which is likely to be the final focus of the battle. It may well be that there are armies throughout an approximately 176-mile stretch from Megiddo in the north to Bozrah (in Jordan) in the south. What, or who, will the nations of the world be fighting against? Some possibilities are: (a) Israel and the Jewish people, (b) Christ’s Second Coming (including the armies of heaven), and (c) the Antichrist’s authority.

Thomas Ice contrasts the first half of the Tribulation with the second half of the Tribulation, as follows [Ice, 2021e], with a reminder that the Church is in Heaven at this time:

First 3½ Years	Second 3½ Years
Seals and Trumpets	Bowls
Antichrist is Head of the West	Antichrist is World Leader
Israel is Protected	Israel is Persecuted
Apostate Church	Worship of Satan and Antichrist
Jewish Levitical System in Effect	Jewish Levitical System Abolished
	Armageddon

As a side note, the *pre-wrath* Rapture model (*not* classical dispensationalism) places the Rapture at the opening of the seventh seal [Rosenthal, 1990]. Under this model, the day of the Lord begins between the sixth and seventh seal judgments, which pre-wrath proponents say is when “God’s wrath” begins. However, it seems that one-quarter of the earth’s population is already killed in the fourth seal judgment alone; and by the time of the sixth trumpet judgment, it is cumulatively one-half of the earth’s population. Furthermore, in the pre-wrath model, the final 7 years are divided into 3 parts: “the beginning of sorrows” (3½ years), the Great Tribulation (the first half of the remaining 3½ years), and the day of the Lord (the second half of the remaining 3½ years). In other words, the dividing line between the Great Tribulation and the day of the Lord is the pre-wrath Rapture, and this takes place *about three-quarters of the way through the 7-year period*, beginning with the seventh trumpet judgment. In this model, therefore, the pre-wrath Rapture is not imminent. Furthermore, Matthew 24:21 calls the Great Tribulation “a time of distress

unequaled from the beginning of the world until now, and never to be equaled again”. Thus, we cannot have the day of the Lord (the time of greatest wrath) after the Great Tribulation. Dispensationalists do not agree with this model, and many dispensationalists call the entire second half of the Tribulation: the Great Tribulation.

The wrath of God has several aspects or types, increasing in severity, as follows [Reagan, 2018]. Remember: the ultimate goal is to cause people to repent and turn to the God of the universe who brings forgiveness and salvation (everlasting life) to all who call on Him.

- *Consequential Wrath*: via our own actions. Scripture says that we reap what we sow (Galatians 1:7).
- *Cataclysmic Wrath*: via natural or man-made disasters—to call people and nations to repentance
- *Abandonment Wrath*: when God turns His back on a person or a nation, often after multiple warnings, allowing self-destruction (e.g., Romans 1:19ff)
- *Eschatological Wrath*: via the events of the Tribulation, as outlined in the book of Revelation
- *Eternal Wrath*: hell, the final punishment; but at this point, it is too late to repent

One of the most overlooked topics on preaching today is the wrath of God. ... All we hear is that God is a God of love and forgiveness and lovingkindness ... *and yes He is*. But he has another aspect to His character, and that is: He is a God of justice, righteousness, and holiness—and as such, He has to deal with sin. ... [But] because He’s a God of lovingkindness, He never pours out His wrath without warning. [Reagan, 2021c]

God is a holy and righteous God and is simply not able to overlook sins (Exodus 34:7). His righteous nature demands justice. Unfortunately, we have no ability to satisfy the demands of a holy God against our sins. We are sinners both by nature and by choice. Our situation was hopeless until God did the only thing that could be done. He satisfied His holy demands by giving His own life, perfect in every way, both human and divine, to pay this debt for all time for every person. The Bible tells us that Jesus’ death on the cross *propitiated* God’s righteous anger toward our sin. To propitiate is to satisfy, to meet the demands of. If you owed me twenty dollars and I demanded it of you, when you gave it to me I would be propitiated, satisfied. Jesus’ work on our behalf is the *only* thing that propitiates God for the guilt of our sin. [Schaeffer, 2008, p. 157]

On the theme of eschatological wrath, Andy Woods argues that the wrath of God described in Revelation cannot begin while the Church is on earth [Woods, 2021f]. Christ made a promise to the Church to spare believers from this kind of wrath. It’s only when Christ begins to unseal the scroll in Revelation 5 that this wrath actually begins. The persecution or suffering that many Christians experience today because of their faith, in numerous nations around the world,

	<p>is either man’s wrath, the world’s wrath, or Satanic wrath; but, it is not the wrath of God [Woods, 2021f].</p> <p>1 Thessalonians 1:10 ... Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.</p> <p>1 Thessalonians 5:1-3,9 Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly ... For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."</p> <p>Revelation 3:10 Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>The judgments are not to be taken literally. They were fulfilled, in apocalyptic language, in the events leading up to—and including—70 AD; therefore, there is no need to speculate about when the judgments will occur.</p> <p>... those who have the <i>mark of the beast</i> (v.2) would be either the loyal citizens of the Roman Empire generally, or else just the Jews in Palestine who had rejected Christ in favor of giving their allegiance to Rome (“We have no king but Caesar!”). Assuming that one of the themes of the Apocalypse is that Jerusalem has become the new Egypt and the church the new Israel, the plague pictured here parallels that which came upon Egypt in Exodus 9:8-12 ...</p> <p>The principal significance of this plague would probably be symbolic, though such literal boils and rashes almost certainly became an epidemic in the besieged Jerusalem, where sanitation was the first luxury to be lost. With dead bodies piled in rotting heaps throughout the city, and the streets running with rivers of blood and sewage, it is no wonder than infectious diseases of every sort were rampant and unchecked. ...</p> <p>Possibly the trumpets depict preliminary calamities that fall upon Israel during the Jewish War [66-70 AD], while the bowls present plagues associated with the final and utter devastation of Jerusalem. [Gregg, 2013, pp. 414-418]</p> <p>Partial preterists hold several views on the judgments in the book of Revelation [Eberle & Trench, 2021]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revelation Chapters 7-11 describe the first set of judgments. • Chapters 12-14 describe the second set of judgments. • Chapters 15-18 describe the third set of judgments. • One view is that all judgments were fulfilled around 70 AD. Martin Trench favors this view.

- A second view is that the first set of judgments above was fulfilled in 70 AD, and the rest were fulfilled when the Roman Empire fell in 476 AD.
- A third view is that the first set applies to 70 AD, the second set applies to 476 AD, and the third set applies to the whole world, which is still under judgment today. Harold Eberle favors this view.

Other authors state that the seals, trumpets, and bowls together form a complete set of events—and the trumpets and bowls simply repeat the events of the seals, albeit from a different perspective [Johnson, 2004]. In other words, the seals, trumpets, and bowls take place concurrently, but from different viewpoints. This would be similar to the first view, above. Thus:

- The first trumpet and the first bowl both affect the earth.
- The second trumpet and the second bowl affect the sea.
- The third trumpet and the third bowl affect the rivers.
- The fourth trumpet and the fourth bowl affect the sun.
- The fifth trumpet and the fifth bowl describe the pit and throne of evil.
- The sixth trumpet and the sixth bowl involve the Euphrates River.
- The seventh seal has “peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake”; the seventh trumpet has “flashes of lightning, rumbling, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail”; and the seventh bowl has “flashes of lightning, rumbling, peals of thunder, a violent earthquake ... and huge hailstones”.

Preterists view many of these judgments as being fulfilled during the Jewish War of 66-70 AD, leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem [Gregg, 2013]. The 42 months mentioned in Revelation 11:2 could well be the 42 months from the time Vespasian got the orders from Nero in February, 67 AD to march against Jerusalem [Gentry, 1998b]. The 42 months ended with the destruction of the Temple in August 70 AD, and the fall of Jerusalem in early September.

Revelation 11:2 But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for **42 months**.

There may be quite a bit of symbolism in the judgments, too. For example, the second trumpet applies to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. A great mountain burning with fire might refer to the burning of Jerusalem, since Jerusalem is sometimes equated with Mount Zion. The “sea” often refers to the Gentile nations, and the fact that a mountain is said to be thrown into the sea may refer to the Gentile Romans conquering Jerusalem and Israel. Josephus commented that the Sea of Galilee became red with blood as the Romans attacked and killed many Jews at that time.

The bitterness of the waters associated with the third trumpet might be a reminder of Israel's complaints during the Exodus from Egypt [Gregg, 2013]. Recall that the waters of Marah were bitter.

The fifth trumpet refers to the 5 months that the Jewish defenders held up, after Titus began the siege against Jerusalem in April of 70 AD—until the end of August [Gentry, 1998b]. The sixth trumpet refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, the killing of many Jews, and the deportation of other Jews, by the Roman army [Gregg, 2013]. The 7 trumpets are similar to the 7 trumpets used before the downfall of Jericho in the book of Joshua.

With respect to the fifth bowl, almost all preterists believe that “the throne of the beast” refers to Rome. The time of this is open to debate, with some preterists believing that this refers to the deterioration of the papal system between 1798 and 1866, followed by Italy conquering Rome to bring the city into the Kingdom of Italy [Gregg, 2013]. Other preterists think the fall of Rome may have occurred in the 5th century.

Some historicists think that “the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception of Mary (1854) and the infallibility of the Pope when speaking *ex cathedra* (1870)” may refer to the phrase in Revelation 16:11: “they blasphemed the God of heaven” [Gregg, 2013, p. 436].

The sixth bowl refers to the Euphrates River. It has a symbolic reference to the fall of Babylon when King Cyrus diverted the flow of the Euphrates River at Babylon to allow invaders to enter the city which was otherwise protected by a defendable wall and the waters of the Euphrates River. The Babylonians believed that no attacker could break these defenses. Some preterists (e.g., Jay Adams and David Clark) view Rome as “Babylon” and they believe that the sixth bowl refers to the fall of the Roman Empire occurring in the fifth century [Gregg, 2013]. Other preterists like David Chilton and J. Stuart Russell equate Jerusalem to “Babylon” and therefore see the sixth bowl as referring to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Revelation 9:14-15 states that 4 angels were bound at the Euphrates River. Interestingly, 4 legions of the Roman army were stationed in that region before they went to Jerusalem in 70 AD [Eberle & Trench, 2021]. The reference to 200 million soldiers is an apocalyptic language description of a very large army. It is twice 10,000 times 10,000, where 10,000 would have been an important military number, like a reference to the 10,000 killed by David (1 Samuel 18:7; 21:11) [Mounce, 1998].

Regarding the seventh bowl, recall that Revelation 16:17-21 speaks of a massive earthquake of unparalleled proportions. The “great city” (Babylon) was split into 3 parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Every island fled away and the mountains were not found. Massive hailstones fell. Preterists have two

answers regarding the city of Babylon and the massive destruction described in this passage. One answer represents the fall of Rome in 476 AD; the other represents the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD [Gregg, 2013]. The latter, when split into 3 parts, is reminiscent of a prophecy in Ezekiel 5:1-12 where Ezekiel was told to shave his head, and then take one-third of the hair and burn it, take another third and cut it up via a sword, and then scatter the remaining third into the wind. It is argued that Nebuchadnezzar’s conquest of Jerusalem in 586 BC resulted in the deaths of many citizens via fire, many via the sword, and the rest were scattered among the nations. This was repeated in 70 AD. Regarding the hailstones weighing one talent each (i.e., about 75 pounds), Josephus wrote about hundred-pound stones being catapulted by the Romans in 70 AD.

Importantly, preterists do not see the fall of Rome—or the fall of Jerusalem—having anything to do with the literal location of Megiddo (Armageddon) in northern Israel [Gregg, 2013]. It is argued that a generic term like “Waterloo” or “Armageddon” refers to any situation where an entity or army meets its end.

Finally, recall that Jesus said that some disciples would not see death until they see Christ returning in judgment—and 70 AD, is often used by preterists as that reference point.

Darrell Johnson says that we see things from the perspective of the suffering *church* when dealing with the seals; the perspective of the *world* when dealing with the trumpets; and the perspective of the *Temple* (viewed from the throne of God) when dealing with the bowls [Johnson, 2004].

Craig Keener also leans towards a concurrent set of seals, trumpet, and bowls—since the sixth seal, for example, deals with cosmic activities, as do some of the later trumpets and bowls [Keener, 2018]. However, he is not sure if they *start* at the same time.

Ken Gentry writes that the first trumpet’s description of burning one-third of the trees refers to the Roman army setting villages and forests on fire, leading up to 70 AD [Gentry, 1998a]. The second trumpet refers to the fighting that took place in the waters off the shore of Israel, including the ships that dashed against each other in a violent windstorm, and left many dead bodies in the Mediterranean Sea. Also, there were dead bodies in the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea, due to the fighting. It was reported by Josephus that there was much blood in the waters.

Topic/ Question	<p>Wormwood is the name of a bitter herb; however, what is the context of the name/term “Wormwood” in Revelation? Is there some eschatological significance?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Revelation 8:11 And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became</p>
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	<p>wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.</p>
<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>In Revelation, the term “Wormwood” seems to be the name of an angel/event; therefore, it’s more than just a metaphor for bitterness. The implication is that a substantial part of fresh water or sea water is contaminated. It is not clear how the water becomes polluted. Some people believe that it may have to do with a nuclear event (perhaps having to do with electrical power generation (possibly involving earthquakes, such as the powerful earthquake that shook Japan in 2011), and not necessarily a terrorist attack.</p> <p>Interestingly, during the Exodus from Egypt, after crossing the Red Sea, the Israelites came to Mara, where the water was bitter.</p>
<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>Wormwood is a metaphor for bitterness or suffering, and in particular, the bitterness of suffering that comes from the judgment of God. We should not tie newspaper events or current events into the term “wormwood”.</p> <p>The prophet Jeremiah also used this term to deal with the idolatry of Israel. The judgment of God came upon them; hence, the people suffered the consequences of their sin.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Jeremiah 23:15 [KJV] Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets; Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Lamentations 3:15 He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood.</p>

Chapter 12: Babylon

Topic/ Question	Revelation 17 and 18 are complex chapters, with much speculation. What is a summary of the high-level viewpoint regarding Babylon, for each of the major eschatological models?
All Positions	<p>In his parallel commentary on Revelation, Steve Gregg provides a summary of the viewpoints:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Historicists</i> see this segment as a protracted celebration of the future downfall of papal Rome, the centuries-long opponent of God and persecutor of the saints. ...</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">On <i>preterist</i> suppositions, Babylon may be Rome, the imperial city, which was to be sacked and destroyed by its subject nations. Otherwise, Babylon represents apostate Jerusalem, sacked and burned by the Romans. The choice between these options rests upon the decision whether the second half of Revelation has turned attention from the fall of Jerusalem to the fall of Rome. There is no consensus on this point.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Futurists</i> differ as to the identity of Babylon. It may be the ancient Babylon in Iraq or ancient Rome revived in the last days. It may represent the Roman Catholic Church or some world council of churches that has defected from Christ and persecuted His followers. ...</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The <i>idealist</i> interpretation sees Babylon as the seductive world system, described in terms reminiscent of Rome, its chief expression in John’s day. [Gregg, 2013, p. 512]</p>

Topic/ Question	Is the Babylon mentioned in the book of Revelation the same city as ancient Babylon, in what is now, present-day Iraq? When did the Fall of Babylon occur—or when will it occur? Is “Babylon” a metaphor for Jerusalem? Is “Babylon” present-day Rome? Is “Babylon” America?
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>Babylon is mentioned many times in Scripture. For example, 44 of the 404 verses in Revelation (11%) deal with Babylon [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007]. There are many parallels between Isaiah 13-14, Jeremiah 50-51, and Revelation 17-18—suggesting that end-time Babylon is likely the rebuilt city of Babylon well-known from the Old Testament. Ancient Babylon was located in modern-day Iraq, on the Euphrates River, about 80 kilometres south of Baghdad. “Babylon” is most likely <i>not</i> a code name for a city like Rome, New York, or even Jerusalem; and it is not simply a metaphor for evil.</p> <p>Jerusalem is mentioned about 800 times in the Bible. In second place—in terms of the number of occurrences—is Babylon at about 300 times [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007]. Every Old Testament occurrence of the word Babylon referred to <i>literal</i> Babylon, in modern-day Iraq.</p>

Babylon had many false gods and goddesses that many people believed controlled nature [Rhodes, 2019].

The chief of the Babylonian gods was Anu, considered the king of heaven, while the patron god of Babylon was Marduk.

Belief in an afterlife was prevalent among the Babylonians. The dead were thought to live in the underworld and found their sustenance in offerings made by their living descendants. If no offerings of food or drink were made by descendants, the ghosts of the dead would allegedly return to haunt them. Hence, there was strong motivation to make such offerings. [Rhodes, 2019, p. 12]

Babylon is the source of most, if not all, of the world's false religions. It was the capital of the world's first dictator (Nimrod, whose name means "we will rebel"), and it may well be the capital of the world's last dictator (Antichrist). The Bible gives "A Tale of Two Cities", says Chuck Missler: Babylon (the city of man) vs. Jerusalem (the city of God). The former will be destroyed during the Tribulation; the latter will exist forever. The fact that the Bible states that Jerusalem will exist forever rules out the possibility that Jerusalem is "Babylon" since Christ will rule from Jerusalem during the Millennium. Furthermore, Jerusalem in Revelation 11:8,13 is in the masculine gender in Greek; whereas, Babylon in Revelation 16:19; 17:18; 18:10,16,18,19,21 is in the feminine gender [Eberle & Trench, 2021].

Henry Morris and Andy Woods both view Babylon in terms of bookends in the Bible: the story of Babylon that began in Genesis continues in the book of Revelation [Woods, 2021d].

Missler and many other scholars believe there will be an end-times revival of ancient, historical Babylon. The Antichrist will establish a power base in Babylon in the future. He will lead the revived Roman Empire (Europe), set up his headquarters in Jerusalem, and establish his commercial base in Babylon [Rhodes, 2019]. Babylon will have both: (a) a religious angle (Revelation 17), and (b) a commercial/political angle (Revelation 18). The religious side will take place during the first half of the Tribulation, that is, until the Antichrist has no further need of the false religion and instead declares himself to be God as per 2 Thessalonians 2:4. Commercial Babylon will dominate during the second half of the Tribulation.

Revelation 17:18 makes it clear that, symbolically, the woman of Revelation 17 is the *city* of Babylon that rules over the kings of the earth (during the end times). The word "city" is used multiple times in these two chapters: Revelation 17:18 and Revelation 18 verses 10 (twice), 16, 18 (twice), 19, and 21. It is possible for Babylon to be represented as both a religious system and a city. For example, consider "Wall Street". It is both a global financial system and a literal street in New York [Woods, 2021d].

Moreover, it is claimed that the response to the destruction of the two Babylons is different because chapter 17 records the kings hating the harlot (17:16) and chapter 18 records the kings weeping over the harlot (18:9). ... However, this discrepancy can be explained. The kings in 17:16 are those who unite with the beast to defeat the harlot while the kings in 18:8 are those engaged in commerce with Babylon mourning over the loss of their source of revenue. [Woods, 2021d, pp. 76-77]

Thus, both Revelation 17 and 18 should both be considered prophecies about the rise and fall of the same futuristic City of Babylon. Like the Tower of Babel, which had both political and religious elements, the Babylon of the future will be the same. However, having these different features does not mean two different Babylons are in view in Revelation 17-18 anymore than Genesis 11:1-9 is speaking of two different Towers of Babel. It is fair to say that Revelation 17 is more focused on the religious aspects of the future City of Babylon while Revelation 18 is more focused on the commercial and political aspects of the identical city. Yet, this much is certain: both chapters are highlighting different features of the identical city. [Woods, 2021d, p. 79]

Since the 1500s, Martin Luther and the Protestant reformers believed that “Babylon” was Rome [Woods, 2021d]. Catholic apologist Karl Keating believes that Babylon is a code word for Rome [Tetlow, 2006]. In fact, some scholars believe that Peter wrote his first epistle (letter) from Rome, even though he used the term “Babylon”:

1 Peter 5:13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark.

However, Babylon was a major Jewish center at the time. The Babylonian Talmud originated there [Missler, 2005]. Babylon also had a Christian community. Other scholars doubt that Peter ever went to Rome [Woods, 2021d]. After all, Paul was already there. There is no indication in Paul’s letters that Peter visited Paul during the time that Paul was in Rome.

At the time of writing of Revelation, Rome was the ruling power. However, we have to be careful here because the events in the book of Revelation refer to the end times.

Revelation 17:18 The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth."

Revelation 18:24 In her was found the blood of prophets and of God's holy people, of all who have been slaughtered on the earth."

Interestingly, Jack Hibbs says that he cannot draw any other conclusion about these Scriptures than Rome. He says that the church of Rome—which has its roots in ancient Babylonianism—has killed more people from the 1500s to the 1800s than any other entity throughout history [Hibbs, 2008a]. Church fathers like Lactantius, Tertullian, Irenaeus, and Jerome believed that Rome was the Babylon mentioned in Revelation 17-18 [Rhodes, 2019]. These opinions about

Babylon being Rome would be a historicist eschatological position. Similarly, using Babylon as a metaphor for evil would support an idealist position. Instead, most dispensationalists take the futurist view of a rebuilt city in ancient Iraq, on the Euphrates River. Furthermore, there appears to be a difference between the Babylon of Revelation 17 and the Babylon of Revelation 18:

While [Revelation] chapters 17 and 18 are linked in the term “Babylon,” there is clearly a distinction between the two. In chapter 17 the term is applied to a system, politico-ecclesiastical, but in chapter 18 to a literal city, a great commercial center. Since the transfer of the center of Babylonian mysticism to Rome and its incorporation into the Roman Catholic Church, Rome has been the seat of Babylonish power; but after the consolidation of the kings under the leadership of the beast is effected, it is probable that the seat of power will be transferred to a new capital city in the “land of Shinar,” the Euphrates Valley, the site of ancient Babylon. [Tetlow, 2006, p. 108]

Babylon may have seemed weak and impotent in John’s day, but she was not dead. Her unclean and idolatrous ways had survived through the other nations she had contaminated, and she herself, through them, would one day revive in greater wickedness than ever. [Morris, 1983, p. 325]

We are well-justified biblically, therefore (and the Bible is our authority), in inferring that the religious system established at the original Babylon (or “Babel”) by its founder and first king, Nimrod, is the root source of the later Assyrio/Babylonian complex of religion and philosophy. This inference is also supported by many parallel indications in archaeology, ethnology, and cultural anthropology, when these are divested of their evolutionary distortions.

Furthermore, with the confusion of tongues and resultant dispersion (Genesis 11:9), this religious system was carried by the scattering tribes into every region of the world. Each had its own cultural distinctives, and the names of the pantheon of gods and goddesses were different in each nation, because the languages were now different. But the basic system was still the same everywhere. [Morris, 1983, p. 327]

But to say that spiritual Babylon is either Rome or the Roman Catholic Church is to grossly underestimate the agelong global impact of this great mystery, Babylon the Great. Babylon is the mother of all the harlots and abominations of the earth. From her have come ancient paganism, Chinese Confucianism, Asian Buddhism, Indian Hinduism, Shamanism, Taoism, Shintoism, animism, astrology, witchcraft, spiritism, Sikhism, and all the world’s vast complex of “gods many, and lords many” (1 Corinthians 8:5). [Morris, 1983, p. 332]

Most vicious of all have been the mass executions instigated in the name of humanistic socialism, whether the system of a totalitarian fascism (as Hitler’s Germany) or of revolutionary communism. It is estimated that, since Marx, more than one hundred million people have died in communist purges. This monstrous fruit of the bitter root of evolutionary atheism has, of course,

destroyed multitudes of people who were not Christians at all, but it is God's true witnesses who have been the objects of its special hatred.

All of these systems and many others have their roots in Babylon. [Morris, 1983, p. 376]

One may wonder why God permitted ancient Babylon, under King Nebuchadnezzar, to take Israel captive. Well, Israel had many blessings from God, but they continually rebelled to the point where they became even more evil than the nations around them. Tim LaHaye writes:

Take for example the eighty years of Israel under David and Solomon, the blessings of God on an obedient people was almost unimaginable until Solomon permitted his wives to bring idolatry into the land where they caused the people to worship idols "in the high places." This sin permeated Israel and even Judah at the time of the captivity.

The ten tribes of Israel had been taken into captivity by the Assyrians over one hundred years before, because of their idolatry and disobedience. Surely Judah would have heeded this lesson.

Unfortunately, Judah did not heed the warnings of God through His prophets and they became unbelievably corrupt. This is seen clearly in Ezekiel 8:6-18, an incredible passage of Scripture. (Please read it before proceeding.) It shows how the Lord let the young prophet Ezekiel look into the sanctuary of God where "seventy of the elders of Israel" were worshipping the worst kind of "wicked abominations." They were actually bowing before some of the grossest kinds of idols. Most of the idols of Babylon were represented there right in the sanctuary of God. And the women were no better; "they were weeping for Tammuz" the Sumerian fertility god. And twenty-five other leaders turned their backs on the temple of God and worshipped the sun!

If ever a nation deserved the judging hand of God it was the children of Israel. Their leaders and many of the people had become pagans right there in the Holy City of God, Jerusalem. But why take them to Babylon where all this idolatry originated? ... Babylon is mentioned more in Scripture than any other city, save Jerusalem. Babylon was the capital of Satanic activity and Jerusalem the city of God. They were the capitals in the long war against God, often called "the conflict of the ages." [LaHaye, 2000b]

Some scholars argue that Babylon is a metaphor for Jerusalem, and that the destruction of "Babylon" refers to the destruction of the Temple and a large part of Jerusalem in 70 AD. This is a more recent view, and preterists sometimes use this argument. There are many problems with this viewpoint [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007; Rhodes, 2019]:

- Revelation was likely written circa 95 AD, and the destruction of Babylon was still in the future (according to Revelation). Thus, Babylon couldn't have referred to the destruction of Jerusalem or the Temple since those events had already occurred in 70 AD.

- The judgments in Revelation are connected with Babylon, and there is no evidence to suggest that the seals, trumpets, and vials of God’s judgment were fulfilled during, or before, 70 AD.
- Reference is made to Babylon sitting on “many waters” (Jeremiah 51:13 and Revelation 17:1) and engaging in sea trade; but, Jerusalem is nowhere near water—no ocean, river, or lake—which also makes it unusual among capital cities.
- Jerusalem was not a centre of world commerce.
- Jerusalem did not reign over the kings of the earth.
- Revelation 18:21-23 and passages in Jeremiah and Isaiah claim that Babylon will never be rebuilt or inhabited again. So far, this does not describe Rome. Secondly, Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD by the Romans, but it has been rebuilt; so 70 AD could not have been the time of its fulfillment. If the interpretation is that Babylon is really Jerusalem, and that it will be destroyed in the future and not be rebuilt, we know that this cannot be true because Christ will rule and reign from Jerusalem after His Second Coming.

One can imagine the triumphant blasphemies as great Babylon is rebuilt. Its long desolation had been superseded by an even more splendid metropolis than Nebuchadnezzar had built, and God’s judgment on Babylon had seemingly been set aside by the greater power of the beast. So they will boast, with malicious glee.

But their triumph will be very short-lived. In only a few days, perhaps, the desolation will be even greater and will last forever. None will be left there except a horde of demons and evil spirits. These, no doubt, had exercised great influence over the men and women of wicked Babylon, but now they are merely disembodied spirits. The bodies they had possessed had burned to embers and their souls departed to Hades.

... It is the same as in Revelation 14:8: “She made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” It is evident that the “Babylons” of Revelation 14, 17 and 18 must all be the same Babylon.

Yet, as we have seen, there must also be a difference. There must be a religious Babylon, the great whore, and a political Babylon, the scarlet beast. They are like two sides of the same coin; each is part and parcel of the other and each supports the other. Each is the great city Babylon, long dead and now risen from the dead, yet never really dead. [Morris, 1983, pp. 353-354]

Note also that Revelation mentions commerce and commodities ... and “many waters”. Some scholars, therefore, think Rome is a better fit than historical Babylon. However, that does not prevent a future world leader, or even the nation of Iraq, from building a seaway extension up the Euphrates River to literal Babylon, sometime in the future [Woods, 2021d]. Iraq has a small part of land bordering the Persian Gulf, and it had been the dream of Saddam Hussein, for example, to provide much greater Iraqi access to the sea. Both the Tigris and Euphrates rivers exit southern Iraq into the Persian Gulf. A deep-water channel could be created to allow ships to reach Babylon.

Is America Babylon? Some authors believe this is the case. For example, Rick Pearson provides a list of 53 arguments for why America is Babylon [Pearson, 2020]. Although some of those arguments are weak, there are some strong ones:

- America was a “gold cup in the Lord’s hand” (Jeremiah 51:7).
- America is the wealthiest of nations (Revelation 17:4; 18:16).
- America trades with foreign merchants at her deep water ports, and has made many people wealthy because of it (Revelation 18:3,11-19).
- America uses her military to “rule” or “police” other nations (Revelation 17:18).
- America is proud (Isaiah 47:8; Revelation 18:7).
- America embraces enchantments (Isaiah 47:12), witchcraft (Isaiah 47:9,12), drugs (Revelation 18:23), and immorality (Revelation 17:4)—and exports these to the world via television, movies, the Internet, etc.
- America has a large number of God’s people within her (Revelation 18:4; Jeremiah 51:14).

While there are certainly some parallels between the characteristics of ancient Babylon and many modern-day American cities because of the focus on wealth, materialism, commodities, and trade—and possibly some major future economic meltdown—this notion doesn’t fit very well with other prophecies concerning Babylon. Recall that Babylon in Revelation 17-18 is in the desert or wilderness—ruling out New York and most of America. New York is not known for its global religion, and has not ruled over political leaders and the world [Rhodes, 2019]. Revelation 18:24 states, “In her [Babylon] was found the blood of prophets and of God’s holy people ...” This does not describe New York or the United States at all. After all, many missionaries, and substantial funding for missions, have come from America. It has been estimated that 75% of the world’s Christian missionaries that have gone to other countries have come from America [Ice & Dodds, 2021a]. Nowadays, many of these countries could be self-sufficient in terms of evangelism via national (local) missionaries.

Andy Woods comments that America might be a “mere daughter harlot rather than the mother of all harlotry” and that “the Babylon equals America thesis should be rejected by all serious Bible readers” [Woods, 2021d, pp. 68-59]. The Antichrist’s empire will likely be in Babylon, Iraq—the same general location as it was in Genesis.

In conclusion, it may be that the prophecies about Babylon have parallel fulfillments: literal Babylon in modern-day Iraq (this is the main fulfillment, in my opinion), Rome in the end times, modern cities with financial empires (including cities in America), etc. In other words, there are historical, spiritual, and materialistic angles that may all be fulfilled; but, the focus is likely still on

	<p>literal Babylon—a city to be rebuilt in the future with the Antichrist eventually leading it.</p> <p>... it is important to understand that the literal Babylon interpretation poses no threat to the view of a last days revived Roman Empire because there is not just one prophetic image in Revelation 17, but two. This reality explains why so many label this important chapter “a woman rides the beast.” The Woman, or Babylon, is portrayed as riding on the beast having ten horns. ... While the woman represents the city of Babylon, the ten horned beast represents the revived Roman Empire associated with the beast. [Woods, 2021d, p. 64]</p>
<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>Just as dispensationalists have different viewpoints on the identification of Babylon in the book of Revelation, the same is true among preterists.</p> <p>Ancient Babylon was destroyed many years before Christ, but well after 537 BC, which is about the time that Daniel received his vision of the 70 Weeks. The “Babylon” mentioned by Peter in one of his epistles (letters), and in Revelation, should be understood as being symbolic—perhaps as Rome. The owl and other animals mentioned in Scripture passages about Babylon are symbols of false gods.</p> <p>Some scholars believe that the destruction of Babylon, and the corresponding prophecies of Jeremiah, <i>have</i> been fulfilled via the Medes and Persians [Hanegraaff, <i>Bible Answer Man</i>, January 7, 2015]. The prophecy is meant to convey the notion that Babylon would never regain its position, power, and prestige. The prophecy is not meant to be interpreted literally. It would be inhabited, albeit in small numbers (e.g., the Persians under Julian). The Greek empire’s Alexander the Great started to rebuild Babylon, but he died at a young age. In modern times, Saddam Hussein started to rebuild some of Babylon.</p> <p>Hank Hanegraaff writes:</p> <p>John describes the historical location of the looming apocalypse as the domain of the first-century Roman Empire—not a ten-nation confederacy in the twenty-first century. ... As the student of history well knows, Rome is historically depicted as the city of seven hills—Capitoline, Palatine, Esquiline, Aventine, Caelian, Viminal, and Quirinal. Thus, there is little doubt that John had the ancient Roman Empire in mind.</p> <p>Likewise, the seven kings are seven Roman Caesars. The first five—Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula and Claudius—had fallen, Nero was presently on the throne, and Galba the seventh king had not yet come; But when he did he only remained on the throne for seven months—or as John put it—‘a little while.’ Internal evidence points to the fact that when John recorded the Revelation of Jesus Christ, the sixth king—Nero Caesar—ruled the Imperial Roman Empire. Only when we grasp the reality that Revelation was addressed to seven historical churches located in the epicenter of Caesar worship and written by John, who was exiled on Patmos during the Neronian persecution, will we fully appreciate the great tribulation chronicled within its pages. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 113-114]</p>

	<p>Darrell Johnson remarks that “Babylon” is a generic code word for “humanity living in rebellion against God”, and that, “in John’s day, ‘Babylon’ was Rome, the city and the empire” [Johnson, 2004, pp. 258-259]. With respect to the sixth king being Nero, and the seventh being Galba (68-69 AD), Johnson—being neither a preterist nor a dispensationalist—states that Revelation was not written until 96 AD; therefore, enumerating and linking the Roman Caesars to Scripture, and claiming fulfillment, doesn’t work.</p> <p>Gary DeMar comments:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Jerusalem and Babylon are both called “the great city” (Revelation 14:8; 11:8). The Harlot (Babylon) is “drunk with the blood of the saints” (17:6). Compare this with Matthew 23:34-36 where Jesus states that “all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar” will be charged against the generation of Jews who rejected him and spurned the Holy Spirit. ... Therefore, there is little doubt that the Babylon of Revelation is the first century city of Jerusalem. [DeMar, 1997, p. 345]</p> <p>Other preterists who believe that Babylon is Rome include Jay Adams, David S. Clark, Harold Eberle, and Moses Stuart [Gregg, 2013; Eberle & Trench, 2021]. David Chilton, Hank Hanegraaff, James Stuart Russell, Milton S. Terry, Martin Trench, and the Roman Catholic denomination believe that Jerusalem is harlot Babylon of Revelation 17-18. In Isaiah 1:21 and Jeremiah 23, Jerusalem is referred to as a harlot.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Another reason ... the second great city is Rome, rather than Old Jerusalem, is because Revelation 16:19 tells us that ... “the nations of the earth fell.” This was true of Rome, not Old Jerusalem. [Eberle & Trench, 2021, Kindle edition, location 7643]</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Those who are consistent with this idea that the harlot is Old Jerusalem must see Jerusalem as the city that was “drunk with the blood of the saints.” To add support to that view, adherents will refer to Matthew 23:35, where Jesus said, “the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah” would fall upon the Jewish religious leaders. [Eberle & Trench, 2021, Kindle edition, location 8019]</p>
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<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>Revelation 17 describes “Mystery Babylon” as system of false worship (and political alliances). Revelation 18 speaks more about the city of Babylon. In what ways does Mystery Babylon differ from physical Babylon? Is there a connection here to the symbolism in Zechariah 5?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Zechariah 5:5-11 Then the angel who was speaking to me came forward and said to me, "Look up and see what is</p>
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	<p>appearing." I asked, "What is it?" He replied, "It is a basket." And he added, "This is the iniquity of the people throughout the land." Then the cover of lead was raised, and there in the basket sat a woman! He said, "This is wickedness," and he pushed her back into the basket and pushed its lead cover down on it. Then I looked up -- and there before me were two women, with the wind in their wings! They had wings like those of a stork, and they lifted up the basket between heaven and earth. "Where are they taking the basket?" I asked the angel who was speaking to me. He replied, "To the country of Babylonia [Hebrew: <i>Shinar</i>, i.e., Mesopotamia in modern-day Iraq] to build a house [Hebrew: <i>bayit</i>] for it. When the house [<i>bayit</i> or temple] is ready, the basket will be set there in its place."</p>
<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>There are 404 verses in the book of Revelation and 44 of them deal with Babylon—the great harlot [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007].</p> <p>The first time Babylon is mentioned in Revelation is in 14:8 where the language closely parallels Jeremiah 51:7-8. From the outset, therefore, Babylon in Revelation is compared to ancient Babylon, not Israel or Jerusalem. Jeremiah 50-51 is a pair of chapters that serve as a kind of Old Testament counterpart to Revelation 17-18. Jeremiah 50-51 clearly describes the literal, geographical city of Babylon on the Euphrates. The many parallels between this passage and the future Babylon in Revelation 17-18 indicate that they are both describing the same city. [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007, p. 171]</p> <p>“Mystery Babylon”—a term only used in one place: Revelation 17:5—is the worldwide system of false religion in the end times. It gives worship to Satan/Antichrist rather than to God; but, oddly enough, the Antichrist later turns against Mystery Babylon.</p> <p>Israel is sometimes called the wife of God; however, the woman riding the beast is not the wife of God—rather, she is a wicked woman (prostitute) enticing the world to come to her.</p> <p>An <i>ephah</i> is a unit of dry measure (approximately 20.8 US quarts, often used to measure grain). Some translations used the word <i>ephah</i> instead of <i>basket</i>. Zechariah 5:5 speaks of a woman called “wickedness” who will build a house in Shinar. Babylon is on the plain of Shinar. <i>Shinar</i> is the Hebrew name for Babylonia, which is the region between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, largely in modern-day Iraq. In Greek, the name <i>Mesopotamia</i> means “between the rivers”. It is possible that this is also where the Garden of Eden and the Tower of Babel were originally located [Woods, 2021d]. The book of Daniel, rich in prophecy including end times prophecy, also references Babylonia:</p> <p>Daniel 1:1-2 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of</p>

the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god.

Note that Zechariah's prophecy (519 BC) was made *after* Babylon's captivity of Israel and *after* Babylon had been conquered by the Medes and Persians (539 BC)—implying that Zechariah's prophecy is for the future [Tetlow, 2006]. This dispels the idea that Zechariah's prophecy refers to Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon and the events of Daniel 5. Since the book of Zechariah was written after the fall of Babylon, and since the many prophecies regarding Babylon in Isaiah 13-14 and Jeremiah 50-51 have yet to be fulfilled in the manner described in those chapters (i.e., complete destruction, sudden destruction, permanent desolation, no reuse of building materials, and no one will pitch his tent there), we can conclude that there will be a literal, future fulfillment, as per Revelation 17-18.

It is interesting that a reference is made to the Hebrew word *bayit* which means "temple" in various places in the Old Testament. This suggests a religious angle.

Ezra 1:5 Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites -- everyone whose heart God had moved -- prepared to go up and build the house [*bayit*] of the LORD in Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 10:4 Then the glory of the LORD rose from above the cherubim and moved to the threshold of the temple [*bayit*]. The cloud filled the temple [*bayit*], and the court was full of the radiance of the glory of the LORD.

Historically, Babylon is the source of almost all—if not all—of the false religions in the world. The Antichrist is likely to make Babylon his political, commercial, and religious center.

The woman in the ephah (basket) of Zechariah 5 likely refers to the woman in Revelation 17. The lead cover is used so that "wickedness" cannot get out. John, Isaiah, and Zechariah all connect a wicked woman with Babylon. In other words, Babylon will rise again. And what is keeping her in the basket? Andy Woods conjectures that it is the Christian church, or more specifically, the Holy Spirit acting through the church until the Rapture occurs [Woods, 2021d]. This is consistent with 2 Thessalonians 2:6-8 where the Restrainer (the Holy Spirit acting through the church) is holding back evil and great lawlessness until the Antichrist is revealed. Woods remarks that if you think evil is rampant now, imagine what would happen when the Restrainer is removed (e.g., the lead cover is removed and "wickedness" is released). Such will be the reign of the Antichrist.

J. Dwight Pentecost writes that the false religion propagated by the Mystery Babylon system will be in competition with the religious worship of the Antichrist in the last days. Thus, the Antichrist will destroy the harlot religion

	<p>“so that the Beast may be the sole object of false worship as he claims to be God” [Pentecost, 1958, p. 368].</p> <p>This first great city of Babel and kingdom of Babylon [under Nimrod] was ruled by two persons, a man and a woman. The man ruled politically and was the head of the Babylonian State; the woman ruled religiously and was the head of the pagan system of religion and idolatry. The city and the tower, politics and religion, merged into one great gigantic system of world-unity. [De Haan, 1946, p. 219]</p> <p>Henry Morris argues that Mystery Babylon is the accumulation of spiritual evil since Nimrod’s Babylon:</p> <p>In various Old Testament prophecies, this final Antichrist is identified in one way or another with all six of these ancient empires. ... Babylon will indeed be resurrected as a great city, capital of a worldwide empire. She will be the eighth of these great kingdoms of the earth, arising out of them even as they all are also reviving. Yet in mystery form, Babylon the Great has existed ever since Nimrod. She has never actually died, even in a physical sense, and the great prophecies of her utter desolation in Isaiah and Jeremiah have never yet been really fulfilled. But they will be! Egypt and Assyria will be thriving nations in the millennium, but not Babylon. [Morris, 1983, pp. 340-341]</p> <p>[The ten kings in Revelation] will eagerly jump at the chance to destroy this despised harlot once the beast gives permission. Already a persecution has been mounted against Christians and Jews—why not get rid of all religion at the same time? ... The kings will mourn the later destruction of political Babylon (Revelation 18:9) but will exult over this destruction of her religious parasite.</p> <p>As a system, religious Babylon began at Babel, whence it permeated every nation on earth, maintaining its special character and influence not only in both ancient Babylon and later Babylon, but also in Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome, the others in the succession of great nations which transmitted the Babylonian heritage of heresy down through the ages. It finally will reach its zenith of power in rebuilt Babylon, the capital city of the final world empire, the kingdom of the beast. There the old harlot will again, through very briefly, become that great city which reigns over all the kings of earth. But it is also there that these same kings will turn on her and destroy her. [Morris, 1983, pp. 346-347]</p> <p>Bill Salus believes the harlot religion begins after the Rapture, and ends at the midpoint of the Tribulation when the Antichrist claims to be God [Salus, 2019].</p>
<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>1 Kings 9:6-7 "But if you or your sons turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land I have given them and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name. Israel will then become a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples.</p>

Hank Hanegraaff states that Mystery Babylon is none other than Jerusalem itself, since its people started out following God, but they embraced foreign gods, let their morals slip, and failed to be the kind of ambassadors that God wanted them to be.

Like the Abrahamic covenant before it, the Davidic covenant was conditional.

Psalm 132:11-12 The LORD swore an oath to David, a sure oath that he will not revoke: "One of your own descendants I will place on your throne -- **if** your sons keep my covenant and the statutes I teach them, **then** their sons will sit on your throne for ever and ever."

... Intended to be a city on a hill—a light to the nations—Jerusalem became a mere microcosm of the surrounding pagan cultures. Though for a brief time it stood as a sacred place, Jerusalem became a symbol of spiritual prostitution—the harlot against whom the prophets pronounced great woes. The kings of Israel made unholy alliances with the rulers of pagan nations from Egypt to Babylon and, in the time of Christ, imperial Rome. They adopted the religions of foreign lands and built altars and shrines to pagan gods. Thus, far from serving as the holy resting place of God's presence among his people, Jerusalem became a bed of wickedness.

Jeremiah 3:1(b) ... But you have lived as a prostitute with many lovers -- would you now return to me?" declares the LORD.

Revelation 17:5 This title was written on her forehead: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

... Using apocalyptic imagery of the Old Testament prophets, Jesus went on to predict Jerusalem's utter devastation within a generation. Colin Chapman, in *Whose Holy City?* comments:

The fall of Jerusalem is to be an act of divine judgment, compared in a shocking way to the judgment on Babylon described by Isaiah. What seems to be most significant, therefore, is that whereas the Old Testament prophets predicted judgment, exile *and* a return to the land, Jesus predicts destruction and exile, *but says nothing about a return to the land*. Instead of predicting the restoration of Israel, he speaks about the coming of the kingdom of God through the coming of the Son of Man.

Like his Master, the apostle John reflected a radical shift in thinking with respect to Jerusalem. In the book of Revelation, he goes so far as to liken Jerusalem to Sodom, Egypt, and Babylon (Revelation 11:8; 17:5). Indeed, by the end of the apostolic era, the focus of outreach and evangelism had shifted from Jerusalem to such faraway places as Rome.

... There is therefore no warrant for the Christian Zionists' claims that the recapturing of Jerusalem by modern Israel signifies the preliminary fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham. While one might well defend the right of the secular state of Israel to exist, the contention that the modern state

	<p>of Israel is a fulfillment of biblical prophecy is indefensible. In truth, since coming under the exclusive control of modern Israel, Jerusalem has demonstrated a far greater resemblance to the harlot city spoken of by the prophets than to the holy city spoken of by the psalmists. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 191-197]</p>
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<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>Will Babylon literally be destroyed as a city? Is this a future event—or one in the past?</p> <p>Revelation 18:10-17 Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry: "'Woe! Woe, O great city, O Babylon, city of power! In one hour your doom has come!' "The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more -- cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble; cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and bodies and souls of men. "They will say, 'The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your riches and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered.' The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will stand far off, terrified at her torment. They will weep and mourn and cry out: "'Woe! Woe, O great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls! In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!' "Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off.</p>
<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>In Revelation 17, the religious system “Mystery Babylon” is destroyed by the Antichrist and the 10 kings, after the Antichrist has successfully used the religious system to advance his career. Many dispensationalists view that event as taking place near the middle of the Tribulation, with the destruction of the city of Babylon taking place near the end of the Tribulation. Andy Woods, however, prefers to treat Revelation 17 and 18 as a single unit about the destruction of Babylon near the end of the Tribulation [Woods, 2021d].</p> <p>In Revelation 18, Babylon is destroyed by God. Scripture says that Babylon will be destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah, and that even the building materials will not be reused. This has not yet happened because: (a) Babylon was never destroyed; rather, it was gradually reduced in size and power; (b) Babylon was used by Alexander the Great several hundred years after Nebuchadnezzar; (c) Peter wrote an epistle from there in the first century; (d) today, Babylon is being rebuilt, in part (and it is a tourist attraction); and (e) around 539-535 BC, when the Medes and the Persians conquered the Babylonian Empire, Babylon actually fell without a battle (i.e., the Euphrates River was diverted and the water levels were lowered to about 2-3 feet deep at</p>

the entrance to the city). Chuck Missler says that some of the residents of Babylon didn't even know that the city had been overthrown—for three days. In fact, the Cylinder of Cyrus in the British Museum in London confirms that Babylon fell “without any battle ... I also gathered all their former inhabitants and returned to them their habitations.” The point is that Babylon has not yet been destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah.

So, is this city the actual Babylon on the Euphrates River? (The Euphrates River is an important geographic location in Revelation, and is mentioned shortly before the description of the Battle of Armageddon.) There are two popular views to Babylon being an actual city: (a) literal Babylon in modern-day Iraq, and (b) symbolic Babylon, which is a different city and is most often associated with Rome. Both of these views may be true, since some literal fulfillments have symbolic fulfillments, too.

Charles Dyer notes the similarities between the Babylon that is described in Jeremiah 50-51 and the Babylon that is described in Revelation 17-18. So far, the prophecies about Babylon found in Jeremiah 50-51 have not been fulfilled. For example, ancient Babylon was never destroyed “suddenly”; it took place over centuries [Rhodes, 2019]. Dyer concludes that the two are likely the same [Hitchcock, 2009, pp. 20-21]:

Attribute	Jeremiah 50-51	Revelation 17-18
Compared to a golden cup	51:7	17:4; 18:6
Dwelling on many waters	51:13	17:1
Involved with nations	51:7	17:2
Named Babylon	50:1	18:10
Destroyed suddenly	51:8	18:8
Destroyed by fire	51:30	17:16
Never to be inhabited	50:39	18:21
Punished according to her works	50:29	18:6
Its fall is like a stone thrown into water	51:63-64	18:21
God's people told to flee	51:6,45	18:4
Heaven to rejoice	51:48	18:20

Jeremiah 51:26 No rock will be taken from you [Babylon] for a cornerstone, nor any stone for a foundation, for you will be desolate forever," declares the LORD.

Isaiah 13:19-20 Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms, the glory of the Babylonians' pride, will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah. She will never be inhabited or lived in through all generations; no Arab will pitch his tent there, no shepherd will rest his flocks there.

Babylon was never destroyed in a manner similar to that of Sodom and Gomorrah. It fell gradually. Also, the Persians attacked from the east, and not the north as required by Jeremiah 50:3. Furthermore, Arabs still pitch their tents there.

	<p>The literal viewpoint is, obviously, that it refers to historical Babylon whose location would be in the modern-day nation of Iraq. Although it is currently in ruins, some parts of Babylon are being rebuilt, and some of its stones have been used as building supplies for other buildings. So, prophecies such as Jeremiah 51:26 are unfulfilled, indicating that Babylon has yet not met its fate. It appears that it will be rebuilt; but at some point, it will be destroyed again, never to be rebuilt from that point forward.</p> <p>This viewpoint implies that Babylon will have power and great influence in future world affairs, including commerce and religion, and will be destroyed in the manner that the Bible mentions—and will never be inhabited thereafter.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Revelation 18:2 With a mighty voice he shouted: "'Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!' She has become a dwelling for demons and a haunt for every impure spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable animal.</p> <p>The double-mention of “Fallen” may well refer to Babylon as a religious system and a physical city. Alternatively, it may refer to Babylon’s commercial fall and its final destruction as a city, since these latter two events seem to be different phases that are disjoint from its fall as a religious system.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Interpreting prophetic events whose details do not fit the known facts of history in such a futuristic framework is a common method of biblical interpretation. For example, it is because of such a methodology that we know that the prophecies of Matthew 24-25 and Revelation 4-22 are not speaking of the events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 but rather pertain to future events. [Woods, 2021d, p. 16].</p> <p>We conclude that the prophecies about Babylon in Isaiah 13-14 and Jeremiah 50-51 have not yet been fulfilled.</p>
<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>Preterists believe that the fall of Babylon refers to either Rome or Jerusalem [Gregg, 2013]. Both of these events occurred in the past. For those who believe it refers to Rome, the fall occurred in 476 AD. For those who believe it refers to Jerusalem, the fall occurred in 70 AD.</p> <p>The list of commodities in Revelation 18:10-17 includes mostly items of luxury. David Chilton, for example, believes that the list of items is related to the commerce surrounding the Temple; hence, Jerusalem would be a strong candidate as the city “Babylon” [Gregg, 2013].</p>

Chapter 13: The Battle of Armageddon and the Second Coming

Topic/ Question	<p>Will the Battle of Armageddon be a real battle; or, is it a <i>metaphor</i> (i.e., not to be taken literally)? If it is a real battle, <i>where</i> does it take place? Why does Bozrah (or Petra) in modern-day Jordan seem to be associated with Armageddon?</p>
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>Armageddon will be a real battle that takes place, or begins, in northern Israel near Megiddo, carries on to Jerusalem, and continues on into Jordan (e.g., Bozrah or Petra). Some authors state that the Battle of Armageddon is a <i>series</i> of battles taking place throughout Israel in the days preceding the return of Jesus Christ. According to Wikipedia, the word “Armageddon” comes from the Hebrew language and means “mountain of Megiddo” (<i>har Megiddo</i>), so technically it is a location rather than a battle, but the events surrounding it are definitely associated with the world’s largest battle.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The hill of Megiddo, located west of the Jordan River in north central Palestine, some ten miles south of Nazareth and fifteen miles inland from the Mediterranean seacoast, was an extended plain on which many of Israel’s battles had been fought. There Deborah and Barak defeated the Canaanites (Judges 4 and 5). There Gideon triumphed over the Midianites (Judges 7). There Saul was slain in the battle with the Philistines (1 Sam. 31:8). There Ahaziah was slain by Jehu (2 Kings 9:27). And there Josiah was slain in the invasion by the Egyptians (2 Kings 23:29-30; 2 Chron. 35:22) ...</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">There are several other geographical locations involved in this campaign. ... Joel 3:2,13 speaks of events taking place in “the valley of Jehoshaphat,” which seems to be an extended area east of Jerusalem. ... Isaiah 34 and 63 picture the Lord coming from Edom or Idumea, south of Jerusalem, when He returns from the judgment. ... Jerusalem itself is seen to be the center of conflict (Zech. 12:2-11; 14:2). [Pentecost, 1958, pp. 340-341]</p> <p>Bozrah and Petra are located in Jordan, in the general area of Mount Seir—the mountainous region between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba. Why do so many authors (e.g., [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]) think that Bozrah or Petra will house the fleeing Jewish remnant during the Great Tribulation (i.e., the final 3½ years)? Significantly, in Hebrew, Bozrah means “sheepfold”; and in Greek, Petra means “cleft in the rock”. The latter location, in particular, resembles a giant sheepfold with a very narrow passageway that has high cliffs as walls, and extends for about 1 mile (1.6 kilometres), providing high defensibility. Consider [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revelation 12:6 and 12:14 both speak of Israel fleeing to the <i>wilderness</i>

- Jesus Christ tells the Jews to waste no time in fleeing to the *mountains* when they see “‘the Abomination of Desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel” (Matthew 24:15-16)

- The prophet Micah hints at a sheepfold:

Micah 2:12 "I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob; I will surely bring together **the remnant of Israel**. I will bring them together **like sheep in a pen**, like a flock in its pasture; the place will throng with people.

- The prophet Isaiah wrote:

Isaiah 33:14,16 The sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling grips the godless: "Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning? ... this is the man who will **dwell on the heights, whose refuge will be the mountain fortress**. His bread will be supplied, and water will not fail him.

Bozrah and Petra are in ancient Edom. In fact, Moab and Edom are in modern-day Jordan, and these areas escape the Antichrist for some unknown reason, possibly because God has prepared a safe place to which the Israelites can flee:

Daniel 11:40-41 "At the time of the end the king of the South will engage him in battle, and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood. He will also invade the Beautiful Land [Israel]. Many countries will fall, **but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand**.

Some scholars also connect the events of Ezekiel 38-39 with Armageddon, although that association has some problems, and is discussed elsewhere in this book—see “Is the Magog invasion part of the Battle of Armageddon?”

Armageddon describes a holocaust for the Jews conceivably worse than that of the Nazi holocaust, but there is also *worldwide* distress (Matthew 15:21-22). Jesus returns at Armageddon to save the Jews and other believers in God. He appears to the hiding remnant, and shows them that He is the Christ—the same Jesus who was crucified around 30 AD: the Messiah for whom they’ve been waiting for thousands of years.

Zechariah 12:10 They will look on me [Jesus], the one they have pierced, and will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child.

Isaiah 63:1 Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson?

Zechariah 13:6 And one shall say unto him, "What are these wounds in thine hands?" Then he shall answer, "Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."

Zechariah 13:8-9 "In the whole land," declares the LORD, "two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.'"

Romans 11:25-26 I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob."

Zechariah 13:8-9 says that two-thirds of the Jews in Israel will be killed during the reign of Antichrist (i.e., during the "time of Jacob's trouble"). One-third will survive this tragedy, and according to Romans 11:25-26 they will all be saved. Jesus Christ returns to rescue them. Unfortunately, there is no evidence to suggest that Zechariah 13:8-9 has already been fulfilled.

Zechariah 12:3 On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves.

Zechariah 12:6-9 "On that day I will make the leaders of Judah like a firepot in a woodpile, like a flaming torch among sheaves. They will consume right and left all the surrounding peoples, but Jerusalem will remain intact in her place. "The LORD will save the dwellings of Judah first, so that the honor of the house of David and of Jerusalem's inhabitants may not be greater than that of Judah. On that day the LORD will shield those who live in Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the Angel of the LORD going before them. On that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem."

Zechariah 14:3-4 Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.

Four groups of Jews can be identified during the Great Tribulation [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]:

1. Apostate Jews who enter the Antichrist's 7-year covenant, who are called "the many" in Daniel 9:27. The phrase "the many" refers to Israel, not to other people or nations [Ice, 2014d]. Thus, the covenant

is not between Israel and Hamas, Israel and Hezbollah, or Israel and its Arab/Muslim neighbours.

“The many” refers to a part (“many”) rather than the whole (“all”) of the Jewish people, and to a specific group (as indicated by the definite article), which may be either the Israelite remnant, or ... the Israeli leadership (cf. Isaiah 52:14; 53:12). [LaHaye & Hindson, 2006, p. 255]

2. The 144,000 Jews that are sanctified in Revelation 7, and evangelize the world
3. The other Jewish believers who receive the gospel via the 144,000 or the 2 witnesses of Revelation 7
4. The *Faithful Remnant* that survive the Tribulation. All Jews that survive the 70th week of Daniel will be saved (Romans 9:27; 11:25-26). Note, however, that the Faithful Remnant may be unbelievers through most of the Tribulation, but they will become believers in Jesus Christ towards the end of the Tribulation. Throughout history, Israel has always had a remnant of believers (e.g., 7,000 in the days of Elijah).

According to Isaiah 41:17-20, just as in the Wilderness of Sinai God miraculously provided food and water for Israel, He will do so again in the Tribulation when the Jews flee to the wilderness. These Miraculous provisions will cause them to reconsider their relationship to God. Just as God miraculously provided food and water for Israel in the Wilderness of Sinai, He will do so again in the Tribulation when the Jews flee to the wilderness. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 788]

Will the whole world be involved in Armageddon? Many prophecy scholars believe so; however, it should be noted that “all nations” in Scripture often refers to the nations around Israel, and not necessarily those from the other side of the world [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008]. For example, Daniel 5 gives a prophecy about Alexander the Great, who ran across “the whole earth”. “Earth”, in the Hebrew, is the word *eretz* which is often translated as “land”.

Zechariah 12:2-3 "I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends **all the surrounding peoples** reeling. Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem. On that day, when **all the nations of the earth** are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for **all the nations**. All who try to move it will injure themselves.

Finally, to counter the argument that dispensationalists want to accelerate God’s plan, including the Rapture and Armageddon, it is important to note that there is nothing we can do to speed up God’s prophetic timetable. Even if all the Jews were back in the land, God could still take many years before any further action takes place. God alone is in control of the timetable, and it is perfectly designed—not a moment too soon, and not a moment too late.

	(See also the introductory section on “Classical Dispensationalism (i.e., Pretribulational Futurism)” near the start of this book for more details about the Battle of Armageddon, and the sequence of events surrounding it.)
Preterist Position	<p>Preaching about—or looking forward to—Armageddon can be depressing for people in the Middle East. For example, dispensationalists would like things to get worse, rather than better, in order to “speed the coming of Christ”. Some dispensationalists want to accelerate the regathering of Jews to Israel, but for what reason? To create the Battle of Armageddon? They often quote Zechariah 13:8-9:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">"In the whole land," declares the LORD, "two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.'"</p> <p>Gary DeMar argues that Zechariah 13:8-9 was fulfilled in 70 AD [DeMar, 1997]. Sadly, 1,100,000 Jews were killed by the Romans.</p> <p>Many preterists believe that the Battle of Armageddon refers to the Roman invasion of Judea and Jerusalem that took place in 70 AD (e.g., [Eberle & Trench, 2021]). Thus, it is a past event.</p> <p>Hank Hanegraaff summarizes the sequence of events as follows: Christ returns, there is a judgment, and then there is the eternal state. The same people who inhabit this planet are the same people who will be resurrected. Hanegraaff says there is no “secret rapture” for the Church, no Battle of Armageddon, and after Christ’s return: no marrying, no procreation, and <i>no Millennium</i>. On the latter point, he adds that there is no “semi-golden” age when sinners and resurrected beings co-exist; and where there is sin, destruction, decay, and finally the greatest apostasy in history [Hanegraaff, <i>Bible Answer Man</i>; June 13, 2012]. Instead, all believers will be resurrected, and they will live in a perfected universe with no sin.</p> <p>When Christ returns to destroy evildoers with a two-edged sword coming out of His mouth, it does not mean that Christ will be chopping off people’s heads in some big battle. Instead, the two-edged sword referred to in Scripture is a <i>metaphor</i> for the Word of God (the Bible). That’s how He will conquer evil: with truth, with His Word. There is a literal resurrection of believers and unbelievers: everyone will be raised at the Second Coming of Christ; and after that, the second state (Heaven) will take place. (Unbelievers will not be in the presence of God, of course.)</p> <p>Gary DeMar states that there will be <i>no</i> future Battle of Armageddon; instead, it was a symbolic battle in 70 AD:</p>

The [dispensational] Armageddon scenario is fraudulent from start to finish.

... The term is absent from the Old Testament, and, as I hope to demonstrate, so is the modern conception of the doctrine.

... Armageddon has reference to a place: The mount (*har*) of Megiddo or the city (*ar*) of Megiddo. The “city of Megiddo” is the better translation.

... Revelation is describing a past battle between Rome and Israel.

... Rome, as an “empire of nations” (Syria, Asia Minor, Palestine, Gaul, Egypt, Britain, and others) representing all the nations of the world (see Luke 2:1), came up against Jerusalem and destroyed her ...

The battle does not take place on the plains of Megiddo but in the city of Jerusalem.

... It no more takes place in Megiddo than Jerusalem is literally Sodom, Egypt, and Babylon. Jerusalem had taken on the characteristics of these wicked cities. [DeMar, 1997, pp. 300-303]

Arthur Ogden provides context regarding Roman General Titus taking positions against Jerusalem in 70 AD, beginning in the north:

Bear in mind that Caesarea was within sight of Mt. Carmel, the mountain of Megiddo, and that those armed forces coming from the northern regions must pass through Megiddo before reaching the appointed place of gathering. Titus stayed in the regions around Caesarea until most of the forces from the north arrived, and then moved on to Jerusalem for the “battle of the great day of God Almighty. [Arthur Ogden, quoted in [DeMar, 1997, p. 303]]

The book of Revelation was written to 7 literal churches in Asia Minor at the time, which is modern-day western Turkey. No 2,000-year gap was intended. The words “soon” and “near” specifically applied to the *first century church*. Thus, the “Battle of Armageddon” is an apocalyptic term or metaphor for events that the Jews went through in 70 AD and before. Revelation is *not* meant to be taken literally, argues Hanegraaff. “The Bible is not written *to* us; it is written *for* us.” When Paul wrote the book(s) of Corinthians, for example, he wrote *to* the Corinthians. Similarly, when John wrote to the Church at Philadelphia, it was directed to those individuals in the first century and *not* to us in the 21st century.

With respect to the place of judgment in redemptive history at “Armageddon” (the Plain of Esdraelon or the Mount of Megiddo), past fulfillments of “Armageddon” in Scripture include these events [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, July 21, 2010]:

- Joshua conquered Megiddo
- Deborah defeated the kings of Cana at Megiddo

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pharaoh Neco slayed King Josiah, who was warned by God not to fight Pharaoh Neco, at Megiddo <p>Note that John’s words in Revelation use apocalyptic judgment language or fantasy imagery (e.g., a “dragon with seven heads and ten horns...”) to get the message across. We need to understand that the genre of apocalyptic language is not meant to be taken literally.</p>
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Topic/ Question	<p>Who are “the kings from the east” mentioned in Revelation 16? Are they coming to the Battle of Armageddon? Are they the army of 200 million mentioned in Revelation 9?</p> <p>Revelation 9:13-16 The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before God. It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number.</p> <p>Revelation 16:12-14 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.</p> <p>Revelation 16:16 Then they [demons] gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.</p>
Dispensationalist Position	<p>In Revelation 16, we read the details about the kings from the east. Many authors have assumed that the “kings from the east”, or the more literal translation “kings from the rising of the sun”, include China, India, and other Asian countries; however, the Bible does not specifically state which countries or ethnic backgrounds make up this group of people. China has been mentioned most often, simply because it is one of the few countries in the world that can field an army of this size [Jeffrey, 1988]. Also, in Isaiah 49, the name “Sinim” in the KJV has the same root from which the word “China” gets its name [Missler, 2006]:</p> <p>Isaiah 49:12 Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.</p> <p>Although there is the possibility that the army in Revelation 9 is a human army (because of the description of the weapons of war), many prophecy teachers think we should draw a distinction between the mounted army of 200 million</p>

	<p>in Revelation 9 (i.e., the sixth <i>trumpet</i> judgment) and the “kings from the east” in Revelation 16 (about 3-4 years later at the sixth <i>bowl</i> judgment). From the descriptions given, the former appears to be a demonic army, whereas the latter is a human army.</p> <p>Other prophecy teachers equate the 200 million troops in Revelation 9 with the armies of the kings from the east in Revelation 16. A common link between the two passages is the Euphrates River. In Revelation 9:14, at the sixth trumpet judgment, 4 fallen angels who were bound at the Euphrates River are released to one-third of mankind. In Revelation 16:12, at the sixth bowl judgment, we learn that the waters of the Euphrates River are dried up “to prepare the way for the kings from east” as their armies head to the Valley of Megiddo (Armageddon) in Israel.</p> <p>We don’t even have to go to the <i>far</i> east to find an army capable of fielding 200 million people:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">In all of Scripture, not a single passage connects “Kings of the East” with China. The real connection is rarely considered. “Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,” (Matthew 2:1). We know that these wealthy kings of the east were from the regions of Babylonia and Persia. Why not consider this option? Westerners argue that the reason the Kings of the East in Revelation come from China is the staggering number of soldiers—a 200-million-man army. But Islam can easily muster them if you consider Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Indonesia east of the Euphrates ... [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008, p. 286]</p> <p>Arnold Fruchtenbaum argues that consistency in the usage of the term “east” in Scripture would call for a Mesopotamian (“between two rivers”) origin (i.e., a Babylonian origin), rather than an origin from China, especially given the Antichrist’s power base in Babylon [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. That said, many prophecy scholars think that the “kings from the east” refers to the far east. In fact, Bill Salus advises soldiers living in the far east, especially China, not to participate in the Armageddon event:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Don’t cross a dried-up Euphrates River and end up in Armageddon with the rest of the troops, because you won’t survive! Instead, accept Christ as your Savior, and though it could cost you your life to do this, your rewards are great in heaven. [Salus, 2019, p. 234]</p> <p>Regardless, the kings from the east will come from the eastern side of the Euphrates River.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>All of this was fulfilled in 70 AD. Josephus wrote that the Roman General Titus brought in thousands of troops from the area of the Euphrates River [Gregg, 2013]. The fact that “frogs” were mentioned may be a symbolic reference to the spiritual fall of Jerusalem because Jerusalem is being compared to ancient Egypt in the metaphor in Revelation 16:13.</p>

	<p>Steve Gregg adds that the 200 million man army is <i>figurative</i> language that refers to the armies of Rome and their confederates.</p> <p>Other authors argue that Revelation 12:3-6 is completely symbolic: out of the mouth of the dragon “comes a flood of accusation and deceit and threats” [Johnson, 2004]. In other words, it is not literal water, nor is there an earthquake to swallow up the flood.</p>
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Topic/ Question	<i>Why</i> do the nations of the world participate in the Battle of Armageddon? Who, or what, are the nations fighting about?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>Scripture never specifically says <i>why</i> the armies of the world are gathered at Armageddon [Hitchcock, 2012]. Here are some possibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nations and people may be fed up with the Antichrist’s rule. The world’s economies are in shamble. Many people around the world are dead, the environment is a mess, and things seem to be getting worse. • The world wants to prevent the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. • The world is blaming Israel and the Jewish people for the lack of peace in the world. • The world is inspired by Satan and his demons to wage a final battle to destroy the nation of Israel and the Jewish people. <p>Some comments are in order. First, it is unlikely that Satan and his demons would wage war against themselves by attacking the Antichrist.</p> <p>Second, because most of the world will not believe in the God of the Bible, it’s unlikely that they would prepare to fight an enemy that they do not believe exists.</p> <p>Third, the whole world is in a shambles, not just Israel or the neighbours around Israel. It would be hard to blame Israel for the many disasters that have occurred throughout the world. Furthermore, there is enough unrest throughout the world that the elimination of Israel probably won’t help solve those problems.</p> <p>Fourth, and most likely, by destroying Israel and the Jewish people, Satan and his demons want to prevent God’s future promises to Israel, the Jews, and indeed the whole world, from being actualized.</p>
Preterist Position	Preterists do not believe that there ever was, or will be, a literal Battle of Armageddon [LaHaye & Ice, 2003].

Topic/ Question	What are the stages of the Battle of Armageddon?
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<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>Arnold Fruchtenbaum summarizes the stages [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The first stage is the gathering of the armies of Antichrist: the “kings from the east”. 2. The second stage is the destruction of Babylon, as per Isaiah 13:1-5. It may well be that the announcement of Babylon’s destruction is made while the Antichrist is at war in Israel: <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Daniel 11:40-45 "At the time of the end the king of the South will engage him in battle, and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood. He will also invade the Beautiful Land. Many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand. He will extend his power over many countries; Egypt will not escape. He will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt, with the Libyans and Nubians in submission. But reports from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many. He will pitch his royal tents between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.</p> 3. The third stage is the attack on Jerusalem. <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Zechariah 12:2-3 "I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling. Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem. On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves.</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Zechariah 14:2 I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city.</p> 4. The fourth stage includes the Antichrist moving south, against the fleeing Jewish Remnant. 5. The fifth stage includes national repentance and pleading for the Messiah to return, so that all (surviving) Jews will be saved. (Matthew 23:39; Zechariah 12:10; Romans 9:27; Romans 11:25-26)
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	<p>6. The sixth stage is the return (Second Coming) of Jesus Christ, first to Bozrah (Isaiah 34:6; Isaiah 63:1), and then to the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:3-4).</p> <p>Isaiah 63:1 Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save."</p> <p>Habakkuk 3:3 God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran [both near Bozrah]. Selah His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth.</p> <p>Zechariah 12:7 "The LORD will save the dwellings of Judah first, so that the honor of the house of David and of Jerusalem's inhabitants may not be greater than that of Judah.</p> <p>With His return to the Remnant of Israel in Bozrah, He will indeed <i>save the tents</i> [NIV: <i>dwellings</i>] <i>of Judah first</i>, before saving the Jews of Jerusalem, as Zechariah 12:7 predicted ... The term <i>tents</i> points to temporary abodes rather than permanent dwellings. The fact that Judah is living in <i>tents</i> shows that Judah is not home <i>in</i> Judah, but is temporarily elsewhere. That elsewhere is Bozrah. Since the Messiah will <i>save the tents of Judah first</i>, this, too, shows that the initial place of His return will be Bozrah and not the Mount of Olives. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 350-351].</p> <p>7. The seventh stage is the battle in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and in particular, the Kidron Valley by the eastern walls of Jerusalem, separating the Mount of Olives from the Old City. Some authors (e.g., [Rhodes, 2019]) include the capture of the False Prophet and the Antichrist here, with both being thrown into the Lake of Fire.</p> <p>8. The eighth stage is the conclusion of the battle, on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:3-4). The world's greatest earthquake will occur, resulting in geographical changes. Massive hailstones will fall. Jerusalem will split into three parts. The Mount of Olives will split into two parts, creating a valley from east to west (Zechariah 14:3-5; Revelation 16:17-21).</p>
Preterist Position	Again, preterists do not believe that there will be a literal, future Battle of Armageddon [LaHaye & Ice, 2003].

Topic/ Question	Is it possible that the Antichrist will actually support Israel in the latter days?
Dispensationalist Position	Daniel 11:36-45 discusses the events involving the Antichrist at the time of the end. Let us pick up the action starting at verse 40:

Daniel 11:40-45 **"At the time of the end** the king of the South will engage him in battle, and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood. **He will also invade the Beautiful Land.** Many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand. He will extend his power over many countries; Egypt will not escape. He will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt, with the Libyans and Cushites in submission. **But reports from the east and the north will alarm him,** and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many. He will pitch his royal tents between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain. **Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.**

John Whitcomb believes that the "he" who "will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood" is the King of the North rather than the Antichrist [Whitcomb, 2014]. Whitcomb argues that the Antichrist is in Jerusalem, and he is attacked by the King of the South. Then, the Antichrist is killed by the King of the North, and this happens perhaps a few months prior to the midpoint of the Tribulation. This is a minority view among prophecy scholars regarding Daniel 11:40-45; however, it is interesting because of the connection to Ezekiel 38-39: Gog from Magog (e.g., Russia) and the alliance between Turkey and Iran ... along with a visitation of the King of the North to Libya and Sudan (i.e., the Cushites). The King of the North continues into Africa, and after that "reports from the east and the north will alarm him". This could refer to the Antichrist's resurrection near the middle of the Tribulation. Also, because there is no chapter break in the original Scriptures, Daniel 12 follows, which infers the *start* of the second half of the Tribulation, rather than the *end* of the Tribulation (which sees the rise of the Kings from the East). So, that would fit the timeline, too. Continuing with the Magog invasion theme, Whitcomb argues that after the return of Christ (3.5 years later) is when the Israelites will take 7 months to bury the dead (from the Magog Invasion of Ezekiel 38-39) and also when the Israelites will use the weapons of the invaders for fuel for 7 years, extending into the Millennium. Whitcomb also places Ezekiel 29:9-11 here, that is, the destruction of much of Egypt, including the 40 years when it will be uninhabitable. Thus, the timeframe extends into the Millennium.

The following quotation gives an alternative viewpoint of the Antichrist's travels during the Tribulation period. In this model, note that the Magog invasion of Ezekiel 38-39 takes place in the first half of the Tribulation period.

The original language of [Daniel 9:26-27] reveals that, at the beginning of the last seven years of this unique program, the Antichrist will establish a strong, binding, seven-year covenant with Israel. In fact, it will so strongly bind Israel to him and his revived Roman Empire that he will regard Israel as an extension of himself and his empire in the Middle East. Therefore, any attack against Israel will be an attack against him and his empire.

	<p>How will the Antichrist react when Israel has been jointly attacked by Egypt and Syria? Daniel 11:40 says, “He shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through.” He apparently will attack Syria, north of Israel, first. Then he will move his forces south through Israel, “the Glorious Land,” but won’t take time to cross the Jordan River to conquer Edom, Moab, and Ammon (modern Jordan, v. 41) because he will want to get to Egypt.</p> <p>The Antichrist will conquer all of Egypt to its western border with Libya and its southern border with Sudan. (The “Ethiopia” of Daniel’s day was not the same nation as modern Ethiopia, vv. 42-43.) It appears he will get complete control of that part of the Middle East.</p> <p>But while the Antichrist plunders Egypt’s wealth, he will receive disturbing news from the east and north (v. 44) of another attack against his ally Israel: the multinational attack foretold in Ezekiel 38. The Jewish prophets Ezekiel and Daniel lived at the same time. The names of those nations in Ezekiel’s time were “Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya,” and the tribes of Gomer and Togarmah (vv. 5-6). Today they are Iran, Sudan, Libya, and Turkey. Gomer and Togarmah were two tribes located in what today is Turkey. These nations will be led by “Gog, of the land of Magog” (v. 2). Gog will come from his “place out of the far north” (v. 15), meaning Russia.</p> <p>This attack will take place “in the latter days” (v. 16) and “latter years” of this present age before the Messiah comes to rule the world and after the Jewish people have been “gathered from many people” and been “brought out of the nations” (v. 8) and back to their homeland. This gathering has been taking place, particularly since 1948. ...</p> <p>But Israel will feel safe during the first half of the last seven years before Christ’s return as a result of the Antichrist’s seven-year covenant to protect it. However, in the middle of that seven-year period, he will turn against Israel and desolate it until Christ’s return (Dan. 9:27).</p> <p>The disturbing news the Antichrist will hear in Egypt will come from the east and north. Iran will come against Israel from the east. Russia and Turkey will come from the north. Sudan and Libya would normally come against Israel from the south and southwest. But it appears they will be unwilling to go through Egypt while the Antichrist and his armies are there. So they will take ships north through the Mediterranean Sea to join forces with Turkey and Russia coming from the north.</p> <p>Once the Antichrist receives the news of this attack, “he shall go out with great fury” with the goal “to destroy and annihilate many” (11:44). But before he arrives, God will have destroyed the invading forces (Ezek. 38:18-23). Now the Antichrist will have a free hand in the Middle East. Perhaps he will claim credit for the supernatural destruction of these forces.</p> <p>He will come to Jerusalem in the middle of the seven-year period, take his seat in Israel’s new Temple, claim to be God, and desolate Israel for three and one-half years (Dan. 9:27; 11:45; Mt. 24:15-21; 2 Th. 2:3-4) until Messiah Jesus returns to rescue Israel and destroy him. [Showers, 2012, p. 23]</p>
Preterist Position	Most of Revelation has already been fulfilled. Preterists do not believe there is a future “Antichrist” figure who appears during the end times in a manner

	described by dispensationalists. Hank Hanegraaff, for example, warns that Christians today should not be playing the game: “Pin the Tail on the Antichrist” [Hanegraaff, 2003+].
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Topic/ Question	<p>Scripture says that blood at the end of the Battle of Armageddon will flow to the height of the horses’ bridles for a distance of about 176 miles or 283 kilometres (i.e., 1,600 <i>stadia</i> or furlongs—some versions of the Bible give approximations of 180-200 miles or 290-322 kilometres). Is this to be taken literally?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Revelation 14:19-20 The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath. They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia.</p>
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Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>This is probably meant to be taken literally, upon Christ’s return at the Battle of Armageddon, though not all dispensationalists agree. Mud, water, large hailstones, etc., mixed with blood in certain areas of the valley could well reach that height. The battle spans the distance from the (Mount of) Megiddo in the north (about 60 miles or 100 kilometres north of Jerusalem), past Jerusalem, and down into Bozrah, Edom (i.e., modern-day Jordan). Many armies will be there—possibly hundreds of millions of people.</p> <p>In his Revelation commentary, Henry Morris titles this section of the book: “The Grapes of Wrath”. There are actually two sickle judgments in Revelation 14. The first appears to involve the harvesting of grain, and the second involves the harvesting of grapes. The first sickle judgment may refer to the harvesting of Babylon (calling a remnant of people out of her, that is, to repentance, via the collective judgments of Revelation)—and this may be the gathering of the elect. The second appears to be the final sickle judgment of the Beast and his followers at Armageddon [Morris, 1983]. Joel 3 also speaks of this judgment in the Valley of Jehoshaphat (at Armageddon):</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Joel 3:12-14 'Let the nations be roused; let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side. Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow -- so great is their wickedness!' Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.</p> <p>Arnold Fruchtenbaum states that the word <i>nations</i> in the above passage is better translated as <i>Gentiles</i>. The purpose of this particular judgment is to take the Gentile survivors after Armageddon, and judge them for their treatment of the Jews during the Great Tribulation, that is, whether individuals were pro-Semitic or anti-Semitic. Those who fall into the category of goats will be killed</p>
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	<p>during this time of judgment, since their lack of appropriate deeds demonstrates their unbelief (e.g., James 2:14,17) [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. Due to “worldwide anti-Semitism and the attempt to kill all Jews, anyone who opposes this and actually befriends a Jew and visits him in prison or in the hospital is obviously declaring his faith in the Bible and his recognition that the Jews are God’s chosen people” [Walvoord, 1990, p. 401].</p> <p>In particular, this judgment is the separation of the <i>sheep</i> from the <i>goats</i>. Note that this judgment implies that the amillennial or postmillennial positions are incorrect, since those positions believe in a single time of judgment for both the saved and the unsaved [Walvoord, 1990].</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Matthew 25:31-40 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'</p> <p>Fruchtenbaum adds that the sheep will go on to populate the Gentile nations in the Millennium.</p> <p>Reaping (e.g., harvest in Revelation 14:14-16) is a term used in Scripture for <i>salvation</i>; treading (e.g., the grapes in Revelation 14:17-20) is a symbol of <i>judgment</i> [Fruchtenbaum, 2004].</p>
Preterist Position	<p>This is an allegory; the physical dimensions described make this impossible.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">As Isaiah and Joel used the language of sickles, winepresses, and blood to symbolize judgment against the enemies of Israel’s God, so John now uses the language of the prophets to signify the impending doom of apostate Israel.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">As the seven heads of the Beast point to seven hills and seven kings, and as the seven lampstands symbolize seven churches, so too the number sixteen hundred is pregnant with meaning. As Dr. David Chilton explains, the number sixteen hundred is a number that uniquely emphasizes Palestine. Four squared symbolizes the land. “Sixteen hundred stadia is slightly more than the length of Palestine: the whole Land of Israel is thus represented as</p>

	<p>overflowing with blood in the coming nationwide judgment ... [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 22-23]</p> <p>Many preterists believe that the vision involves the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD:</p> <p>Many expositors believe that the reaping of verses [Revelation] 14-16 has to do with the salvation of the believers, or their gathering to safety (the escape of the Judean Christians to Pella in AD 66-70), while the vintage vision of verses 17-20 depicts the judgment upon the city of Jerusalem in AD 70. Russell expresses this view:</p> <p>As the “harvest of the land” denotes the salvation of the faithful people of God, so the “vintage of the land” denotes the destruction of His enemies ... The harvest corresponds with the reaping of the wheat and its safe gathering into the barn [Matt. 13:30]; in other words, it is the fulfillment of the prediction, “The Son of man shall send his angels, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds” (Matt. 24:31-34), an event which was to take place before the passing of that generation. [Gregg, 2013, pp. 396-398]</p>
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Topic/ Question	Will Christ literally set foot on the Mount of Olives, and will the mountain split when He does so?
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>Most dispensationalists believe that this Scripture will be fulfilled literally at the time of the Battle of Armageddon. Some scholars believe that Christ sets foot on the Mount of Olives <i>at the end of</i> Armageddon, and that He visits Bozrah (Jordan) as one of His <i>first</i> stops during the Battle of Armageddon (Isaiah 63:1-3) [LaHaye & Ice, 2003].</p> <p>Zechariah 14:3-5 Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.</p> <p>Zechariah 14:8 On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea [the Dead Sea] and half to the western sea [the Mediterranean Sea], in summer and in winter.</p> <p>It is interesting to note the following spiritual picture. Mount Hermon feeds the Sea of Galilee with water. The Sea of Galilee has life. It receives water, and it gives water to the Jordan River which flows into the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea <i>receives</i> water, but doesn't <i>give</i> any. There is no life there, not even bacteria. At some point in the future, the Dead Sea will teem with fish, as life is brought to it via the waters coming down from Jerusalem. This is literal, and it is also a fitting picture of the redemptive work of the Creator of life.</p>

	<p>Ezekiel 47:1-10 The man brought me back to the entrance to the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). . . . As the man went eastward with a measuring line in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits [about 500 metres] and then led me through water that was ankle-deep. He measured off another thousand cubits and led me through water that was knee-deep. He measured off another thousand and led me through water that was up to the waist. He measured off another thousand, but now it was a river that I could not cross, because the water had risen and was deep enough to swim in -- a river that no one could cross. . . . He said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, where it enters the Dead Sea. When it empties into the sea, the salty water there becomes fresh. Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live. Fishermen will stand along the shore; from En Gedi to En Eglaim there will be places for spreading nets. The fish will be of many kinds -- like the fish of the Mediterranean Sea.</p>
<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>No, it's symbolic, says Hank Hanegraaff. This event isn't intended for a 21st century audience. Zechariah used apocalyptic messages in his writing.</p> <p>Dispensationalists should not be spreading the Armageddon message. In particular, the Jewish people should not be "herded back" to Israel by classical dispensationalist, evangelical, Christian dollars—to await Armageddon. Otherwise, such Christians would create a self-fulfilling prophecy.</p>

Chapter 14: The Millennium

(The Millennial Kingdom, The Kingdom Age)

Topic/ Question	Is the Millennium a literal period of 1,000 years following the return of Christ?
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>Historically, Jewish scholars always believed that the Messiah will reign in a literal kingdom on the earth, with Jerusalem as its focus/center, and ruled by the Messiah [Alcorn, 2004; Fruchtenbaum, 2011]. Furthermore, when His disciples asked if now would be the time when Jesus would set up His kingdom on Earth, Jesus didn't rebuke them for a false assumption, but He implicitly indicated that the time would not be known to them.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Acts 1:6-11 Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."</p> <p>Randall Price provides the following reasons for why premillennialism matters [Price, 2020]. These topics are explained in this Chapter, and reference is made to them in other sections of this book. Premillennialism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a consistent, literal interpretation of prophecy, like the rest of dispensationalism • Fulfills the covenants made to national Israel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Unconditional promises: the Abrahamic, Land, Davidic, and New Covenants • Has the Messiah reigning from David's Throne in Jerusalem • Proves that there will be a victorious climax to history's conflict between God and Satan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Restoring the world ○ Reversing the curse ○ Making sure that Satan cannot claim victory over God's original plan, by being triumphant where it looked like God's plan was being defeated • Promises universal peace on Earth during Christ's reign

During this time, Satan is bound, sin is significantly limited, wars don't take place, worldwide peace exists, prosperity exists, nature no longer rebels, and we have excellent government.

Revelation specifically states that the Millennium will last for 1,000 years—Revelation 20 uses the word “thousand” six times—and that the saints will reign with Christ during this time. The saints are those individuals who are saved, and this includes those believers coming out of the Tribulation, or who have died since the Rapture.

There are many unfulfilled Old Testament prophecies that will be fulfilled during the Messiah's rule on Earth during the Millennium (e.g., David's throne, worldwide peace, prosperity, realization of the full extent of the Promised Land, physical healing, and healing of nature). Then will “Heaven and nature sing” as per the well-known Christmas hymn “Joy to the World” by Isaac Watts, which is actually about the *second* coming of Christ, rather than the first. In particular, it is about the first day of the Millennium [Ice, 2015d]. Some of its lyrics include:

- Joy to the world! the Lord is come; Let Earth receive her King ...
- And heaven and nature sing ...
- Joy to the world! the Saviour reigns ...
- No more let sins and sorrows grow, Nor thorns infest the ground ...
- He rules the world with truth and grace ...

When will Christ's kingdom come? The prophet Daniel referred to the time of the end when a ten-nation confederacy coming out of the old Roman Empire would be crushed by the Messiah Himself, and from that point on, He will rule and it will be an everlasting kingdom, not just for the Millennium (although that's the starting point), but forever:

Daniel 2:44 "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure **forever**."

Daniel 7:14 He [Jesus] was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an **everlasting** dominion that **will not pass away**, and his kingdom is one that **will never be destroyed**.

Daniel 7:17-18 "The four great beasts are four kings that will rise from the earth. But the holy people of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it **forever** -- yes, for ever and ever."

Note that Daniel 2:44 implies a sudden severe judgment *event*, and not a gradual *process*, as amillennialists or postmillennialists might have us believe [Walvoord, 1990].

During the Millennium, we have the binding of Satan, the presence of Jesus Christ, the institution of a just and righteous government, the removal of temptation, and the provision of all human needs (so that coveting is minimized). It's possible that many or all demons will be with Satan in the Abyss [Woods, 2021g]. Nevertheless, we *still* see that “the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9), even apart from the influence of Satan! Even under these ideal living conditions, the true nature of many people's hearts manifests itself in a final (albeit unsuccessful) rebellion against Jesus Christ at the end of the Millennium (Revelation 20:7-9).

Jesus said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The devil tries to tell us that we need merely better our environment, improve the physical quality of the race by eliminating the weak and mentally unfit, and promote education, reformation and better social understanding, and consequently man will become better and better until we have a world of perfect peace and perfect people. God is going to prove *twice* that this is the devil's lie. He proved it once in the Garden of Eden. [De Haan, 1946, p. 256]

The Millennium could well parallel the 7th day of creation. Under a young earth creation model, this means that there would have been about 6,000 years since Adam (i.e., approximately 4,000 years before Christ, and 2,000 more years until now), plus 1,000 years (the Millennium) when we will live in his presence. Thus, the sum of 7,000 years could parallel the 7 days of creation—as per Hosea 6:2 and 2 Peter 3:8:

2 Peter 3:8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: **With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.**

Hosea 5:15-6:2 Then **I will go back to my place until they admit their guilt.** And they will seek my face; in their misery they will earnestly seek me." "Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. **After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence.**

The notion of 6,000 years + 1,000 years for the Millennium resonated with the early church fathers and Jewish leaders [Johnson, 2021a; Reagan, 2021a]:

The oldest existing Jewish reference to the Week of Millenniums is probably the one found in the Talmud which references a statement attributed to the prophetic school established by the prophet Elijah:

Six thousand years is the duration of the world ...

This concept is echoed in a 10th Century AD midrash called *Tanna D'Vei Eliyahu*. (A midrash is commentary on part of the Hebrew scriptures.) It reads as follows:

The world is to exist 6,000 years. In the first 2,000, there was desolation (no Torah, from Adam to Abraham), 2,000 years the Torah flourished, and the next 2,000 years is the Messianic era (He should have come at the beginning of the last 2,000 years; the delay is due to our sins).

... Justin Martyr (100-165 AD), in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, asserted his belief that the earth will last for 6,000 years followed by a Sabbath of rest lasting 1,000 years.

But even earlier than this, the concept was expressed in detail in *The Epistle of Barnabas*, the complete text of which is preserved in the 4th-century *Codex Sinaiticus*, where it appears immediately after the New Testament and before the *Shepherd of Hermas*. Scholars estimate it was written between 70 and 132 AD. The author described the Millennial Day Theory ...

... This implies that the Lord will finish all things in 6,000 years, for a day is with Him a thousand years ... Therefore, my children, in six days, that is, in 6,000 years, all things will be finished. "And He rested on the seventh day." This means: when His Son shall come, and shall abolish the time of the Lawless One, and shall judge the ungodly, and shall change the sun and the moon, and the stars, then shall He truly rest on the 7th day." (*Epistle of Barnabas*, Chapter 15).

But despite this early popularity of the concept, it fell out of acceptance after 400 AD when the Roman Catholic Church, under the influence of the spiritualizing interpretations of Origen and Augustine, adopted the Amillennial viewpoint which argued that Jesus was never going to return to reign over this earth for a thousand years.

The Millennial Day Theory experienced a renaissance following the Reformation as people began to obtain copies of the Bible in their own languages. The Premillennial viewpoint of end-time events was revived and with it, the idea that 6,000 years of history would be followed by the 1,000 year reign of Jesus. [Reagan, 2021a, pp. 4-5]

Other ancient church fathers who wrote about 6,000 years followed by Christ's Millennial Kingdom include: Irenaeus, 180 AD; Hippolytus, 205 AD; Commodianus, 240 AD; Victorinus, 240 AD; Methodius, 290 AD; and Lactantius, 304 AD [Johnson, 2016]. Papias, who was a disciple of the Apostle John in the first century, wrote that Christ would reign for 1,000 years following the resurrection of the dead [Papias, *Fragment 6*, cited in [Johnson, 2016, p. 16]]. Barnabas wrote that the Jews would return to the land, and rebuild the Temple [Johnson, 2016].

It is interesting to note that when Lazarus was dying (and actually had died), Jesus delayed his trip by 2 days. Could this be an analogy to Christ waiting for 2,000 years (since His first advent) to rescue Israel?

John 11:6 So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days.

Other possible parallels to “a day is like a thousand years” include [Kilpatrick, 2017a; Kilpatrick, 2017b]:

- Christ rising from the dead *on the third day* (e.g., Matthew 17:23; Luke 9:22; Luke 13:32)
 - Christ returning after 2,000 years? (equivalent to 40 occurrences of the Year of Jubilee—see our earlier discussion on the Year of Jubilee)
- God instructing the Israelites during the Exodus from Egypt: “and be ready by the third day, because on that day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people”—Exodus 19:11
 - Two days to prepare
 - Christ returning, to be seen by all, after 2,000 years?
- The Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-35 gave two denarii or pennies to the innkeeper for two days’ worth of services to take care of the injured/dying man:
 - Man fell in the Garden of Eden
 - The thieves are Satan and his demons
 - Our garments are now filthy and need to be replaced by robes of righteousness
 - Man is wounded and half dead: dead spiritually but alive physically
 - The priest and the Levi didn’t help the man; legalism can’t help us in our condition, only Christ can
 - The Good Samaritan promised to come back. In the interim, he gave the innkeeper two denarii—enough for two days because a denarius was the usual daily wage of a day laborer (Matthew 20:2) [NIV, 2002].
 - Christ returning after 2,000 years?
- Moses and Elijah appearing after 6 days on the Mount of Transfiguration
 - Christ returning after 6,000 years since Adam and Eve? (equivalent to 120 occurrences of the Year of Jubilee)

Some scholars believe that the “two days” referred to in Hosea 6:2 are two literal days, the two days just before the return of Jesus Christ at Armageddon.

- In the Old Testament, there are 1845 references to Christ’s return [Missler, 2006].
 - 17 of 39 Old Testament books give prominence to the Messiah ruling on the earth.
- In the New Testament, there are 318 references to Christ’s return.
 - 23 of 27 New Testament books give prominence to the event.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For every prophecy about Christ’s first coming, there are eight about His Second Coming. <p>The Millennium is a time when mortals will co-exist with immortals, on Earth. The last time this happened was when the resurrected Jesus walked with the disciples prior to His ascension to Heaven, for a period of 40 days, circa 30 AD [Feinberg, 1980]. Amillennialists are confusing the Millennial state with the eternal state (post-Millennium) when they claim that the two groups cannot co-exist. It is the eternal state that has no presence of sin.</p> <p>Amillennialists argue that there will be no Millennium, but this flies in the face of many Scripture passages throughout the Old and New Testaments. In fact, if there is no Millennium, then ...</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">What does one do with 2 Samuel 7 ...? What with passages like Isaiah 2, 9, 11, 35, 55, to mention only a minimal number? What of Jeremiah 23, 31, 33? What of Ezekiel 36 and 37 with 40-48? What ... with Daniel 2 and 7? What with the overwhelming testimony of the so-called minor prophets, especially Amos 9, Micah 4, and Zechariah 14? And, in the name of all reason, how is Matthew’s gospel to be interpreted without the millennial doctrine ...? [Feinberg, 1980, p. 322]</p>
Preterist Position	<p>Not all preterists hold to amillennialism. David Chilton, Gary DeMar, Kenneth Gentry, and Steve Gregg are examples [Gregg, 2013].</p> <p>Some preterists hold to the postmillennial view in which Christ returns at the end of the “millennium”, where the millennium is defined to be the period of time beginning with Christ sitting down on His throne in Heaven following His ascension circa 30 AD [Eberle & Trench, 2021]. Postmillennialists believe that Satan is currently locked up in the Abyss (Revelation 20:2-3). Verses such as John 12:31 and Colossians 2:15 are used to support this. Most postmillennialists believe that Revelation 20 describes the approximately 2,000 years (so far) between the first and second comings of Christ.</p> <p>Stan Newton agrees that we are currently living in the period of time that dispensationalists and premillennialists call “the Millennium”. He argues that the world will get progressively better (e.g., Isaiah 65:17-25; 66:12-23) during the current age, and after that, Christ will return [Newton, 2012]. Thus, Christians today have a <i>responsibility</i> via the church and their careers, for example, to transform society for the better. This contradicts the dispensational teaching that: society is heading downhill; believers get raptured; the Tribulation kicks in; and finally Christ returns to establish the Millennial Kingdom, rebuild the earth, and rule and reign from Jerusalem.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The belief that Jesus returns and sets up a kingdom for 1,000 years is popular among current Evangelicals. Nevertheless, throughout history it has been a minority view. Today the 1,000-year Millennium finds itself on the shelf of left-behind doctrines. Renewed eschatological studies are finding little</p>

support for the once-popular teaching. The Millennium of premillennialism is a literal interpretation of Revelation 20:1-5. Dispensationalists and premillennialists adhere to a literal 1,000-year reign of Christ. Amillennialists, postmillennialists, and those advocating a kingdom-centered, victorious view do not. [Newton, 2012, p. 205]

The old covenant is gone; the new has come. We now live in Zion, the city of our great king. We now live in the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem. Old Jerusalem has gone, and the new creation is here. Most of all, we have come to God and His Son, Jesus.

This is the kingdom. [Newton, 2012, p. 271]

Eberle and Trench claim that the postmillennial view was the view that most evangelicals held in the 1800s regarding the Millennium.

During the first three centuries of the church, there are very few eschatological works such as commentaries [Gregg, 2013]. Victorinus, Papias, Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Lactantius are examples of early church fathers (e.g., 100-300 AD) who believed in premillennialism, but Gregg cautions the readers that we should not assume that the early church actually adopted premillennialism. There are simply not enough early documents to say for sure. Eschatology was not a priority of the early church, and we know that eschatology was the last branch of systematic theology to be developed [Ice, 2011f].

Steve Gregg argues that because Christ disarmed the powers of death and darkness at the cross, we are already in the Millennium. If there were to be a literal, separate, Millennium in the future, then this would amount to *three* comings of Christ: His first coming, His coming before the Millennium, and His coming at the end of the Millennium. Also, think of the strange situation of glorified saints living with mortal people, on Earth during the Millennium.

Hank Hanegraaff says that the “Millennium” is not meant to refer to a literal period of 1,000 years. Rather, the Millennium is *metaphorical* [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, November 11, 2011]. The only place in Scripture where the Millennium is mentioned is Revelation 20. The “Millennium” did not take place between Christ’s First and Second Comings, and it will not occur *after* Christ’s Second Coming. Furthermore, he argues that there will be *no*:

- Rebuilt temple
- Pretribulation Rapture
- 7-year Tribulation, followed by Christ’s return
- 1,000-year period with:
 - A rebuilt temple and reinstated temple sacrifices
 - People bearing and rearing children
 - A big revolt at the end

Instead, following Christ's return, Hanegraaff argues that following Christ's return ("Second Coming"), the eternal state—the new heavens and new earth—begins (i.e., without any of the above points). Christ will indeed "put all things to right" and be living among us in the new heavens and new earth, with no more mourning or pain, etc. Furthermore, he argues that there is no pretribulational "Rapture" and no posttribulational "Rapture"—just a rapture that occurs simultaneously upon Christ's return, without a 7-year tribulation.

Hanegraaff points out that the word "thousand" is used over and over again in Scripture, and is not to be taken literally. It is a large round number that's always to be taken in a *metaphorical* sense. Examples of such passages include references to: God "showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments" (Exodus 20: 6); "With the Lord a day is like a thousand years" (2 Peter 3:8); "The least of you will become a thousand" (Isaiah 60:22); the Lord "owns the cattle on a thousand hills" (Psalm 50:16); and so on.

The "code breaker" is the Old Testament, says Hanegraaff. We won't be able to understand what Revelation is saying without understanding the Old Testament. In Revelation, 278 verses out of 404 verses in total are direct allusions to Old Testament passages. There is a lot of figurative language, including many metaphors.

Unlike most other books of the New Testament, Revelation does not contain even one direct quotation from the Old Testament. However, there are hundreds of allusions to images and expressions from the Old Testament, and from the New Testament as well (especially the other writings of John).

It has been calculated that Revelation draws upon concepts and imagery from Isaiah (79 times), Daniel (53 times), Ezekiel (48 times), Psalms (43 times), Exodus (27 times), Jeremiah (22 times), Zechariah (15 times), Amos (9 times), and Joel (8 times). [Gregg, 2013, p. 37]

Will the earth and its people continue to get better (improve) if we're currently in the Millennium? Gary DeMar argues that even in Martin Luther's day, things looked pretty gloomy, but then Protestantism grew [Hunt & DeMar, 1998]. People became more Biblically literate. Luther stood up for truth (mostly), and he transformed Europe. Today, there are probably many more Luthers, Calvins, etc. that can make a difference in the world. As another example, DeMar points to the days preceding Christopher Columbus. Things looked pretty bleak back then, and the downfall of civilization was considered. Who would have been optimistic about the spreading of the gospel in 1492? But, it happened.

Lastly, some comments are appropriate about Daniel 2. Recall that King Nebuchadnezzar's statue showed 4 Gentile kingdoms, and the 5th was the Messianic kingdom that would come after Rome and was set up in the "days of

	<p>those kings” (Daniel 2:44). DeMar argues that there was no gap between Rome and a future revived Roman Empire. Instead, Christ’s kingdom destroyed the earlier kingdoms. Furthermore, there was no interruption of time. Dispensationalists want us to believe that the kings in Daniel 2:44 are the ten toes; however, DeMar claims: “The toes are never referred to as kings or kingdoms” [DeMar, 1997, p. 309]. Rome, however, had ten imperial provinces in the first century.</p> <p>Unlike dispensationalists who claim that the 70th week of Daniel is in the future, and that it’s the Antichrist who makes the covenant to start that final week called the Tribulation, preterists argue that there is no gap between the 69th and 70th weeks of Daniel, just as there was no gap between the first 7 weeks and the next 62 weeks (to account for the first 69 weeks). Furthermore, it is Jesus Christ (not the Antichrist) who makes the covenant with Israel [DeMar, 1997]. That covenant is the New Covenant (aka New Testament) made through the shed blood of Jesus Christ on the Cross. The destruction of Jerusalem and its desolation was “determined” (Daniel 9:26) during the 70th week—and in particular when Christ announced during the Olivet Discourse and thereafter that the temple and the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed. This would have been in the first 3½ years of the 70th week of Daniel. Recall that there were 3½ more years left in the 70th week, after Christ’s crucifixion.</p> <p>Daniel then went on to predict that from this commandment, to the Messiah, would be “seven weeks, and three score and two weeks” (9:25), or 69 weeks of years, equaling 483 years. From 458 B.C. this brings one to A.D. 26, the very time which many would accept for the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus Christ and the commencement of his incarnate ministry. Versus 26 and 27 then describe how, in the midst of the final week (that is, of the last seven year period, and therefore in the spring of A.D. 30), He would bring an end to the Old Testament economy by his death. There could hardly have been a more miraculously accurate prediction than was this! The 490 years then conclude with the three and a half years that remained, during which period the testament was to be confirmed to Israel (cf. Acts 2:38). It terminated in A.D. 33, which is the probable date for the conversion of Paul. At this point the Jews, by their stoning of Stephen, in effect cut themselves off from the eternal blessings of inheritance under the newer testament (cf. Rev. 12:6, 14); and shortly thereafter, within that generation, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, A.D. 70. [Mauro, n.d., quoted in [DeMar, 1997, p. 310]]</p>
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Topic/ Question	What characterizes the Millennium? In other words, what is the Millennium going to be like?
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>J. Dwight Pentecost, H. Wayne House, and Randall Price describe the Millennium by highlighting some of its characteristics [Pentecost, 1958; House & Price, 2003]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace

- Joy
- Holiness
- Glory
- Comfort
- Justice, including social justice—the ultimate implementation of social justice is Jesus Christ during the Millennium
- Full knowledge
- Instruction
- Worship, including music and singing
- Beginning of the removal of the *curse*
- Restoration of some Edenic conditions
- Longevity (of life)
- Removal of sickness
- Healing of the deformed
- Freedom from oppression, war, and enemies
- No immaturity
- Reproduction by the people
- Unimpaired labor
- Economic prosperity
- Increase of light
- Unified language
- Unified worship
- Manifest presence of God
- Fullness of the Holy Spirit
- Rebuilt Temple
- Return of the Shekinah glory
- Revival of sacrificial system
- Restoration of Sabbath and ritual feasts
- Satan and demons bound (until the end of the Millennium)
- Initially, only believers are present; then, many children are born, and choose to be unbelievers. The world's population will soar.
- Theocratic government
- Jesus Christ as King
- David as regent
- Nobles and governors will reign under David
- Many lesser authorities will rule, also
- Jerusalem will become the focus of the earth
- Jews return, and live in the land
- Universal access to Israel
- Fertility and productivity of the land
- Abundant rainfall
- Increase in Israel's territory; enlargement of Jerusalem
- Topographical changes

The Second Coming of Christ, and the start of the Millennium, will fulfill the words of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:10, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven". Note that the Kingdom did not come at Christ's first coming because He instructed his disciples to pray, "Thy Kingdom come" (still future).

We have no way of knowing how much of God's plan was revealed in heaven prior to Adam's sin, but we can place some limits on it. For example, we can be reasonably sure that God did not discuss that His Son would die on the cross in man's place and then rise from the dead. Had Satan known the plan, he would not have possessed Judas (John 13:27) to betray Jesus, an action that led to Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, and ultimately to Satan's demise. ...

It seems Satan thought that Christ's intention during His earthly ministry was to set up the [Millennial] kingdom, and he tempted Him to circumvent God's plan and timing for the kingdom. [Chaffey, 2019, p. 321]

The world will finally experience absence of war. Furthermore, Christ will be in charge, and note that there will be nations on the earth:

Isaiah 2:4 He will judge between the **nations** and will settle disputes for **many peoples**. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. **Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.**

Micah 4:3 He will judge between **many peoples** and will settle disputes for strong **nations** far and wide. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. **Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.**

Across the street from the United Nations building in New York is a small park, which has a concrete wall with the words of Isaiah 2:4 written on it. Also, it is interesting to note that the former Soviet Union provided a sculpture to the United Nations called "Let Us Beat Swords into Plowshares". The world longs for peace; and only Jesus Christ can provide true peace.

Isaiah 9:6-7 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.** He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

Secondly, note the agricultural productivity during the Millennium:

Amos 9:13-15 "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills. I will

bring back my exiled people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them," says the LORD your God.

Luke 6:21 Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

The Millennium will be characterized by “good government” compared to the many failed attempts at peaceful rule by governments of all kinds—democratic and dictatorship—all over the world, for decades, centuries, and indeed millennia.

The above verses should bring great encouragement to those who seek justice, peace, love, and righteousness in a world that is currently filled with injustice, inequity, crime, disobedience, rebellion, violence, war, hatred, etc.

Will there be animals during the Millennium? Yes. Note also the presence of children:

Isaiah 11:6-9 The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a **little child** will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The **infant** will play near the hole of the cobra, and the **young child** put his hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

Isaiah 65:19-25 I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. "Never again will there be in it an **infant** who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; **he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth**; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands. They will not toil in vain or bear **children** doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them. Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the LORD.

Randy Alcorn writes:

I realize that if there was no food chain, then the animal world of Eden was different the animal world we know today. Indeed, our entire ecosystem was likely changed more by the Fall than we can imagine. We don't know what the animals in Eden looked like. Did God change their form as part of the Curse—or as a way to help them survive after the Curse? Is it possible that originally cheetahs ran for the sheer joy of it rather than to chase their prey? Could a lion have been capable of tearing apart other animals but have no desire to do so? Could he be powerful, even with sharp teeth, without being a killer? I think so. There was a special beauty and great power that refrains from doing harm, as Jesus himself demonstrated.

... It is no coincidence that the first two chapters of the Bible (Genesis 1-2) begin with the creation of the heavens and the earth and the last two chapters (Revelation 21-22) begin with the re-creation of the heavens and the earth.

All that was lost at the beginning will be restored at the end. And far more will be added besides. [Alcorn, 2004, pp. 124-126]

Henry Morris comments on the events leading up to and during the Millennium, beginning shortly after Christ returns to the earth at Armageddon:

Thus the only ones left on earth are those followers of the beast who were not in the armies at Armageddon and who had not already perished in the plagues, as well as those who had managed somehow to escape the beast's executioners while still refusing to receive his mark. These are evidently the goats and the sheep, respectively.

... The "sheep," on the other hand, had been both compassionate and courageous, rendering such help as they could to these persecuted "brethren" of the Son of man, at the risk of their own lives.

... The "brethren" of whom the Lord had spoken could only be the persecuted tribulation martyrs, both Jew and Gentile. ...

From each nation, with Israel at the head, will thus come a remnant to rebuild their devastated countries. Even though the initial population of each nation will be small, the conditions and incentives will be present to encourage large families, and the populations will grow rapidly. Furthermore, antediluvian longevity will be restored. "There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed" (Isaiah 65:20). This may be accomplished partially by the restoration of antediluvian climatological and agricultural conditions and partially by new technologies developed by millennial scientists. In fact, scientific and technological research will thrive as never before, as mankind seeks as never before to fulfill its primeval commission to "subdue the earth" (Genesis 1:28).

Israel, of course, will be the chief nation of the world during the millennium. "And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the world of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Micah 4:2).

	<p>Other nations will be expected to honor Israel and to center their worship there: “And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain” (Zechariah 14:16,17). A great temple will be established in Jerusalem, as described in Ezekiel 40-46, and a form of the ancient worship instituted again, complete with priestly orders and sacrificial animal offerings.</p> <p>... In every dispensation, salvation is offered only by the grace of God on the basis of the substitutionary death of Christ for sin.</p> <p>... In the days of His glory, it will be difficult to remember and believe in His humiliation and death, and yet it is still as important as ever that men and women understand and believe that they are sinners and can only be saved through the substitutionary death of Christ for their sins. Thus, the animal sacrifices will be a memorial and reminder of the great saving work of Christ, and thus will also serve both as an aid and evidence of faith. [Morris, 1983, pp. 415-417]</p> <p>From what Zechariah prophesied in 14:16-19, the typological meaning of Sukkot [the Feast of Tabernacles] is quite clear. The feast will be fulfilled by the Messianic kingdom, which will be a time of rejoicing following the afflictions of the great tribulation. As Sukkot was a time of rejoicing following the afflictions of Yom Kippur [the Day of Atonement], so the Messianic kingdom will be a time of rejoicing following the afflictions of the day of the Lord, the great tribulation.</p> <p>... In the Messianic kingdom, the observance of Sukkot will be obligatory not only for Jews, but for all the Gentiles as well. Every year, each Gentile nation will have to send a delegation to Jerusalem. [Fruchtenbaum, 2019, p. 286]</p> <p>In summary, only believers (in their natural bodies) enter the Millennium; but, children are born to them during the Millennium, and some of these children may be unbelievers. It appears that only unbelievers will die during the Millennium. Arnold Fruchtenbaum believes that all Jewish people who are born during the Millennium will be saved (Jeremiah 31:31-34) [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. In other words, there will be no unbelievers among their children born during the Millennium.</p>
<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>In the preterist camp, there are various schools of thought regarding millennialism. Many do not believe that there will be a 1,000-year period of time following the return of Jesus Christ, under the rule and reign of Christ, in the presence of sinners here on Earth.</p> <p>When the Lord returns, He will indeed create new heavens and a new earth. There will no sinners.</p> <p>Isaiah 65:20 is figurative language of what the world will be like when Christ returns. Isaiah is using the term figuratively, so that people of his day can</p>

	understand it. But, the bottom line is that there will be no death for believers following Christ's Second Coming. However, there will be no 1,000-year Millennium where the saved, unsaved, and people in glorified bodies will be on the earth simultaneously.
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Topic/ Question	Will children be born during the Millennium?
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>Babies will be born post-Second Coming, during the Millennium, but only to those people who have not had resurrected bodies at that point in time.</p> <p>The living saints who go into the millennium in their natural bodies will beget children throughout the age. The earth's population will soar. These born in the age will not be born without a sin nature, so salvation will be required (Jer. 30:20; 31:29; Ezek. 47:22; Zech. 10:8). [Pentecost, 1958, p. 489]</p> <p>Those who are raptured received resurrected bodies at the Rapture. Those who have died since then (but are believers) will get resurrected, perfected bodies after the Second Coming—but before the Millennium. It appears that neither of these two groups will bear children during the Millennium or beyond. It's quite possible that the resurrected believers will be responsible, in part, for the children's development. During the Millennium we know that the population will greatly increase. In fact, the number of unbelievers born during the Millennium, will be very large:</p> <p>Revelation 20:7-8 When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth -- Gog and Magog -- to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore.</p> <p>Following the Millennium, when God creates the new heavens and the new earth (as per Isaiah 65:7), all non-resurrected believers get a resurrected body (like those at the earlier Rapture and premillennial judgment).</p> <p>Luke 20:34-36 Jesus replied, "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are considered worthy of taking part in the age to come and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection.</p>
Preterist Position	The preterist position is the same as the dispensationalist position; however, the physical bodies will be obtained after the Second Coming of Christ, rather than at some alleged pretribulational rapture.

Topic/ Question	What kinds of tectonic, topographic, or geographical changes can we expect for the Millennium, with respect to Jerusalem?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>Zechariah 14:3-4 Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.</p> <p>We expect major changes to occur to the area around Jerusalem, to fulfill the prophecies about the millennial temple given in Ezekiel 40-48.</p> <p>At the onset of the Millennium, the Messiah will rebuild Jerusalem on a reconfigured, post-tribulational landscape. A forceful tectonic upthrust will have elevated the area to form a plateau some 50 miles square (Isa. 2:2-4; Mic. 4:1-2). On the northern end of the plateau will be the earthly city of Jerusalem, 10 miles square and housing the center of government for the Messianic Kingdom, with the Millennial Temple at the heart of the city (Ezek. 48:1-28). (The rebuilt city of Jerusalem should not be confused with the New Jerusalem that descends from heaven after the creation of the new heaven and Earth, cf. Rev. 21:2, 10.) [McCracken, 2011, p. 25]</p> <p>The millennial temple will be about one square mile in size. The current Temple Mount would not be able to hold this fourth temple; so, this is another reason why changes to the physical landscape have to occur.</p> <p>Zechariah 14:10 says that the land around Jerusalem will largely be flat.</p> <p>Ezekiel 47:1-12 speaks of the Dead Sea coming to life, teeming with fish, like the great sea (the Mediterranean Sea).</p> <p>Ezekiel 47:8-10 He said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, where it enters the Dead Sea. When it empties into the sea, the salty water there becomes fresh. Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live. Fishermen will stand along the shore; from En Gedi to En Eglaim there will be places for spreading nets. The fish will be of many kinds -- like the fish of the Mediterranean Sea.</p>
Preterist Position	Preterists do not believe that there will be a third temple, let alone a fourth one. They believe that the Millennium is "the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, which He established at His First Advent ... the period between the First and Second Advents of Christ; the Millennium is going on now, with Christians reigning as kings on earth" [LaHaye & Ice, 2003].

Topic/ Question	What is the relationship that will exist between the resurrected people and the earthly (unresurrected) people during the Millennium?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>The resurrected people entering the Millennium are the raptured believers and the Old Testament saints. Believers who are alive at the time of Christ's return will enter the Millennium in their natural bodies.</p> <p>Jesus Christ freely associated with the disciples (and others) following His resurrection. He even ate with them. Similarly, the resurrected individuals will be able to interact with those in their natural bodies. (The resurrected believers will have permanent, perfected bodies.)</p> <p>Unlike those who survive the Tribulation and the Millennial Age in their mortal bodies, Tribulation, Old Testament, and Church Age believers will all have glorified, immortal bodies that will not be limited to the earthly realm.</p> <p>... mortals living on Earth will mingle with people who have resurrected, glorified bodies.</p> <p>Today every level of creation groans for the climax of Earth's history and the peace, tranquility, and righteousness associated with the Messiah's 1,000-year reign. Our anticipation of a world where every system on the planet is under the Messiah's direct control is truly mindboggling. [McCracken, 2011, p.26]</p> <p>Zechariah 8:23 This is what the LORD Almighty says: "In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.' "</p> <p>Although the resurrected individuals have an active part in the Millennium, they are not the subjects of the King's reign [Pentecost, 1958].</p> <p>The New Jerusalem, after the Millennium, is described as follows:</p> <p>Revelation 21:10-14 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.</p>
Preterist Position	Resurrected beings will not mingle or interact with mortals during the Millennium. Resurrection assumes perfection in a perfect environment (i.e., Heaven).

Topic/ Question	What is meant by the terms “kingdom of Heaven”, “kingdom of God”, and “kingdom”?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>These terms are often used interchangeably [Vlach, 2009]. Matthew often, but not always, uses the term “kingdom of Heaven”, whereas Mark and Luke use the term “kingdom of God”. This “kingdom” is the same kingdom that was prophesied in the Old Testament. Among Jewish people, the name “God” was used with great sensitivity, lest it be misused. Orthodox Jews, for example, often write “G-d” instead of “God”. Since Matthew was written to a Jewish audience, this may be the justification for the use of the two terms [Fruchtenbaum, 2004].</p> <p>Some scholars believe that the kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, and not an earthly, political kingdom. Most premillennialists, however, view them as both. The Millennium is the “kingdom of God” that the Old Testament saints and the people of Jesus’ day referred to. As noted elsewhere in this book, the Millennium is physical: both national Israel (under the future rule of David) and the Gentile nations are active entities during the Millennium.</p> <p>The millennial kingdom is declared to be a literal, earthly kingdom over which Christ rules from David’s throne in fulfillment of the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7:8-17; Matt. 1:1; Luke 1:32). This kingdom is the subject of Old Testament prophecy (2 Sam. 7:8-17; Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-16; Jer. 23:5; 33:14-17; Ezek. 34:23; 37:24; Hosea 3:4-5; Micah 4:6-8; 5:2; Zech. 2:10-12; 8:20-23; Psalm 2:6,8-10; 72:11,17; Mal. 3:1-4). This kingdom was proclaimed as being “at hand” at Christ’s first advent (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:5-7); but was rejected by Israel and therefore postponed (Matt. 23:37-39). It will again be announced to Israel in the tribulation period (Matt. 24:14). It will be received by Israel and set up at the second advent of Christ (Isa. 24:23; Rev. 19:11-16; 20:1-6). [Pentecost, 1958, p. 142]</p> <p>The Bible’s most frequent use of the word <i>Kingdom</i> refers to Christ’s political, ethnic, Israel-centered Kingdom that will begin in the last days. This Kingdom has several names: Messianic Kingdom, Davidic Kingdom, and Eschatological Kingdom.</p> <p>The Kingdom is referred to as the Messianic Kingdom because Messiah Jesus will return to establish the specific will of God on earth (Isa. 11; Dan. 7; Zech. 14; Rev. 19). It is also called the coming Davidic Kingdom because it will fulfill God’s promise to King David in the Davidic Covenant to send the Messiah to reign forever from David’s throne in Jerusalem (2 Sam. 7; Ps. 89; Amos 9:11-15). And it is sometimes called the Eschatological Kingdom because Christ will establish it in the last days.</p> <p>... By the time of Origen in the third century, many Christians had abandoned Premillennialism altogether for a robust Amillennialism (no-Millennium view) that sees the church as the Kingdom. Using an allegorical, rather than literal, interpretation, they redefined Scripture’s promise of a future, earthly, Israel-centered kingdom to mean a spiritual kingdom that characterizes the time between Christ’s two advents.</p>

	<p>... This replacement view dominated Christianity through the Reformation. [Stallard, 2018, pp. 28-29].</p> <p>When John the Baptist announced the coming of the kingdom of Heaven, it is clear from the context (e.g., Matthew 5-7) that it was to be an earthly kingdom. Later, from prison, John sent a message to Jesus asking him if this kingdom was to be established at this time.</p> <p>In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus stated, “Your kingdom come” (Matthew 6:10), implying it was still to come. In Matthew 10, Jesus sent the disciples out to heal the sick, preach the gospel, and state that the kingdom was at hand. Matthew 11:12-14 indicates that the kingdom was being offered to Israel, if the Israelites chose to accept it; but, most didn’t.</p> <p>In Luke 19, as Christ approached the Mount of Olives, Jesus gave his disciples a parable to indicate that the kingdom was not being ushered in, at this time. In Luke 21, Christ stated that when one sees the signs of what appear to be end times events, then the kingdom of God is near. Towards the end of His ministry, Christ turned the focus of His ministry to the Church Age—yet without removing the promise of the future earthly kingdom: the kingdom of God.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>The terms “kingdom of Heaven” and “kingdom of God” are used interchangeably. See the comments below about the Millennium. Christ is currently on David’s Throne <i>in Heaven</i> (rather than on Earth, in the future) [DeMar, 1997].</p> <p>Steve Gregg writes about the coming of the Davidic kingdom:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">When Jesus came, the kingdom that the Jews anticipated was a Davidic one—namely, a political empire in which one of David’s sons would rule eternally from David’s throne ...</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">There is nothing in Scripture to suggest that the kingdom was or would be postponed. John the Baptist and Jesus both proclaimed that the kingdom was ‘at hand’ (Matt. 3:2; Mark 1:14), and Jesus later said that the kingdom of God “has come upon you” (Matt.12:28) and “is within you” (Luke 17:21). It was not derailed or postponed, but came powerfully in the person of the King Jesus (Acts 17:7). [Gregg, 2012]</p> <p>According to the book of Hebrews, the idea of a Jewish theocracy with Jerusalem at its head, or a rebuilt Temple, or reinstated Temple sacrifices is “tantamount to trampling on the sacred blood of Jesus Christ” [Hanegraaff, <i>Bible Answer Man</i>, December 23, 2014]. Jesus left his disciples with instructions to <i>leave</i> Jerusalem, and be filled with power as the Holy Spirit came upon them.</p> <p>Stan Newton writes:</p>

	<p>The truth is simple: The kingdom is the life you have, the family you are in, and the work you do. If Jesus were ruling his kingdom living in Jerusalem, how could he keep the peace in Africa, Asia, or your neighborhood? Will Jesus need an army? Will he hire the United Nations' peacekeepers? NO! Jesus reigns over people through spiritual transformation, a changed heart. This is the core of present kingdom realities and reveals a substantial flaw in the premillennial scheme.</p> <p>Yes the glorious fact is that we are already in the kingdom. Jesus is crowned king. We reign with him. The kingdom is growing! The millennial kingdom is here; it is the kingdom of God Jesus preached, Paul preached, and we proclaim and teach to the nations. [Newton, 2012, p. 212]</p>
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Topic/ Question	Who will rule during the Millennium? What is meant by "David's throne"? Is this literal? Will David be resurrected and rule over Israel? What role do Christians have in the Millennium's government?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>In Matthew 25:14-29, Jesus tells a parable about three individuals to whom a master had given different amounts of resources, and the master wanted to see how well they did with the resources he gave them. He commended those who were faithful and used their resources to gain even more. Similarly, in Luke 19:11-27, in the Parable of the Ten Minas (coins), the master commended those who had invested wisely, and rewarded them by putting them in charge of several cities. However, the master rebuked the man who hid his original mina and did not create any wealth from it, sending him away without any reward.</p> <p>The point is: whoever uses their resources wisely in the service of the master, in this life, will be rewarded with more responsibility in the age to come; and this should be viewed as a good thing, and not a chore. In other words, if we use our talents and resources wisely in this life, we will be appropriately rewarded in our resurrected bodies. Specifically, we will rule and reign with Christ. Several Scripture verses state this. It is unclear if this means we will only judge at the Great White Throne Judgment; but, it seems to imply that we will be involved in judging and ruling in the Millennium, and then ruling in the eternal state. We will also judge angels.</p> <p>1 Corinthians 6:2-3 Or do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!</p> <p>2 Timothy 2:12 if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us;</p> <p>Revelation 22:5 There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.</p>

Revelation 20:4 says that those who refused to take the mark of the beast during the Tribulation will rule with Christ throughout the Millennium:

Revelation 20:4 I saw **thrones** on which were seated those who had been given authority to **judge**. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. **They 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 a thousand years.**

Regarding David's throne, the following passages were written well after King David died. Note that it says that David will be resurrected. This will happen after the Tribulation and prior to the start of the Millennium.

Jeremiah 30:9 Instead, they will serve the LORD their God and **David their king, whom I will raise up for them.**

Ezekiel 37:24-25 "'**My servant David will be king over them,** and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees. They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your ancestors lived. They and their children and their children's children will live there forever, and David my servant will be their prince forever.

The following verses state that Jesus Christ will rule on the Throne of David:

Luke 1:32-33 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. **The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,** and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

Isaiah 9:6-7 **For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders.** And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. **He will reign on David's throne** and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

Psalms 110:1 Of David. A psalm.
The LORD [God the Father] says to my [David's] Lord [Jesus Christ]: "Sit at my right hand **until** I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."

Note also the disciples' question about the restoration of the Kingdom:

Acts 1:6-7 Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you **at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?**" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.

Mary had the expectation, as did the people of Israel, of the coming of a future Messiah who would literally revive the Davidic kingdom. The angel

[Gabriel, in Luke 1:26-38] confirmed this by asserting that Christ would reign on the throne of David. [Walvoord, 1990, p. 344]

The following hierarchy of rulers is taken from [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. Note that Jesus Christ rules over both branches, that is, over the whole world, during the Millennium. The Jewish branch is Israel with its extended borders, as per the original Promised Land; the Gentile branch is the rest of the world. King David will be resurrected, and will rule over Israel during the Millennium (but under Jesus Christ). In fact, the Old Testament saints will inherit the Promised Land. These events will fulfill the writings of the prophets of long ago, and will also fulfill the covenants made by God to Israel. Unlike the many centuries following King Solomon, Israel will be joined as one nation; there will not be a separation of Israel and Judea & Samaria. We do not know which apostle will rule over which tribe of Israel. Zerubbabel (of the times of Nehemiah, Ezra, and Haggai) may be one of the princes ruling over part of Israel.

Jesus Christ on the Throne of David (Isaiah 9:6-7; Luke 1:30-33; Zechariah 14:9; Jeremiah 23:5-6)	
Gentile Branch	Jewish Branch
Church and Tribulation Saints—in resurrected bodies (Revelation 20:4-6)	David—in his resurrected body (Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Hosea 3:5)
Kings of the Gentile Nations—in their natural bodies (Psalm 72)	12 Apostles—in their resurrected bodies—ruling over the 12 Tribes who are in their natural bodies (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:28-30)
... who rule over the Gentile nations	Princes (e.g., possibly Zerubbabel) (Isaiah 32:1; Ezekiel 45:8; Haggai 2:20-23)
	Judges and Counselors (Isaiah 1:26)
	... who rule over Israel (Deuteronomy 15:6; Deuteronomy 28:1)
	... who in turn rule over the Gentiles

Psalm 72 was written by David. It looks forward to the Messiah's (Jesus') literal reign on the earth:

Psalm 72:2-17: May he judge your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice. ... May he defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy; may he crush the oppressor. May he endure as long as the sun, as long as the moon, through all generations. ... In his days may the righteous flourish and prosperity abound till the moon is no more. May he rule from sea to

	<p>sea and from the [Euphrates] River to the ends of the earth. ... May all kings bow down to him and all nations serve him. ... May his name endure forever; may it continue as long as the sun. Then all nations will be blessed through him, and they will call him blessed.</p> <p>Zechariah 9:10 I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the warhorses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.</p> <p>No Scripture passage states that Christ is currently reigning on David’s throne, or that David’s throne is in Heaven [Woods, 2014b].</p> <p>Isaiah 60:5 states that the riches of nations will come to Israel. There will be a temple (Isaiah 60:7). Nations will serve the Lord (Isaiah 60:10), and any nation that does not serve the Lord via Israel “will be utterly ruined” (Isaiah 60:12). Israel’s gates will never be shut, day or night (Isaiah 60:11). Violence will no longer be in the land (Isaiah 60:18).</p> <p>All who enter the Millennial Kingdom will be believers. While there will be Gentile unbelievers born in the Millennial Kingdom, Arnold Fruchtenbaum believes that there will be no Jewish unbelievers born then (because they will all be saved) [Fruchtenbaum, 2004].</p>
Preterist Position	<p>Of the two resurrections in Revelation 20, the first is spiritual, and the second is physical and in the future.</p> <p>David will be resurrected, but this passage isn’t talking about this. The passage is referring to the Messiah, who will rule from “David’s throne”. In fact, Christ is already enthroned in Heaven (e.g., Acts 2), and is ruling from David’s throne <i>today</i>. David won’t be literally ruling over the people during some alleged Millennium.</p> <p>You don’t want to take this passage literally because it talks about the time of Jacob’s trouble. So, with Jacob being dead long ago, it wasn’t Jacob who was going to experience that trouble. Instead, the passage is a prophetic warning of what’s going to happen to Jerusalem, if the people carry on in their ways, and don’t repent.</p>

Topic/ Question	<p>Will Satan literally be chained or bound for 1,000 years, and be placed in an abyss? Has Satan been bound, yet?</p> <p>Revelation 20:1-3 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked</p>
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	<p>and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.</p>
<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>The chain is most likely symbolic; however, Satan will be bound for 1,000 literal years, so that he cannot deceive people during that time. Satan has not been bound yet; this event is still in the future. One look at the evil in today’s world—and looking back for many centuries—makes it clear that Satan has not been bound yet. If Satan were already bound, then the church should not be undergoing persecution, and there shouldn’t be much evil in the world—but there clearly is. Furthermore, if Satan were already chained (e.g., as of the death of Christ on the Cross), then why does Revelation 2:13 state that he is living in Pergamos?</p> <p>Some authors argue that if Satan is currently chained, then “his chain is too long”. In fact, it appears that Satan has been more active in the past 2,000 years than he was before Christ [Morris, 1983]. Timothy describes “the last days”—and arguably our world’s current social situation—as follows:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">2 Timothy 3:1-5 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God - - having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">2 Timothy 3:12-13 In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.</p> <p>Although amillennialists think that Satan was bound at the Cross, the following passages say that he is not bound yet [Hitchcock, 2012]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The prince of this world (John 12:31; 14:30) • The god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4) • The ruler of the kingdom of the air (Ephesians 2:2) • A roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8) <p>“Do you really think the chain is literal?” It is a real chain all right! It may not be made of iron, but whatever it is it can hold down the devil. To which we might ask: Is Satan real? Is the abyss real? Is the binding real? Of course they are! God will by His own sovereign power restrain Satan during the millennium. He cannot get out. He is not on a long chain. He is on a short chain, chained down, locked in, lid sealed, and cannot deceive the nations. [Hindson, 2021, p. 130]</p>
<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>It is symbolic. Satan is a spiritual, not a physical, being. He is not a literal dragon or serpent, and therefore cannot be “chained” up. The language in Revelation 20 is used metaphorically.</p>

Satan was bound at the time of Christ's crucifixion on the cross. When Scripture says that Satan is bound for "a thousand years", then that's a style of writing that implies "a very long time" (i.e., eternity). When the Church is told that it will be tested, or undergo trials, for "ten days" (e.g., the church at Smyrna), then that implies a relatively short period of time.

Those favoring the partial-preterist view of eschatology believe that Satan is defeated but differ in the scope of his defeat. A number of partial preterists see Satan as hindered in his work, defeated at the cross, yet still possessing significant influence. Christians are "mopping up" the forces of evil in light of this defeat. Revelation 20 has Satan chained and thrown in a pit and then the pit sealed over. The reason for this binding is to prevent him from deceiving the nations. Yet Satan roams freely even if he drags his chains. ... He cannot prevent the spread of the gospel in the nations but continues his work of warring against individuals.

... [The Apostle] John says the devil has only a short time, and with his binding occurring in the "coming of the son of man" in A.D. 70, he is chained, thrown in the pit, and sealed (to prevent any escape). [Newton, 2012, pp. 191-193]

It is possible that the binding of Satan simply means that Satan cannot prevent the gospel from being spread around the world during the interval between Christ's first coming and His Second Coming [Page, 1995].

Who binds Satan in Revelation 20:1? The word "angel" is used; however, because of this individual's authority, his coming down from Heaven, and John's other usages of the term "angel", Stan Newton and David Chilton believe that a case can be made for Jesus Christ being this person, given the following verses [Newton, 2012]:

Revelation 1:18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

Revelation 9:1-12 The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss.

Revelation 10:1 Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars.

Revelation 18:1 After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor.

Topic/ Question	What is <i>amillennialism</i> ? Will there be a literal 1,000-year reign of Christ (i.e., Millennium) on Earth prior to the beginning of the new heavens and the new earth?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>It has to be literal, and on the earth, as per Revelation 20:2,3,4,5,6,7—where a “thousand years” is mentioned 6 times: 3 times as “a thousand years” and 3 times as “the thousand years”. If it were spiritual, then why does Revelation 20 say that it will <i>end</i> after 1,000 years [Tsarfati, <i>et al.</i>, 2020]? (After the 1,000 years, we have the eternal state described in Revelation 21-22.)</p> <p>Amillennialism claims that there will be no <i>future</i> Millennial period (of 1,000 years) when Christ literally rules and reigns on planet Earth, after His bodily return to Earth. The claim is that the “Millennium” referred to in Revelation is a general term given to the Church age: that period of time between Christ’s first and second comings.</p> <p>Although some authors would disagree (e.g., [Johnson, 2004]), amillennialism was <i>not</i> a view held by the early church; there is no record of it [LaHaye & Hindson, 2004]. It came on the scene with Augustine (354-430 AD) when he abandoned premillennialism [Ice, 2009e; Watson, 2015]. Chuck Missler comments, “Most people are victims of Church history, and Church history is pretty dismal from Augustine on. They did a lot of good things, but they also perpetuated some falsehoods that have become [indoctrinated] into most of the major denominations.” [Missler, 2004] Many Catholics and Protestants today still hold to some of the views of Augustine [Reagan, 2005].</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">To me, [amillennialism] presents a series of problems. It violates the natural understanding of the chronology of the book of Revelation and wreaks havoc with Revelation 20:1-10. But there are even worse problems. It wreaks havoc with entire chapters of the Old Testament teaching and many New Testament references to the literal reign of the Messiah on earth.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The only way to make A-Millennialism work is to spiritualize and symbolize these many Old Testament Scriptures. Once you begin doing that, you get away from a literal interpretation of the Bible. One of the soundest principles for Bible study I know is this one: If a passage can reasonably be interpreted literally, do so. When the biblical writer obviously uses symbolic language, then interpret that symbol in the context of the passage. A-Millennialism doesn’t follow this rule, and that leads to speculation rather than clarity. [Jeremiah, 2017, pp. 233-234]</p> <p>David Reagan grew up in a church that taught amillennialism [Reagan, 2013]. He was taught that Christ would not set foot on Earth again. When young David read Zechariah 14, he was stunned by what he read. Could his pastor be wrong? So, at age 12, he faced his pastor “with fear and trembling”. He was informed that all of the Old Testament prophecies have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, most people in his church only had a New Testament. Even when a seminary student came to preach, similar words were used. The student told David that passages such as Zechariah 14 were “apocalyptic” and were not meant to be taken literally.</p>

Thus, like many other Christians at the time, David's formative years gave him a non-literal, allegorical interpretation of Scripture with an emphasis on replacement theology. Some pastors even claimed that it was sinful to pray the Lord's Prayer because it said, "Thy Kingdom Come". Finally, around age 30, David read the minor prophets; and again, the book of Zechariah was a turning point. He realized that every one of those prophecies *meant what they said* ... and the same with the rest of the Bible.

Amillennialists "spiritualize" the future role and rule of Christ. For example, they might say, "Christ will rule in our hearts", implying that Christ will *not* be returning physically to rule and reign on planet Earth. Dispensationalists, however, believe that Christ will return bodily, and that He will reign: (a) in person (physically) over many people groups during the Millennium, as well as (b) "in our hearts".

For every prophecy in the Bible about Christ's first coming, there are eight about His Second Coming [Missler, 2005]. There is every reason to believe that these promises will be literally fulfilled. Millennialism is the view of the first two centuries of the early church. They believed in a tangible, literal, physical, geographical, earthly, moral, and ethical kingdom [Woods, 2013b]. Old Testament writings expressed the same opinion, and the New Testament confirms, rather than refutes Millennial teachings. The Jews of Christ's day held the same position, and Christ would have corrected their misunderstanding.

For example, Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-165) in his *Dialogue with Trypho* declared, "But I and every other completely orthodox Christian feel certain that there will be a resurrection of the flesh, followed by a thousand years in the rebuilt, embellished, and enlarged city of Jerusalem as was announced by the prophets Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the others." So pervasive was the belief in a future earthly reign of Christ in Justin Martyr's day, that, as revealed in the above quotation, he even held out such a belief as a test for Christian orthodoxy. [Woods, 2016a, p. 184]

Preterism is a form of amillennialism, since it assumes that most of the prophecies of Revelation are in the past, and that there will not be a future Millennium. In particular, amillennialism teaches that the *church* is the Kingdom, and it is a spiritual kingdom, not a physical kingdom [Baker, 2022].

Postmillennialists believe the Millennium is currently taking place. In other words, we are currently in the "Millennium". Variants of postmillennialism include reconstructionism, Kingdom Now theology, or Dominion theology, which claims that the Church needs to "prepare the world for the return of Jesus Christ" [Missler, 2005]. The idea is that once the world is in the right (positive) state, and the Church rules the world, then Christ will return. Eventually, the kingdom will achieve its final form, that is, when Christ rules with a rod of iron [Baker, 2022].

Postmillennialists believe that the Kingdom of God is now extended through teaching, preaching, evangelization, and missionary activities. The world is to be Christianized, and the result will be a long period of peace and prosperity called the Millennium. This will be followed by Christ's return. This position is seemingly gaining more adherents in contemporary circles ... [House & Price, 2003, p. 136].

The many wars and genocides of the 20th century have reduced the credibility of postmillennialism. We have seen many examples of man's inhumanity to man, such as the millions of lives lost under of the leadership of Hitler, Mao, Stalin, Lenin, Pol Pot, etc. Clay Jones wrote an excellent book that addresses the question "Why does God allow evil?" and documents some of the horrors of the world wars, Holocaust, pogroms, etc. [Jones, 2017].

... in the last century virtually all the major wars and most of the minor ones have been launched by dictatorships. [Netanyahu, 2000, p. 263]

Here, in a nutshell, is the main problem of achieving peace in the Middle East: Except for Israel, *there are no democracies*. None of the Arab regimes is based on free elections, a free press, civil rights, and the rule of law. [Netanyahu, 2000, p. 269]

Elwood McQuaid adds:

Nearly every war in history has involved more than mortal combatants, or at least the combatants have thought so. Nations take their gods to war with them; thus god is pitted against god. Clans, tribes, nations, and empires have asked their gods to help them win so that they could, in turn, place the garlands of their triumphs on their deities' altars.

... Babylon did this, as did Syria. Rome's periodic desecration of the Jewish Temple and sacred Mount Moriah also attest to this system.

... when Russian Communism came on the scene ... Atheism became the official state dogma. In essence, the state became the god ...

Therefore Communism, like fascist Nazi Germany, became the definitive satanic device. It cast aside any pretense of lip service to a deity and blatantly declared war on almighty God. [McQuaid, 2019, pp. 187-188]

Each of amillennialism and postmillennialism denies a consistent, literal hermeneutic (interpretation) of the Bible [Baker, 2022]. Instead, they rely on an allegorical or spiritual interpretation. Conversely, premillennialists believe that things generally *won't* get better, and that the world *requires* the return of Jesus Christ to get better.

Here is a summary of the theological perspectives on the final three chapters of the Bible (i.e., Revelation 22-23) [House & Price, 2003]:

	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Postmillennial</td> <td>Victory of Christianity over the world, followed by Christ’s return</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Amillennial</td> <td>Coming of Christ; judgment; eternal state</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Premillennial</td> <td>Literal millennial reign; Great White Throne Judgment; New Jerusalem</td> </tr> </table>	Postmillennial	Victory of Christianity over the world, followed by Christ’s return	Amillennial	Coming of Christ; judgment; eternal state	Premillennial	Literal millennial reign; Great White Throne Judgment; New Jerusalem
Postmillennial	Victory of Christianity over the world, followed by Christ’s return						
Amillennial	Coming of Christ; judgment; eternal state						
Premillennial	Literal millennial reign; Great White Throne Judgment; New Jerusalem						
	<p>Missler thinks that part of the blame for the Holocaust needs to be placed at the feet of amillennialism—“from Augustine to Auschwitz”. In particular, some pastors who adhered to amillennialism kept silent during the Holocaust. Missler warns that this sad mistake is likely to be repeated [Missler, 2005].</p> <p>Furthermore, if we are in the Kingdom now, then why do we need Christ to rescue us out of it, as per John 14:1-3 and the Rapture [Woods, 2020e]? Andy Woods remarks that “Kingdom Now” theology is “Augustinian amillennialism” whereby the Church is the Kingdom—or the Church is bringing in the Kingdom. Recall that under Constantine, Christianity moved from being persecuted (e.g., Nero, etc.) to being “the top religion in the Roman Empire” [Woods, 2020e]. This contributed to the acceptance of some of Augustine’s views in those centuries. People started to believe that we were in the “millennial” Kingdom.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Since the early 1600s, amillennialism has remained the only significant view of eschatology within the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, while it has been in steady decline within Protestantism.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">... The greatest problem with amillennialism is the fact that the Bible just does not teach it. [LaHaye & Hindson, 2004, p. 19]</p> <p>In summary, the notion of a future, 1,000-year Millennium should be taken literally. The number “thousand” is used many times in Scripture. A 1,000-year dispensation would be consistent with the notion of 6 days of creation times 1,000 years (2 Peter 3:8)—for example: 6,000 years since Adam, 4,000 years since Abraham, 3,000 years since David, and 2,000 years since Christ. The number “7” speaks of perfection, and it is an interesting pattern: 7 times 1,000 years.</p>						
Preterist Position	<p>Most preterists believe the “Millennium” is going on right now, and there will be no special, future period of 1,000 years of Christ’s literal, physical reign on Earth.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Partial preterists agree: The age of the Messianic kingdom (God’s general rule is eternal) is between the first and final comings of Jesus. It is the present kingdom where Jesus rules over his people and leads them into victory. The thousand years have already gone over 2,000, and no one knows how long they will continue. During these symbolic thousand years, Satan is bound. How restricted is he? We are not sure ... [Newton, 2012, p. 194]</p> <p>Throughout Scripture, the word “thousand” is used metaphorically: the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10), a thousand generations (Exodus 20:6),</p>						

	Samson killed a thousand men (Judges 15:15), with the Lord a day is like a thousand years (2 Peter 3:8), etc. Thus, it is not meant to be taken literally.
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<p>Topic/ Question</p>	<p>What is the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and when will it take place? Is this the same event as the “marriage of the Lamb”? (Some translations use “wedding” instead of “marriage”.) Does this mean there will be food and beverages in Heaven?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Revelation 19:7-9 Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God."</p>
<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>Symbolically, the wife of God is Israel. Israel has temporarily rejected God. Israel will eventually return to God.</p> <p>The Marriage of the Lamb refers to the post-Rapture gathering of saints in Heaven. This event only includes Christians because the Lamb is Jesus Christ. It likely follows the Bema judgment of the saints (i.e., the Bema Judgment Seat of Christ) where rewards are given to the saved for their works on Earth. It appears to precede the Battle of Armageddon, since a short description of that battle follows a few verses later in Revelation 19 where the Lord appears to be returning <i>with</i> His saints. Furthermore, the saints are wearing fine linen suggesting that they have been rewarded for their righteous acts. The implication is that the Marriage of the Lamb has already occurred.</p> <p>The notion of a “marriage supper” begs the question: Will there be literal food and beverages in Heaven? The answer is: yes! The following verses have applicability to the Millennium, which marks the first 1,000 years of Heaven for many people. It is unclear whether the eternal state will have meat because sin and death won’t exist; but, perhaps God will provide a meat-like substitute—though, that’s not even necessary. There will undoubtedly be spectacular dishes with the finest ingredients made without meat ingredients. Note that Jesus ate food in his post-resurrection body (e.g., Luke 24:30-31,39-43; Acts 1:4). He didn’t have to eat, but chose to do so. Given that our bodies will be like his, this means we can eat and drink, in our resurrected bodies.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Matthew 8:11 I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Luke 13:28-29 "There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from east and west and north</p>

and south, and will take their places at **the feast in the kingdom of God.**

Luke 22:16-18 For I tell you, **I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.**" After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you **I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.**"

Luke 22:29-30 And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that **you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom** and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Luke 24:39-43 Look at my hands and my feet. It is I [post-resurrection Jesus] myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" **They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.**

John 21:9-14 When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "**Come and have breakfast.**" None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. **Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.** This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Isaiah 25:6 On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare **a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine -- the best of meats and the finest of wines.**

The Marriage *Supper* of the Lamb takes place in the first part of the Millennium, but the Marriage of the Lamb appears to take place in Heaven after the Rapture and before the Second Coming. There is a distinction between these two events. In particular, the Marriage of the Lamb includes only those individuals who have been raptured (i.e., Christians, including deceased Christians); however, the Marriage *Supper* of the Lamb includes, as participants or guests, all of the saved people since the beginning of time. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb takes place on Earth, and includes Israel. The Old Testament saints will be there because Scripture says that they will "take their place at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 8:11). It is believed that this feast will be a multi-day celebration spanning "many days and probably even months ... at the beginning of the Tribulation" [Ice, 2021f].

The Old Testament and Tribulation saints (i.e., those saved during the Tribulation but after the Rapture) are sometimes called "friends of the Bridegroom".

Israel, at the second advent, will be waiting for the Bridegroom to come from the wedding ceremony and invite them to that supper, at which the Bridegroom will introduce His bride to His friends (Matt. 25:1-13). [Pentecost, 1958, pp. 227-228]

Andy Woods notes that the Millennium is the Son's kingdom, and the Eternal State is the Father's kingdom [Woods & McGowan, 2021b]. The two kingdoms merge at the end of the Millennium.

1 Corinthians 15:23-24 But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, **when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father** after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum writes:

The Rapture is the fetching of the Bride. Jesus will come in the air in order to fetch His Bride to His home, which is in Heaven. Only God the Father knows the timing of this event (Mat. 24:36). Furthermore, it will only happen once the place of residence has been prepared (Jn. 14:1-3).

In Heaven, the third step will take place. This is the marriage ceremony given in Revelation 19:6-8 ... The marriage ceremony takes place in Heaven and involves the Church. That it must take place after the Judgment Seat of Messiah is evident from verse eight, for the Bride is viewed as being dressed in white linen, which is *the righteous acts of the saints*. This means that all the wood, hay, and stubble has been burned away and all the gold, silver, and precious stones have been purified. Thus, following the Rapture of the Church in which the Bridegroom brings the Bride with Him to His home, and following the Judgment Seat of Messiah which results in the Bride having the white linen garments, the wedding ceremony takes place. It takes place before the actual Second Coming of Messiah. The Judgment Seat of Messiah corresponds to the Jewish practice of the cleansing of the bride.

... the marriage feast, will take place on earth after the Second Coming, and with the feast the Messianic Kingdom will begin. For that reason, some of Messiah's Kingdom parables were in reference to the marriage feast (Mat. 22:1-14; 25:1-13). Whereas the marriage ceremony involves only the Church, the marriage feast will include the Old Testament saints and the Tribulation saints. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 161-162]

David Reagan believes there are *two* feasts: the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in Heaven, after the Rapture, but before the Second Coming; and another on Earth after the Second Coming [Reagan, 2017a]. I think there will only be the one, on Earth, following Christ's Second Coming. Scripture references for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, which includes both Old and New Testament Saints, are found in: Revelation 19:7-9 (the feast appears to follow the wedding of the Lamb), Matthew 8:11, Luke 22:29-30, Luke 13:29, and Isaiah 25:6.

Let us contrast the Marriage Supper of the Lamb to a slightly earlier "feast" at the Battle of Armageddon:

An invitation had gone out long ago to come to the marriage supper of the Lamb, and many had responded. Now an invitation is issued to another feast, the supper of the great God, but what a difference in the two suppers! The guests at the one are the redeemed saints [believers] of the ages, joyfully feasting in the presence of the Redeemer. Those invited to the other are the birds of prey and the carrion-eating fowl from all over the world, and their dinner is to be the flesh and blood of the slain multitudes at Armageddon. [Revelation 19:17-18] [Morris, 1983, p. 396]

To summarize, we have the following ordering, analogous to a traditional Galilee wedding ceremony from the time of Christ [Levitt, 1978; Walvoord, 1990; Showers, 1995; Missler, 2011; Fruchtenbaum, 2013a; Miller, 2020; Woods, 2020c; Moore, 2021; Melnick, 2022]. In Old Testament times, and in some cultures today, the parents often arranged the marriage. However, in the Jewish wedding custom (or more specifically, the Galilean wedding custom), the would-be bride could reject the marriage proposal.

- *The betrothal.* The bride and groom met at the town gate, in the presence of witnesses, to enter into a covenant relationship and thus become engaged. They both drank from a cup of wine to agree to the relationship. If the bride didn't want to participate in the marriage, she could reject the offer. The bridegroom paid a significant dowry to the bride's father. (Ed Hindson suggests that the dowry was the Holy Spirit, given by the Father to the bride (Church) [Hindson, 2021]. Others suggest that God the Father indeed gave the dowry, but it was the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.) It was a reminder of how much the bridegroom and the bridegroom's father were willing to pay for the bride.
 - Analogy: The dowry price was high. Christ would lay down his life for his bride. This would serve as a reminder of how much he loves us—and how he spared no expense [Levitt, 1978]. It would remind us of Christ's love for us while He is in heaven, and how we are not to seek other lovers (gods).
 - Analogy: Christ committed to the relationship, at the Upper Room Discourse where He introduced *communion* ("common union") after the Last Supper on the night before His crucifixion. Today, in churches, we regularly observe communion by partaking of bread and wine (or grape juice) which are symbolic of Christ's body and blood.
 - The betrothal was recognized as a legal marriage. The betrothal often lasted for a year or longer.
 - Believers make up the "Bride of Christ". We are currently in the betrothal period, that is, the church age.
- *Preparation.* The groom would return to his father's home to prepare a place for the bride and groom to live in. The bride stays in her current home, and prepares for her future wedding, which takes place

at an undetermined time. This time of preparation is sometimes called the period of betrothal or the time of sanctification [Melnick, 2022].

John 14:2-3 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

- The betrothal period is also a loyalty test.
- Analogy: The Bride (church) is sanctified and cleansed, so that she can be presented as a glorified virgin to Jesus Christ. She is not to run after other lovers (i.e., false gods).

- *Imminence*. The bride and the groom eagerly await the marriage day, which is unknown to them. The father of the groom is the one who decides when the marriage will take place. He decides this based on the state of preparations and other considerations. When he directs his son to get the bride, the groom quickly surprises her with his return, perhaps at midnight (in fact, it often took place in the middle of the night), preceded by a shout or trumpet call. Then, the groom takes the bride to his father's house for the marriage ceremony.
 - Analogy: The Bride of Christ continues to live in the world during the betrothal period, waiting in eager expectation of the imminent call (i.e., Rapture) to come to the Father's house for the marriage ceremony. The Rapture is preceded by a shout: "the voice of the archangel and the trumpet call of God" (1 Thessalonians 4:16).
 - Interestingly, sometimes the bride and groom did not meet each other until their wedding day [Fruchtenbaum, 2013a].

- *The Bema Judgment Seat of Christ*. This event is not a part of the marriage ceremony, but it is a time of rewards for the believers following the Rapture, and likely occurs before the marriage ceremony. The Bema Judgment Seat is like a victory celebration at a major sporting event such as the ancient Greek games or Olympics: it focuses on *rewards* rather than on negative judgments.
 - The works of the believer will be judged, with awards being handed out for those who built on the foundation (Jesus Christ) using "gold, silver, and costly stones", whereas works with selfish motives ("wood, hay, or straw") will be burned away, as per 1 Corinthians 3:11-15.
 - When the process of sanctification, as per Ephesians 5:25-27, is complete, the Church will be without defilement or sin. In other words, Christ will have a pure bride.

- *The wedding ceremony.* The wedding ceremony finally takes place at the home of the bridegroom's father. It is a private ceremony that is much smaller in attendance than the marriage feast later on.
 - Analogy: The Marriage of the Lamb. The "marriage" of Jesus Christ and the body of believers (Christians) takes place in Heaven. At this point, the Bride of Christ is wearing white, which Scripture says is "the righteous acts of God's holy people" (Revelation 19:8)—implying that the Bema Judgment Seat of Christ has taken place. Righteous acts refer to works.

- *The wedding procession.* A wedding procession of women carrying lamps *en route* to the marriage supper takes place, similar to that in the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13).
 - Analogy: Arnold Fruchtenbaum believes that the 10 virgins describe people left behind *after* the Rapture [Fruchtenbaum, 2013a]. Only 5 of them become believers. Oil is a *type* of the Holy Spirit. Five of the virgins had the Holy Spirit, that is, they became true believers after the Rapture and before the Second Coming; and 5 did not become believers. Of these two kinds of virgins, only the former were saved, and were therefore invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb which is about to take place on Earth. Once the Second Coming occurs, it is too late; thus, preparation needs to be made before then.
 - Other prophecy teachers think that the Parable of the Ten Virgins relates to the time *before* the Rapture, and only those who are prepared (the 5 virgins with oil) are taken in the Rapture [Missler, 2011; Miller, 2020; Tsarfati, 2020a]. In other words, some people claim to be Christians, but don't really believe in Christ as their Lord and Savior; therefore, they aren't saved.
 - Note that this parable is part of the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24-25 which is directed to the Jewish people. It seems to focus on the Tribulation period and the events immediately afterwards, implying that the Rapture is *not* in view. Instead, it is post-Rapture, and the 10 virgins are Jewish individuals during the Tribulation: 5 become believers in Christ, and 5 do not.
 - Jesus Himself claimed not to know the day or the hour of His return, but it's unclear if this refers to the Rapture, the Second Coming, or the Marriage Supper of the Lamb:

Matthew 24:36: "But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Matthew 25:13 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Marriage Supper.</i> The bride and groom present themselves to a larger audience, and the marriage supper takes place with many guests. The feast might last for seven days, or even longer in the case of a wealthy family [Melnick, 2022]. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Analogy:</u> The Marriage Supper of the Lamb takes place on Earth, with a larger audience, probably at the start of the Millennium. It follows Christ’s Second Coming (i.e., his physical presence on the earth)—an event that is distinct from the Rapture. It occurs following the resurrection of the believers from pre-Christian times because Matthew 8:11 specifically mentions Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as attending the feast “in the Kingdom of Heaven”. The Old Testament saints won’t get their resurrected bodies until after the Second Coming, as per Daniel 12:11-13. The Kingdom of Heaven is the Millennium, on Earth. ○ The Book of Daniel speaks of a window of about 75 days following the return of Christ, just before the Millennium, and perhaps the marriage supper is part of that window of 75 days. (Search for “75 days” in this book for further discussion.) Most prophecy experts think it takes place on the earth at the start of the Millennium; but, some believe that the Marriage Supper takes place <i>in Heaven</i> during the 7-year Tribulation [Showers, 1995; Moore, 2021]. ○ Note that John the Baptist is likely the last of the Old Testament prophets. He called himself “a friend of the Bridegroom”—suggesting that he will not be at the wedding ceremony, but rather at the marriage supper [Fruchtenbaum, 2013a]. ○ Who else will be present at the marriage supper? The believers from Old Testament times will participate (recall that they were not part of the Church because the Church was initiated by Christ). It also includes all other believers who are saved after the Rapture: the entire remnant of Israel (all of whom will be believers, as per Romans 11:25-26); and any other believers, post-Rapture, who are alive or who have died—by martyrdom (Revelation 20:4-6) or any other cause of death. • <i>The Millennium.</i> After the Marriage Supper of the Lamb on Earth, we have the rest of the Millennium. At the end of this thousand-year period, Christ will create new heavens and a new earth (Isaiah 65:17), and the New Jerusalem (the home of the Bride, Revelation 21:9-22:5) comes down from Heaven to Earth. All believers will be with Christ in a perfected universe, never subject to sin again—for eternity.
Preterist Position	David Chilton correlates the marriage of the Lamb and the Church (Bride of Christ) with the “final divorce and destruction of the unfaithful wife in AD 70”

	(i.e., Jerusalem, the “harlot”) [Gregg, 2013, p. 500]. The marriage represents the fulfillment of the establishment of the New Covenant, and therefore the “age to come” has already arrived.
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Topic/ Question	What is the state of Israel’s neighbors during the Millennium? Will the nations live in peace?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>Scripture seems to suggest that, in the Millennium, Israel will include all of Lebanon. The prophets Jeremiah and Obadiah describe the destruction of Edom (southern Jordan). Note that this has not happened yet.</p> <p>Obadiah states rather clearly that this destruction of Edom will come by means of the children of Israel (v. 18), for the two houses of Israel will be like fire, while Edom will be like stubble that quickly catches fire when exposed to the flame. The destruction will be total, so that nothing will remain of Esau’s descendants, while the descendants of brother Jacob will own and possess the mountains of Edom (vv. 19-20). It is out of Mount Zion that judgment will fall on Edom (v. 21).</p> <p>... As for Moab, present-day central Jordan, it, too, will suffer destruction (Jer. 48:1-46), but it will not be total. Those who survive will come to repentance and a remnant of Moab will return, according to Jeremiah 48:47 ...</p> <p>Concerning Ammon, or modern northern Jordan, it will also suffer a partial destruction and become a possession of Israel, in Jeremiah 49:1-2 ...</p> <p>As with Moab, it will not be a total destruction and those who survive will turn to the Lord for a remnant of Ammon will also be found in the Kingdom, according to Jeremiah 49:6 ...</p> <p>Thus, peace comes between Israel and northern Jordan by means of a partial destruction, followed by conversion, and there will be a saved nation called Ammon in the Kingdom. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 495-496]</p> <p>Possibly large parts of Egypt will be desolate for 40 years, quite possibly the first 40 years of the Millennium, in accordance with the prophets Joel and Ezekiel. Chapter 3 of Joel is about the latter stages of the Tribulation and the first part of the Millennium. The following are NIV passages:</p> <p>Joel 3:19 But Egypt will be desolate, Edom a desert waste, because of violence done to the people of Judah, in whose land they shed innocent blood.</p> <p>Ezekiel 29:9-14 Egypt will become a desolate wasteland. Then they will know that I am the LORD. "Because you said, "The Nile is mine; I made it," therefore I am against you and against your streams, and I will make the land of Egypt a ruin and a desolate waste from Migdol to Aswan, as far as the border of Cush. No foot of man or animal will pass through it; no one will live there for forty years. I will make the land of Egypt desolate among devastated lands, and her cities will lie desolate forty years among ruined cities. And I will disperse the</p>

Egyptians among the nations and scatter them through the countries. "'Yet this is what the Sovereign LORD says: At the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the nations where they were scattered. I will bring them back from captivity and return them to Upper Egypt, the land of their ancestry. There they will be a lowly kingdom.

Ezekiel 30:6 "'This is what the LORD says: "'The allies of Egypt will fall and her proud strength will fail. From Migdol to Aswan they will fall by the sword within her, declares the Sovereign LORD.

We know that this prophecy has not yet been fulfilled because significant parts of Egypt have never been a wasteland for 40 years.

This prophecy was issued by the prophet Ezekiel around 570 BC. The phrase, “Migdol to Aswan” is translated as “tower of Syene” in the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible. The phrase “Migdol to Syene” is used in the New American Standard Bible (NASB). The Hebrew word for “Migdol” could refer to either a town in the northern part of Egypt—or simply a “tower” [Strong, 2016]. “Syene” refers to a town or city in upper/southern Egypt near the border of Cush (modern-day Sudan). No tower existed in Ezekiel’s day. However, a tower was completed in 1902: the Aswan Low Dam; and then in 1970, 6 kilometres further upstream: the Aswan High Dam was built—about 1,000 kilometres up the Nile River, about 690 km from Cairo. Thus, it’s possible that Ezekiel wrote about a tower that wouldn’t be constructed for about 2,500 years. At three times the height and twice the length of the Aswan Low Dam, the Aswan High Dam is a massive structure: 4 kilometres (about 2½ miles) long, 980 metres (about 1 kilometre or 0.6 miles) wide at its base, 40 metres wide at its crest, and 111 metres tall (equivalent to a 35-40 story building) [Wikipedia, 2020].

Ezekiel 29:10 [KJV] Behold, therefore I [am] against thee, and against thy rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste [and] desolate, from the **tower of Syene** even unto the border of Ethiopia.

Ezekiel 30:6 [KJV] Thus saith the LORD; They also that uphold Egypt shall fall; and the pride of her power shall come down: from the **tower of Syene** shall they fall in it by the sword, saith the Lord GOD.

Ezekiel 30:6 also uses the term “tower of Syene” in the KJV, and mention is also made of term “sword” (which refers to war), leading some prophecy teachers to wonder if some kind of an attack on the Aswan High Dam is prophesied—perhaps a nuclear attack because of words “desolate” and “forty years” [Stearman, 2011]. Note that 95% of Egypt’s population lives near the Nile River.

It’s possible that Ezekiel 29 will be fulfilled in the time leading up to Armageddon, suggesting that large parts of Egypt will be uninhabited during

the first 40 years of the Millennium [LaHaye, *et al.*, 2001]. It is also possible that it will occur prior to the Tribulation, and prior to the Magog invasion of Ezekiel 38-39 [Stearman, 2016]. This would explain why Egypt is not one of the invading countries, yet Libya and Sudan (Egypt's neighbours) are invaders.

In terms of eschatology, the Bible has little to say about Egypt. Egypt is strangely absent from the Gog and Magog passage of Ezekiel 38-39; however, the prophet Isaiah writes that many Egyptians will turn to the Lord, and they will be blessed:

Isaiah 19:19-25 In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the heart of Egypt, and a monument to the LORD at its border. It will be a sign and witness to the LORD Almighty in the land of Egypt. When they cry out to the LORD because of their oppressors, he will send them a savior and defender, and he will rescue them. **So the LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians, and in that day they will acknowledge the LORD.** They will worship with sacrifices and grain offerings; they will make vows to the LORD and keep them. The LORD will strike Egypt with a plague; he will strike them and heal them. **They will turn to the LORD, and he will respond to their pleas and heal them. In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria.** The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. **In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The LORD Almighty will bless them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance."**

In summary, peace will come between Israel and Egypt by means of conversion. Only when the Egyptians worship the same God as Israel, through Jesus the Messiah, will peace finally come. For the first forty years of the Kingdom, the land of Egypt will be desolate and the Egyptians will be dispersed all over the world. But afterwards, the Egyptians will be regathered, becoming a kingdom again. [Fruchtenbaum, 2009, p. 501]

The Bible has a lot to say about Assyria. Today, northern Iraq makes up part of ancient Assyria. As a side note, in 2015, in Iraq, the Kurds largely live in the north, Sunni Muslims live in the middle, and Shiites live in the south. Iran, which has a Shiite majority, supports Iraq's 64% Shiite majority [Wikipedia, 2016]. Saudi Arabia, which has a Sunni minority, supports Iraq's 32% Sunni minority.

There are about 30 million Kurds living in Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey. The Kurds have been fighting against ISIS terrorism, and would like their independence. Both the US and Israel are in favour of Kurd independence. It is estimated that about 150,000 Jews of Kurdish origin are living in Israel. In January 2018, Wikipedia estimated that approximately 1.3 million Kurds live in Western Europe.

	<p>Ancient Assyria also includes some of modern-day Syria. As of 2015, Syria is a war zone. It has been estimated that there are 37 rebel groups opposing Bashar al-Assad [Dyer & Tobey, 2015]. As of mid-2015, the Syrian government may have killed over 160,000 civilians including 1,800 Palestinians [LaHaye & Hindson, 2015]. Many civilians have had to flee war-torn areas. Russia and ISIS have also become involved. The effects are widespread, and many civilians have tried to relocate to places like Europe. For example, Germany has taken in about one million migrants. This has had a financial strain on the welcoming nations.</p> <p>We know that the Messiah’s rule during the Millennium will usher in a time of peace unknown since the Garden of Eden (or possibly the early days of the post-Noahic period). But, what about the nations surrounding Israel? Will animosity turn to peace?</p> <p>Indeed, the Millennial period appears to be a time of peace and prosperity between Egypt, Israel, and Assyria—as we just read (above) in Isaiah 19:23-25.</p> <p>What about Southern Iraq, known in ancient times as Babylon? What about Southern Jordan, formerly known as Edom? Arnold Fruchtenbaum points out that both of these regions will be uninhabited forever (presumably beginning with the return of Jesus Christ).</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Jeremiah 50:39-40 "... It [Babylon] will never again be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation. As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah along with their neighboring towns," declares the LORD, "so no one will live there; no man will dwell in it.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Isaiah 34:9-10 Edom's streams will be turned into pitch, her dust into burning sulfur; her land will become blazing pitch! It will not be quenched night and day; its smoke will rise forever. From generation to generation it will lie desolate; no one will ever pass through it again.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Throughout the Millennial Kingdom, while the whole earth is beautified and blossoming as the rose, the two areas of Babylon and Edom will be places of continual burning pitch and burning brimstone. The smoke will rise and be visible for the entire one thousand years. While Satan will be confined in the Abyss, his demons will be confined in Babylon and Edom. These two places will be the abode of demons for the entire Kingdom period. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]</p>
<p>Preterist Position</p>	<p>This question is irrelevant because most preterists believe that the Millennium is “the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, which He established at His First Advent ... the period between the First and Second Advents of Christ; the Millennium is going on now, with Christians reigning as kings on earth” [LaHaye & Ice, 2003].</p>

Topic/ Question	What is the relationship between the New Jerusalem and the earth during the Millennium?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>Only redeemed, resurrected individuals enter the New Jerusalem during the Millennium [Pentecost, 1958]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The New Jerusalem is to be inhabited by God, the Church, the unfallen angels, and the redeemed of all ages. • At the time of Christ's Second Coming, the living Gentiles and Jews enter the Millennium with unresurrected bodies. They will populate the earth during the Millennium. They are not permitted to enter the New Jerusalem in their unresurrected bodies. • The saved Old Testament saints go into the New Jerusalem after Christ's Second Coming and after they get their resurrected bodies, where they join the Church saints who are already there (because they were taken there at the Rapture). • The New Jerusalem appears to be suspended over the earth during the Millennium. • After the Millennium, it's possible that all of the saved have resurrected bodies, and can enter the New Jerusalem; however, as will be seen below, there are some unanswered questions. • It is after the Millennium—in the new heavens and new earth—that the New Jerusalem descends to the (new) earth. <p>The Mountain of Jehovah's House (during the Millennium) is described by the prophet Ezekiel:</p> <p>Ezekiel 40:2 In visions of God he took me to the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain, on whose south side were some buildings that looked like a city.</p> <p>Ezekiel 45:1-7 "'When you allot the land as an inheritance, you are to present to the LORD a portion of the land as a sacred district, 25,000 cubits long [note: approximately 11 km or 7 miles, when using an 18-inch cubit] and 20,000 cubits wide [approximately 9 km or 6 miles]; the entire area [approximately 42 square miles] will be holy. Of this, a section 500 cubits square is to be for the sanctuary, with 50 cubits around it for open land. In the sacred district, measure off a section 25,000 cubits long and 10,000 cubits wide. In it will be the sanctuary, the Most Holy Place. It will be the sacred portion of the land for the priests, who minister in the sanctuary and who draw near to minister before the LORD. It will be a place for their houses as well as a holy place for the sanctuary. An area 25,000 cubits long and 10,000 cubits wide will belong to the Levites, who serve in the temple, as their possession for towns to live in. "'You are to give the city as its property an area 5,000 cubits wide and 25,000 cubits long, adjoining the sacred portion; it will belong to the whole house of Israel. "'The prince will have the land bordering each side of the area formed by the sacred district and the property</p>

of the city. It will extend westward from the west side and eastward from the east side, running lengthwise from the western to the eastern border parallel to one of the tribal portions.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum describes the location as follows:

... somewhere on this [Holy] mountain the Millennial Temple is to stand, as well as the City of Jerusalem. This very high mountain, the highest in the world, will itself have a fifty-mile square plateau [approximately 42 square miles using the 18-inch cubit, or approximately 50 square miles when using the 24-inch Hebrew long cubit] on top (v. 1). This square plateau will be subdivided into three sections. The northern section (vv. 2-4) will be twenty miles by fifty miles, having in its center the Millennial Temple, which will be about one mile square. The rest of the area of the northern section will be reserved for a certain group of priests to live in. The central section (v. 5) will also be twenty miles by fifty miles and will be reserved for the members of the Tribe of Levi. The southern section (vv. 6-8) will be ten miles by fifty miles. In the center of the southern section will stand the Millennial Jerusalem, measuring ten miles by ten miles. On either side of the city will be field areas, each measuring ten by twenty miles, for growing food. These areas will be controlled by the prince, the resurrected David, who will apportion the Land according to tribe. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 448]

Note that “the prince” mentioned in Ezekiel 44-47 may well be the resurrected David, or a descendant of David [MacArthur, 2006]. He is an administrator of Israel during the Millennium. The prince cannot be Jesus Christ because: he has sins for which he offers sacrifices, he is the father of sons, he worships the Lord, but he does not perform the duties of a priest [MacArthur, 2006].

Henry Morris ponders the duties of the saints during the Millennium:

... the resurrected apostles of the Lord have been promised that they will be assigned earthly thrones from which they will judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Luke 22:28-30). It seems also that the resurrected King David may be placed over the entire nation of Israel (Ezekiel 37:24,25; Jeremiah 30:9; Hosea 3:5). Some will be assigned jurisdiction over ten cities, some over five (Luke 19:17,19). Apparently there will be a hierarchy of authority assigned to the saints in either civil or religious duties or both.

It may appear at first that the hosts of resurrected saints, including all the redeemed of all the ages, will so far outnumber the depleted population of the earth at the beginning of the millennium, that there will be more “kings and priests” than “subjects”. ... Those who had attained a higher state of spiritual knowledge and effectiveness in the days of their flesh may well serve as teachers and leaders for those who died as “babes in Christ,” at least for the early years when the human population on earth is still low.

Furthermore their ministries will be needed for all those who had died while still too young (many even still in the fetal state) to have even reached the so-called “age of accountability.” They must surely be allowed to grow to maturity somehow, both physically and spiritually, and many of the more mature saints may well have assignments to train and tutor these. [Morris, 1983, pp. 418-419]

Preterist Position	Preterists have different views of the Millennium. All views have problems, and some scholars such as Hank Hanegraaff do not endorse any of them [Hanegraaff, 2016]. Hanegraaff argues that nowhere does Scripture indicate that there will be a “semi-golden” age. The figure “1,000 years” is just a figure of speech suggesting a long period of time. For example, the amillennial position is that the Millennium is a period of time which is not literally a period of 1,000 years. Rather, it is the period of time between the time of Christ and His Second Coming.
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Topic/ Question	What events occur at the end of the Millennium?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>It is during the Millennium that the population of the earth will swell, so that the number of people is “like the sand on the seashore”. In fact, towards the end of the Millennium, the enemies of God alone will be “like the sand on the seashore” (Revelation 20:8).</p> <p>Recall that at the end of the Millennium, Satan is freed one last time. He gathers unbelievers for one final attack on Jerusalem, to try to destroy God’s plan. Perhaps these unbelievers have only acknowledged the rule and reign of Christ reluctantly or out of fear of discipline; and when Satan is released, and they are given the opportunity, they rebel. This goes to show that even under near-ideal conditions during the Millennium—when for 1,000 years sin was greatly restrained, and peace and prosperity existed, that the words of Jeremiah 17:9 (KJV) hold true: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” Scripture says that when Satan’s armies surround Jerusalem, fire comes out of Heaven, and devours the unbelievers. Satan is then thrown into the Lake of Fire, where the Antichrist and the False Prophet have been for the past 1,000 years. They will remain there, for eternity.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Revelation 20:7-10 When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth -- Gog and Magog -- to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.</p> <p>Secondly, recall that up to now, all of the unbelievers throughout history are either in Hades (the place of the unsaved dead) or they are still alive at the end of the Millennium. These individuals are unsaved; that much is known. What happens at the Great White Throne Judgment, however, is the determination of the <i>degree</i> of their punishment. These unbelievers are resurrected to demand</p>

	<p>accountability, and to face judgment. Following the Great White Throne Judgment, they are thrown into the Lake of Fire.</p> <p>Revelation 20:11-15 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>Most preterists believe the “Millennium” is going on right now, and there will be no special, future period of 1,000 years of Christ’s literal, physical reign on Earth. However, they agree that there is a day of judgment for everyone.</p>

Topic/ Question	<p>What is meant by the “Book of Life” and “the books” mentioned in Revelation 20? Are these records of everything that people did on Earth?</p> <p>Revelation 20:11-15 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.</p>
Both Positions	<p>In Verse 12 above, note that the phrase “books were opened” is immediately followed by the phrase “Another book was opened”. The latter is the Book of Life.</p> <p>What would the first set of books refer to? It could be that these are used for “audit” purposes, and to show every thought, word, and deed from an unbeliever, in order to provide evidence that God’s judgment is just. These other books may well be our biographies [Johnson, 2004].</p> <p>The fact that the person is not listed in the Book of Life provides an indicator that the person is not saved and therefore will not go to Heaven.</p>

Note, however, that the evil deeds of *believers* will be burned up as wood, hay, and straw (1 Corinthians 3:11-15), and the Christian can be assured of sins forgiven and forgotten:

Isaiah 65:17 "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.

Romans 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

With respect to the Book of Life:

In this book had once been inscribed the name of every child ever conceived and who, therefore, had been granted "life" by God. Sadly, however, multitudes during their lifetimes (when it became evident that they had irrevocably rejected God's provision of salvation for them through Jesus Christ) had had their names "blotted out of the book of life" (Revelation 3:5; Exodus 32:33; Psalm 69:28). This book will also be opened, as the resurrected dead stand before the awful Majesty on the shining throne. [Morris, 1983, p. 428]

In terms of the level of accountability, consider Jesus' warning to the residents of the cities in which Jesus performed miracles, but was rejected:

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

Luke 12:48 But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

The cities which saw His great works would be judged with a higher standard than those cities which did not. While each would be judged for their sin, harsher judgment would be upon those cities which Jesus Himself visited and performed His miraculous deeds.

The scriptural truth is that "to whom much has been given, much will be required."

... The more we know, the more we are responsible for. Therefore, the judgment of God will be based upon the amount of light, or truth, which a person has received and then how they respond to it.

... The work of God is to believe in Him whom He has sent, Jesus Christ. This is the one issue in which everyone will ultimately be judged; what have they done with Jesus?

... There is no doubt that God will be fair in His judgments. This is consistent with the character of the Lord as revealed in the Bible. [Stewart, 2015b, pp. 158-161]

“The book” is the Lamb’s Book of Life that contains the names of all the saved, throughout history. “The books” probably record to the works of the unrighteous; and from these records, at judgment time, God will present the evidence to the unsaved, and tailor the punishment to fit the crime. Admittedly, there is some mystery about the books, as we don’t have further information [Hitchcock, 2011b].

Chapter 15: The Eternal State

So far in this book, we have devoted quite a bit of space to topics related to Heaven and Hell. Heaven is for real, as is hell; however, there are some interesting puzzles regarding the eternal state following the Millennium. In this last chapter, we consider some of these seldom-explored topics.

Topic/ Question	The eternal state is the renewed heavens and earth. Describe the eternal state. Why do we need a renewed heavens and earth?
Dispensa- tionalist Position	<p>The renewed heavens and earth are physical. Resurrected bodies are physical. If, upon resurrection, believers would not have real bodies, then we wouldn't need a physical place in which to live [Alcorn, 2004]. God could simply delete the universe, and not bother with re-creating physical entities. But, God's plan right from the beginning was that mankind would live with Him in a physical universe. God intends to restore and rebuild things; otherwise, if it's believed that God's original plan could never have succeeded, then Satan could claim some degree of victory. Instead, God will finish His plan.</p> <p>Even the phrase 'new heavens and earth' indicates the nature of the restoration we look forward to. The Bible uses the phrase 'heavens and earth' to talk about the entire physical universe in a comprehensive way (Genesis 1:1). So, when the Bible talks about a <i>new</i> heavens and earth (2 Peter 3:13, Revelation 21-22), even the term indicates that it is <i>like</i> the first heavens and earth—otherwise there would need to be a different term for it.</p> <p>So 'new heavens and earth' means we should look to what God originally intended for the physical creation to understand what things will be like—what Eden was like before Adam sinned. Eden was a picture of the perfect paradise God created for people to live in. It was a place especially suited for humans to live comfortably and engage in easy, pleasant work (Genesis 2:15). In the well-watered garden with plentiful food, all their needs were provided for. Best of all, they enjoyed direct, intimate fellowship with God. There was no sin, no death, and no barrier between men and God. This has to happen again, and it is most certainly something we all look forward to. So the 'new heavens and earth' will be a <i>restoration</i> back to how things were before the Fall.</p> <p>... The restored earth must again be physical because if God does not restore the physical world and at least what was lost, then Satan would 'win' in a certain sense, because he would have foiled God's original purpose in creating the earth. Instead, God will undo everything Satan did, and He will make creation even better than before. This is why the resurrection of Christ was so important. It gives us an inkling of what God will do when Christ returns. Only the Creator of the universe has the power over death.</p> <p>... Scripture's teaching about the future New Heavens and Earth only makes sense in light of the Bible's big story of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration, and most importantly starting with a literal, good creation. If God created a perfect world with no sin or death, it makes sense that the final goal would be its restoration to its pre-sin state. [Bates & Cosner, 2019]</p>

Right now, sin is present throughout the universe because of mankind's fallen state on Earth—but also because Satan and his angels fell in Heaven. Therefore, the universe must be purged of sin—and this is how the eternal state differs from the Millennium, and of course, from the current earth.

The eternal state follows the Millennium. This much we know:

Isaiah 65:17 "Behold, I will create **new heavens and a new earth**. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.

Isaiah 66:22-23 "As the **new heavens and the new earth** that I make will endure before me," declares the LORD, "so will your name and descendants endure. From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me," says the LORD.

2 Peter 3:10-13 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare [uncovered]. ... That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a **new heaven and a new earth**, where righteousness dwells.

- Thus, the new moon festival (*Rosh Chodesh*), at the start of each month, will be observed throughout the Millennium, in accordance with the Law of Moses (2 Chronicles 2:4) and passages in Ezekiel 45:17; 46:1; and 46:3 [Fruchtenbaum, 2019]. The new moon festival will also be observed by Gentiles. The inner eastern gate of the Millennial Temple will be closed on all days except for each Sabbath day (Saturday) and *Rosh Chodesh*.
- Following the Millennium, there will be a new heaven and a new earth. The word "new", however, should be replaced with a word such as "renewed", "cleansed", "purified", or "transformed" [Jeremiah, 2017]. We don't know if this will take place instantly, in six days, or over a longer stretch of time; but, very likely, we'll be able to observe it.

God never gave up on his original plan for human beings to dwell on Earth. In fact, the climax of history will be the creation of a new heavens and a New Earth, a resurrected universe inhabited by resurrected people living with the resurrected Jesus (Revelation 21:1-4). [Alcorn, 2004, p. xx]

The New Earth will not be a non-Earth but a real Earth. The Earth spoken of in Scripture is the Earth we know—with dirt, water, rocks, trees, flowers, animals, people, and a variety of natural wonders. An Earth without these would not be Earth.

... We're told the "first earth" will pass away (Revelation 21:1). The word for "first" is *prōte*, suggesting a vital connection between the two Earths. The first Earth serves as the prototype or pattern for the New Earth. There's continuity between old and new. [Alcorn, 2004, p. 158]

Revelation 21:1-4 Then I saw "a **new heaven** and a **new earth**," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was **no longer any sea**. I saw the Holy City, the **new Jerusalem**, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! **God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them**. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be **no more death' or mourning or crying or pain**, for the old order of things has passed away."

- There will no longer be any sea. A possible reason for this is that our current salt-water oceans use the salt for cleansing; but, on the new earth, this property won't be needed.
- God will live with the believers.
- There will no longer be any death, crying, or pain.

The words "passed away" in Revelation 21:1 come from the Greek word *parerchomai* which means "to pass from one state to another" [Jeremiah, 2017]. In other words, there is continuity, but it's a transformation or transition—similar to how death moves a person from one state to another, or how God used Noah's Flood to transfer the world from its old state to a new state. In fact, the New Jerusalem may be analogous to Noah's Ark in the sense that we will be preserved while the future transformation of the universe takes place.

Revelation 21:10-11 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, **Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God**. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

Revelation 21:15-17 The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long.

- Note above that the New Jerusalem descends out of Heaven, and is enormous in size: 12,000 furlongs on each side; so this is 1,500 miles × 1,500 miles × 1,500 miles; or, equivalently, 2,414 km × 2,414 km × 2,414 km. This is based on conversion rates of 8.000 furlongs per mile, and 1.609 kilometres per mile. Some translations use "stadia" (singular "stadium") in place of the equivalent word "furlongs". The

large size of the New Jerusalem may mean that the new earth will be considerably larger than the current earth.

Revelation 21:22-27 I did not see a temple in the **city**, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The **city** does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The **nations** will walk by its light, and the **kings** of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the **nations** will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

- There is no temple in the New Jerusalem.
- This very large city does not *need* the sun or moon to shine on it, because it gets supernatural light. However, this is not necessarily true about the whole earth. In other words, it may be that only the New Jerusalem is in continual light. In fact, in the next chapter, the comment in Revelation 21:23 is reiterated as follows:

Revelation 22:1-5 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the **city**. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the **city**, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. **There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun**, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

- There will still be *nations* on the new earth, in the eternal state. But, why are there distinct nations? After all, isn't everybody supposed to be "one" without distinction?
 - It appears that the nations and Israel will be treated differently, or perhaps have different roles, in the eternal state.
 - Related to nations, there will still be *kings* on the new earth, in the eternal state. So, it appears that there will be people over which to rule.

Psalm 2 speaks of Christ's ruling "with an iron scepter" and dashing the nations to pieces "like pottery" (v. 9), a reference to the Messiah's return, judgment, and perhaps his millennial reign. But once we enter the new heavens and New Earth, there is no iron rule or dashing to pieces, for there is no more rebellion, sin, or death. The vanquishing of sin doesn't mean the end of Christ's rule. It means the end of his *contested* rule and the beginning

of his eternally uncontested rule, when he will delegate earthly rule to his co-heirs.

If we understood God's unaltered plan for his people to exercise dominion over the earth, it wouldn't surprise us to find on the New Earth that nations still exist and kings come into the New Jerusalem bring tribute to the King of kings (Revelation 21:24,26). [Alcorn, 2004, p. 200]

- The gates of the New Jerusalem will never be shut. This implies that there will be people living outside of the New Jerusalem. Who are those people?
 - It is possible that such individuals are the saved Tribulation believers, or their descendants who were born during the Millennium [Reagan, 2017b]. They live to the end of the Millennium, but no *resurrection* is specifically mentioned for them in Scripture. That said, they are likely to have some kind of glorified body because they need to pass through the renewal of the heavens and the earth.
 - Reagan poses some interesting conjectures, *and these are just speculation*. For example, will the humans that transition from the Millennium to the eternal state be capable of reproduction in the eternal state? There must be people over which to reign “forever” in order for the following passage to come true, argues Reagan:

Isaiah 9:6-7 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the **greatness** of his government and peace **there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.** The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

- In fact, the word “greatness” above is translated “increase” or “expansion” in some translations of the Bible, implying that the government's role will grow, possibly because there will be more and more people to govern. Some people argue that this particular passage refers only to the Millennium; however, the word “forever” is used.

We are also told that those of us who receive glorified bodies and whose residence will be the New Jerusalem will reign as priest and kings with Jesus forever (Revelation 5:9-10). To do so requires a population for us to minister to and to reign over.

The major problem I am left with is whether or not the nations on the New Earth will be capable of sinning. Most commentators believe they will not, and they have good

reasons for believing this. Again, the Bible says the “wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), and the Scriptures also tell us that in the Eternal State death will be abolished (1 Corinthians 15:25-26 and Revelation 21:4).

But the prohibition against sinners entering the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:27) seems to indicate that the people who compose the nations will be capable of committing sins. And if they are not, why would they need priests and kings? This is a mystery to me for which I have no answer. [Reagan, 2017b, p. 7]

○ Randy Alcorn writes:

It may be that Christ’s government will always increase because he will continually create new worlds to govern (and, perhaps, new creatures to inhabit those new worlds). Perhaps it will always increase because the new universe, though still finite, may be so vast that what Christ creates in a moment will never be exhaustively known by finite beings. From what we know of our current universe, with billions of galaxies containing millions of billions of stars and untold planets, this is certainly possible. Restoration of the current universe alone will provide unimaginable territories for us to explore and establish God’s dominion over to God’s glory.

... The proper question is not, Why would God create new worlds? That’s obvious. God is by nature a creator and ruler. He is glorified by what he creates and rules. He delights to delegate authority and dominion to his children to rule his creation on his behalf. “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.”

Is there anything in Scripture—anything we know about God—that would preclude him from expanding his creation and delegating authority to his children to rule over it? [Alcorn, 2004, pp. 224-225]

God told Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky or the number of grains of sand on the earth:

Genesis 22:17-18 I will surely bless you and **make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore.** Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

Exodus 32:13 Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants **as numerous as the stars in the sky** and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance **forever.**'"

Deuteronomy 1:10 The LORD your God has increased your numbers so that today you are as numerous as the stars in the sky.

Hebrews 11:12 And so from this one man [Abraham], and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

These Scripture passages seem to indicate that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's [Israel's] descendants would possess the Promised Land, and that this was fulfilled during the time of Moses. However, note the word "forever" in Exodus 32:13 above. Perhaps God was referring to the number of stars observable in the nighttime sky during the time of Moses. Perhaps God was simply using literary hyperbole. But, perhaps God also had a future plan in mind—the future far beyond Moses' day. We don't know; but, sometimes prophecy has both a near-term and a far-term fulfillment.

Some scientists estimate that there are 100 billion stars in the Milky Way galaxy, and 10 billion galaxies in the "observable" universe alone [NASA, 2019]. That alone suggests an estimate of $100,000,000,000 \times 10,000,000,000 = 1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000$ descendants—assuming we are to take God literally! So, perhaps there is more to the new heavens and new earth than we can imagine.

Psalm 147:4 He [God] determines the number of the stars, and calls them each by name.

The closing chapters of the book of Ezekiel report that, during the Millennium, Israel (those who enter the Millennium in their natural bodies) will live on the earth, in the Promised Land. Those in their resurrected bodies will live in the New Jerusalem and this is distinct from the Promised Land. Abraham was looking forward to this city, as per Hebrews 11:10. Revelation 21:12-14 imply that the Old Testament saints will live here, too.

Ezekiel 43:6-7 While the man was standing beside me, I heard someone speaking to me from inside the temple. He said: "Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet. This is where I will live among the Israelites **forever**. The people of Israel will never again defile my holy name ...

Revelation 22:1-5 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

- We discussed the Tree of Life previously. Dispensationalists believe that this is a literal tree with life-sustaining properties.

Questions remain as to why there are nations, and why there appears to be a separation of the New Jerusalem from the rest of the earth. Some claim that these Scriptures late in the book of Revelation represent a look back at the Millennium when there will be glorified individuals, and at the same time, humans living in sin. However, this can't be an answer because the New Jerusalem doesn't descend to earth until *after* the Millennium [Reagan, 2017b]. We can't tell for sure, but it appears that the New Jerusalem will settle on the earth in the eternal state (rather than during the Millennium); and this is *after* the earth has been destroyed (renewed) by fire.

As noted above, a possible explanation is that those who: (a) survived the Tribulation (and therefore are saved), or (b) were born during the Millennium and are saved ... will live in the new earth in their natural bodies, and will live outside the New Jerusalem and repopulate the new earth [Reagan, 2017]. Obviously, we cannot be dogmatic about this—and really this is speculation; but, consider the following comments about the eternal state:

It is clear from the context that John is talking about a group of people who have access to the New Jerusalem but who don't live there.

There is only one group of people left on earth to go into eternity in their physical bodies—believers that served Christ during His millennium kingdom. They go into eternity in their physical, glorified bodies, not spiritual glorified bodies like we [Church Age saints] will have because they did not experience death and resurrection. These people will go into eternity with bodies like Adam and Eve had at their creation before they were flawed by sin. [Keith Krell, quoted in [Reagan, 2017b]]

... the “nations” are composed of saved people who survive the millennial kingdom without dying and without joining Satan's rebellion and who undergo some sort of transformation that suits them for life in the Eternal State. They will be like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden prior to the Fall. They will be unresurrected human beings who will inhabit the new earth ... These will be the ones over whom God's resurrected saints will reign. Nations, people and men on earth must continue in the flesh as Adam and Eve did before the Fall. [Robert L. Thomas, quoted in [Reagan, 2017b]]

Scripture is not clear as to whether Israel, the church, and the other believer groups of history will maintain their distinctions throughout eternity. There does not appear to be a biblical reason why they may not worship and serve God as distinct saved people groups for all eternity. In fact, the New Jerusalem of the eternal state, indicates some distinctions such as the 12 tribes of Israel (Rev. 21:12), the 12 apostles of the church (Rev. 21:14), and the glory and honour of the nations will be brought into the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:26). [Ice, 2015b]

We are going to live forever. There is going to be a resurrection. Everyone who has ever lived on Earth will be resurrected. If you are resurrected to eternal life, you'll be with God; if you are not saved, then you'll be separated from

	<p>God—and be consciously aware of that fact—for all eternity (but you will long for a permanent death). Remember, “All of us have a shelf life. We’re not going to live in these [mortal] bodies forever. ... We need to prepare for the next life.” [Stewart, 2009] At resurrection time, you’ll get a literal, physical, and perfected body, never subject to death and decay.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>Many of the points mentioned in the dispensationalist position above apply to the preterist position, except for the Millennium, and speculation about endless generations. Recall that preterists believe that the Millennium is going on now [LaHaye & Ice, 2003]. Dispensationalists and (partial) preterists both believe in everlasting life, and that includes physical, resurrected bodies.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">St. Peter describes this judgment is the destruction of “the present heavens and earth” (2 Peter 3:7), making way for “new heavens and a new earth” (3:10). ... Many have mistakenly assumed that St. Peter is speaking of the final end of the physical heaven and earth, rather than the dissolution of the Old Covenant world order.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">... The Old Covenant order, in which the entire world is organized around the central sanctuary of the Jerusalem temple, could quite appropriately be described, before its final dissolution, as “the present heavens and earth.”</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">... In fact, St. Peter was quite specific about the fact that he was not referring to an event thousands of years in their future, but to something that was already taking place ... [DeMar, 1997, pp. 486-491]</p> <p>Stan Newton concurs:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The heavens here refer to the old covenant and its elements; they are about to end and be replaced with the reality of the new covenant and the coming of the kingdom in power and glory.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">... Peter is not talking about the physical elements here but about spiritual elements. [Newton, 2021, p. 237]</p>

Topic/ Question	<p>Is the New Jerusalem a literal city coming down from Heaven to Earth? What will life be like in the New Jerusalem? Will there be food and beverages in the eternal state?</p>
Dispensationalist Position	<p>Following the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment, God restores creation. There is no possibility of sin recurring. The New Jerusalem is part of this creation.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Revelation 21:1-5 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed</p>

away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

The *New Jerusalem* is measured and described in Revelation 21. Its length, width, and height are about 2,200 km each. Note that commercial aircraft fly at a height of about 11 km (approximately 36,000 feet), and that 2,200 km × 2,200 km would cover an area equal to over half of the United States. The city could be in the form of a cube; however, there are an infinite number of symmetrical and asymmetrical shapes that could also satisfy the constraint. The fact that the Most Holy Place was a cube may add some weight to the New Jerusalem being cubic. Note also that resurrected bodies are not subject to gravitational or electromagnetic forces; thus, "streets" in the New Jerusalem can be vertical, diagonal, etc. [Morris, 1983]

This is a continuation of the Millennium without any presence of sin, and with no sinful influence, because Satan and his followers are been fully dealt with.

Revelation 21:1 states that there will be no more sea; however, we know that there will be fresh water on the new earth. For example, the river of life will be there. Presumably, it flows into a body of water, and this may be one of many large, freshwater lakes. God could adapt saltwater creatures to be freshwater creatures. Many animal kinds live underwater, or around water, and presumably they'll be re-created in a restored environment on the new earth [Alcorn, 2004]. Note that it's possible that before Noah's Flood, there were no seas either, that is, until the "fountains of the great deep" opened up (Genesis 7:11) yielding enormous quantities of water accompanied by major tectonic activity.

The New Jerusalem is a literal city, albeit a very large one—and it is designed by God. It is part of Heaven—its capital city, so to speak [Jeremiah, 2017]. Believers, unfallen angels, and Jesus Christ will be there. It appears to be suspended over the earth during the Millennium, and thereafter it will likely descend to earth. It is likely that its occupants will be able to regularly travel between it and the rest of the earth.

John 14:2-3 **In my Father's house are many rooms**; if it were not so, I would have told you. **I am going there to prepare a place for you.** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

Hebrews 11:10 For he was looking forward to the **city** with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

Hebrews 12:22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the **city** of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.

Hebrews 11:16 Instead, they were longing for a better country -- a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a **city** for them.

Hebrews 13:14 For here we do not have an enduring city, but **we are looking for the city that is to come.**

Revelation 3:12 Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, **the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God;** and I will also write on him my new name.

Revelation 21:9-10 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me **the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.**

Revelation 21:22-27 I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. **The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.** The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for **there will be no night there.** The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

... it may be argued that Christ will return to the earth at the second advent and He will reign on David's throne. The center of that authority is recognized to be earthly Jerusalem. That does not necessitate the presence of Christ on that throne constantly. Christ may still reign on David's throne over David's Kingdom, but make the heavenly Jerusalem His place of residence with His Bride.

... there will be night in the millennial earth, but need not be in the heavenly city, since the Lamb is there to give light. [Pentecost, 1958, pp. 569-570]

When we picture a city, we often think of people, buildings, streets, houses, parks, gardens, social gatherings, activity, movement, entertainment, restaurants, etc. The New Jerusalem is likely to have all—or almost all—of these. Because the new earth will be inhabited by believers, there will be no need for security, metal detectors, etc. [Alcorn, 2004]. There won't be any crime, sirens, car alarms, hospitals, homelessness, pollution, etc.

Revelation 22:1-5 Then the angel showed me the river of the **water** of life, as clear as crystal, **flowing** from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the **tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month.** And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the **nations.** No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his

face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

The above verses indicate that there will literally be water, trees, fruit—and even nations—in Heaven. The river of life appears to be a literal river with pure water flowing from the throne of God in the New Jerusalem. Water was very important to people for survival, especially in hot, dry conditions. This is clear, fresh, abundant water. Earlier in this book, we were introduced to a flow of fresh water in the Millennium, as described in Ezekiel 47. Zechariah 14:8 says that the Millennial water, living water, will flow to the Eastern Sea and the Western Sea, from Jerusalem. In the new heavens and new earth, however, there will be no more seas. There may be freshwater lakes, though, because the rivers presumably end in large basins of water.

Secondly, recall that there will be fruit trees in the Millennium, recorded in Ezekiel 47:

Ezekiel 47:12 Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing."

The Ezekiel passage appears to be referring to the Tree of Life because the passage seems to be a parallel to Revelation 22:1-2. In Ezekiel 47, we may be dealing with the Millennium; however, because sin still exists—albeit in limited fashion—in the Millennium, unbelievers wouldn't have access to this tree and its fruit. In Revelation 22, we are dealing with the eternal state, and sin and death no longer exist. (We assume that there won't be any animal deaths, either.)

Note also that the Tree of Life, first mentioned in Genesis 2, re-appears. The first two chapters of the Bible (Genesis 1-2) complement the last two chapters of the Bible (Revelation 21-22) in the sense that the curse is lifted and we have a renewed heavens and a renewed earth—without sin. The Tree of Life will regularly produce fruit for our consumption. Food is yet another reason why we can take the new earth literally. There may well be many trees of life, given the number of people who will be in Heaven. There will not be a tree of knowledge of good and evil because there will be no temptation [Alcorn, 2004].

Ezekiel 47:6-10 speaks of fish and fishermen, during the Millennium. We'll be able to eat fish during that time; but, we're not sure if this will also be the case in the eternal state.

Ezekiel 47:6-10 He asked me, "Son of man, do you see this?" Then he led me back to the bank of the river. When I arrived there, I saw a great number of trees on each side of the river. He said to me, "This water flows

toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, where it enters the Dead Sea. When it empties into the sea, the salty water there becomes fresh. Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live. Fishermen will stand along the shore; from En Gedi to En Eglaim there will be places for spreading nets. The fish will be of many kinds -- like the fish of the Mediterranean Sea.

Presumably, all kinds of crops will grow. To supplement the food, there will undoubtedly be fine spices. Also, it is reasonable to expect all kinds of beverages in the eternal state: water, fruit juices, coffee, tea, milk, etc.

In terms of geography, mountains will exist on the new earth because of Revelation 21:10. We can expect many scenic wonders. Rainfall, and snowfall at higher elevations, are likely to occur. Randy Alcorn comments:

Just as our resurrection bodies will be better than our current ones, the New Earth's natural wonders will presumably be more spectacular than those we now know. We can expect more magnificent mountains and more beautiful lakes and flowers than those on this Earth. If we imagine the New Earth to have fewer and less beautiful features than the old, we picture the Earth's regression. The least we should expect is retention. But in fact, I believe there's every reason to anticipate *progression*.

... Remember, God will make the new heavens, which will correspond to the old and which will therefore include renewed versions of the planets, stars, nebulae, and galaxies God created in the first heavens.

The New Earth's waterfalls may dwarf Niagara—or the New Niagara Falls may dwarf the one we know now. We will find rock formations more spectacular than Yosemite's, peaks higher than the Himalayas, forests deeper and richer than anything we see in the Pacific Northwest. [Alcorn, 2004, pp. 251-252]

These characteristics describe life in the eternal state [Pentecost, 1958]:

- Fellowship with God
- Rest
- Full knowledge
- Holiness
- Joy
- Service (purposeful activity)
- Abundance
- Glory
- Worship
- Time

	<p>With respect to the last point, time, we note that there are seasons in Heaven, New Moons, Sabbaths, trees yielding their fruit, flowing water, singing, etc.—all indicative of time.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>“Taking Revelation 21 and reading it in a wooden, literalistic fashion rather than the fashion in which it’s intended lends to all kinds of problems in terms of biblical hermeneutics”, says Hank Hanegraaff [Hanegraaff, <i>Bible Answer Man</i>, August 15, 2011]. Revelation is written in apocalyptic literature; so, it needs to be read with that in mind. Even the modern-day expression, “See you next year in Jerusalem”, can be taken to represent an eternal state.</p> <p>Contrary to the dispensationalists’ position, Hanegraaff argues that the New Jerusalem is <i>not</i> a physical city. The dimensions given in Revelation are not meant to be taken literally because Revelation 21 is a <i>symbolic</i> reference to Heaven, using poetic language. Heaven is not a “new” place, but rather the old order <i>restored</i>; and that is the key point: the universe will be restored. There’s no point in computing how much “acreage” each saved person might have. In Scripture, when the Apostle John describes Christ in apocalyptic language, it’s not stating how Jesus actually looks, but rather <i>what he is like</i>.</p> <p>Finally, and just as a side note, Darrell Johnson comments on the term “pillar” used in Revelation 3:12:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Jesus picks up on a custom associated with the temples. William Barclay explains:</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">When a person had served the state well, when he had left behind a noble record as a magistrate or as a public benefactor or as a priest, the memorial which the city gave to him was to erect a pillar in one of the temples with his name inscribed upon it. Philadelphia honored its illustrious sons by putting their names on the pillars of its temples, so that all who came to worship might see and remember.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Jesus says to the disciples of that city, “I will make the one who overcomes a pillar in the temple of my God.” Jesus is saying that he honors those who are faithful to him by making them pillars in the only temple that lasts, in the temple of the living God. [Johnson, 2004]</p>

Topic/ Question	<p>Will the “new heavens and a new earth” be an <i>ex nihilo</i> (“out of nothing”) creation, or will it be a <i>renewal</i> of the existing heavens and earth? When will this event occur?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Isaiah 65:17 "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.</p>
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	<p>Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.</p> <p>Matthew 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.</p> <p>Psalms 148:3-6 Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars. Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies. Let them praise the name of the LORD, for at his command they were created, and he established them for ever and ever -- he issued a decree that will never pass away.</p> <p>2 Peter 3:10-13 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.</p>
<p>Dispensationalist Position</p>	<p>Most prophecy scholars think that the new heavens and new earth take place after the Millennium, namely after the Great White Throne Judgment takes place. Revelation 20 describes the Millennium and this judgment of all unbelievers throughout history. Revelation 21 and 22 follow, and describe the eternal state. It appears that Revelation 19-22 (Battle of Armageddon through to the eternal state) are chronological.</p> <p>Many believe that the new heavens and new earth will be part of a “second creation”, that is, the current heavens and earth are annihilated (even though the souls of people and supernatural beings continue to exist during this transformation) [Pentecost, 1958; MacArthur, 2006; Walvoord, <i>et al.</i>, 2011]. Others believe that the current heavens and earth will be renovated or renewed by fire, rather than being created “brand new” [Brainard, 2022b]. In other words, the current universe will not be wiped out and re-created, but will undergo a massive transformation via fire, and this includes the earth which will be transformed by fire and earthquakes. The earth already saw a transformation of the earth by water and tectonic activity during Noah’s Flood.</p> <p>Lee Brainard, a dispensationalist, emphasizes that the Greek word <i>kainos</i> means “new” in the sense of being made with pre-existing materials, and therefore does not require an <i>ex nihilo</i> creation. For example, Adam was created out of the dust or dirt of the earth. Eve was created from Adam. We read about a “new tomb” or a “new garment”, etc. Furthermore, once a sinner accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, that person is said to be “a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17). All of these examples and more point to a process of renewal.</p>

	<p>Does the new heavens and earth come at the beginning of the thousand years or at the end? Or is there a minor new heavens and earth (renovation) at the beginning and a major new heavens and earth (ex nihilo recreation) at the end? Most expositors hold the third position. This allows them to honor the clear biblical testimony which teaches a renovation of the heavens and earth at the beginning of the millennium while maintaining the doctrine that the present earth and heavens shall cease to exist and be replaced by a new creation after the millennium. [Brainard, 2022b, p. 74]</p> <p>Brainard argues that the Second Coming of Christ is when the “new heavens and new earth” take place.</p> <p>... the heavens departing as a scroll in Revelation 6:14 is associated with the great day of the Lord’s wrath (v. 17), the signs in the heavens that herald the second coming (vv. 12, 13), the great earthquake that flattens the mountains and sinks the islands (v. 14), and the men of the earth seeking desperately and frantically to find some place to hide from the physical presence of the Lamb ... [Brainard, 2022b, p. 81]</p> <p>Yet others acknowledge that either possibility (re-creation or renewal) has arguments for it [Thomas, 1992]. Nevertheless, it will be a major event; and we can leave the implementation details to the Lord.</p>
Preterist Position	<p>On 2 Peter 3, the “elements”, and a possible renewal of the earth by fire, Stan Newton comments:</p> <p>The heavens here refer to the old covenant and its elements; they are about to end and be replaced with the reality of the new covenant and the coming of the kingdom in power and glory.</p> <p>If we can get the correct reading about the earth’s being “found” and not burned up, then Peter’s use of “elements” makes more sense. Peter is not talking about the physical elements here but about spiritual elements. Paul uses this same word, “elements,” and he clearly has something different in mind from a physical fire. ...</p> <p>The doctrine that God destroys the earth by fire has no basis in Scripture. God is renewing the earth and has no plan for destroying it. Sin and evil are destroyed, Christ’s enemies are being destroyed, but the physical earth will last a very long time [forever]. [Newton, 2012, pp. 237-238]</p>

Topic/ Question	How old will we be, at resurrection time? Will we age in eternity?
Dispensationalist Position	<p>Henry Morris writes:</p> <p>The Scriptures are not explicit on this, but there is at least a possible implication that the “apparent age” of each person in the resurrection may be in, say, his or her early thirties. When Adam and Eve were created, they were mature adults, capable of raising children. Since aging and death were</p>

	<p>part of the results of their sin, they would presumably have remained at the same “age” as that at which they were created if they had not sinned. ...</p> <p>It also seems significant that those who were to serve as priests or Levites in the service of the tabernacle had to be thirty years old and upward (Numbers 4:3). Joseph was thirty years old when he was made ruler over Egypt (Genesis 41:43,46), and David, the man after God’s own heart, became king over Israel at age thirty (2 Samuel 5:4). Since those who are in the resurrection are also to serve as priests and kings in the millennium (Revelation 20:6), it would be likely that their resurrection “age” would be of this same order.</p> <p>Even the Lord Jesus Christ entered on His earthly public ministry at age thirty (Luke 3:23), and went to the cross only about three-and-a-half years later. It is significant that His own resurrection body was of this same apparent age, different in its glorified state but still easily recognizable. The Scriptures, of course, also teach that those who are Christ’s will be “like Him” when He comes again (1 John 3:2), with bodies “fashioned like unto his glorious body” (Philippians 3:21). [Morris, 1983, pp. 441-442]</p> <p>None will ever age, nothing will ever be lost, all work will be productive and enduring. The entropy law, the so-called second law of thermodynamics, will be repealed. Information will nevermore become confused, ordered systems will not deteriorate into disorder, and no longer will energy have to be expended merely to overcome friction and dissipation into nonrecoverable heat. Entropy will from now on be conserved along with energy and mass and momentum. [Morris, 1983, p. 467]</p>
Preterist Position	<p>We will have resurrected, physical, recognizable bodies in Heaven. And, how old will we be, at resurrection time? We will likely be fully developed “in full bloom”—the “flower of our youth for all eternity as we learn and grow and develop without error, and as forever we explore the glory and grandeur of the One who created us by His grace” [Hanegraaff, <i>Bible Answer Man</i>, August 4, 2011]. This is a theological deduction. We will be as if sin had never entered the world, and if our DNA had never been corrupted. The universe will be ours to explore. We will have <i>more</i> information, awareness, and intelligence in Heaven—not <i>less</i>. God redeems things; He will restore things to the way they were meant to be: without sin.</p> <p>There won’t be permanent babies or permanent old men—and everything in between—in Heaven. Remember that God created Adam and Eve as mature human beings. Also, Jesus Christ died in his prime, around age 30. In our mid-to late-30s, and certainly by our 40s, the body is starting to break down.</p> <p>Dispensationalists and preterists may disagree on a lot of things, but we all agree on the fact that believers will be resurrected with physical bodies, and that the resurrected state lasts for eternity.</p>

Topic/	Is the Tree of Life a literal tree? What is its role in the eternal state?
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Question	<p>We read about the <i>Tree of Life</i>, first found in the Garden of Eden, and now present in the eternal state:</p> <p>Genesis 3:22-24: And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."</p> <p>So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.</p> <p>After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.</p> <p>Revelation 22:1-3a Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse.</p>
Dispensationalist Position	<p>The Tree of Life is literal. It will be present on earth once again. It will bear literal fruit.</p> <p>Scripture says that the leaves of the Tree of Life "are for the healing of the nations". But, why is there a need for "healing" in Heaven? Isn't there supposed to be no sickness, pain, crying, etc?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good explanation is that "healing" can be translated as "health" or the maintenance of health (i.e., preventative medicine), as opposed to healing from sickness [Reagan, 2017b]. • Note that the Tree of Life was found in the Garden of Eden. Had Adam and Eve eaten from it, they would have lived forever in their sinful state. This is why the <i>cherubim</i> with "flaming swords" prevented Adam and Eve from accessing the Tree of Life (Genesis 2:9; 3:22-24).
Preterist Position	<p>In Genesis, the <i>cherubim</i> who used flaming swords to prevent Adam and Eve from gaining access to the Tree of Life can be contrasted with Jesus Christ who provided a way for us to access the true "Tree of Life". The Tree of Life is a symbol, argues Hanegraaff; it is a symbol of having eternal life with God. There is no real "fruit" to be eaten; partaking of the Tree of Life is a symbol of us being with Christ.</p> <p>The Tree of Life in Genesis 2-3 reappears in Revelation 22. The Bread of Life is Jesus Christ. When you partake of the Bread of Life (a symbol or type), then</p>

you have access to the Tree of Life [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, February 16, 2011]. Although there is a debate about whether the Tree of Life is a literal tree or not, the bottom line is that we have access to the Tree of Life through the Bread of Life: Jesus Christ.

Revelation is not a mere book of riddles originating from a shallow post-Christian mind; it is a book of symbols deeply rooted in Old Testament history. We mistake their meanings when we fail to hear the background music of the Old Testament. The *tree of life* referred to in Jesus's letter to the church in Ephesus first appears in Genesis; the *ten days of testing* in Smyrna find their referent in Daniel; the heavenly *manna* promised to the church of Pergamum first fell from heaven in Exodus; the *Jezebel* who promoted sexual immorality in Thyatira is the mirror image of the idolatrous Jezebel in Kings; the *seven spirits* of the letter to the church in Sardis hark back to the Spirit as described by Zechariah; the *key of David* referenced in the letter to Philadelphia echoes the words of Isaiah; and Christ's rebuke to the church in Laodicea alludes to the words of Proverbs, 'My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline and do not resent his rebuke' (3:11). Furthermore, as the letters of Christ to his *persecuted bride* utilize images deeply embedded in language of the Bible, so too the judgment of Christ against a *prostituted bride*—written on a seven-sealed scroll, announced with seven trumpets, and depicted by seven plagues—find their referent in the history of the Old Testament Scriptures. The pattern of sevenfold judgment against unfaithfulness on the part of Israel is spelled out in dreadful detail in Leviticus. Four times God tells his covenant people, 'I will punish you for your sins seven times over.' In like fashion, the imagery of sevenfold judgment against apostate Israel is unveiled on four occasions in Revelation. The pronouncement of judgment for unfaithfulness in the seven churches is followed by the judgments of the seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 117-118]

In conclusion, we see that there are some unanswered questions about the eternal state, but not any showstoppers as far as our destiny is concerned.

In summary, this book has presented arguments for both dispensationalism and preterism. It is my belief that dispensationalism is the model of eschatology that best fits the Scriptures. It fits far better than any other model. An important principle of eschatology that this book has used when mapping Scriptures to the evidence for *fulfilled* prophecies is that of *literal* interpretation. This principle also provides a consistent approach when examining *unfulfilled* prophecies. Literal interpretation of Scripture is generally synonymous with the *grammatical-historical* approach, and stands in contrast to the allegorical approach.

The literal method of interpretation is that method that gives to each word the same exact basic meaning it would have in normal, ordinary, customary usage, whether employed in writing, speaking or thinking. It is called the grammatical-historical method to emphasize the fact that the meaning is to be determined by both grammatical and historical considerations. [Pentecost, 1958, p. 9]

This book would be incomplete without mentioning that *today* is the day of salvation. Don't put off making the most important decision of your life, if you have not already done so: a commitment to Jesus Christ. Jesus paid the full penalty for our sins on the cross, and He welcomes you to accept Him and acknowledge Him as Lord and Savior. By doing so you will be part of a blessed future resurrection, and eternal life.

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

A simple prayer is as follows:

Dear Lord Jesus, I acknowledge that I have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed. I realize that I cannot save myself. I am amazed that the Creator of the universe came down from heaven to earth to die for mankind to pay the penalty for sin. The same baby who was born in a manger (celebrated as Christmas), is the same person who later died on the cross for me as a sacrificial substitute, and who rose from the dead (celebrated as Easter). Sin has a high price. I am guilty. However, You laid down your sinless life for me—and for anyone who believes in You and accepts You as their Lord and Savior—so that my sins are forgiven and that I am restored to fellowship with You. Romans 10:9 states, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God [the Father] raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” What a wonderful gift of salvation! Thank you Lord that I am saved, and I look forward to spending eternity in a renewed body without sin, in the world to come. Amen.

The bottom line is that Heaven is a real place with real people doing real things, for eternity. We'll be learning more about the grace and character of God for all eternity. Think of all the things that you could do, if you knew you could not fail.

Keep looking up! The best is yet to come.

Ed Knorr
Vancouver, Canada

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