

The Most  
**EMBARRASSING**  
Book in the  
Bible

Understanding the Book of  
**Revelation**

DR ANDREW CORBETT

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*What Is A Family? And Why It Matters!*

*The Most Embarrassing Verse In The Bible*

*Why Christians Should Get Involved*

*Christianised Witchcraft*

*Commentary on Ephesians*

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*The Most Embarrassing  
Book In The Bible:*

*Understanding the Book of*  
**REVELATION**

by

Dr. Andrew Corbett

***THE MOST EMBARRASSING BOOK IN THE BIBLE***  
***Understanding the Book of Revelation***

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Legana, Tasmania,  
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ISBN 0-9775186-0-4 (Hardcopy)

ISBN 0-9775186-1-2 (eBook)



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Special thanks to Rev. Anthony Llewellyn, Marsden, Queensland for proof reading and providing critical comments of this text. Several other pastors, Bible teachers, and critics have also reviewed this manuscript and contributed to its current form. None the least of these has been a Queensland Barrister, Graham Robinson, whose legal eye for detail has added to the honing and refining of this book. Despite this input, and their encouragement, I don't claim to have tied everything down, or that I perfectly explain everything. Therefore any mistakes you find in this work are entirely my own and anything I haven't clearly justified is completely my own ineptitude. But I trust that this stimulates Bible students to think exegetically rather than eisegetically.

Andrew Corbett

# ***THE MOST EMBARRASSING BOOK IN THE BIBLE***

## **Understanding the Book of Revelation Contents**

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|                                                                            |            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Commendations.....                                                         | vi         |
| <b>END TIMES POEM .....</b>                                                | <b>XII</b> |
| Glossary of Revelation.....                                                | xv         |
| <b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO UNDERSTANDING THE BOOK OF REVELATION.....</b> | <b>1</b>   |
| Different Schools Of Interpretation.....                                   | 3          |
| The Date Of Revelation's Authorship.....                                   | 5          |
| Historical Context .....                                                   | 6          |
| Consistency.....                                                           | 6          |
| <b>CHAPTER 2 UNDERSTANDING THE THEME OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION .....</b>   | <b>11</b>  |
| Contrasting Themes .....                                                   | 15         |
| <b>CHAPTER 3 UNDERSTANDING THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION .....</b>      | <b>19</b>  |
| The Message To The Seven Churches And Today's Application .....            | 23         |
| <i>Ephesus</i> .....                                                       | 23         |
| <i>Smyrna</i> .....                                                        | 24         |
| <i>Pergamos</i> .....                                                      | 25         |
| <i>Thyatira</i> .....                                                      | 26         |
| <i>Sardis</i> .....                                                        | 28         |
| <i>Philadelphia</i> .....                                                  | 30         |
| <i>Laodicea</i> .....                                                      | 31         |
| Overcoming And Hearing.....                                                | 33         |

|                                                                          |            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>CHAPTER 4 UNDERSTANDING THE THRONE ROOM OF REVELATION .....</b>       | <b>37</b>  |
| A Door Open In Heaven .....                                              | 38         |
| The Twenty Four Elders .....                                             | 41         |
| The Seven Lamps Of Fire .....                                            | 42         |
| The Four Living Creatures.....                                           | 43         |
| <b>CHAPTER 5 UNDERSTANDING THE SEVEN SEALS OF REVELATION .....</b>       | <b>47</b>  |
| The Four Horsemen.....                                                   | 47         |
| <i>The First Seal.....</i>                                               | <i>48</i>  |
| <i>The Second Seal.....</i>                                              | <i>48</i>  |
| <i>The Third Seal .....</i>                                              | <i>49</i>  |
| <i>The Fourth Seal.....</i>                                              | <i>50</i>  |
| <i>The Fifth Seal.....</i>                                               | <i>50</i>  |
| <i>The Sixth Seal .....</i>                                              | <i>51</i>  |
| <b>CHAPTER 6 UNDERSTANDING THE THE SEVEN TRUMPETS OF REVELATION.....</b> | <b>57</b>  |
| The 144,000.....                                                         | 59         |
| The Seventh Seal: 7 Trumpets.....                                        | 62         |
| The Two Witnesses .....                                                  | 72         |
| <b>CHAPTER 7 UNDERSTANDING THE SEVEN BOWLS OF REVELATION .....</b>       | <b>79</b>  |
| The Beast .....                                                          | 81         |
| The Second Beast .....                                                   | 83         |
| Reaping.....                                                             | 87         |
| The Bowls.....                                                           | 90         |
| Armageddon .....                                                         | 92         |
| The Harlot & Beast .....                                                 | 94         |
| <b>CHAPTER 8 UNDERSTANDING THE FINAL JUDGMENT OF REVELATION.....</b>     | <b>101</b> |
| Eschatology's Importance.....                                            | 102        |
| Diverse Millennial Positions.....                                        | 103        |
| <i>The Pre-Millennial Position (Pre-Millennialism).....</i>              | <i>103</i> |
| <i>The Post-Millennial Position (Post-Millennialism).....</i>            | <i>103</i> |
| <i>The A-Millennial Position (Amillennialism) .....</i>                  | <i>104</i> |
| The Place Of The Devil Today .....                                       | 104        |
| <i>Pre-Millennialism's Devil.....</i>                                    | <i>104</i> |
| <i>Post Millennialism.....</i>                                           | <i>105</i> |
| <i>Amillennialism's Devil.....</i>                                       | <i>106</i> |
| <i>Hyper-Preteristism's Devil .....</i>                                  | <i>106</i> |
| Revelation's Demise Of The Devil .....                                   | 107        |
| An Analysis Of Revelation 20.....                                        | 108        |
| Satan's Release At The End of The 1,000 Years.....                       | 110        |
| Gog & Magog.....                                                         | 113        |
| The Beloved City .....                                                   | 113        |
| The Last Judgment .....                                                  | 115        |
| Hell & Ultimate Judgment.....                                            | 117        |

|                                                                             |            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>APPENDIX I UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLICAL POSITION OF ISRAEL TODAY .....</b> | <b>125</b> |
| Dispensational Claims.....                                                  | 125        |
| An Everlasting, Unbreakable Covenant? .....                                 | 126        |
| Who Really Owns Palestine?.....                                             | 129        |
| Who Is The Israel Of God?.....                                              | 131        |
| <b>APPENDIX II UNDERSTANDING WHY THE RAPTURE IS UNBIBLICAL.....</b>         | <b>135</b> |
| The Origins Of The Rapture .....                                            | 136        |
| What Is The Rapture? .....                                                  | 137        |
| Does Scripture Teach It?.....                                               | 140        |
| What Then Is Our Hope? .....                                                | 141        |
| <b>APPENDIX III UNDERSTANDING THE RESURRECTION BIBLICALLY .....</b>         | <b>147</b> |
| Hyper-Preterism Is Pantology.....                                           | 149        |
| About Death.....                                                            | 151        |
| Resuscitation.....                                                          | 152        |
| Resurrected Bodies.....                                                     | 154        |
| The Resurrection Must Be Future .....                                       | 156        |
| The Second Resurrection.....                                                | 157        |
| The Resurrection Of Christ.....                                             | 159        |
| The Future... ..                                                            | 162        |
| <b>APPENDIX IV UNDERSTANDING THE OLIVET DISCOURSE.....</b>                  | <b>167</b> |
| A DIFFERENT PARADIGM.....                                                   | 170        |
| THE TEMPLE.....                                                             | 171        |
| FALSE MESSIAHS.....                                                         | 172        |
| WARS.....                                                                   | 173        |
| FAMINES & EARTHQUAKES .....                                                 | 174        |
| MARTYRDOM .....                                                             | 175        |
| GOSPEL TO “ALL THE WORLD” .....                                             | 176        |
| ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION .....                                             | 177        |
| GREAT TRIBULATION .....                                                     | 178        |
| COMING OF THE SON OF MAN.....                                               | 179        |
| QUESTIONS ABOUT THE COMING OF CHRIST-.....                                  | 181        |
| SUN, MOON & STARS .....                                                     | 183        |
| THE SIGN OF THE SON OF MAN.....                                             | 183        |
| THE TIME WAS NEAR THEN .....                                                | 185        |
| WHAT THE SCRIPTURES REALLY TEACH ABOUT THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.....     | 186        |
| <b>INDEX: .....</b>                                                         | <b>191</b> |
| <b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>                                                   | <b>195</b> |

# Commendations

*“One of the best commentaries, if not ‘the’ best commentary, on the Book of Revelation I’ve ever read!”*

Trevor Chandler, Chairman of Christian Life Churches International, Brisbane, Australia

*“I especially like your conclusion: that the eschatology of much of the last century has left us bankrupt in terms of pre-evangelism in our western cultures. This is what I don’t like about pre-millennialism. I really would like you to teach this at the college in Nigeria, at least to stir the minds and hearts of the people and get them thinking. “Left-Behind” should be left behind! - a good phrase.”*

Dr. Kent Hodge, Former Principle of Christ For The Nations Bible College, Nigeria (The largest Bible College in the world), and Adjunct Lecturer in Theology, Oral Roberts University, London, U.K.

*“I found this singularly helpful- in fact inspiring and excitingly stimulating to my faith...I’ve devoured this thing this afternoon! Thanks for the privilege of reading this.”*

Rev. Steve Nicholson, Gateway Baptist Church, Launceston, Tasmania, Australia

*“Dr. Andrew Corbett’s new book, “Understanding the Book of Revelation”, will not suit those Christians who simply want to have a “pop” version of end times teaching to reinforce existing beliefs about a 7-year tribulation on earth while the people of God rest in heaven, or about an earthly reign of Christ for a thousand years following his return. Neither will this book suit those who recoil in dismay and disapproval when challenged about their contention that the nation of Israel plays, and will play, a major role in the fulfilment of Bible prophecy.*

*Every fair-minded reader will perceive that Andrew Corbett has set out to honour the Christ who is so evidently at the centre of the Book of Revelation and many will agree that he produces heavy-weight argument in support of his approach. I think that more than a few will conclude that he establishes an interpretation of the Book that is a viable, worthy and sustainable alternative to the views generally held in evangelical and Pentecostal church circles.*

*At the very least, this book will be an instrument to challenge the brash high-mindedness of those who categorically assert that the Dispensationalist/Futurist view is unassailable and that any who construe the Book of Revelation in any other way are either in error or lesser lights in the world of Biblical scholarship.”*

Rev. Charles Schwab, Apostolic Church, Victoria, Australia

*“Yes I now believe the Preterist viewpoint. I come from a Pre-trib Pre-mill Dispensationalist background and I am SOOOOOOOOOO happy to have discovered this theory of eschatology. I don't know how anyone could EVER believe Dispensationalism! It is what I now call, TRAIN-WRECK theology. I appreciate your work. At least someone is out there fighting the good fight of biblical truths.”*

*K.H., Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A.*

*“Got the Revelation material today, half way through and you continue to bless me, I have plenty more copies of those futurist books from the 70's if your running low...Have you got a different God in Tassie or does the cold keep Him awake down there. I suppose I'm trying to say I'm blessed by your common sense approach and I love not having the mental and spiritual challenge of 'where or how did he come up with that?'”*

*Paul Halliday, Wagga Wagga, NSW*

*“This has really opened my eyes! I'm convinced that you're right. I always found teaching about end-times so confusing. But this is so understandable and really makes sense. Thank you for making it so freely available.”*

*Bronwyn E., Launceston, Tasmania, Australia*

*“I had decided that I was going to try and figure the Book of Revelation out along with our Bible study group. I went to a major Christian bookstore looking for a study series our Home Group could use together, but there was nothing. I then came across this video and study guide, and have been convinced! This series will be watched by many, many people, I'll make sure of it!”*

*John, King Island, Australia*

*“I so appreciate your intellectual and spiritual approach to the scriptures. I would like to know if there is anyone in the USA who handles your materials. I downloaded the first few chapters of The Most Embarrassing Book in the Bible, and completely agreed with what was being said...a great example of rightly dividing the word of truth. I have known about The Kingdom of God since a child, but not many people really teach the truth....Again, thank you for the wonderful insight.”*

*J. A. Webster, Nashville, Tennessee, USA*

*“This book is what I have been needing to help me to understand Scriptures that the secular world apparently are distorting to mean a whole different thing. The world needs this book - do your best to get it more easily available on a grander scale. Bless you in your endeavors and please help me if you can and will.”*

Glenda Lenington (your sister in Christ), Illinois, USA

*Yesterday after downloading, I read “The Most Embarrassing Book In The Bible” and my spirit has not stopped leaping for Joy inside of me!!*

*I’ve had these questions since I’ve been able to read Revelation, about 8 yrs old...but I kept getting the same answers from everyone...that it was over my head and that someday God would reveal the truth to me...well I am now 46 and I believe that He gave me the answer for all of my doubts.*

*Thank you for going against the tide and writing, what I believe with all of my being, is the truth!*

Victoria Eden, Douglasville, Georgia, USA

*“I have found your books “Most Embarrassing Book In The Bible!” and “Most Embarrassing Verse In The Bible!” extremely helpful - Thanks. I have been looking for similar reference material for some time but only found reformed material that is mostly anti-Pentecostal.”*

Rev. Paul S Fermor, U.K. Regional A.O.G Superintendent, London, U.K.

*“Thank you for the quick response. I look forward to reading your commentary on Revelation. My quick scan of the material on the website indicated to me that you have written a very readable and Biblically sound document.”*

Dr. Norman R. Hunter, FCIC Professor and Head Department of Chemistry, University of Manitoba,  
Winnipeg, Canada

*“I have just now come to realize that what I’ve been taught is probably wrong and I’m seeking the truth. I been having problems trying to figure out where we stand as for as scripture is concern and I’m hoping with the help of your research and the leading of the Holy Spirit my eyes might be opened to understanding. I haven’t done much research on your ministry but from what I read and heard so far it is fair to say I enjoyed hearing your teaching on Matthew 24 and reading the first part of Revelation. I live in Tampa. Thanks for your hard work in the Lord and may God bless you and your family.”*

Wally Carroll, Tampa, Florida

*I've thoroughly enjoyed it. Your book has been a great aid in my preparation for teaching Revelation in my Sunday School class.*

C. Mark Murrah, Houston, Texas

*I would like to tell you that the messages on the book of Revelation are very informative and right on the mark. Very sound in the way you explain the text in it's context. Thanks for your labor in the word of God. May God bless you in your ministry and in all that you do. In Christ service ,*

Jeff Tofilau Sr., La Verne, California

*When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.*

Matthew 10:23

*Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.*

Matthew 16:28

*Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.*

Matthew 24:34

*But He kept silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” <sup>62</sup>Jesus said, “I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”*

Mark 14:61-62

*Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.*

Revelation 1:3

*Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.*

1 Corinthians 10:11

*for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*

Hebrews 9:26

# End Times Poem

by Donna Maree Hill

Did you hear that Jesus is coming again?  
We must let everyone know!  
The best possible way of sharing the news,  
Is to make a scary video!

Sorry? You don't thinking scaring people,  
Is really God's loving way?  
Well, I think it's time He talked with me,  
Listened to what I had to say!

I'm "right up" with end times prophecy,  
With the help of my favourite book,  
No, of course it's not the bible!  
To the latest author I usually look.

Have you seen the current end times book?  
It's really a good read!  
Does it line up with what the bible says?  
What is your point? Indeed!

Shred your bank cards, big brother's tracking you,  
Every cent you spend!  
Don't buy anything with a barcode,  
On this your soul may well depend!

I heard you must convert your cash,  
To the currency of “religious gold”!  
What? Aurora won’t accept a nugget?  
Well, just rug up in the cold!

Going on holiday to Europe?  
Please take lots of care!  
Stay well away from Brussels,  
I heard the beast lives there!

I want to know the date for sure.  
Pre-trib, post-trib, when will it really be?  
Before the tribulation is important!  
No suffering for me!

Before the 70s, 80s, no, 90s end,  
It’s definite Christ will appear.  
Have I checked a calendar?  
Um, surely before 2010. Oh dear!

There’s a world-wide government conspiracy,  
So give up your jobs, live underground!  
But I’m worried - will we be able,  
To hear the final trumpet sound?

Someone tried to tell me,  
To read the Bible, trust God and pray,  
But I’m too concerned that I might miss,  
That final rapture day.

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# GLOSSARY OF REVELATION

## UNDERSTANDING THE LANGUAGE OF THE APOCALYPSE

Some scholars regard the language of Revelation as “apocalyptic”. By this, they mean- *ultimate doom language presented in symbolic terms*. If we accept this narrow definition as the working definition of “apocalyptic” then we are forced to reject the Book of Revelation as truly being apocalyptic language. The reason for this is that the Book of Revelation is not about the end of the world as much as it is about the end of something else.

Other scholars take a broader definition of the word apocalyptic and employ it to simply mean *prophetic symbolism*. Clearly the Book of Revelation is full of symbols. The challenge for the Bible student is to learn its language and interpret what the symbols mean. We do this by following the standard rules for sound Bible interpretation. These include-

1. Interpret within the context of a passage.
2. Interpret within the overall message of Scripture (an interpretation of a verse which contradicts the overall message of Scripture is faulty).
3. Interpret Scripture with Scripture (where the Scripture has already interpreted itself or another passage).
4. Interpret Scripture as being intentional (the Author had a clear intention for what He was communicating which means that there is *one* interpretation but *many* applications and ideas of “double references” are at best, unnecessary).

The principle therefore for determining the symbolism within Revelation (or any Book of the Bible) is to firstly examine its context. Biblical words are not unequivocal (the same word always means the same thing), but rather *equivocal* (the context and way in which the word is used determines its meaning). For example, “leaven” can be regarded as either a good or a bad thing in Scripture depending on its context. “Darkness” is either an attribute of God or Satan depending on the context. The Bible student doesn’t need a theological degree to determine this. A simple broad knowledge of Scripture is sufficient. Hopefully as the student examines the proceeding glossary they will see the principles of interpretation behind each word. It is the goal of the exegete (one who interprets) to avoid guesswork and speculation. Thus, you will not find U.S. Presidents, computer chips, recent wars, or other such fanciful interpretations within the Revelation.

Finally, the Book of Revelation is placed *last* in the Bible. It is presumed that the reader has become with the preceding language of Scripture before they read it. It is not the hardest Biblical book to understand once the language is understood. But it does follow 65 other Biblical books for good reason. The student would be especially well prepared by understanding the tabernacle language of the Old Testament since this is essentially the language of Revelation.

## Gemetria

| HEBREW |   |     |    | GREEK   |   |     |  |
|--------|---|-----|----|---------|---|-----|--|
| Aleph  | א | 1   |    | Alpha   | α | 1   |  |
| Beth   | ב | 2   | b  | Beta    | β | 2   |  |
| Gimel  | ג | 3   | g  | Gamma   | γ | 3   |  |
| Daleth | ד | 4   | d  | Delta   | δ | 4   |  |
| He     | ה | 5   | h  | Epsilon | ε | 5   |  |
| Vav    | ו | 6   | v  | Zeta    | ζ | 7   |  |
| Zayin  | ז | 7   | z  | Eta     | η | 8   |  |
| Cheth  | ח | 8   | ch | Theta   | θ | 9   |  |
| Teth   | ט | 9   | t  | Iota    | ι | 10  |  |
| Yod    | י | 10  | y  | Kappa   | κ | 20  |  |
| Kaph   | כ | 20  | k  | Lambda  | λ | 30  |  |
| Lamed  | ל | 30  | l  | Mu      | μ | 40  |  |
| Mem    | מ | 40  | m  | Nu      | ν | 50  |  |
| Nun    | נ | 50  | n  | Xi      | ξ | 60  |  |
| Camek  | ס | 60  | c  | Omicron | ο | 70  |  |
| Ayin   | ע | 70  |    | Pi      | π | 80  |  |
| Pe     | פ | 80  | ph | Rho     | ρ | 100 |  |
| Tsadey | צ | 90  | ts | Sigma   | σ | 200 |  |
| Qoph   | ק | 100 | q  | Tau     | τ | 300 |  |
| Resh   | ר | 200 | r  | Upsilon | υ | 400 |  |
| Shin   | ש | 300 | sh | Phi     | φ | 500 |  |
| Tav    | ת | 400 | th | Chi     | χ | 600 |  |
|        |   |     |    | Psi     | ψ | 700 |  |
|        |   |     |    | Omega   | ω | 800 |  |

# Numbers:

- 1** = Absolute, “one God”
- 2** = unity, “two witnesses”
- 3** = ultimate, “holy, holy, holy”
- 4** = earth, “four corners/winds of the earth”
- 5** = grace
- 6** = sin/man
- 7** = complete, ending
- 10** = human government “Ten kings”
- 12** = redemption
- 13** = evil
- 42 months** = the period between 64AD and 66AD when Nero embarked on the most violent campaign against Christians martyring multitudes.
- 666** = six hundred and sixty six, not six, six, six. It is the numerical value of “Caesar Nero”
- 1000** = large number, when linked with years = long time, equates to “the Kingdom of God”. God owns the cattle on “a thousand” hills.
- 144,000** = 12,000 (12 x 1,000 = many redeemed) from 12 tribes (the redeemed)

There is therefore a logical divide in Revelation after Revelation 19 where a thousand year gap is described. We understand one thousand years to mean a long time. This means that the first 19 chapters had an imminent application to the original audience in early 64 AD (when Revelation was probably written) and the events described from Revelation 20 and following pertain to events to take place after “a long time”.

| <b>Word</b>                                 | <b>Interpretation</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>Revelation</b>    | <b>Other</b>              |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Angel</b>                                | Messenger, whether earthly or heavenly. Since the first three chapters of Revelation describe an angel overseeing each of the seven churches having a letter written to them, we logically understand these “angelos” to be human.<br><br>When angels are flying in heaven they are obviously heavenly rather than earthly.                             | 1:1; 1:20; 5:2;      |                           |
| <b>Armageddon</b>                           | Armageddon, a literal place, the place of God’s judgment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 16:16                |                           |
| <b>Beast</b>                                | Ruler, in Rev. 13 there are two beasts mentioned. The first is “from across the sea” which is a citation from Daniel 7:3, and then refers to the Roman Ruler as prophesied in Daniel 7. At the time of writing Revelation this was Nero.<br><br>The second Beast of Rev. 13 is “from the Land” (13:11) this refers to the High Priest, the Anti-Christ. | Rev. 13              | Psalm 73:22;<br>Dan. 7:5; |
| <b>Bound</b>                                | Restriction, Satan was bound (restricted) with the close of the Old Covenant                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 20:2                 |                           |
| <b>Camp of the Saints, the Beloved City</b> | The Church, the beloved city in contrast to “Sodom, Egypt, Babylon”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 20:9                 |                           |
| <b>Coming</b>                               | Judgment, the expression “the Lord is coming” is a warning of God’s impending judgment, not the physical return of Christ.                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 1:7; 22:7            | Isa. 19:1                 |
| <b>Door opened in heaven</b>                | Spiritual, not physical but a revelation into the Heavenly realm                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 4:1                  |                           |
| <b>Dragon</b>                               | Satan                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 12                   |                           |
| <b>Elders</b>                               | Covenant Leaders, there are Twenty Four elders which is 12 elders from the Old Covenant (the Tribal Patriarchs) and 12 from the New (Apostles).                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 4:4; 7:11;<br>11:16  |                           |
| <b>Eyes</b>                                 | Knowledge, God is described as having “seven (complete) eyes” which means He has omniscience                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 5:6;                 |                           |
| <b>False Prophet</b>                        | Judaism, they spoke against Christ, against His servants and against His message.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                      |                           |
| <b>Fire</b>                                 | Judgment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 20:9                 |                           |
| <b>Gog and Magog</b>                        | Opposition, a reference to the times in which Esther lived when Haman orchestrated socio-political opposition to God’s people.                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 20:8                 | Ezekiel 38:2              |
| <b>Harlot (Prostitute)</b>                  | Jerusalem, a promiscuous woman, therefore it depicts unfaithful Israel                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 17:1; 17:15;<br>19:2 |                           |
| <b>Heaven and Earth</b>                     | Covenantal Order, the relationship between God and man, the Old Covenant passed away thus fulfilling the words of Christ in Matthew 5:18. One day even the New Covenant will be superseded by ultimate perfection, as described in Revelation 21:1. This may also coincide with a literal new heaven and earth called the New Jerusalem.                | 21:1                 |                           |

|                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                      |                                                     |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Heaven opened</b>                   | <b>revelation</b> , a revelation into the Heavenly realm                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 19:11                |                                                     |
| <b>Horns</b>                           | <b>Might</b> , God is described as having “seven horns”, ie., He is Almighty.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 5:6;                 |                                                     |
| <b>Horse riders</b>                    | <b>Emperors of Rome</b> , commencing with Augustus the first Emperor of Rome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                      |                                                     |
| <b>Kings</b>                           | <b>Kings of Rome</b> , starting with Julius Caesar the first king of Rome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                      |                                                     |
| <b>Lake of Fire</b>                    | <b>“Hell”</b> into which Hades (the place of the wicked dead) will be cast                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 19:20; 20:10         |                                                     |
| <b>Lamb</b>                            | <b>The Lord Jesus Christ</b> , the Pascal, the sacrificial Provision of God                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 5:6                  |                                                     |
| <b>Lampstands, candlesticks (KJV),</b> | <b>Christ</b> , the light of the world and thereby those who are connected to Christ as His Church.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 1:12; 11:4;          | Exo. 25:31;<br>Num. 8:2;<br>Zech. 4:2;<br>Heb. 9:2; |
| <b>Man Child</b>                       | <b>Christ</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 12                   |                                                     |
| <b>Mark</b>                            | <b>A display of loyalty and submission.</b> God’s mark is on those who are His (Rev. 7:3; 22:4), and the Enemy’s mark is on those who have rejected God. The “mark of the beast” was the sign of allegiance to Judaism called “phylacteries.”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 13:16; 14:9;<br>20:4 |                                                     |
| <b>New Jerusalem</b>                   | The dwelling place of God with man                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 21                   |                                                     |
| <b>Scroll</b>                          | <b>The Decrees of God</b> , the “Small Scroll” (10:2) in particular perhaps refers to the Book of Daniel (note how it was “sealed up” in Daniel 8:26)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 10:2, 9;             |                                                     |
| <b>Across the Sea</b>                  | <b>Gentile</b> , since ‘sea’ is not of ‘The Land’, in reference to Revelation 13 it specifically refers to Rome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 13                   |                                                     |
| <b>Seal</b>                            | <b>Royal decrees</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 6                    |                                                     |
| <b>Seven Mountains (Hills)</b>         | <b>Jerusalem</b> The City of Jerusalem as it existed in the time of Christ Jesus was widely reckoned to be the "City of Seven Hills." This fact was well recognized in Jewish circles. In the Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, an eighth century midrashic narrative (section 10), the writer mentioned without commentary (showing that the understanding was well known and required no defense) that "Jerusalem is situated on seven hills" (recorded in The Book of Legends, edited by Bialik and Ravnitzky, p. 371, paragraph 111). And, so it was. Those "seven hills" are easy to identify. If one starts with the Mount of Olives just to the east of the main City of Jerusalem (but still reckoned to be located within the environs of Jerusalem), there are three summits to that Mount of Olives. The northern summit (hill) is called Scopus [Hill One], the middle summit (hill) was called Nob [Hill Two], the highest point of Olivet itself, and the southern summit (hill) was called in the Holy Scriptures the "Mount of Corruption" or "Mount of Offence" [Hill Three] (II Kings 23:13). On the middle ridge between the Kedron and the Tyropoeon Valleys there was (formerly) in the south "Mount Zion" [Hill Four] (the original "Mount Zion" and not the later southwest hill that was later called by that name), then the "Ophel Mount" [Hill Five] and then to the north of that the "Rock" around which "Fort Antonia" was built [Hill Six]. And finally, there was the southwest hill itself [Hill Seven] that finally became known in the time of Simon the Hasmonean as the new "Mount Zion." This makes "Seven Hills" in all. |                      |                                                     |

|                                                         |                                                                                                                       |                     |  |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--|
| <b>Sodom</b>                                            | <b><i>Jerusalem</i></b> , also referred to as “Egypt, where they crucified their Lord” (11:8). The place of sin.      | 11:8                |  |
| <b>Soon, shortly, this hour</b>                         | Soon, not two thousand years or so to come, but within the lifetime of the original audience.                         | 1:1                 |  |
| <b>The Bride</b>                                        | The Church                                                                                                            | 19:7; 22:17         |  |
| <b>The Land (some translations render this “earth”)</b> | Palestine, the Promised Land. Greek word, “ge” from where we get the word “geology”.                                  | 11:6; 13:3, 8, 14;  |  |
| <b>Trumpets</b>                                         | Announcement of God’s looming arrival and intervention                                                                | 11                  |  |
| <b>Two Witnesses</b>                                    | The two houses of Israel, Ephraim and Judah probably represented at least by James the brother of Christ from Judah.  | 11                  |  |
| <b>White</b>                                            | Righteous                                                                                                             |                     |  |
| <b>White robes</b>                                      | Heavenly bodies for the redeemed which precede resurrected bodies (note Rev. 6:11)                                    | 3:5; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9 |  |
| <b>Woman</b>                                            | Israel, also identified as having the Sun, Moon and Stars which is an echo of Joseph’s dream of Israel in Genesis 37. | 12                  |  |

# INTRODUCTION



## *Chapter 1*

# Introduction to Understanding the Book of Revelation

---

I sat across the table from a very seasoned American missionary and his wife. My colleague and I had travelled half way around the world to enjoy this lunch. Being somewhat cut off from the outside world, they asked my colleague what world events were currently fulfilling Bible prophecy. The question hung in the air until my colleague, who had borne the brunt of my recent discoveries into Revelation, said boldly, *“You should ask Andrew that. He’s been doing a lot of research into that lately.”* Knowing just how radical my views would seem, I was (to say the least) reluctant to share anything on the subject. *“You don’t want to hear my views on end times!”* I said. *“Yes we do.”* *“No you don’t!”* I insisted. They thought I was being coy to gain their interest. I wasn’t. I have seen how unreasonably hostile believers have become with each other over the topic of Bible prophecy. I was a guest at this table in their adopted country and I had no intention of starting a hostile theological debate.

But I succumbed after reassurances that they would not martyr me if I upset or disagreed with their existing end-time views. I shared with them my journey of being a *rapture-waiting-no-way-am-I-going-to-be-left-behind-type* believer to

becoming someone who realised that Scripture neither taught a rapture, a One World last days' government, a future seven year tribulation, or a reconstructed Temple- to then becoming someone who realised that when Jesus said in Matthew 24:34 that all of the signs of the end of the age would take place within the generation which witnessed Him.

As the implication of this one verse dawned on me it drove me back to the Bible to search out what it really was saying about eschatology (end times). At the conclusion of the lunchtime conversation my hosts said, *"That makes more sense than anything else we've ever heard!"* I was relieved.

And it has generally been with great trepidation that I have shared with anyone what I have discovered. But at the end of every presentation (so far) I have had unanimous endorsement. This is not to say that it hasn't provoked questions! What you are about to read is a major challenge to much of what is taught in Baptist, Charismatic and Pentecostal churches today. Just as those to whom I have already made this presentation have generally come from a Dispensational viewpoint and then immediately recognised the impossibility of their Dispensational theology, it is my humble hope that those who read this presentation will similarly be challenged to re-examine their views in the light of Scripture.

*Rather than assuming that a Biblical prophecy is yet to be fulfilled, the Preterist investigates whether it has already been fulfilled.*

I don't profess to have all the answers. But I trust that I can create some of the right questions. Neither do I claim to have made an enthralling presentation in this book. Some of this work might seem tedious to read, but I believe that if you take the time to wade your way through it you will be richly profited since that is the promise of the Book itself.

*Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.*

Revelation 1:3

The Book of Revelation is placed last in the Bible for good reason! It should be the last book of the Bible that anyone seeks to become an expert on. The reason for this is simple. Without a thorough understanding of the rest of Scripture most of Revelation will neither make sense nor be appropriately appreciated. Most of the Book of Revelation is saturated in Old Testament imagery. Its language is highly symbolic and to be regarded as apocalyptic (revealing the future). It has clear echoes from the Books of Daniel and Zechariah where we also find similar apocalyptic passages.

## **Different Schools Of Interpretation**

Throughout the history of the church there have been several main schools of interpretation in regard to the Book of Revelation.

The *Historical School* regards most of Revelation describing events beginning chronologically close to its date of origin but extending through history to the end of time.

The *Futurist School* regards most of the Book of Revelation, from chapter 4 on, as applying to events far removed from the original readers. Futurists view the prophetic contents of Revelation as taking place near the end of time over a relatively short and compact period.

The third predominant school of interpretation regarding Revelation, which is once again enjoying resurgence in popularity, is the *Preterist School*. “Preterist” simply means *to look back into the past*. This view regards Revelation in the same way as we would view Ephesians or First Corinthians, or any other Book of the Bible. Rather than assuming that a Biblical prophecy is yet to be fulfilled, the Preterist investigates whether it has *already* been fulfilled. Preterists argue that the contents of Revelation need to be viewed from the context of the original recipients with consideration then given to how it can be applied to readers of any era.

I may be regarded as a *Partial Preterist* since I see the Preterist School as clearly the most Biblically responsible of Eschatological (End Times) Schools. Unlike Full-Preterists, I regard Scripture as describing the consummation of this age when Christ will hand over His kingdom to His Father (1Corinthians 15:26; noting Ephesians 1:10) whereupon there will a general resurrection (the Second Resurrection) and the final Judgment. I believe all this is described in Revelation, and does not conflict with any of the Church's ancient creeds.

In this School of interpretation there are several important principles of interpretation that I believe must be adhered to for sound interpretation of any Scripture:

1. No Scripture should be interpreted outside of its textual, cultural, or historical context. This encompasses the principle of original audience.
2. No single verse of Scripture should be interpreted as contradicting the overall message of Scripture.
3. No verse should be interpreted as having multiple meanings or fulfilments, unless the passage itself clearly states that this is the case.

Therefore to adequately interpret the Book of Revelation the first of these Hermeneutical principles needs to be honoured. Understanding the *textual* context of the Book of Revelation will help us to realise that when it uses the number *seven*, unless it defines itself as a literal quantity of seven, it is also to be understood as having symbolic meaning. Taking into consideration John's other writings, especially his Gospel, the textual context reveals that "seven" represents *complete, finished, all*. Thus, when we read that the Lamb has seven horns, the text is actually telling us something other than what on the surface of it appears to be quite grotesque. Understanding that the literary use of the word "horn" frequently symbolised '*strength*' in the Old Testament, we see that a Lamb with seven horns speaks of Christ who has *all strength* (He is therefore "Almighty").

Understanding the cultural context we would consider that most of the original readers were either from a Jewish background or thoroughly familiar with it. So when it speaks of seals being opened the original readers would have harkened back to the Lord's words to Daniel to "seal up" these words until the end and realised that the Lord was now saying the latter days were near (refer also

to 1Cor. 10:11; Heb. 9:26). The use of trumpets was also highly significant in the Old Testament. They announced to the camp of Israel that a significant and often triumphant time for the community had commenced and that they should gather together in response to the trumpet sound.

## **The Date Of Revelation's Authorship**

It would be remiss of any serious student of Revelation not to at least do a cursory examination of the historical context to which Revelation is back-dropped. The first point of reference would have to be to determine when Revelation was written. Most scholars regard there being only two possible dates. Dr. Leon Morris explores this adequately in his Tyndale Commentary series volume on Revelation, and I recommend that this widely available commentary be read. In the case of most books of the Bible, determining the date of its authorship, while certainly important, is not necessarily crucial to its interpretation. But this is absolutely not the case with the Book of Revelation. Some tradition has up until recent times regarded the date Revelation's authorship to be around 95AD. This has been based almost entirely on one vague statement by the second century Church Father, Irenaeus.

But the recent doctoral work by Kenneth L. Gentry on dating Revelation has concluded that it must have been written in the "mid to late 60s" rather than in 95AD-

*There are suggestive evidences within the book to date it in the mid- to late-60s of the first century. In fact, the evidence is persuasive enough that it convinced such notable scholars Moses Stuart, F. J. A. Hort, B. F. Westcott, and F. W. Farrar in the last century, and J. A. T. Robinson, R. A. Torrey, Albert A. Bell, and C. F. D. Moule in our own day.*

*Two leading indicators of the early date are: (1) The "temple" in the "holy city" is still standing as John writes, though it is being threatened with devastation (Rev. 11: 1-2). We know as a matter of historical fact that the Jewish temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, and has never been rebuilt. (2) The sixth "king" is presently ruling from the "seven mountains" and will do so until a king comes who will reign a "short time" (Rev. 17:9-10). The preterist takes this to be a clear enough allusion to Nero Caesar. According to the enumeration found in Josephus' Antiquities (18:2:2,6, 10) and Suetonius' Lives of the Twelve Caesars, Nero is Rome's sixth emperor, following Julius Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, Gaius, and Claudius. The next reigning emperor, Galba, reigned but six months, the shortest reigning emperor until that time.*

Sourced from- <http://www.kennethgentry.com/Merchant2/apocalypse.htm>  
by Dr. Kenneth Gentry Jr.

## Historical Context

It was a dark time for the Church. Since the death of Stephen in Acts 7, the Jewish Temple authorities had been waging a violent war against the Church. This continued up until the time of Jerusalem's destruction in 70AD. Empire sanctioned persecution against the Church was being intensified since 64AD when Nero had ordered Christians to be put to death (usually by beheading). He declared that everyone in the Empire must acknowledge that *he* was Lord and King. Christians were publicly humiliated, ostracized and martyred throughout the Empire by both Jews and the Romans as they refused to declare that Caesar was either their Lord or their King (titles they exclusively reserved for Christ) or that the Old Covenant had any hold on them. Added to this was the rise in false doctrine, an increase in spiritual routine and therefore a decline in authentic passionate love for Jesus.

The Lord reveals through John that the wave of persecution against the Church was driven by the Dragon, no longer would his initial readers be lulled into thinking that they were engaged in some mere politico-ideological war- but a life-and-death *spiritual* war.

## Consistency

Some fanciful interpretations of the Book of Revelation have seen computer chips predicted within its pages and other things equally amazing. But when we refuse to take one verse out of context or let one verse contradict the overall message of Scripture, it is very difficult to give such interpretations any credibility.

Still others have invented a system of interpretation that says a prophecy can have multiple fulfilments. This makes prophetic Bible passages totally arbitrary (subject to change according to a person's whims). The problems with this kind of interpretation are obvious. How does a serious student of the Bible determine when a prophetic passage should be interpreted as having multiple fulfilment

options? What about prophecies that we all assumed only had one possible fulfilment (such as the virgin birth of Christ), but which someone else claims will be fulfilled again? Unless the particular prophetic Scripture states that it will have multiple or staggered fulfilment it is hermeneutically perilous to devise multiple fulfilments otherwise. One writer even bases his concept of the “Law of Double Reference” on what he calls an ‘*ancient rabbinic principle of interpretation*’. Supposedly these are the same rabbis who denied that Jesus was the Messiah or that He fulfilled any Old Testament prophecy (?).

Too often the symbols in Revelation are interpreted as meaning something contrary to how Revelation interprets itself. One such example of this is to interpret the Dragon of chapter 12 as referring to Communist China. The passage goes on to clearly define the Dragon as Satan (Revelation 20:2).

The Preterist view of Revelation regards this as the glorious culmination to the Bible. Study of this Book will strengthen the believer’s confidence in both Christ and His Word. There is much to be learned, applied, and drawn from this Book for your life today. It is my hope that I can prove this to you.



Andrew Corbett,

Legana, Tasmania, November 2004





# THE THEME



## *Chapter 2*

# Understanding the Theme of the Book of Revelation

---

*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants; things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John,*

Revelation 1:1

**W**hen I grew up as a young Pentecostal boy in the 1970s and into the 1980s I often heard “End Times” teachers preach. These preachers had elaborate diagrams painted on bed-sheet-like material supposedly based on the Books of Revelation and Daniel. I felt the terror of those who would miss out on the secret rapture and have to endure the wrath of the Anti-Christ in the Great Tribulation. The evangelist would then appeal to his hearers to commit their lives to Christ so they too could avoid the agony of living through the Great Tribulation, which may start tomorrow!

To back up his presentation he would point out how the Book of Revelation accurately predicted the rise of Adolf Hitler and World War 2, Henry Kissinger, the formation of the European Economic Union, a one world government, a super-computer containing the details of every human being on the face of the planet (!), and a global cashless money system (of which “Bankcard” was a pre-cursor since it had a symbol which consisted of three bs which looked suspiciously like “666” mentioned in Revelation 13).

But as I grew older and my own understanding was sharpened through personal study, listening to hundreds of quality international Bible teachers, reading many books, talking with senior men of God, combined with my formal ministerial training, I realised that this teaching which I had received as a young man was seriously flawed!

For instance, I was told that the thrust of Revelation was for the very last days of our time. That is, I was told that what it prophesies about relates to events far removed from the lives of the original recipients since it so obviously relates to the times that *we* now live in or are at least to be fulfilled within *our* lifetimes. But this is contradicted by the plain message within Revelation itself-

*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants; things **which must shortly** take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John,*

Revelation 1:1

***It is not just a revelation about the future, although it revealed details about the future. It is ultimately a revelation about Christ!***

*Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; **for the time is near.***

Revelation 1:3

*“Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else **I will come to you quickly** and remove your lampstand from its place; unless you repent.”*

Revelation 2:5

*“Repent, or else **I will come to you quickly** and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.”*

Revelation 2:16

*“Behold, **I am coming quickly!** Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.”*

Revelation 3:11

*“Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because **he knows that he has a short time.**”*

Revelation 12:12

*Then he said to me, “These words are faithful and true.” And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the **things which must shortly take place.***

Revelation 22:6

*“Behold, **I am coming quickly!** Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”*

Revelation 22:7

*And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, **for the time is at hand.**"*

Revelation 22:10

*"He who testifies to these things says, "**Surely I am coming quickly.**" Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"*

Revelation 22:20

For centuries some scholars have tried to make these verses mean something other than what they plainly say. How could these words be intended to comfort and encourage the original recipients during their endurance of massive persecution if the thrust of the Book exclusively related to events to take place some 2,000 years after them, especially when the Book so unmistakably gives the time frame as "*at hand*"? Surely the words of Revelation 1:3 would then have to be considered some cruel sadistic joke if this was the case.

*Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.*

Revelation 1:3

So if the Book of Revelation is not necessarily filled with detailed and titillating predictions about the future of a world filled with super-computers, high-tech commerce, and "big-brotherish" governments, then just what is its theme? We have too long craved for *Christian* soothsayers and their confident fortune telling who look not into a crystal ball, but into the pages of Bible. The surfeit of speculative paperback Christian books on end times teaching is testament to this. Often when I have presented an exegesis of Revelation and Matthew 24 I have been asked, "*Well, what does the Bible say is going to happen then?*" My response is to direct our attention back to the Word of God itself, and to guard against going beyond what it clearly says. Because of this desire, I have felt the need to write this commentary on Revelation.

If we take careful note of the opening verse we read the intended theme for the whole Book.

*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants; things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John,*

Revelation 1:1

“*The revelation of Jesus Christ*” is clearly stated as the central theme to this Book. It is not a revelation about Heaven, although it tells us things about this glorious place. It is not a revelation about the Devil although it reveals much about him. It is not just a revelation about the future, although it reveals details about the future. It is ultimately a revelation about Christ!

The whole point to this Book is to see Jesus for who He really is and to realise the implications of this revelation. This Revelation of Christ shows *Him* to be the Supreme Ruler of the universe, not Caesar, not the Jewish High Priest nor any other human ruler. It reveals that Christ is Lord over eternity and history despite the apparent upper hand that despotic rulers seemingly exercised over God’s people during the time of its writing. And just when it seemed that injustice against God’s people would go unchallenged, this Book reveals that *nothing* has gone unnoticed and that *all* will be brought to justice and remain so for all eternity as God does away with time as we know it.

It is not just a revelation about the immediate future, but it is largely a Revelation of *why* the future was to unfold this way based on *who* Christ truly is.

For John, the penman of this remarkable Book, Jesus was the One. Throughout His earthly ministry no one was as close to Christ as John was. At the last supper it was John who leant across the breast of Christ. At the Cross, it was John and no other disciple who remained to support Jesus in His agony. After the resurrection it was John who was seemingly publicly honoured above the other disciples by Christ (John 21:20-24). This was a man who knew Christ! More than any of the other disciples he seemed to grasp the message of love, which Jesus brought to the world. This is the predominant theme of his epistles. Yet we read this astounding statement in the opening chapter of Revelation-

*I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands,*

Revelation 1:12

John did not recognise the voice of Jesus when he heard it on the Isle of Patmos! Amazing! What this tells us immediately is that the Jesus who walked the shores of Galilee, whom John was intimately familiar with and had even seen a glimpse of His transfigured glory, was now being revealed in a way previously

unknown to John. The unfolding description of Christ paints a truly awesome picture of the glorified Christ. In John 17:5 Christ prayed that He would once again have His glory reinstated upon the completion of the Father's business. And Revelation gives us a fleeting glimpse of that reinstatement. For John, this glimpse was enough to completely overwhelm him (Rev. 1:17). And it begs the question that if the great apostle was overwhelmed by his revelation of Christ, do we truly understand the theme of this Book if we too fail to catch a glimpse through its pages of this same glorified Christ?

It is my great aim through the pages of commentary to help you to receive a "Christ-glory-glimpse".

## Contrasting Themes

The Book of Revelation has an interesting symmetry of contrasts. It starts off on a barren Isle and finishes in Paradise. It glorifies the Lamb but condemns the beasts. It condemns the city which killed our Lord (Rev. 11:8), along with His apostles and prophets (Rev. 16:6; 18:20, 24), but honours the Heavenly New Jerusalem. It describes a succession of earthly kings (Rev. 6) but finishes with the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 17:14; 19:16). It condemns the harlot but commends the bride (Rev. 21:2).

There are two very distinct judgment events which are described in Revelation. The first involves judgment upon the unholy alliance between Judaism and Rome (the two beasts of Revelation 13) where Jerusalem (symbolic of Judaism) sits in the lap of the ungodly Roman Empire (described as the harlot sitting on seven hills). The second involves everyone. We will all be judged. For those who have committed their lives to Christ they escape the judgment of condemnation and enter into eternal life now—



*Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.*

John 5:24

But for those who have not committed their lives to Christ the warnings of this Book should terrify them. And for good reason! I want to show you that the first part of this Book has been accurately fulfilled and that we can therefore know that the remaining three chapters of Revelation will certainly be fulfilled. This is a truth no one can ignore.

Please enjoy this labour of love and consider carefully what you are about to read.

# THE SEVEN CHURCHES



## *Chapter 3*

# Understanding the Seven Churches of Revelation

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*I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, <sup>11</sup>saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."*

Revelation 1:10-11

Some Bible teachers regard the seven churches of Revelation to be a prediction of what would happen throughout the Church's unfolding history. There are several problems with this interpretation though.



Firstly, the conditions described in each of these churches have been present in nearly every era of the Church's history. To view this as a chronological forecast of the global Church is grossly over simplistic, and unsustainable from Church history.

Secondly, it makes no sense for the Lord to command John to write to what we know were seven actual churches and cryptically invent scenarios that didn't actually pertain to them! If this had been the case, this epistle from John would have been immediately dismissed as uninspired and thereby rejected from the Canon of Scripture. But it wasn't. This seems to suggest that the initial recipients acknowledged it as being truly insightful into their church's condition and presumably responded accordingly. This initial acceptance by these seven churches, of what we know as the first three chapters of the Revelation, would have also given added credibility to the remainder of the Book. Indeed, since it was readily accepted as integral to the Canon very early in the formation of the Canon we could also surmise that what appears to be very enigmatic to the modern reader may not have been so to the first readers.



In seeking to understand Christ's message to the seven churches we should consider the overall theme. Something apocalyptic was about to happen. Christ was about to do away with the vestiges of the Old Covenant and judge Israel. How Christ describes Himself to these churches is often overlooked by those more interested in speculating about what it might say about the Church far removed from the condition of these seven churches.

| Church:             | Revelation of Christ:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Ephesus</b>      | 2:1 ~ Christ relates to His churches through God ordained authority (stars). He is One who has authority and relates to His Church through His appointed authority. This does not mean that Christ is ‘authoritarian’ and thereby aloof, rather, He is authoritative and imminent (close) to His Church – He “walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.”                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Smyrna</b>       | 2:8 ~ Christ is in absolute control of the universe. He is First. While this world wars against the Church through futile efforts to destroy it and it may at times look like the Church will not survive the barrage of unreasonableness, Christ is there at the Last, and so will His Church be also. While the Devil thought that he had conquered Christ when Jesus died on the Cross, it turned out to be his greatest humiliation (Col. 2:15). So too when believers die for their faith the world erroneously considers it a victory for their cause, but ironically the victory is ours! Thus Christ was dead, but is now alive forevermore. |
| <b>Pergamos</b>     | 2:12 ~ Christ is a Just Lord- He will execute judgment on His enemies- He has a two-edged sword in His mouth. Unlike mortal rulers, Christ’s words are more powerful than any human weaponry. Never underestimate the words of Christ!                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Thyatira</b>     | 2:18 ~ Christ sees all and will hold the guilty to account. Fire nearly always represents judgment in Scripture and Christ’s eyes are described as being like fire. Only He is qualified to judge since He Himself has been judged and found innocent- He has feet like burnished bronze (brass). Burnished bronze in the Old Testament spoke of that which withstands judgment (hence it is burnished). One such example of this is found in Numbers 16:39-40.                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Sardis</b>       | 3:1 ~ Christ loves His Church deeply. He is the One who gives His Church the Anointing – the Seven Spirits of God - (1John 2:20), and anointed ones – Stars - (Eph. 4:11).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Philadelphia</b> | 3:7 ~ Christ is without compromise: He is holy and true.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Laodicea</b>     | 3:14 ~ Christ fulfils the Word of His Father- He is the Amen, Faithful and True. He is the beginning and source of all that has been created, He therefore has the right to judge the earth.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

It's actually quite refreshing to avoid speculating about whether the Lord's messages to these churches are some cryptic predictions about the Church throughout the Ages. Instead, as we try to look over the shoulder of the original readers we can see how this revelation of Christ would have given them so much strength and courage. Imagine living during a time when becoming a Christian could cost you your life because you were seen as a threat to the stability of the Empire who would mercilessly deal with such threats. Imagine living during a time when being a Christian meant that you would be ostracized by your family, friends, and community. They also might ruthlessly slander you for your faith in Christ. Imagine also living at a time when you had been told that there was only a short time before Christ would return and bring all of creation under subjection to His authority, yet the longer you believed the less likely it seemed. Imagine how it must have felt to the first century Christians who witnessed some of their brothers and sisters being publicly martyred, and to see others openly forsaking their faith in Christ.

***If there is no love in the church for Christ there is no need for it to exist!***

But what about how John the apostle must have been feeling? He had oversight of at least seven churches. He knew that some of these churches were struggling in the midst of all this pressure. Some of them had resorted to trying to gain political approval by accumulating wealth and a corresponding prestige (Rev. 3:17). Others had just grown complacent thereby losing their zealous passion for Christ and His cause (Rev. 2:4). Still others had downright succumbed to an immorality-is-tolerated attitude (Rev. 2:20), which was destroying them in the process. John must have been tempted to despair. Everything looked like it was going awry.

Christ's last words before His ascension stated His lordship over everything- but there was little visible evidence of it. Christ's last commission was to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth and make disciples of all nations- but all the nations were rejecting the Church and killing its servants. Christ said He would return soon - but time was dragging on and there was no apparent sign of His coming.

Some of these issues are addressed in this Revelation. But the focal point of the Book of Revelation is not to make fanciful predictions about the future, but to point the reader back to Christ! The message contained in Revelation is a message that spoke straight into the hearts of the first hearers and still speaks with special power today.

## **The Message To The Seven Churches And Today's Application**

### ***Ephesus***

Christ commended the Ephesian church for their hard work. They were a church which cared for elderly widows (1 Timothy 5:3), preached the Gospel in the midst of opposition, and sought to be diligent to the Lord's instructions (we draw these conclusions from Paul's epistles to the Ephesians, I & II Timothy, and Acts 20).

Today we should understand that Christian service requires diligence and hard work. They did not tolerate those who were evil. Today we should guard what we put aside in the name of "grace" and ensure that our grace does not become "disgrace" because we accept or tolerate what is evil. They tested those claiming to be apostles and found many of them to be liars. This implies that the apostolic ministry was not limited to the original disciples of Christ but is a ministry gift given by Christ to the Church to bring it to maturity. Apparently there were many who were claiming apostolicity (that they were apostles), but neither had the gifts nor the character to substantiate their claims. Today we should be very careful about both claiming to be an apostle and recognising someone as having an apostolic ministry when we have not tested their claims first.

***Today we must  
guard against  
elitism and  
understand the New  
Testament teaching  
on the priesthood of  
all believers.***

The Ephesian church had lost its first love for Christ. Today it is possible to become distracted with so much administration and gadgetry that we can almost leave Christ out of the Christian equation. Love is the only appropriate response to Christ at any time. If there is no love in the church for Christ there is no need for it to exist- hence Christ says He would remove their lampstand (Rev. 2:5, which is symbolic of their witness as a church). In gracious conclusion Christ commends the Ephesians for being against the Nicolaitans who taught that there was a priestly class within Christianity. Today we should be especially on guard against teaching that contradicts the priesthood of all believers.

### ***Smyrna***

The church at Smyrna was also commended for the hard work. May we gain an understanding that ‘success’ in the church (which is measured by our obedience to Christ) actually demands work. “Work” may best be described as toiling under a certain degree of duress. In other words, work is doing what you have to do, even when you may not want to do it. Even as enjoyable as a job might be, there will always be moments when it really becomes “work”. It’s the same in a church. There are some things that have to be done under a certain degree of duress! Elders who labour in preparation to preach may feel that their efforts go unnoticed and unappreciated. Deacons who spend hours stocking the church’s pantry to show hospitality to others who take for granted what they enjoy (food and drink and service) may feel that their efforts go unnoticed and unappreciated. The worship musician who spends hours learning a worship song so that they can be liberated from the sheet music to truly worship may feel that their efforts go unnoticed and unappreciated. But the work done by these servants is noticed and is appreciated! Even though there may not be any human accolades, the Lord Jesus Christ sees the work that was done. And He regards it as work done for Him!

The church at Smyrna was experiencing tribulation. Today we must be prepared to endure the discomfort that comes from standing up boldly for Christ. While the church at Smyrna felt inadequate due to their lack of resources, it actually resulted in them having to depend upon the Lord, which in turn made

them “rich” in the eyes of the Lord. As wealthy and as well as we may be resourced, if we become self-reliant we quite possibly could become spiritually bankrupt! We need to live dependant upon the Lord.

*Excise all the references to heaven from the New Testament and you have very little left. Saint Teresa said, ‘In light of heaven, the worst suffering on earth, a life full of the most atrocious tortures on earth, will be seen to be no more serious than one night in an inconvenient hotel.’*

Saint Teresa, cited in THE CASE FOR FAITH, Strobel, page 65

As also said to the church at Ephesus, Christ makes reference to “overcoming”. For the Ephesians Christ said that overcoming would qualify them to eat from the tree of life in the Paradise of God (Rev. 2:7). For those in Smyrna Christ said that overcoming the pressure to abandon Him would shield them from the second death.

### ***Pergamos***

Christ’s statement confirming that He knew the works of the church at Pergamos is encouraging. What we do for Christ is not unnoticed. Unlike the other two churches already addressed, Christ says that He was also aware that the church at Pergamos was physically located in a very difficult area. He described Pergamos as where Satan’s throne was. Interestingly He gave them no command, instruction, or edict to confront Satan in what many today pass off as “spiritual warfare”. (For more on this issue please refer to my ebook – *Christianised Witchcraft*.) In the midst of much spiritual opposition they had held fast to the Lordship of Christ even to the point of laying down their lives in martyrdom (verse 13). Christ’s restatement that this was where Satan dwells seems to give the insight that the martyrdom of Antipas was not the mere machinations of flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12), but a deliberate plot of Satan designed to destroy the church.

But Christ had some disappointments with the church at Pergamos. They had some people in the church who held to a false doctrine which endorsed a form of idolatry and sexual compromise. This is referred to as the teaching of Balaam. Today we must guard what doctrines are tolerated in the church. Wise pastors

know how to gently correct the erring but teachable. But it is vital to also know how to confront and address those who hold to dangerous doctrines because their beliefs will eventually harm themselves and others! If we could believe anything then Christ would not address these two subtle doctrinal errors.

The second doctrinal error is that they had some who held to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. No one can be sure at this stage (perhaps some manuscripts or archaeological data is yet to be discovered) exactly what this meant. But there is

***People often fail to understand that while God is absolutely gracious, He remains absolutely just.***

good reason to believe that this doctrine was the beginning of a teaching which drew a line of distinction between those who had received holy orders (*cleros* from where the word clergy comes from) and laity (ordinary). Hence it is speculated that the term Nicolaitans meant nico – over, laitan – ordinary; the doctrine of a priestly class of believers

lording it over ordinary believers. Christ said that He hated this doctrine of the Nicolaitans. His instructions for dealing with this doctrine are short: repent. And His warning for not doing so is severe: *I will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.* Today we must guard against elitism in the church. We must also understand the New Testament teaching on the priesthood of all believers which negates the possibility of a New Testament priestly class.

Whenever the expression he who has ears let him hear is used it demands that the reader look beyond the natural implications of what has been said (note Isa. 6:10; 42:20; Jer. 5:21; 6:10; Ezek. 12:2; Matt. 11:15; 13:16). This necessitates that we understand that Christ is saying something that goes beyond what it immediately may sound like. We all (generally) have ears, but Christ is referring to understanding something that may not be immediately obvious. He makes this statement to each of the seven churches and it is still true today.

### ***Thyatira***

Christ commended the church at Thyatira for increasing their good works (2:19). But Christ condemned them for tolerating sexual immorality. One disturbing New Testament Manuscript describes this Jezebel as “*your wife*

*Jezebel*” (refer to the translator’s footnote in the NKJV). If this was the case then it makes the charge all that more serious. Since this was addressed to the star of Thyatira, which we regard as the leader of (messenger to) the church, then that particular manuscript suggests that this corruption was coming from very close to the top. The Lord said that He was going to cast this woman onto a sickbed (vs. 22) and bring great tribulation on those who had committed adultery with her. This reference to a woman does not appear to be symbolic language. It has all the hallmarks of talking about a real character and situation in the church at Thyatira. But we can draw legitimate lessons from this for today in regard to tolerating immorality within the church.

The Lord also warned those who followed this woman. Christ warns that they were in danger of “great tribulation”. We know that Caesar (Titus) Vespasian launched a campaign of terror against the Jews throughout the Empire around 70AD in which some Christians suffered as well. These followers of the woman Jezebel are called her children (vs. 23). John also referred to his disciples as his children (1John 2:1; 3:7). We should be on guard against any teaching that says that the Lord punishes children for the sins of their parents.

*Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall the children be put to death for their fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin.*

Deuteronomy 24:16

To interpret this verse as saying that the Lord Jesus would kill this woman’s children is an error. Clearly the reference to children is to her followers. To be killed with “death” (verse 23) is akin to dying of pestilence- a wasting death brought about by disease.

*I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.*

Revelation 2:23

The purpose for the Lord in dealing with these people so severely was to establish a clear message to all the churches that He would not tolerate sin in His Church. People often fail to understand that while God is absolutely gracious, He remains absolutely just. God did not stop being just in the New Testament! He

was, is, and always will be just. He “searches the minds and hearts” is a timely reminder to us just as it was to the original recipients that Christ will judge our actions and motives (refer to Matthew 5:28).

But not everyone in Thyatira had fallen prey to the corruption of false doctrine and immorality though. For these believers, it must have been tough to remain loyal and faithful in the midst of so much opposition. Graciously, the Lord Jesus says to these battered believers that He would lay no further burden on them vs. 24. Perhaps you have felt overwhelmed by life and your spirituality has suffered as a result. This can often lead to a downward spiral of guilt and condemnation. Take heart. Remain faithful to Christ and He lays no burden further on you.

As a pastor I have had to counsel people with the Word of God through some tough periods in their life. They have confessed to me that they have felt ashamed because they weren’t able to read their Bible as much as they had been used to, or prayed with the reverence they had previously grown to enjoy, or serve in the church with the diligence they knew was deserved. During these tough times, my pastoral counsel has often reflected Christ’s words to these battered believers.

### ***Sardis***

Some scholars have noted that there seems to be a progression of deteriorating conditions in the seven churches listed. As I’ve previously stated, there is no Scriptural or logical reason for doing this. These Historicist scholars regard the church at Sardis as representing the Church at the point of the Reformation (early 1500s) because this church was “dead” and their works were no longer perfect (Rev. 3:1). That’s how the Reformers regarded the (Roman Catholic) Church of their day. They also felt that their reforming work was ushering the Church into the Philadelphian Age. This is reading too much into the text when we consider that the hermeneutical principle of audience relevance demands that we regard Christ’s words to the leader of the church of Sardis as pertaining immediately to them.

Each of these messages to the seven churches is primarily addressed to the “angel” of the church. The Greek word translated into English as “angel” is the word angelos which literally means messenger. It is used in the New Testament of both earthly and heavenly messengers. Since Christ is giving this message to the leader of the church at Sardis we note that he had ceased to “watch” and grown weak in good works and thus affected the whole church.

The term “watch” is an Old Testament term. In the Old Testament it was the watchmen who were responsible to hear from God and deliver His Word, but they had failed to do so.

*Also, I set watchmen over you, saying,  
Listen to the sound of the trumpet  
But they said, “We will not listen.”*

Jeremiah 6:17

The church at Sardis had failed to watch. The correlation between the leader of a church and the spiritual depth of a church is now well established. Many people who move into a new area, and look for a new church home, make the mistake of basing their evaluation of a new church purely upon what the church offers them and their family rather than on who might be leading them. The leader of a local church has the privilege of setting the spiritual pace and tone of a church, and those who align themselves with a church will be influenced by the spiritual depth of the leader.

To this leader, and church, Christ commands that they remember what they heard and return to it (repent). They are then told to watch. To “watch” demands prayerfulness, prophetic proclamation and heeding the word of God. Today we should also be watchful by giving ourselves to prayerfulness, obedience and boldness in proclaiming God’s Word. For the church at Sardis this was apparently their last opportunity to do so.

Even in this church which looked alive, but was dead (Rev. 3:1), there were some who had not “defiled” their “garments”. This expression generally related to sexual morality.

*Moreover you shall not lie carnally with your neighbour’s wife, to  
defile yourself with her.*

Leviticus 18:20

Christ promised those who had not defiled their garments that they would be clothed in white. This is an expression that is used several times in Revelation and speaks of the believer's resurrection with 'garments' of righteousness (Rev. 4:4; 7:9).

*And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright,  
for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*

Revelation 19:8

### ***Philadelphia***

***There are a growing number of scholars who acknowledge that this period occurred during the time leading up to 70AD.***

The Reformers believed that they were ushering in the Philadelphian Age of Church history. They believed that they were bringing the Church back to true brotherly love, which is what *Phila* (love) *Delphia* (brotherly) means. To this actual church Christ stated that He had "the key of David". This is very significant considering the tone of Christ's message to this church. What 'key' did David have? Some regard the key to David's success as his genuine love for others. He had an incredible ability to win people over. Christ has this same ability. Still other scholars regard this as an expression which affirms Christ's messiah-hood. He had the key of David to the true City of David- the New/Heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 3:12). In the context of this view Christ was affirming the Philadelphian church as being the rightful continuation as the people of God rather than the apostate Jews of the local synagogue. This makes sense considering Revelation 3:9-

*Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie; indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.*

Revelation 3:9

The reference to "the hour of trial" in Revelation 3:10 is regarded by Futurists as referring to a future "Great Tribulation". If this "Great Tribulation" was yet another 2,000 years away from the recipients of this message, then Christ's promise to "keep you from" it, is absurd. There is a growing number of scholars who acknowledge that this period occurred during the time leading up to

the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. Interestingly, the New Testament uses three Greek words which are translated “world”. One of those Greek words is “oikoumene” which refers to the Roman Empire (note the use of this word in Luke 2:1, Romans 10:18, and refer to the note on page 127). That is the word used here.

Based on verse 11, something was very imminent: *the coming of Christ to judge*. It is ridiculous to make this mean anything other than what it plainly says and therefore negating an interpretation which demands thousands of years of waiting in order for it to be fulfilled.

The irony of verse 12 is that while Christ was about to do away with the last vestiges of the Older Covenant by the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, He promised to make the overcoming Philadelphia Christians “pillars” in the real Temple in the real Jerusalem (the Heavenly one).

### ***Laodicea***

Historicists regard this church as depicting the last age of the Church. Their view of the future Church was affected by their belief in a great falling away of Christians (2 Thessalonians 2:3), a great betrayal (Matthew 24:10), and a growing cold of the love of many for the things of God (Matthew 24:12). But these references relate to the time described in the Olivet Discourse (the teaching of Christ in Matthew 24 and Luke 21). These events were related to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and Christ’s judgment on those who had rejected Him. Jesus said that all the events of Matthew 24 would take place within the lifetime of His disciples (Matthew 24:34, refer to Appendix 3). The references to apostasy and betrayal are recorded in the New Testament as being fulfilled (NB. 2 Timothy 1:15).

Also from a purely historic point of view the facts of Christianity’s growth today flies in the face of this age being considered the “Laodicean Age”. Never before in the history of Christianity have so many people been converting to Christ. This is taking place in both the Western world, the East, and the Middle Eastern world.

The statements about this church are used to support a late date for the writing of Revelation. In 62AD Laodicea experienced a major earthquake. Because the church is described as being wealthy, some scholars have used this as internal evidence that Revelation must have been written toward the end of the first century so that the Laodicean church would have had time to become wealthy. But this assumes, perhaps wrongly, that because there was a destructive earthquake in Laodicea that the church would have been financially or materially depleted. We know from historical documents that Laodicea rebuilt itself within a couple of years and was restored to being a prosperous city within that time. So either way, this is a poor assumption for the late date of the writing of Revelation. Interestingly, we note Paul's prayer for the Laodiceans recorded in Colossians 2–

*For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, <sup>2</sup>that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, <sup>3</sup>in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

Colossians 2:1-3

Revelation's reference to the Laodicean church being wealthy makes Paul's prayer somewhat ironic. While the Laodicean church was materially wealthy, or perhaps in particular the Laodicean church's leader, they were *spiritually* poor. Today, while we may make financial security our goal, it is actually a dangerous thing to be in a situation where we need nothing (vs. 17) because we think we can live without God's daily bread!

Laodicea was famous for four things. Firstly its water was lukewarm. Secondly, it produced eye ointment. Thirdly it produced coloured garments. Fourthly, it was a very wealthy city. Christ said to them that He wanted them hot or cold, but not lukewarm like their water. Secondly He said to them that they should use His eye salve (ointment). Thirdly He told them to wear white garments from Him. Fourthly He told them to buy true gold from Him which had been refined by fire (vs. 18).

*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.*

Revelation 3:19

Christ was rebuking the Laodiceans. Rebuking is rarely regarded as an act of love. Perhaps this is both indicative of how we both rebuke and love today. Jesus could rebuke with both sternness and compassion so that His hearers could recognise His deep concern for them. May God grant us, especially those of us who are charged with the oversight of the church, to be able to rebuke because we love – just like Christ.

Christ's appeal to the Laodiceans was not forceful, but rather an appeal to their volition (free will choice). Thus, He says to them that He was standing at the door and knocking, awaiting for the occupants to open up to Him and invite Him in to dine with them (Rev. 3:20). The same is true today. Christ does not force Himself on anyone. It is up to us to invite Christ in to the dining room of our hearts and welcome Him into intimate fellowship with us.

To each of the churches Christ challenges them to overcome and hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches. These churches had to overcome the mounting temptation to revert to Judaism or simply abandon Christ. What made the temptation all the more enticing was the hardship that went with being Christian caused by the constant threat from Judaizers, which often meant being stoned and clubbed for blasphemy (as was James the brother of Christ, and author of the Book of James, around this time).

## Overcoming And Hearing



Philip Schaff

*[A]t the instigation of the younger Ananus, the high priest, of the sect of the Sadducees, whom he calls "the most unmerciful of all the Jews in the execution of judgment," stoned to death with some others, as "breakers of the law," i.e. Christians, in the interval between the procuratorship of Festus and that of Albinus, that is, in the year 63. The Jewish historian adds that this act of injustice created great indignation among those most devoted to the law (the Pharisees), and that they induced Albinus and King Agrippa to depose Ananus (a son of the Annas mentioned in Luke 3:2; John 18:13).*

Philip Schaff, citing - Josephus: ANTIQUITIES. XX. 9, 1

*Hegesippus, a Jewish Christian historian about A.D. 170, puts the martyrdom a few years later, shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem (69). He relates that James was first thrown down from the pinnacle of the temple by the Jews and then stoned to death. His last prayer was an echo of that of his brother and Lord on the cross: "God, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."*

Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Volume I. Apostolic Christianity

This Jewish persecution against Christians at this time should not be underestimated. If James was brutally martyred in 62 or 69 AD it shows that the hostility experienced by the Church in the early chapters of Acts had not abated even forty years later! Added to this was the edict of Caesar Nero in 64AD that Christians should be killed, and this was a time when these Christians had some very real challenges to overcome. But this wasn't all. Within the Church there was a growing tolerance of immorality and idolatry. So we note the promises of Christ to those in these churches who overcame:

**Ephesus** - I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. (Rev. 2:7)

**Smyrna** - I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it. (Rev. 2:17)

**Thyatira** - and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations. (Rev. 2:26)

**Sardis** - shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. (Rev. 3:5)

**Philadelphia** - I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. (Rev. 3:12)

**Laodicea** - I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. (Rev. 3:21)

# THE THRONE ROOM



## *Chapter 4*

# Understanding The Throne Room of Revelation

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*After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this."*

Revelation 4:1

**T**rumpets announce the impending presence of God (Exodus 19; 20:18; Joshua 6:8; Judges 7:22; 1 Chronicles 15:24; 2 Chronicles 5:13; Psalm 47:5; Isaiah 27:13; Hosea 8:1; Joel 2:1; Amos 2:2; Zechariah 9:14; Hebrews 12:18-19; Revelation 1:10). Trumpets were also blown to commence battles (Numbers 10:9). But more often than not they symbolically announce God's impending presence to judge.

*God has gone up with a shout,  
The LORD with the sound of a trumpet.*

Psalm 47:5

*Set the trumpet to your mouth!  
He shall come like an eagle against the house of the LORD,  
Because they have transgressed My covenant  
And rebelled against My law.*

Hosea 8:1

Because *trumpets* in Scripture often announce the impending presence of God to judge, we know that judgment was imminent in Revelation 4. We know this because of the principles upon which the Word of God is to be soundly interpreted. Firstly, the immediate context says so –

*The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come,  
And the time of the dead, that they should be judged,  
And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints,  
And those who fear Your name, small and great,  
And should destroy those who destroy the earth."*

Revelation 11:18

The context of the whole scene is one of judgment about to commence. Back in the days of the first century AD Roman Empire it was ultimately the King who *judged* (note Christ before Herod – Luke 23:8; Paul's appeal to Caesar - Acts 25:11). These earthly kings are contrasted with the heavenly King since *He* is *worthy* to judge because only He has been judged and found completely innocent.

***It is highly likely  
that when John  
was directed to  
measure the  
Temple in  
Jerusalem, it was  
still standing!***

*Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?"*

Revelation 5:2

*And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation..."*

Revelation 5:9

The scroll mentioned here is a judgment scroll which is sealed seven times. This scroll will set the stage for the next set of visions that John describes.

## A Door Open In Heaven

*After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this."*

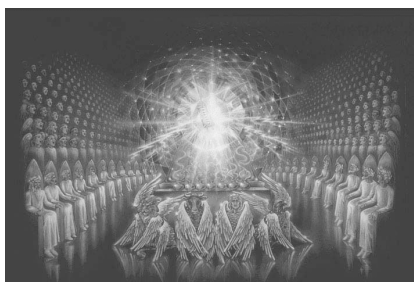
Revelation 4:1

We are now taken into what can be described as John's second set of visions. "*After these things*" is different to the expressions used to show continuity in the visions which are used in the remainder of this Book. This may legitimately indicate an unspecified lapse of time between the visions of chapters 1 – 3 and chapter 4. Quite possibly John may not have received the remainder of these visions while on Patmos since he is told in chapter 11 to measure the temple in Jerusalem. Some scholars, however, regard this command to be reminiscent of what God told Ezekiel to do in Ezekiel 40.

*In the twenty-fifth year of our captivity, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was captured, on the very same day the hand of the LORD was upon me; and He took me there. <sup>2</sup>In the visions of God He took me into the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain; on it toward the south was something like the structure of a city. <sup>3</sup>He took me there, and behold, there was a man whose appearance was like the appearance of bronze. He had a line of flax and a measuring rod in his hand, and he stood in the gateway.*

Ezekiel 40:1 - 3

But there are notable differences. In Ezekiel's account he saw a vision of the temple and of someone else measuring it. It wouldn't have been possible for Ezekiel to have physically seen the temple since the Babylonians had already destroyed it. But allowing for the growing body of data which is now mounting regarding Revelation's pre-70AD authorship it is highly likely that when John was directed to measure the Temple in Jerusalem, it was still standing, and he had the capacity to obey.



In many respects what is now revealed in these next two chapters (4 and 5) is the penultimate focus of the revelation. It marks the first of two royal judgment settings (note the use of the word "thrones"). The other occurs in Revelation 20 and occurs after the "1,000" year reign of the Lamb's Kingdom.

The expression "*a door open in heaven*" is very insightful since it reveals that there is an unseen realm that is intimately involved with the affairs of earth that is generally not perceived by most. A *door* grants an entrance into a different

perspective. Jesus said that He was the Door (John 10:9) through which all who would seek salvation must enter. The writer to the Hebrews describes in Hebrews 4:10-13 that Christ has now made an entrance into the promised rest. This rest is salvation. Poignantly, John is now shown what lies beyond this door-

*Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven,  
and One sat on the throne.*

Revelation 4:2

The Biblical commentator, (Bishop) John Lightfoot lived from 1602 to 1675. He became a Presbyterian minister and was jointly responsible for formulating the *Westminster Confession*. One of his most significant works was *A Commentary of the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica* (written in 1658). He adopted the view that Revelation 1:7 speaks of “*Christ's taking vengeance on that exceeding wicked nation*” of Israel (Volume 2, pages 319 and 422). There he interpreted Christ's coming as a providential judgment upon “*those who pierced him*” (the Jews) from among “*all the tribes of the land literally*” (Israel). He suggested that Revelation’s overall theme is Israel’s judgment, which is the Preterist view.



*“I may further add, that perhaps this observation might not a little  
help (if my eyes fail me not) in discovering the method of the author of  
the Book of the Revelation”*

Lightfoot 3:210

***We must recognise  
that we are called to  
be salt and light to  
our society. We are  
called to be the  
major influence in  
our societies.***

This led him to conclude that the judiciary scene set up in Revelation 4 and 5 speaks of “*the throne of glory*” and “*is to be understood of the judgment of Christ to be brought upon the treacherous, rebellious, wicked, Jewish people. We meet with very frequent mention of the coming of Christ in his glory in this sense*” (2:266). I believe that Bishop Lightfoot has given us a not-so-axiomatic insight into understanding the Book of Revelation. The events leading up to and culminating in 70AD form the crux of Revelation’s contents and chapters 4 and 5 set it up.

## The Twenty Four Elders

*Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.*

Revelation 4:4

Numbers in Biblical literature often carry symbolic meaning. The number 12 speaks of *redeemed people*. When God established Israel as His redeemed people He established *twelve* patriarchs then *twelve* tribes. When Christ was establishing New Covenant redemption (salvation) He selected *twelve* apostles. The twenty four elders represent the redeemed of both covenants. They epitomize what redeemed people do. Firstly, they are seated on *thrones*. Thrones are *positions of influence*.

*...and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,*

Ephesians 2:6

We must recognise that we are called to be salt and light to our society. We are called to be *the* major influence in our societies. Our Great Commission includes teaching our communities everything Christ has commanded (Matthew 28:19). When our Governments legislate statutes that are contrary to the teachings of Christ we have the divine right and responsibility to protest in the Spirit of Christ. That is, not with hatred or maliciousness, but with meekness and love.

*Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.*

Revelation 5:8



Secondly, they *bow down*, and carry *harps* (note Rev. 5:14; 11:16; 19:4). They continually worship Christ. It's one thing to sing the praises of Christ; it's another to lay our lives down before him. To *bow down* is to surrender. And Christ deserves nothing less!

Thirdly, they carry bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints. God wants His people to be in intimate fellowship with Him. This is the essence of prayer. All redeemed people need to know that our prayers are precious before God and are regarded like incense infiltrating the fragrance of heaven.

## The Seven Lamps Of Fire

*And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.*

Revelation 5:6

Biblically, the number seven often symbolises *complete, perfect*. In Revelation 4-5 Christ is described as having seven horns (complete or perfect strength), and seven eyes because He has the Sevenfold Spirit of God. In Revelation 4:5 the Holy Spirit is described as *seven lamps of fire*, and *the seven Spirits of God*. He is God. And this glimpse of the



Throne of God gives us a powerful picture of the Trinity. The Father is on the Throne (Rev. 4:2). The Holy Spirit surrounds the Throne of the Father (Rev. 4:5). And God the Son is described as the Lamb who is worthy of worship (Rev. 5:8).

## The Four Living Creatures

*Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back.*

Revelation 4:6



These four living creatures seem to guard the Throne of God and simultaneously lead all of heaven in worship.

These creatures were also seen by Ezekiel when he was also shown the Throne of God (Ezekiel 1:10; 10:14). When Isaiah saw the Throne of God in

heaven he described creatures with six wings over and before the Throne of God doing the same thing as these four creatures. Isaiah called these creatures *seraphim* (Isaiah 6:2, 6).

Other Scriptures describe these creatures as *cherubs* or *cherubim*. When the Ark of the

Covenant was made, which was a shadow of the heavenly throne of God; Moses was instructed to include two gold cherubim hovering over the Throne (Mercy Seat).

<sup>18</sup>And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat. <sup>19</sup>Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it of one piece with the mercy seat. <sup>20</sup>And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat.

Exodus 25:18 – 20

The Old Testament gives us a typological glimpse into the Heavenly presence of God, but the Book of Revelation peels back the veils of mystery and gives us the fullest view of Heaven available in Scripture. But we would be mistaken if we thought Revelation was simply a treatise on



Heaven. Far from it. It actually is one of the most powerful revelations anyone could ever receive about why the earth is the way it is. The scene described in Revelation 4-5 shows the Crucified, Risen, Saviour and Lord taking His rightful position as Judge of the earth. His programme of Judgment begins with the Household of God first, in this case- the now apostate nation of Israel. The next fourteen chapters describe His judgment upon Israel and Rome and their unholy alliance. It also describes how His plans can not be thwarted, and thus reveals the Word of God as absolutely true.

We will discover that with the judging of Judaism the Old Covenant was brought to a close and the Kingdom of Christ commenced. What you are about to read could well revolutionise your walk with God!

# SEVEN SEALS



## *Chapter 5*

# Understanding The Seven Seals of Revelation

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*Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see."*

Revelation 6:1

**H**aving been introduced to the seven churches of Asia who were all battling in some way both internally (with false doctrine and immorality) and externally (with persecution), then with the throne-room of the universe where judgment was about to be executed we are now about to unfold the judgment seals of God.

## The Four Horsemen

This is where many commentators on the Book of Revelation commence to speculate. Historicist commentators see in the first four seals (the Four Horsemen) world leaders who have arisen down through the ages. Dispensational futurists

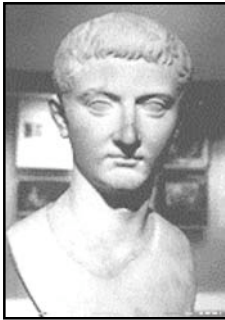


regard the Four Horsemen as yet to come events. The Preterist attempts to avoid these interpretations by firstly looking to the time of the original recipients of this Epistle to determine how they would have understood its message. Employing the sound principle of “intended meaning” means that a prophetic statement can only logically have one fulfilment, or *intended meaning*. So whatever or whoever these Four Horsemen are, it is absurd to suggest that they could have multiple yet diverse intended meanings.

*And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.*

Revelation 6:2

### ***The First Seal***



How would the original recipients have understood this verse? Who had been given a crown? To understand this, we perhaps have to understand who was reigning during the time of the writing of this Epistle. The whole world at this time was under the reign of the Romans. Which Roman Emperor was reigning at the time of the birth of Christ? Interestingly it was Caesar

Augustus who was given a crown unlike any Emperor before him since he was the first to receive the title *Pontifex Maximus* in 12AD. He also introduced the *Pax Romana* in 11BC. This Roman Emperor was mentioned in Luke 2:1-

*And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.*

Luke 2:1

Caesar Augustus is referred to as the rider of the first horse and is described as the result of the opening of the first seal. He literally went out to conquer the world and extend the Roman Empire.

### ***The Second Seal***

*When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, “Come and see.” <sup>4</sup>Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.*



Revelation 6:3-4

The second seal is described as revealing an emperor who rode a red horse and wielded a great sword. The Caesar immediately following Caesar Augustus was Caesar Tiberius-

*Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene,*

Luke 3:1

Caesar Tiberius reigned from 14AD to 37AD.

### ***The Third Seal***



*When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. <sup>6</sup>And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine."*

Revelation 6:5-6

The third seal is the rider of the third horse which, in this case, is black. The next emperor in the succession of emperors is Caesar Caligula (Gaius) who reigned from 37AD to 41AD. The rider of the Black Horse carries a pair of scales which speaks of injustice and in particular, economic injustice since it describes basic grocery items being charged at exorbitant prices yet luxury items still being available.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica notes that Caesar Gaius Caligula was extraordinarily cruel and financially inept (which aptly fits the description of him as the rider of the black horse)-



*In 38 he executed Naevius Sutorius Macro, prefect of the Praetorian Guard, to whose support he owed his accession, and Tiberius Gemellus, grandson of Tiberius, whom he had supplanted in the succession. He made pretensions to divinity...After his accession Caligula quickly squandered the vast sums Tiberius had accumulated in the state treasury. To procure the revenues needed to finance his extravagances, he then resorted to the extortion of prominent Roman citizens and the confiscation of their estates.*

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### The Fourth Seal

*When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see." <sup>8</sup>So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.*

Revelation 6:7-8



The fourth seal is the rider of the ashen (pale) horse who brings cruel death, and hunger (famine). The next emperor in the succession of Roman Caesars was Caesar Claudius who reigned from 41 – 54 AD. He is noted in Acts 11:28 as reigning during a time of widespread famine.

*Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar.*

Acts 11:28



Claudius (statue pictured left) used the military might of Rome and extended Roman rule in North Africa and made Britain a province. From what we know of Claudius, and what happened during his reign, the description of him being the rider of the fourth horse is again apt. His reign also corresponds to what Christ said would happen at this time in Matthew 24:7–

*For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.*

Matthew 24:7

### The Fifth Seal

*When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. <sup>10</sup>And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" <sup>11</sup>Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.*



Revelation 6:9–11

The first four seals corresponded to the Roman Emperors from the time of the birth of Christ. The fifth seal however is not the rider of a horse. In this sense the fifth emperor since Christ was not a noble military ruler who personally led his troops into battle as did the other Emperors. Yet, it is this Emperor represented by the fifth seal who carries out the most devastating attack upon the Church. Revelation 6:9 introduces not him, but the result of his wicked work: *souls who had been slain for the Word of God*. It was Caesar Nero who in 64AD officially launched a State campaign of eradication of Christians. On July 19<sup>th</sup> 64AD he blamed Christians for the arson of a major part of Rome. His war against the Church lasted until his mysterious death in 68AD, a period of 42 months. Writing during the early nineteenth century, George Olford said of Nero in his book *The Destruction of Jerusalem*—

*Emperor Nero, "who," says Tacitus, "inflicted upon the Christians punishments exquisitely painful;" multitudes suffered a cruel martyrdom, amidst derision and insults, and among the rest the venerable Apostles St Peter and St. Paul.*

***His war against the Church lasted until his mysterious death in 68AD, a period of 42 months.***

One web site author noted about Nero -

*Under Caesar Nero, AD 54 - AD 68, Paul was beheaded and Peter crucified. As things escalated, Christians were fed to the lions, fighting gladiators to the death for sport, wrapped in animal carcasses and hunted by dogs. At one point, Nero had them wrapped in robes soaked in oil and set afire to become human torches for his court yard. He would ride among them dressed as a charioteer. They had a giant griddle type setup where they would fry them alive. They skinned them alive and placed them in dung heaps, in order that they might die from terrible diseases and pain from the incredible infections they contracted. It is said that he fashioned a large slide with cutting knife blades. If one did not renounce Christ, they were pushed down the slide, being cut to pieces before they reached the bottom. One catacomb was found to have 350,000 skeletal remains in it. It is estimated that millions died during the reign of Nero.*

### ***The Sixth Seal***

*I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. <sup>13</sup> And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. <sup>14</sup> Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. <sup>15</sup> And the kings of*

*the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains,<sup>16</sup> and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!"<sup>17</sup> "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"*

The first five seals represented significant people who each bore some historical significance. But the sixth seal is not a person but an event which presumably is linked to the person behind the fifth seal since he is not yet replaced. Within two years of declaring war on Christians, Nero responded violently to the Jewish revolt in Jerusalem by ordering its destruction in 66AD. Citing the records of Josephus, George Holford notes what precipitated the Jewish revolt, and what response came from Caesar Nero—

*At length Eleazer, son of the High Priest, persuaded those who officiated in the temple to reject the sacrifices of foreigners, and no longer to offer up prayers for them. Thus an insult was thrown upon Caesar, his sacrifice rejected, and the foundation of the Roman war laid.*

*The disturbances among the Jews still continuing, Cestius Gallus, president of Syria, marched an army into Judea, in order to quell them, and his career was every where marked with blood and desolation. As he proceeded, he plundered and burnt the beautiful city of Zabulon, Joppa, and all the villages which lay in his way. At Joppa he slew of the inhabitants eight thousand four hundred. He laid waste the district of Narbatene, and, sending an army into Galilee, slew there two thousand of the seditious Jews. He then burnt the city of Lydda; and after having repulsed the Jews, who made a desperate sally upon him, encamped, at length, at the distance of about one mile from Jerusalem.*

Several historians of the day note that Nero had ordered General Cestius from Syria to attack Jerusalem. Christians at this time understood the invasion of Cestius and his setting up of the Roman insignia in the Holy Place as the fulfilment of Christ's prophecy in Matthew 24:15-20 and fled the city during the surprising withdrawal of Cestius for three days (which gave all the resident Jewish Christians of Jerusalem time to flee). The sixth seal is also time of unprecedented earthquakes. Again we note from historical records of this time—

*In the reign of Nero there was an earthquake at Laodicea. Tacitus records this also. It is likewise mentioned by Eusebius and Orosius,*

*who add that Hieropolis and Colosse, as well as Laodicea, were overthrown by an earthquake. There was also one in Campania in this reign (of this both Tacitus and Seneca speak)... "A heavy storm (says Josephus) burst on them during the night violent winds arose, accompanied with the most excessive rains, with constant lightnings, most tremendous thunders, and with dreadful roarings of earthquakes. It seemed (continues he) as if the system of the world had been confounded for the destruction of mankind; and one might well conjecture that these were signs of no common events."*

George Peter Holford, "The Destruction of Jerusalem", written 1805

The expression *sun moon and stars* is used on three significant occasions in various forms throughout the Book of Revelation. It apocalyptically refers to the nation of Israel. We first find this metaphor for Israel used in Genesis 37:9 when Joseph dreamed of his family (the progenitors of Israel). It is an expression which is also apocalyptically employed to speak of Israel throughout the Old Testament as well (note Joel 3:15-16). When the sun is darkened and the moon is turned to blood or stars are falling, it refers to Israel's unfaithfulness toward God.



An artist's impression of the destruction of Jerusalem

*Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*

Matthew 24:29

The apocalyptic language used in the opening of the sixth seal is descriptive of the destruction of Jerusalem around 70AD but instigated by Nero in 66AD. The "fig tree being shaken" speaks of Israel being judged, and the passage of the sixth seal speaks apocalyptically of God's wrath about to be poured out on Israel. While it might look as if the Romans were the perpetrators of wrath against Jerusalem, they were just the pawns of the Lamb in the same way that the Babylonians under

Nebuchadnezzar were the pawns of Yahweh to judge Israel of old. In the following verse, Nebuchadnezzar, the violent king of Babylon, is called the *servant* of the Lord.

*'behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,' says the LORD, 'and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land, against its inhabitants, and against these nations all around, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, a hissing, and perpetual desolations.*

Jeremiah 25:9

Just as the Hebrews of old had betrayed the *LORD* which brought about God's wrath through the Babylonians, so the Jews of the generation of Christ had committed the ultimate betrayal and were about to experience the wrath of the Lamb.

*But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!"*

John 19:15

# SEVEN TRUMPETS



## *Chapter 6*

# Understanding the The Seven Trumpets of Revelation

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*Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see."*

Revelation 6:1

*...yet it will be found that they are all different aspects of the same great event. If we may venture to use such an illustration we should say that the visions are not telescopic, looking at the distant; but kaleidoscopic,---every turn of the instrument producing a new combination of images, exquisitely beautiful and gorgeous, while the elements which compose the picture remain substantially the same. As Pharaoh's dream was one, though seen under two different forms, so the visions of the Apocalypse are one, though presented in seven different aspects...*

James Stuart Russell, THE PAROUSIA

**T**he seventh seal is the seven trumpets. The number seven is very significant in the Book of Revelation. In fact, the entire Book of Revelation is really seven visions with one central apocalyptic picture: *retribution upon the apostate Jews for rejecting the Christ and God's New Covenant*. Seven speaks of "complete". There is therefore a completion to Scripture with the last Book of the Bible delivering seven visions about God's dealings with Israel.

Some might suggest that God would never have dealt so harshly with Israel since He was in an *everlasting* covenant with them. But this overlooks what the prophet Zechariah prophesied would transpire around the time of Christ.

*And I took my staff, Beauty, and cut it in two, that I might break the covenant which I had made with all the peoples. <sup>11</sup> So it was broken on that day. Thus the poor of the flock, who were watching me, knew that it was the word of the LORD. <sup>12</sup> Then I said to them, "If it is agreeable to you, give me my wages; and if not, refrain." So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver.*

Zechariah 11:10-12

***Revelation was clearly written to Christians living before 70AD who were about to see most of its fulfilment!***

This passage describes God breaking His covenant with the nation of Israel ("Beauty") because in effect they ultimately betrayed Him when they exchanged their Lord for 30 pieces of silver. Jesus Himself told several parables about God taking the Kingdom away from the nation of Israel and it being given to Gentiles.

*Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, And it is marvellous in our eyes'? Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it."*

Matthew 21:42 – 43

While we talk about God ending His covenant with the nation of Israel, the New Testament stresses that the descendents of Abraham were not qualified to be such because of their ancestry but because of their faith in Christ.

*For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; <sup>29</sup> but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.*

Romans 2:28 – 29

*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

Galatians 3:28 – 29

*I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.*

Revelation 2:9

## The 144,000

*And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed:*

Revelation 7:4

When we understand that the events of Revelation deal with God's final dealings with Israel and the completion of the Old Covenant, the period between Pentecost and the destruction of Jerusalem can be seen as the time of final harvest for the Jewish era.

The number 12 speaks of redemption. In redeeming the world under the Old Covenant, God ordained 12 tribes of Israel. Under the Mosaic Law, the use of 12 was used in the objects of redemption within the Tabernacle (Lev. 24:5 - twelve bread-cakes; Num. 7:84 - twelve silver platters, twelve silver bowls, and twelve gold pans). In continuing the redemption of the world under the New Covenant, God ordained 12 apostles.



When a number is cubed in apocalyptic literature, it is used to stress “ultimate” or “maximum”. Apocalyptic interpretation is based on Old Testament precedent. So when we see something in the Old Testament which is stressed three times, and it clearly means *ultimate* or *maximum* we can be confident that this is the correct interpretation when dealing with Revelation. For example, God is described as being *holy, holy, holy* which obviously means that He is the ultimate or maximum expression of holiness.

The description of the 144,000 is represented as 12 tribes with 12,000 from each tribe. If we see that 12 from 12 tribes is 144, and that multiplied by 10 cubed (1,000) we can see that 144,000 represents the ultimate redemption of the *true* Israel in the transition period between the Old Covenant into the New (note Romans 11:26). The time leading up to 70AD marks the closing of the Jewish Age.

The arrangement of the twelve tribes is also unusual. Not surprisingly, Judah is mentioned first. Judah was the tribe of blessing (Deut. 27:12) and of the Messiah.

*Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel; he was indeed the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel, so that the genealogy is not listed according to the birthright; yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph's;*

1 Chronicles 5:1 - 2

***Paul said just prior to 70AD that the Gospel had now been preached in all the 'world'!***

What is curious though is that the tribe of Dan is not mentioned in this list. We will see shortly that the redeemed Jewish Israel of God are also referred to as *the two witnesses* (Revelation 11). Since Jacob prophesied that Dan would be a judge (or condemner) of Israel, they could not also simultaneously be a witness-

*"Dan shall judge his people  
As one of the tribes of Israel."*

Genesis 49:16

Secondly, most people who read the Old Testament story of Jacob (the father of the twelve tribes) are caught up with his romance with Rachel and therefore assume that her children, Joseph and Benjamin, are the primary plan of God. But *they* are both placed last in this list. Since Joseph is mentioned as a tribe, Ephraim is not listed, but Manasseh is. Ephraim was the first tribe to collectively turn away from the Lord and were eventually exiled by the Assyrians. Manasseh is mentioned the middle of the list. Manasseh was Joseph's firstborn and was half Egyptian (Gen. 41:50-51). This is also one of the few lists where the tribe of Levi is included in a list of the tribes.

Perhaps we should not look too intently at the order of the twelve tribes for any hidden meaning in their order. In a way, this list of tribes which saw its direct fulfilment leading immediately up to 70AD, is an adumbration of ultimate redemption where-

*After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,*

Revelation 7:9

John is shown the redeemed of Israel during the generation which lived during the time of Christ (the 144,000) and is given a glimpse of what is ultimately to come- redeemed people from every nation, tribe, people, and tongue (Rev. 7:9). There is no doubt that this second company included people who turned to Christ between Pentecost and the destruction of Jerusalem. Since the events of Matthew 24 are described as great tribulation-

*For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.*

Matthew 24:21

We also know from the New Testament that the Gospel by this stage had indeed gone out into all the world, and been preached to every creature-

*because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth;*

Colossians 1:5 – 6

*if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.*

Colossians 1:23

This picture of the redeemed wearing white speaks of their righteousness in Christ and the blessing of their salvation since they have had their robes *washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb* (Revelation 7:14). This should also be distinguished from the clothing which will come from the resurrection. In the former, picturing salvation, their clothes are washed, but in the resurrection we are given *new* clothes-

*For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.*

2 Corinthians 5:4

The pain and agony which they tolerated for the cause of Christ will be beautifully rewarded in heaven-

*“for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”*

Revelation 7:17

## The Seventh Seal: 7 Trumpets



Pictures of a Roman catapult hurling a 30 kg (1 Talent) flaming missile up to 400 metres

After the Gospel had been offered to the Jew first (Romans 1:16; 2:10) which is the picture of Revelation 7, the time had come for the destruction of Jerusalem and the formal end to the Old Covenant. This principle of ensuring the redeemed are delivered is the same as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19 where Lot and his family were delivered prior to its destruction. Josephus records that when Jerusalem was initially surrounded by armies under the charge of the Roman General, Cestius, he set up the Roman insignia in the Holy Place which Christians understood to be the fulfilment of what Christ had foretold in Matthew 24:15-

*Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), <sup>16</sup>then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. <sup>17</sup>Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. <sup>18</sup>And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. <sup>19</sup>But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! <sup>20</sup>And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.*

Matthew 24:15 - 20

Curiously though Cestius withdrew from the Holy City for three days which gave every Christian in Jerusalem the opportunity to flee just as Christ had advised. This is recorded by a nonplussed Josephus. After every Christian had fled, Cestius returned but by this time the Jews had established a siege to try to

prevent the Romans from entering their city. Thus at this time began the Roman onslaught against the Jews in 66AD. Jews throughout Palestine were butchered, but those within the walls of Jerusalem were particularly targeted.

*The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.*

Revelation 8:7

The Romans were brutal. Their strategy for taking a sieged city centred around the use of the catapult. From these machines they would hurl fiery bombs around 30 kilograms in weight (an ancient “talent”). When the first attack began (the first trumpet) trees and grass within Jerusalem were literally destroyed.

Meanwhile their attack included Jewish ships by use of similar means and curious weather phenomena. This was the second trumpet (Rev. 8:8-9). Below is a description based on the writings of Josephus which shows just how accurately this was fulfilled-

*For fifteen months Vespasian proceeded in this sanguinary career, during which period he reduced all the strong towns of Galilee, and the chief of those in Judea, destroying at least one hundred and fifty thousand of the inhabitants. Among the terrible calamities which at this time happened to the Jews, those which befell them at Joppa, which had been rebuilt, deserve particular notice. Their frequent piracies had provoked the vengeance of Vespasian. The Jews fled before his army to their ships; but a tempest immediately arose, and pursued such as stood out to sea, and overset them, while the rest were dashed vessel against vessel, and against the rocks, in the most tremendous manner. In this perplexity many were drowned, some were crushed by the broken ships, others killed themselves, and such as reached the shore were slain by the merciless Romans. The sea for a long space was stained with blood; four thousand two hundred dead bodies were strewed along the coast, and, dreadful to relate, not an individual survived to report this great calamity at Jerusalem. Such events were foretold by our LORD, when he said, “There shall be distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring.” Luke xxi. 25.*

THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM, George Peter Holford

*Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. <sup>11</sup>The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.*

Revelation 8:10-11

***It is wrong to assume that what was clearly fulfilled by 70AD will be ‘re-fulfilled’ in our day!***

Historicists regard the sound of the third angel announcing the fall of some great leader in history. For example, Matthew Henry said-

*III. The third angel sounded, and the alarm had the like effects as before: There fell a great star from heaven, etc., v. 10. Some take this to be a political star, some eminent governor, and they apply it to Augustulus, who was forced to resign the empire to Odoacer, in the year 480. Others take it to be an ecclesiastical star, some eminent person in the church, compared to a burning lamp, and they fix it upon Pelagius, who proved about this time a falling star, and greatly corrupted the churches of Christ. Observe, 1. Where this star fell: Upon a third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters. 2. What effect it had upon them; it turned those springs and streams into wormwood, made them very bitter, that men were poisoned by them; either the laws, which are springs of civil liberty, and property, and safety, were poisoned by arbitrary power, or the doctrines of the gospel, the springs of spiritual life, refreshment, and vigour to the souls of men, were so corrupted and embittered by a mixture of dangerous errors that the souls of men found their ruin where they sought for their refreshment.*

*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) 1997*

But this type of interpretation is far too subjective and then almost impossible to detect its intended fulfillment. It also ignores the clear time-frame references within Revelation itself, which demand that the visions prior chapter 20 were expected to be fulfilled within the lifetime of its original recipients. Futurists are divided over what this reference means, but speculation includes such bizarre things as nuclear warhead missiles, and nuclear contamination of the world's major water supplies! For example, this astounding claim of Biblical prophetic fulfillment is being made-

*Scientists who have dedicated their lives to the dangers of nuclear contamination are warning the government of Ukraine that the seepage of radiation from Chernobyl Reactor #4 will soon enter the river which provides the water for Kiev. Already the measurable radiation is above acceptable levels.*

*This sobering fact brings us to the plagues of Revelation where the apostle John sees the day when water supplies of the world will be contaminated. Fifty years ago prophecies in the New Testament were not taken seriously. Now the scientific community is warning that we could all be affected by not treating nuclear technology responsibly.*

Dr. DeWayne Coxon <http://www.blossomingrose.org/chernobyl/wormwood.htm>

***Historicists  
wrongly agree  
with Futurists  
that Revelation is  
written to them!***

Both Historicists and Futurists are guilty of extra-biblical speculation in this regard. To avoid the same accusation, we should follow the principle of allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture and look firstly to the Bible (especially for interpreting apocalyptic literature) then to immediate history.

Therefore, let's examine what the Bible says about "wormwood" (depicted right)-

*The word wormwood occurs frequently in the Bible, and generally in a metaphorical sense. In Jeremiah 9:15; 23:15; Lamentations 3:15, 19, wormwood is symbolical of bitter calamity and sorrow; unrighteous judges are said to "turn judgment to wormwood." (Amos 5:7). The Orientals typified sorrows, cruelties, and calamities of any kind by plants of a poisonous or bitter nature.*

*Smith's Bible dictionary [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System, (Thomas Nelson) 1997*



Wormwood is associated with bitterness. In this instance it is associated with making waters bitter. This is reminiscent of the time Israel had failed to trust God and had begun to rebel.

*When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah (bitter). <sup>24</sup>And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?"*

Exodus 15:23-24

What Revelation has unfolded about first century Israel to this point would be consistent with this Old Testament story of bitter waters resulting from Israel's rebellion. The time leading up to 70AD saw Israel fall to its most apostate depths.

Secondly, the description of *a star falling from heaven* parallels the prophecies of Daniel about this same period-

*And out of one of them came a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land. <sup>10</sup>And it grew up to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them. <sup>11</sup>He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down.*

Daniel 8:9-11

The prophecy of Daniel regarding an emperor invading Israel, destroying the inhabitants (stars falling), putting an end to daily sacrifices, and then casting down the sanctuary is in perfect keeping with our understanding that this refers to the events leading up to 70AD. This is so because we know emphatically that the unbroken sequence of (i) Palestine being invaded by a Roman emperor, (ii) its inhabitants being massacred, (iii) daily sacrifices ceasing, and (iv) the temple being destroyed was fulfilled in 70AD.

We have already established that the expression *sun, moon, and stars* refers to Israel (Gen. 37:9). “Stars falling” is apocalyptic language for Israel’s apostasy. Christ foretold that this would happen immediately prior to the destruction of Jerusalem—

*Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*

Matthew 24:29

So when we read verses like Revelation 8:12 which describes the sun and moon and stars being struck and darkened, we can still interpret Scripture “literally” without concluding that the sun was physically struck by something or that the stars and moon physically became dark.

*Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.*

Revelation 8:12

***If the 7<sup>th</sup>  
Trumpet has not  
already sounded  
then the Old  
Covenant has  
not ended!***

Interpreting Scripture literally means that we take the Scripture as it is intended to be taken. In apocalyptic literature the expression “sun moon and stars” speaks of Israel. When these are darkened or dislodged, it refers to Israel not honouring God.

*The earth quakes before them, The heavens tremble; The sun and moon grow dark, And the stars diminish their brightness... <sup>13</sup>So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm.*

Joel 2:10, 13

At the end of the fourth trumpet a terrible announcement is made about the ultimate woes to befall Jerusalem.

*And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"*

Revelation 8:13

When the fifth trumpet sounded an angel is sent to unleash a massive attack by hordes of demon spirits previously held back, but now released from a bottomless pit (Rev. 9:1). The wrath of God was being poured out on the apostate, who had repeatedly refused to turn to the Lord, not upon those who had been sealed by God.

*They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.*

Revelation 9:4

We are told that this intense torment was to last for five months. History notes that the most intense and brutal part of the Roman campaign against the Jews lasted five months, just as Revelation had foretold –

*And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man.*

Revelation 9:5

*The vial of divine wrath, which had been so long pouring out upon this devoted city was now emptying, and JERUSALEM, once "a praise in all the earth," and the subject of a thousand prophecies, deprived of the staff of life, wrapt in flames, and bleeding on every side sunk into utter ruin and desolation. This memorable siege terminated on the eighth day of the ninth month, A.D. 70: its duration was nearly five months, the Romans having invested the city on the fourteenth day of the fourth month, preceeding.*

THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM, Peter Holford

This was the first of the three woes.



An artist's impression of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70

No wonder Revelation 9:6 says that men would seek a quick end to their agony, but the Romans had a knack for making their enemies suffer through deliberately prolonged campaigns.

*The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men.*

Revelation 9:7

I remember watching one of those amusing end time movies (although none of us thought they were that amusing at the time!) where the old backslidden preacher who found himself 'left behind' in the 'Tribulation' - largely for the sake of the movie plot(?) - describes huge flying locusts with the tails of scorpions and the faces of men. Again we need to remind ourselves of the principles of good Bible interpretation: *Scripture interprets Scripture*.

*They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power was to hurt men five months.*

Revelation 9:10

Revelation oscillates between heaven and earth in its descriptions of events taking place on earth. Earlier in this passage (Revelation 9:5) we referred to the five month Roman rampage of Jerusalem in 70AD. We are now shown what was behind this.

*And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon.*

Revelation 9:11

From an earthly perspective Rome was simply carrying out routine retribution for a seditious pocket of the Empire. But from a heavenly perspective this was demonic attack made possible due to Israel's rebellion which removed them from God's protective covering.

*One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things.<sup>13</sup> Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, <sup>14</sup>saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." <sup>15</sup>So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind.*

Revelation 9:12-15

Around this time the Romans had 4 battalions of their vast army stationed at the Euphrates River. Once again, Revelation shows the connection between the earthly and the heavenly. This is clearly one of the main points about Revelation- *heaven and earth are linked*. In 2003 in my home state of Tasmania, we engaged in a debate which we considered to be fundamentally a moral issue. While the State Government sought to deconstruct the institution of marriage and redefine what a "spouse" and "family" was, they nevertheless invited public comment through the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute. We soon discovered that this debate was not going to be a purely rational (earthly) one. The State Government received around 1200 submissions opposing their changes, and only 62 in favour of it. Yet they proceeded with their ungodly, immoral, legislation regardless. Having nearly exhausted every earthly means of sustaining godliness, the Church is left to appeal to Heaven in prayer. The message of Revelation is that this is never a wasted effort.

***The Bible  
describes God  
having 'come'  
to judge on the  
clouds  
previously  
(Isa.19:1)***

*Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. <sup>17</sup>And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone.*

Revelation 9:16-17

One of my earliest readings of Revelation was from the Living Bible, paraphrased by Kenneth Taylor, which included a note on this passage stating that this could be fulfilled by the present day Chinese army. But the context of the passage demands that this was imminent.

Secondly, Revelation is revealing the link between heaven and earth. When it talks about releasing four angels near the Euphrates we know that it shows the real source of power behind the four Roman legions stationed there who were summoned to join the attack on Jerusalem. So the reference to these two hundred million horsemen should be seen in the same light as the earlier reference to horsemen in this passage whose king was Satan-

*And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon.*

Revelation 9:11

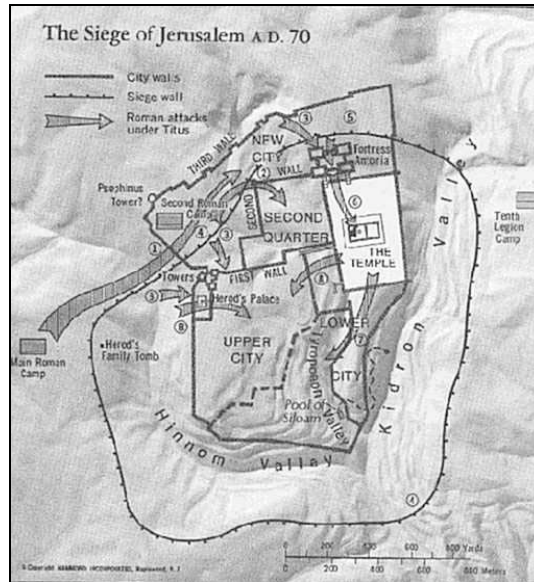
In other words, while it appears that this is purely a military procedure, the Lord wants His people to know that He is about to judge Jerusalem by allowing demonic hordes to attack God's former people through the brutal Romans. The fact that this is spiritually motivated is reinforced by the reasons given for Jerusalem's judgment-

*But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. <sup>21</sup>And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.*

Revelation 9:20-21

The Jewish leaders had not only rejected their Messiah, they were actually guilty of idolatry, murder, sorcery, sexual immorality and theft. There is a sobering warning here for the Church today. God is not averse to disciplining His people when they unrepentantly misrepresent Him by: (i) living lives in which He is not their primary focus (which is idolatry); (ii) hating (which Jesus said was akin to *murder*, Matthew 5:44); (iii) committing sexual immorality (note-*fornication* is sex without marriage, and *adultery* is sex outside of marriage); and, (iv) thieving (failure to respect another's property).

The references within this passage of Revelation to one third of mankind being killed clearly refer to the slaughter of Jews during this period leading up to 70AD, not some yet-to-come tribulation.



A topographical map of the siege of Jerusalem.

Between the sixth and seventh trumpets we are again shown the link between heaven and earth. Whereas we were earlier introduced to a Beast with a connection with the sea and the land, we are now shown that in the spiritual realm there are powers at work. While it appears that Rome is wreaking vengeance on a recalcitrant and insignificant part of the Empire, we are shown that there is actually a divine agenda at work here. The city which Jesus wept over - because it was rejecting its day of visitation -

*For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.*

Luke 19:43-44

- was about to receive its prophesied judgment and retribution for its treatment and condemnation of their Messiah.

*but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.*

Revelation 10:7

By 70AD the revelation of the Church as the “mystery of God” (Ephesians 5:32 *“This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church”* and Colossians 2:2 *“that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ”*) had been fully revealed. To claim that the revelation of the Church would not be revealed for another 2,000 years after Christ’s ascension is absurd. Firstly, Christians who have lived since the close of the Canon (the finalisation of the New Testament) have understood this mystery of God. Secondly, this doctrine is contradictory to the New Testament’s revelation about the Church as the mystery of God.

***To presume what  
Revelation said was  
‘at hand’ would not  
be fulfilled for  
another 2,000 years  
later is absurd!***

Before the seventh trumpet of final judgment on Jerusalem sounds, John is told that his prophecy will affect many people, nations, tongues and kings to come. This reinforces that while the bulk of Revelation (chapters 1-19) was fulfilled by 70AD there is an acknowledgment that the scope of Revelation goes way beyond the first century.

*And he said to me, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.”*

Revelation 10:11

## The Two Witnesses

*Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, “Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there.”*

Revelation 11:1

This is one of the clearest indications that Revelation could not have been written in the 90s of the first century. Since the temple and its furnishings were destroyed in 70AD it would have been impossible for John to have measured it in 95AD! Since the prophetic statements about the Romans’ 42 month occupation of Jerusalem (Rev. 11:2) are so accurate, some liberal scholars have dared to suggest that Revelation was actually written in 95AD and was really history dressed up to sound like prophecy.

The scene of the sounding of the seventh trumpet involves two witnesses. Their identity remains a mystery. Some have suggested that James the Just, the stepbrother of Christ aptly fits the description of at least one of the witnesses. Others have suggested that it refers to Moses and Elijah (since they were present at the Transfiguration of Christ, and performed the miracles ascribed to the two witnesses.) Still others claim that death must be made complete for Enoch and Elijah, so they must be the two witnesses. Again we must tear ourselves away from such speculation and anchor our hermeneutics to the principle of *Scripture interprets Scripture*.

*But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months*

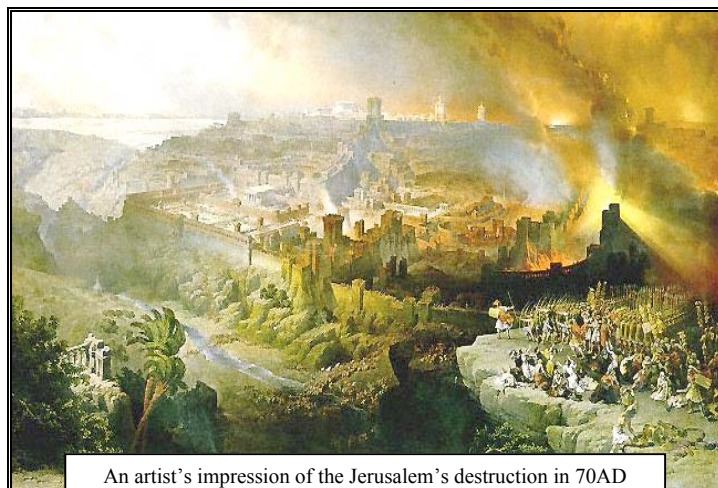
Revelation 11:2

The forty-two months is most naturally associated with the historic Roman occupation of Jerusalem. This is supported by the statement in Revelation 13:5 where the Roman Beast speaks against the “Tabernacle” for forty-two months. The twelve hundred and sixty days however, while also equivalent to three and a half years is distinguished from the Gentile occupation of Jerusalem (Rev. 11:3) because this was also the period of time when Rome waged war on the Church (Rev. 12:6). Therefore, we are dealing with the two witnesses ministering during the time of persecution against the Church, not the occupation of Jerusalem.

*These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.*

Revelation 11:4

This is a reference to Zechariah 4:3. In this passage Zechariah is shown that the two Houses of Israel, Judah and Ephraim, are the Lord’s Witnesses, Lampstands, and Olive Trees. This is confirmed by other prophets.



An artist's impression of the Jerusalem's destruction in 70AD

*The LORD called your name,  
Green Olive Tree, lovely and of good fruit.  
With the noise of a great tumult  
He has kindled fire on it,  
and its branches are broken.*

*<sup>17</sup>For the LORD of hosts, who planted you, has pronounced doom against  
you for the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they  
have done against themselves to provoke Me to anger in offering incense to  
Baal."*

Jeremiah 11:16-17

*I will be like the dew to Israel;  
He shall grow like the lily,  
And lengthen his roots like Lebanon.  
<sup>6</sup>His branches shall spread;  
His beauty shall be like an olive tree,  
And his fragrance like Lebanon.*

Hosea 14:5-6

Of course, Paul refers to Israel's being as an Olive Tree as well (Romans 11:17-24). These two witnesses are not two individuals. No empire has to "make war against" two individuals.

*When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the  
bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.*

Revelation 11:7

The Two Witnesses, which are the Olive Trees and the Two Lampstands refers to the Jewish Christians who were literally witnesses to Christ in the sense of having physically seen Him, and perhaps most importantly being prepared to lay down their lives for Him. It's this latter aspect of the term *witness* that is recurring throughout the Book of Revelation. The Greek word for witness is

*martus* from where we get the English word *martyr*. The Law required that a testimony be established on at least two witnesses.

*Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness.*

Deuteronomy 17:6

During the three and a half year campaign of State eradication, the Romans thought that they would wipe out the Christians from the Empire.

*The event that sparked official persecutions, however, was the fire of Rome, beginning on July 19 of A.D. 64. That holocaust, which lasted for nine days and gutted ten of the fourteen districts of the city, brought untold suffering to a population of about one million. Some of Nero's enemies circulated a report that he had started the fire. The charge was probably untrue, but Nero diverted attention from himself by making scapegoats out of the Christian community in Rome. The penalty suffered by many of the supposed incendiaries was burning at the stake at night to light the gardens near Nero's circus in the Vaticanus section of Rome. Some were crucified and others thrown to wild beasts or mad dogs. Paul suffered martyrdom at the hands of Nero; Peter is said to have suffered the same fate.*

Howard Frederic Vos, *Exploring church history* [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1994 by Howard F. Vos.

The Church's ministry during this three and a half year period, when thousands of Jewish believers were martyred, is described in Revelation as equating to three and a half days. They are described as being dead for three and half days, and particularly in the city where the Lord Himself was killed: *Sodom and Egypt*.

*And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves.*

Revelation 11:8-9

At the end of the 1260 day persecution against the Church (AD64 – AD66), the 42 month assault on Jerusalem began (AD66 – AD70). With the beginning of the prophesied terrible Day of the Lord coming upon Jerusalem, the two witnesses were vindicated. Significantly, while 7 represents complete, 3<sup>1/2</sup> represents incomplete. Rome had only incompletely destroyed the Church. The breath of life enters back into the Church and it lives!

*Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them.*

Revelation 11:11

Judgment against Jerusalem began with a great earthquake which caused a tenth of the city to fall.

*In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.*

Revelation 11:13

Josephus notes that at this time terrible manifestations began-

*...for there broke out a prodigious storm in the night, with the utmost violence, and very strong winds, with the largest showers of rain, with continual lightnings, terrible thunderings, and amazing concussions and bellowings of the earth, that was in an earthquake. These things were a manifest indication that some destruction was coming upon men, when the system of the world was put into this disorder; and anyone would guess that these wonders foreshowed some grand calamities that were coming.*

The Works of Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, Book IV, Chapter 4, Section 5



After Jerusalem had been punished, the seventh trumpet would sound thus announcing the end of the Old Covenant and the completion of retribution on Jerusalem. This is the completion of the third woe.

# SEVEN BOWLS



## *Chapter 7*

# Understanding The Seven Bowls of Revelation

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*Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun,  
with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve  
stars.*

Revelation 12:1

**R**evelation chapter 12 is a very brief history lesson of the events immediately surrounding the coming of Christ. The woman clothed with the sun, moon, and stars represents Israel. From out of Israel came the Messiah (Rev. 12:2) who was opposed by the Dragon (Satan, Rev. 12:3-4). The Messiah ascended into heaven (Rev. 12:5) and Israel was guarded by God until the end of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (1260 days after Christ appeared half way through the beginning of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of years as described in Daniel's prophecy, since He was cut off in the middle of that 70<sup>th</sup> week, refer to Daniel 9:26-27).

At the point of the ascension of Christ, war broke out in the heavens between Michael and the Dragon where we read that Satan was expelled from the heavens.

*but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any  
longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called  
the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the  
earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

Revelation 12:8-9

This is an important point for Christians to observe here: *Satan no longer has any place in the heavens because of the Cross and Ascension.* Under the Old Covenant it appears that he dwelt in the realm of the heavens that enabled him to stand before God (refer to Job 1), but under the New Covenant he was been expelled from entering the heaven of God's throne (which Paul refers to in Second Corinthians 12:2 as the "third heaven"). Satan is now restricted to the spiritual realm known as "the air" (Eph. 2:2), which at the time of writing his epistle to the Ephesians, Satan still had access to the third heavens where he was accusing God's people continually. This is why Paul could state in Ephesians 6:12 that Satan was in "heavenly places". But with the close of the Old Covenant which brought saw "the dragon cast out of heaven and down to earth", his expulsion from this third heaven means he is further disarmed of a great deal of power.

*Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down."*

Revelation 12:10

The expulsion of Satan from Heavenly access to God is a cause for rejoicing on earth, and even though he seems to wreak revenge upon God's people (Rev. 12:12), they overcome him by remaining faithful to Christ even to the point of martyrdom orchestrated by Satan.

*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.*

Revelation 12:11

The expression in Revelation 12:12 regarding the Devil knowing that "*his time is short*" refers to the time between the Ascension of Christ and the Destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. It was within this time frame that the Gospel was being made available to those Jews still living under the Old Covenant. Thus Satan does all he can to destroy the woman (Israel) and her offspring (Jewish believers).

*And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

Revelation 12:17

## The Beast

*Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.*

Revelation 13:1



The idea that the Anti-Christ spoken of in John's other writings is synonymous with this Beast is so unquestionably accepted by some that to even raise the obvious problem with this link causes bewilderment in some minds. But there is a problem with presuming this: *the term "Anti-Christ" is nowhere mentioned in Revelation.* Secondly, in this chapter there are two "Beasts" mentioned and which one should be thought of as *the* Anti-Christ is not immediately clear.

I am convinced that the Beast from across the sea is identical to the person described in Daniel since it uses precisely the same language.

*And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other...<sup>7</sup>After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.*

Daniel 7:3, 7

The message already contained in this Revelation is now being retold. We had already been introduced to this person during the opening of the seals. He was the character of the fifth seal who perpetrated the murder of the Lord's servants (Rev. 6:9). He will be mentioned again in Revelation 17. He is described as having seven heads and ten horns. The seven heads speak of his being the world emperor while the ten horns refers to his basis for rule- the support of a confederacy of other rulers (either the Roman Senate or subservient foreign kings).

***The term "Anti-Christ" does not appear anywhere in Revelation! "The Beast" should not be confused with this other character.***

This beast refers to the Roman Empire which was led at the time by Caesar Nero. When he died mysteriously in 66AD it appeared that the Roman Empire had received a fatal wound because the Empire remained unstable for over a year during a succession of short and tragic reigns by three would-be Emperors. When Vespasian ruthlessly seized the Empire, stability was returned.

*But what of the death of the Beast followed by his remarkable resurrection (Rev. 13:3)? Here not only Josephus, but also Roman historians Tacitus and Suetonius have provided helpful historical data. Each of these reported that Rome erupted into civil war during the course of the Jewish War. At the outset of Rome's civil war Nero committed suicide, which destabilized the empire so greatly that Tacitus reported: "Many believed the end of the empire was at hand" (Histories 4:5:4) and "this was the condition of the Roman state in the year which was to be for Galba his last and for the state almost the end" (Histories 1:1). Yet, according to Suetonius, to the surprise of the world, "the empire which for a long time had been unsettled and, as it were, drifting through the usurpation and violent death of three emperors, was at last taken in and given stability by the Flavian family" (Vespasian 1:1). As Josephus commented: "So upon this confirmation of Vespasian's entire government, which was now settled, and upon the unexpected deliverance of the public affairs of the Romans from ruin..." (Wars, 4-11:5). Thus, when the personal aspect of the Beast died in Nero, the generic Beast of the Roman Empire began collapsing to death. But the empire was finally revived before the destruction of Jerusalem was complete.*

(Dr. Kenneth L. Gentry Jr- website article: "Apocalypse")

*So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"*

Revelation 13:4

It was Nero who made war on the Church and initiated the attack against Jerusalem, but it was Vespasian who completed it. This attack on the Church lasted from AD64 to AD68 (a duration of 42 months within this period).

*And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.*

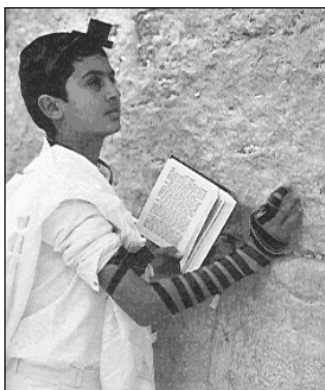
Revelation 13:5

After this commenced, Rome turned its attention to Jerusalem where the tabernacle (temple) of God was located. This war lasted 1260 days, from 66AD to 70AD.

*Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.*

Revelation 13:6

Rome was given authority to overcome the saints (the people of God), the tribes of Israel, and foreign nations (Rev. 13:7). Not only this, all those whose names were not written in the Book of Life would worship this Beast (Rev. 13:8). We note that Emperor worship was compulsory throughout the Empire during this time.



*He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.*

Revelation 13:10

This verse reveals to the believers about to go through this increased persecution that they must remain faithful to the Lord whether they are imprisoned or martyred. But for Jewish Christians, Rome was not their only concern. We are now introduced to a second beast.

## The Second Beast

*Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.*

Revelation 13:11

This second beast is Judaism. It joined with Rome (the first beast) to war against the Church. The expression “the earth” in Revelation 13:12 is the Greek word “ge” and is best understood as “the Land” (Palestine). It is different to the Greek word for the entire world population, *kosmos* (as used in Matthew 4:8). The second beast, Judaism, exercises authority given to it from Rome. This was seen most graphically in its union with Rome to have Christ put to death.

*He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.*

Revelation 13:13

Judaism, personified as this second beast, was well known for its apparent miraculous signs. Both Christ and Paul acknowledged that Judaism had miracle workers during their time (Matthew 12:27; Acts 13:6).

*And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.*

Revelation 13:14

Jesus warned his generation of followers not to be deceived when this happened –

*“For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”*

Mark 13:22

***Most Christians  
would be staggered  
to discover that  
there are two  
Beasts mentioned  
in Revelation 13!***

Revelation reveals that this second beast (Judaism) encouraged the people to honour and worship the first beast (Rome). Perhaps the most telling New Testament verse endorsing the seeds of this great apostasy is John 19:15–

*But they cried out, “Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar!”*

John 19:15

The trial and execution of Christ shows how Judaism prostituted itself with Rome to serve its own ends. This pattern of partnership between Judaism and Rome continued as they both persecuted the Church resulting in many martyrs (Rev. 13:15).

*He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads,*

Rev 13:16

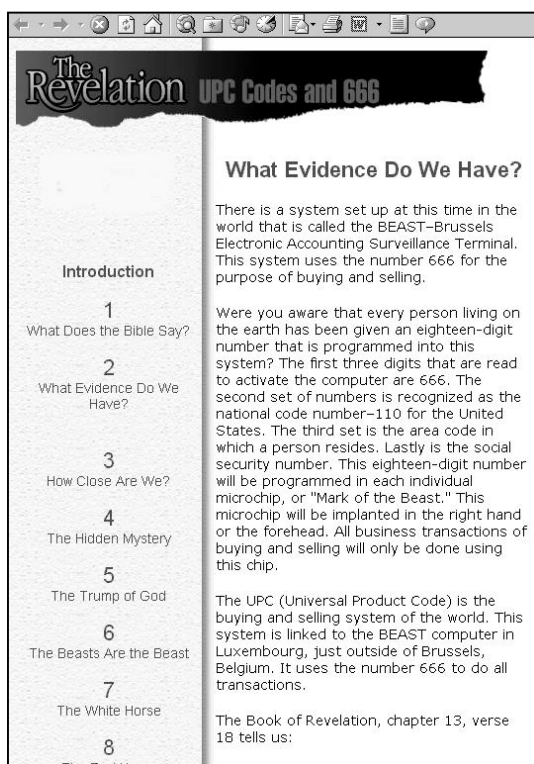
Judaism insisted that its people be distinguished from Gentiles. But when Jews accepted their Messiah and became followers of the true Lamb (rather than the one who spoke like a dragon, Rev. 13:11) they abandoned the teachings of men which included such religious identifications. The Jews insisted upon the wearing of “phylacteries” as their attempt to literally fulfil what the Law required–

*"You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes."*

Deuteronomy 6:8

*Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.*

Rev 13:18



The speculation regarding this verse is breathtaking. At times it borders between sheer absurdity and utter ridiculousness! To suggest that this is a computer chip, barcodes, or even a global satellite tracking device numbering system, or a cashless financial system is just plainly nonsensical. This was an urgent message to the first generation of believers. None of these fanciful guesses could have possibly applied to them and they are therefore to be dismissed immediately.

To understand what this verse is telling us, I remind you of our guiding principles of interpretation: (i) *Scripture interprets Scripture*, (ii) *consider the context*, (iii) *what was its intended meaning*, and (iv) *does our interpretation cause this verse to contradict the overall message of Scripture?*

Note that the emphasis is actually not so much on the number, but on the fact that it is the number of a man. The point here is that it is not God's mark. It is man's mark. Revelation has already revealed to us that God has a mark for His people-

*saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."*

Revelation 7:3

The Judaism of the day of Christ was not of God: it was of man! Christ confronted this head on repeatedly, and warned His disciples from thinking like “man”.

*And in vain they worship Me,  
Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.*  
Matthew 15:9

*But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offence to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”*

Matthew 16:23

Judaism had formed an unholy alliance with Rome. They were no longer mindful of the things of God, but the things of man.

*Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*

John 12:42

And the “man” they were most trying to appease was the Roman Emperor (note John 19:15). At the time, this was Caesar Nero.

*“...the cryptic number 666 (Revelation 13:18) designates Nero. The number involves the use of gematria (assigning numerical values to letters of the alphabet and thus determining the numerical value of words). Nero Caesar written in Hebrew letters has the numerical value of 666. That explanation becomes all the more probable when you realise that in Hebrew, Nero can also be spelled Neron. With the second “n” the numerical value is 666. Without it, 616 (a well-attested reading in some New Testament manuscripts).”*

J. Stewart Russell, The Parousia

*“It is with great satisfaction that he finds himself in substantial agreement with the distinguished ecclesiastical historian and theologian, Dr. Dollinger, of Munich, in his interpretation of St. Paul’s prediction in 2 Thessalonians. (1) Dr. Dollinger distinctly identifies the “Man of Sin” with Nero, a conclusion now so generally accepted by the highest authorities, that it may be regarded as a settled point. (2) He clearly distinguishes between the “Man of Sin” and “the Apostasy,” so frequently confounded by the mass of interpreters. Dollinger shows that the former is a person, the latter a heresy. (3) He recognizes “the Beast” of the Apocalypse as the Emperor, and therefore identical with the “Man of Sin.” (4) The miracles wrought by the “Second Beast” (the Beast from the earth) he regards as a representation derived from our Lord’s prophecy on the Mount of Olives.”*

(The Parousia, Afterword.)

Harper's Bible Dictionary states-

- The 'mark of the beast' (Rev. 13:16-18; 14:9-11; 16:2). The number 666 is thought to conceal the emperor Nero's name and the 'mark' of the official imperial seal, necessary to conduct business. Accepting this mark was apostasy, as true Christians were marked with God's name upon their forehead (Rev. 3:12; 7:3; 14:1; 22:4; cf. Ezek. 9:4).
- six, a number that appears occasionally in the Bible without apparent symbolic significance. The mysterious number of the beast in Rev. 13:18 (666) is the number of its name (v. 17). In Hebrew and Greek, letters were used also as numerals. Each name thus had a numerical value, calculated by adding the numerical values of the letters. 666 is the numerical value of 'Nero Caesar' in Hebrew.

***The original audience of Revelation were in little doubt as to the real meaning of its message!***

The New Bible Dictionary questions but acknowledges this interpretation and also alludes to a variant spelling of Nero as also fitting the 666 symbolism-

*...Support is adduced from Rev. 13:18, which gives 'the number of the beast' as 666. Numbers were written in the 1st century, not with our convenient notation, but with letters of the alphabet. Each letter had a numerical value. By taking the numerical values of the letters making up 'Nero Caesar' in Hebrew we get 666. But it is difficult to see why it should be in Hebrew (when the book is in Greek), and anyway to get the desired result a variant spelling has to be adopted.*

## Reaping

*Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.*

Revelation 14:1

Revelation 14 immediately contrasts the religious systems of man, the false lamb, and the false mark, with presence of the true God, the true Lamb, and the true mark of God. This chapter also contrasts the false religious system of Judaism with those who truly followed the Lamb. They are described as the 144,000 (the redeemed from Israel), “virgins” (contrasting Judaism’s harlotry), “firstfruits to God” (literally the first generation of New Covenant believers). Since they are not depending upon their own righteousness, but in the saving grace of the Lord Jesus and the power of His blood to cleanse them, they are washed and clean and able to stand before the throne of God.

*And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.*

Revelation 14:5

John is shown a picture in heaven that reveals what was about to happen on earth. He is shown an angel announcing the Gospel to the world.

*Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth; to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people; saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."*

Revelation 14:6 - 7

This is reminiscent of what Christ predicted in Matthew 24:31-

*"And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."*

Matthew 24:31

Before God would judge Jerusalem, the seat of Judaism, He would ensure that as many of them as possible had an opportunity to turn to Him and accept Christ. We observe that the New Testament states that this was accomplished immediately prior to the judgment of Jerusalem in AD 70.

*because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, **as it has also in all the world**, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth;*

Colossians 1:5 - 6

*if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, **which was preached to every creature under heaven**, of which I, Paul, became a minister.*

Colossians 1:23

If the angels of Revelation 2 and 3 are generally accepted to be the overseers of the seven churches, then it is perfectly consistent to regard the angels which Revelation 14 and Matthew 24 refer to as being human messengers. This seems to be reinforced by the teaching of the New Testament that the Gospel is not preached by angels but by men. This point is made in Acts 10 where although an angel appeared to Cornelius, his message was not the Gospel but a direction to find a Gospel preacher.

After the Gospel is made available to every Jew, judgment comes to Jerusalem, which is referred to as “Babylon”.

*And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”*

Revelation 14:8

Christ also warned all believers who would be in Jerusalem at the time of its invasion by the Romans to flee the city (Matthew 24:15–16). Thus Revelation states that the city would be inhabited by those who had the mark of the beast-

*Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.”*

Revelation 14:9 - 10

The Romans literally bombarded Jerusalem with fire and brimstone just as this verse predicted. But beyond the mere natural bombardment of Jerusalem there awaited an eternal fate for all those who refused to accept Christ, thus not only would they endure the torment of the Romans for their rebellion against Rome they would suffer for eternity for their rebellion against the Lamb-

*“And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”*

Revelation 14:11

We are then shown a picture of Christ reaping the harvest of those who have transitioned from the Old Covenant into the New.

*Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.” So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.*

Revelation 14:14 – 16

This is contrasted with the reaping conducted by an angel. Jesus gave the parable of such an end-time harvest when He described the end of the Old Covenant Age as being like a harvest which would reap both wheat and tares, acceptable and unacceptable fish.

*Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."*

Matthew 13:30

*So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just...*

Matthew 13:49

Revelation describes what at the time was an immediate future event. Those Hebrews who had rejected their Messiah would be reaped for God's wrath-

*So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.*

Revelation 14:19

The reference in Revelation 14:20 to the blood flowing outside of Jerusalem as high as a horse's bridle is attested to the historian Josephus who said that this is what happened.

*Regarding the blood flow to the "horses' bridles," Josephus' comments on the battle scenes during the Jewish War are enlightening. At one point a naval battle produced a "lake all bloody, and full of dead bodies" (Wars 3:10:9). Later he reported that "the whole of the country through which they had fled was filled with slaughter, and Jordan could not be passed over, by reason of the dead bodies that were in it, but because the lake Asphaltitis was also full of dead bodies" (Wars 4-7:6). Surely such carnage and bloodshed are suggested by John's imagery.*

Dr. Kenneth Gentry, Jr.

## The Bowls

*Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever.*

Revelation 15:7

Revelation now begins another vision of the same events which it has already been describing. Historicists regard these bowls (or "vials") as transpiring

throughout history. Their interpretation of these bowls is highly subjective and not at all united. It violates the principles of sound interpretation which we are employing since such an interpretation demands that this vision would have been completely irrelevant to the original audience.

Once we understand the message of the previous visions we can soon see that this vision is a complementary one. Each of the bowls describe a form of judgment upon Jerusalem culminating in the complete destruction of Judaism's holy city.

*...For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets,  
And You have given them blood to drink.  
For it is their just due."*

Revelation 16:6

This chapter succinctly leaves the reader with the impression that God's judgment upon Judaism is just. It repeatedly states how hardened the hearts of these people had become. Twice it states that they blasphemed God and refused to repent or give Him glory. Verse 13 reveals that Israel (the false Prophet) and Rome (the Beast) were actually in league with Satan (the Dragon). They were using demonic power ("frogs", verse 14). The kings of the earth in union with Rome were able to gather together at Rome's summons to carry out vengeance upon Jerusalem.



## Armageddon

Jerusalem is called Armageddon because it would be the site of a major battle. The symbolic name “Armageddon” was used since this was the Old Testament place where Israel fought many of its battles against invading armies. It is actually “the Valley of Megiddo”.

*Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself so that he might fight with him, and did not heed the words of Necho from the mouth of God. So he came to fight in the Valley of Megiddo.*

2Chronicles 35:22

Jerusalem is prophetically pictured as being destroyed not just with the might of human armies but with massive “natural” phenomena as well.

*And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth.*

Revelation 16:18

We have already referred to the Jewish historian Josephus who described the events leading up to Jerusalem’s destruction in AD 70 as being accompanied by unusual earthquakes and natural phenomena.

*<sup>19</sup> Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. <sup>20</sup> Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.*

Revelation 16:19-20

Interestingly, both Jerusalem and the Temple were divided into three parts. The city was divided by three walls, and the Temple by three courts. Jerusalem remains in three parts to this day.

*Jerusalem is divided into three sections, the Old City, New City (West Jerusalem) and East Jerusalem. The Old City was under Jordanian control from 1949 to 1967. During this time the Jordanians destroyed the Jewish quarter but today it has been restored. The New City built mostly by the Jews has developed greatly since the 19th century. East Jerusalem, just north of the Old City is considered the modern Arab section. The walled old city in the centre contains Muslim, Jewish, Christian and Armenian quarters.*

[http://msms.essortment.com/religionjerusal\\_rubl.htm](http://msms.essortment.com/religionjerusal_rubl.htm)

*They don't come any holier than this. Jews, Muslims, Christians: all three hold Jerusalem sacred, and it seems all three would rather see it*

*destroyed than have the others touch it. Of course, most people come to Jerusalem to immerse themselves in this holy history, but try to remember that Jerusalem is as much a modern city as a concept, as full of living, breathing people as ghosts and Biblical figures. The city is divided into three parts: the walled Old City, where most of the sights are; the predominantly Arab East Jerusalem; and the rapidly expanding new city, known as West Jerusalem. The Old City is also divided, into Armenian, Christian, Jewish and Muslim quarters.*

Lonely Planet Travel Guide

Even though the city was divided into three secured sections, there was nowhere to hide from the wrath of the Romans, the agents of God's judgment. This verse likens Jerusalem to the Jewish by-word for debauchery and moral depravity: *Babylon*. We are therefore shown that Jerusalem had completely rejected her God and become just as wicked as the cities it scorned. This verse seems to be reminiscent of Jerusalem's destruction by the Babylonians, as predicted by Ezekiel-

*"And you, son of man, take a sharp sword, take it as a barber's razor, and pass it over your head and your beard; then take scales to weigh and divide the hair. You shall burn with fire one-third in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are finished; then you shall take one-third and strike around it with the sword, and one-third you shall scatter in the wind: I will draw out a sword after them."*

Ezekiel 5:1-2

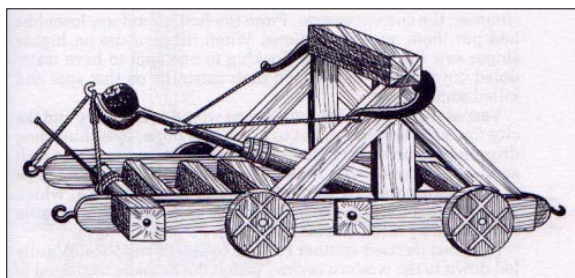
*And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.*

Revelation 16:21



Cannonball-shaped stones such as these pictured left, found in Jerusalem, were hurled by the Roman catapults at the Jews, holed up in the Holy City (*The Topical Josephus*, Cleon L. Rogers Jr., p.180).

The Romans used catapults, which could hurl their missiles up to 400 metres. The picture to the right is an artist's reconstruction of the ancient Roman catapult. Each missile weighed 1 talent (around 30 kilograms).



*The prophecy of the talent weight hailstones has found a similar fulfilment in the siege of Jerusalem...Josephus states of the catapults of the Roman tenth legion: "the stones that were cast, were of the weight of a talent, and were carried two furlongs and further....As for the Jews, they at first watched the coming of the stone, for it was a white color" (Wars 5:6:3). These stones not only had the weight required by John, but were the same color as hail.*

(Dr. Kenneth L. Gentry Jr- <http://www.kennethgentry.com/Merchant2/apocalypse.htm>)

## The Harlot & Beast

*But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!"*

John 19:15

Jerusalem is once exposed for her true wickedness by the expression assigned to her of being a harlot.

*The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written:*

*MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT,  
THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS  
AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS  
OF THE EARTH.*

Revelation 17:4

Since the entire revelation is describing God's judgment upon Judaism for not only rejecting their Messiah, but completely abandoning Him when they had received so much revelation of Him (including the ultimate revelation: Jesus), we readily see that the same theme continues here. She is seated in the lap of Rome (the Scarlet Beast) which is described as having seven rulers and in league with ten foreign kings (vs. 12) submitted to it.

*So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.*

Revelation 17:3

Jerusalem, the Harlot, is shown to be guilty of the unjust deaths of Christ's witnesses, and even to be in league with Rome in its attempts to eradicate Christians-

*I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.*

Revelation 17:6

John the apostle is able to reveal to the Church that the Beast who would be ruling at this time would be empowered by Satan, and destined for Hell. In the midst of these events taking place he would die, cause the Roman Empire to stumble, but have his mantle of Emperorship and persecution resumed by another.

*"The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.*

Revelation 17:8

We are now given perhaps the clearest time indication of both when Revelation was written and when these events would take place.

*Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. <sup>10</sup>There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. <sup>11</sup>And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition. <sup>12</sup>The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast.*

Revelation 17:9-12

The seven mountains are now revealed to be the seven Emperors of Rome. We are told that at the time of John writing this five had fallen. These included: Julius Caesar, Caesar Augustus, Caesar Tiberius, Caesar Caligula, and Caesar Claudius. The "one is" was Caesar Nero who was reigning at the time of this Revelation being written and was the sixth Emperor of Rome. "The other has not yet come" was Caesar Vespasian who, along with his son Titus, would brutally complete the destruction of Jerusalem by 70AD.

John is shown that the union between Jerusalem and Rome would turn very sour.

*Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire."*

Revelation 17:15 - 16

Revelation 18 goes on to lament the destruction of Jerusalem but grieve over her apostate condition caused by the love of power and wealth over that of God Himself.

*The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all.*

Revelation 18:14

Thus, John warns his audience to come out from under the influence of this harlotry—

*And I heard another voice from heaven saying, Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.*

Revelation 18:4

***The internal evidence within Revelation clearly points to events which were about to immediately take place!***

Revelation 19 takes us back into heaven and reveals that the New Covenant is about to be the exclusive covenant. For one generation since Christ the Gospel was made available to every Jew. During this time the Old Covenant was coming to end. Legally we know that it ended at the Cross, but its amnesty extended to the generation of the cross (40 years). Paul stated that mission was accomplished in Colossians 1:5-6, 23. Christ said that not until the Gospel had gone throughout the entire Empire (Gr. *oikoumene*, not *kosmos* as in Matthew 4:8) would the Old Covenant Age end (Matthew 24:14). Hebrews 8:13 states that the Old Covenant was *about to be done away with*.

Revelation 19 reveals Christ coming to judge Jerusalem. He is seated upon a white horse as the true conqueror.

*Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.*

Revelation 19:11

Two parties are principally judged by Christ at this point: *Jerusalem* (“Sodom and Egypt”, Rev. 11:8; “the Beast from the Land”, Rev. 13:11; “the Harlot in Scarlet”, Rev. 17:4; “Babylon”, Rev. 17:5), and *Rome* (“the Beast from across the sea”, Rev. 13:1; Dan. 7:3, 6) because they both opposed Christ and His servants. The heads of these two organisations were dealt a savage destruction. To the head of Judaism Christ had plainly stated-

*Jesus said to him, “It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”*

Matthew 26:64

Rather than being disappointed that most of Revelation prophesied events which would literally “*take place soon*” to its original readers, we should marvel at just how accurately it did prophesy them and heed its warnings to us. I used to believe the Dispensational lie of a futuristic rapture, tribulation, and the final battle of Antichrist- but now I realise that we are not called to be escapists from this world. Our hope is not the rapture! To equate our hope with escape from a doomed world is pathetic theology and an insult to Scriptural integrity. Our hope is Christ Himself and our eternal relationship with Him. We can have hope now!

I am convinced that Revelation 1-19 is fulfilled. But there is something glorious which awaits. This is revealed in Revelation 20-22. I believe it is legitimate to make a distinction between these two sections of the Book of Revelation, as I hope to demonstrate.

*After **a long time** the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.*

Matthew 25:19



JUDGMENT



## ***Chapter 8***

# **Understanding The Final Judgment of Revelation**

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*<sup>1</sup>Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. <sup>2</sup>He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;*

Revelation 20:1-2

As an ordained Australian Assemblies of God minister I was required to affirm a statement of beliefs which contained the doctrine of an earthly millennial reign of Christ. If any credentialed minister did not affirm this they jeopardised their right to hold ordination. In 1999 this changed. The doctrinal position of the Australian Assemblies of God changed to embrace a broader range of interpretations of what the “1,000” years (“millennium”) of Revelation 20 *could* mean. This was fortunate for me, as I could no longer reconcile the dispensational concept of an earthly millennium with Scripture.

I was very reluctant to talk about my eschatological struggles with my colleagues through this period. I have since learned that I am far from being alone in questioning Dispensationalism’s eschatology. The more I tried to ignore eschatology and relegate it to the realms of “peripheral” doctrines, the more I

encountered pastoral situations where people's lives were being dramatically shaped by their understanding of eschatology.

## Eschatology's Importance

Your understanding of eschatology could cause you to withdraw from society; build a nuclear fall-out shelter in your backyard and stock it with several years supplies of non-perishable food; regard all politicians as part of some worldwide conspiracy to amalgamate all governments; cause you to withdraw from society so that Christ might return sooner to rescue the Church.

*The Pre-millennial view of the Devil's destiny is perhaps more fanciful than Biblical!*

However, regardless of our views of eschatology, Christ's clear instructions for the church is *not to withdraw* but to be salt (Matthew 5:13), light (Matthew 5:14), leaven (Matthew 13:33), a prophetic voice (1Peter 4:11), and the pillar of truth in society (1Tim. 3:15).

Eschatological views have literally resulted in the deaths of thousands of people. One only needs a cursory knowledge of the Middle East crisis to appreciate this. Dispensational prophecy teachers still make claims of prophetic fulfilment about *any* activity in the Middle East, particularly in Israel. They often grope for vague Biblically prophetic announcements which they state will shape the future. When these events have progressed in such a way as to ultimately contradict their interpretation of prophetic Scripture, there have rarely been any apologies, or re-evaluation that their entire system may be faulty.

Underlying many of these views is the basic assumption that the Church was only ever a "Plan B" with God and needs to be removed so that His "Plan A" with Israel could be re-established. This almost heretical notion has demeaned the place of the Church and virtually made the Cross unnecessary or possibly irrelevant. This should at least *disturb* any sincere student of the Bible. We will deal with the place of Israel more fully in the Appendix i.

Therefore, eschatology not only affects how we regard the future, but how we live the present. It influences how we regard our place in society today and whether we should engage in the political process. It determines how we spend or give our money. And for some it has some bearing on whether they start a family or not! For some atheists, eschatology is the main reason why they discredit the Scriptures and the person of Christ, since they regard Matthew 24:34 as proof that Christ was not a prophet, and that the Bible lacks credibility. Thus, the importance of eschatology demands that we handle the Scriptures with care and integrity so that we live the way Christ has intended.

## **Diverse Millennial Positions**

At the beginning of this commentary on Revelation I alluded to three main schools of thought regarding its interpretation: the *Historicist*, the *Futurist*, and the *Preterist* Schools. Now as we conclude this commentary we need to return to these three views to evaluate their interpretation of chapters 20 - 22. It is helpful to appreciate that even within each school of interpretation there are differing views regarding the “*millennium*” of Revelation 20. Some opinions of the millennium are shared by people who hold to different schools of interpretation. For example, Pre-Millennialism has advocates in each of the three main schools, as does Post-Millennialism, and Amillennialism. We might sum up the differing millennial positions as-

### ***The Pre-Millennial Position (Pre-Millennialism)***

This view generally regards the 1,000-year period as a literal one thousand years of the earthly reign of Christ on David’s throne from Jerusalem.

### ***The Post-Millennial Position (Post-Millennialism)***

This view generally does not regard the 1,000-year period as a literal one thousand years but as the period of time in which the Church successfully fulfils the Great Commission and disciples the nations which precedes Christ’s return.

### ***The A-Millennial Position (Amillennialism)***

This view generally considers the 1,000-year period to be symbolic of the spiritual Kingdom of God on earth which was established by Christ on the Cross.

Although there are slight variations of these views these descriptions are generally accurate. While the different schools of interpretation create different understandings of Revelation's contents, it is chapter 20 where perhaps the most radical distinctions are made. How chapter 20 through to chapter 22 is viewed is perhaps the most life-impacting part of the entire book. We will study the millennium a little later, and devote an entire appendix subject to it.

However, one of the greatest implications of how we regard chapters 20 to 22 is not about the millennium, but about our understanding of the place of the Devil today. Based on this passage, some claim that the Devil is an entirely spent force and all evil today is the result of human sinfulness. Others claim that the Devil's ultimate fate is still in the future and that he currently wreaks havoc on planet earth.

## **The Place Of The Devil Today**

*He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; <sup>3</sup>and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.*

Revelation 20:2-3

Revelation 20 deals with the demise of Satan. Which School of interpretation one holds to determines when the timing of Satan's demise is to be regarded.

### ***Pre-Millennialism's Devil***

If you regard the Book of Revelation from a "Pre-millennial" position then chances are that you see the Devil as being highly active, almost instrumental throughout the Book, culminating in an ultimate cosmic clash between Christ and Satan. Prior to Satan's future demise, he is vigorously working to oppose God's

people, wreak havoc, and thwart the purposes of God on earth. Today, the believer must consistently battle with Satan in order to maintain their walk with Christ. Thus there is a strong emphasis on “spiritual warfare” in modern pre-millennialism.

### ***Post Millennialism***

The Post Millennialist sees the Devil as having been bound with the close of the Old Covenant. The Devil is “bound” in the sense that he is restricted. Due to Christ’s victory on the cross the Devil has been defeated and bound.

*<sup>14</sup>having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. <sup>15</sup> Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.*

Colossians 2:14-15

Satan is credited as interfering in the mission of the early Church-

*Therefore we wanted to come to you; even I, Paul, time and again; but Satan hindered us.*

1Thessalonians 2:18

But the Church ultimately triumphs as it carries out its mission-

*Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.*

2Corinthians 2:14

The Post-Millennial view regards the Devil as having been expelled from the direct presence of God with the finalising of the Old Covenant-

*<sup>5</sup>She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne. <sup>6</sup>Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days. <sup>7</sup>And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, <sup>8</sup>but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.*

Revelation 12:5-8

This expulsion has bound Satan and restricted his authority over the earth. Post-Millennialism foresees the ultimate demise of the devil at the culmination of time.

### ***Amillennialism's Devil***

Similar to the Post-Millennial view, Amillennialism however regards that the Devil was bound at the Cross. He and his demonic forces are active in the world, but will eventually be eternally judged.

### ***Hyper-Preterism's Devil***

This view has gained resurgence in recent times. I will explain its difference to Preterism shortly. In rebutting Hyper-Preterism scholars have searched for an adequate term to classify it without being pejorative. These terms have included *Full-Preterism*, or *Hyper-Preterism*. More recently the term *Pantelological* has been coined. It is derived from the Greek word which means *entirely ended*. I believe this to be an accurate and non-pejorative reflection of this position.

It regards the Devil as having been legally defeated at the cross, expelled from the heavenly realms with the ascension of Christ (Rev. 12:9) and bound while the Gospel of the Kingdom (1,000 years) was preached during the first New Testament generation (AD 26 – AD 66). At the end of this time (AD 66 – AD 70) he is released to “deceive the nations” to war against God’s people (Rev. 20:7-9). With judgment carried out on Jerusalem the Devil is cast forever into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:10). Therefore, the Devil is not active today, and never will be again. All evil in the world today is the result of human sinfulness.

*Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?*

James 4:1

## Revelation's Demise Of The Devil

Every millennial view acknowledges the demise of the Devil. The pre, post, and amillennial views regard his just demise at the end of time. Post-millennialism and Amillennialism acknowledge that the Devil *was* defeated at the Cross and expelled from the immediate presence of God when Christ ascended.

*So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

Revelation 12:9

The Pre-millennial view of the Devil's destiny is perhaps more fanciful than Biblical. It strikes me as rather illogical apart from being Biblically flawed. It generally disregards the power of the Cross and its relationship to the Devil's past demise. Its claim that the Devil will be released at the end of Christ's earthly rule lacks sense and raises more questions than providing answers.

The Post-millennial and Amillennial views are both plausible and worthy of further examination. But the Hyper-Preterist, or *Non-millennial*, view presents a significant challenge to both of these views. As worthy as each view is, they can't all be right. I take the (Partial) Preterist viewpoint which must be distinguished from the Pantology (Full-Preterist) viewpoint. Here is a table of differences-

| PANTELOGY (FULL PRETERISM)                                                                                                                                        | PARTIAL PRETERIST                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All Bible prophecy is fulfilled (Dan. 9:24)</li></ul>                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Matthew 24, Revelation 1-19 is fulfilled</li><li>• Matthew 25, Revelation 20-22 unfulfilled</li></ul>                              |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Millennium is a past event which occurred between 26AD and 66AD (40 years from the date of the crucifixion)</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We are in the "millennium" now as Christ's Kingdom is being extended through the preaching of His Gospel</li></ul>                 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Devil was cast into the Lake of Fire in AD70</li></ul>                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Devil is bound now, will seek to deceive the nations and be condemned to the Lake of Fire at the culmination of time</li></ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Resurrection is purely spiritual</li></ul>                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The resurrection is both spiritual and will be physical at the culmination of time</li></ul>                                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All Gifts of the Holy Spirit have ceased (1Cor. 13:10)</li></ul>                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Gifts of the Holy Spirit are available until the Final Resurrection at the culmination of time.</li></ul>                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Disagrees with the accepted Creeds of the Church</li></ul>                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agrees with the accepted Creeds of the Church</li></ul>                                                                            |

## An Analysis Of Revelation 20

The first few verses of Revelation 20 describe the binding of the Devil and his casting into the Bottomless Pit. It then describes those first century martyred saints who would be vindicated with the Lord executing judgment on their behalf.

*And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.*

Revelation 20:4

It is after this judgment that the “1,000 years” begins. This therefore does not agree with the Pantelological view. Rather than take the 1,000 years literally we should regard it as a long period of time - a time of the Lord’s patience.

*But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. <sup>8</sup>But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. <sup>9</sup>The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*

2 Peter 3:7-9



Since this time period began when Judaism was judged and the Old Testament was closed, it is reasonable to conclude that we are now in the New Covenant Kingdom age. It seems extraordinary to try and make the first New Covenant generation (40 years) equate to 1,000 years. There is no Scriptural language for a generation equating to the expression “1,000” years, but as the passage cited above (2 Peter 3:7-9) highlights there is precedent for regarding it as *a long time*.

This view would also be reinforced by the parable and expression in Matthew 25.

*After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.*

Matthew 25:19

Thus Matthew 24 describes Jerusalem's judgment and the invitation to accept admission into the coming Kingdom (Matthew 24:14), while Matthew 25 talks about the Kingdom being established.

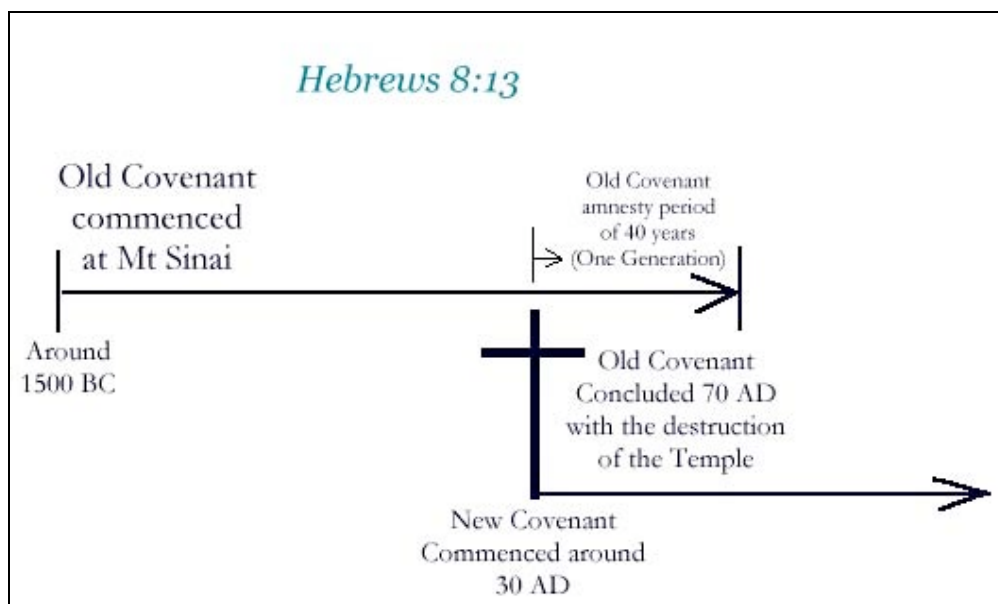
*Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.*

Matthew 25:1

Christ continues to describe the Kingdom of God to His disciples as being established after the destruction of Jerusalem. It is reasonable to understand that although the New Covenant was established at the Cross, the Old Covenant did not end until Jerusalem's destruction in 70AD. Compare this reasoning with Hebrews 8:13-

*In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now **what is becoming** obsolete and growing old is **ready to vanish** away.*

Hebrews 8:13



Thus with the destruction of the elements of the Old Covenant (the Temple, the priesthood, the ceremonies, and the sacrifices) the Old Testament amnesty ended and the Kingdom Christ had come to commence began. When Christ preached-

*(and saying,) "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."*

Mark 1:15

-He meant it perhaps more literally than most have realised. The Kingdom, which He said was *at hand*, literally was at hand and was established as the elements of the Old Covenant ended. This understanding perfectly matches the timeframe statements in Revelation 20.

*Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.*

Revelation 20:6

According to Ephesians 2:1, prior to salvation we were *dead in sin*, but then we were made *alive in Christ*.

*And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins*

Ephesians 2:1

Salvation is the first resurrection. That's the only plausible reason for stating the "second death" (eternal separation from God) has no power over them.

## Satan's Release At The End of The 1,000 Years

*Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison*

Revelation 20:7

Pantelogsists regard the 1,000-year period of Revelation 20 commencing at the Cross and ending just prior to 70AD when the attack on Jerusalem began. They see this attack as correlating to the release of Satan as described in verse 8.

*and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.*

Revelation 20:8

I see the Pantelogsical interpretation as quite reasonable. But I don't agree with it. Firstly there is a world of difference between the city which is judged for its apostasy and wickedness and the city described in Revelation 20:9 (refer to my comments about this verse). Secondly, we now have the purpose of Satan's binding revealed to us. Thus we can see that Christ has wrought a progressive

victory of Satan by taking a stand in both covenants so to speak. Under the Old Covenant Satan could–

1. Enter God's presence (Job 1, 2)
2. Constantly accuse God's people of sin (Zech. 3:1; Rev. 12:10)
3. Rightfully condemn God's people (Jn. 3:18; Rom. 5:16; 8:1)
4. Rule the immediate spiritual realm of earth (2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 6:12)
5. Intimidate God's people with fear (1 Peter 5:8)
6. Steal, murder, and lie (Gen. 3; Jn. 8:44)
7. Possess the willing (1 Sam. 16:14; Jn. 13:2, 27; Acts 5:3)
8. Transform his appearance (2 Cor. 11:14)
9. Buffet believers (2 Cor. 12:7)
10. Hinder the work of God (1 Thess. 2:18)

Some will query this list where I have provided New Testament references to detail Old Testament activities. Again I emphasise the ramifications of Hebrews 8:13 which reveals that the Old Covenant did not end at the Cross but overlapped it until the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. Therefore, what the New Testament describes of Satan's activity has direct relevance to the Old Covenant's understanding as well. But we need to make the following observations about how Satan's progressive downfall was assured by the Cross of Christ.

Because of the Cross, Satan–

1. Can not rightfully condemn God's people of being in sin (Rom. 8:1).
2. Can no longer claim to be Lord of the earth.

Because of the Ascension, Satan–

1. Can no longer enter into the Third Heaven.
2. Can no longer accuse God's people of sin before God.

Because of the close of the Old Covenant and the binding of Satan, he can no longer–

1. Prohibit entire nations from turning to God.
2. Deceive entire nations.
3. Destroy the Church.

When Christ's return culminates His Kingdom, Satan will be forever damned in the Lake of Fire. This Partial Preterist view can be compared with Pantology as-



THE LAST JUDGMENT  
And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and every man shall receive his reward of him. — Revelation 20:12

| Satan's Progressive Downfall:                                          | Pantological View:                                                                            | Partial Preterist View:                                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Satan's 'D Day'</b><br><i>Col. 2:15; 1John 3:8</i>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Cross</li> </ul>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Cross</li> </ul>                                                                 |
| <b>Satan's Expulsion From The Third Heaven</b><br><i>Rev. 12:7 - 9</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Ascension</li> </ul>                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Ascension</li> </ul>                                                             |
| <b>Satan's Binding</b><br><i>Rev. 20:2</i>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Cross</li> </ul>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The close of the Old Covenant with the destruction of the Temple in 70AD.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Satan's Release</b><br><i>Rev. 20:3, 7</i>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The destruction of Jerusalem</li> </ul>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Near the close of time and the culmination of the Kingdom of Christ.</li> </ul>      |
| <b>Satan's Damnation</b><br><i>Rev. 20:10</i>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Occurred with the close of the Old Covenant</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Occurs at the return of Christ</li> </ul>                                            |

## Gog & Magog

Gary DeMar makes a reasonable case in his book *Last Days Fiction* that this reference to Gog and Magog is an allusion to the battle which Ezekiel prophesied about (Ezekiel 38:2), which took place later during the time of Esther. Revelation's use of this battle is a literary device which is reminiscent of the time when the enemies of the Lord's people sought to wipe them out. This then would seem to be saying that at the end of time, persecution may increase against the Church.

*If the battle described in Ezekiel 38-39 does not refer to modern-day Russia, then when and where in biblical history did this conflict take place? Many older commentators placed the battle sometime during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes IV, "whose armies were overthrown by Israelite forces about 400 years after Ezekiel prophesied."\* Instead of looking to the distant future or finding fulfilment in a historical setting outside of the Bible where we depend on unreliable secular sources, we would do well to look to the Bible itself for fulfilment. James B. Jordan believes that "it is in [the book of] Esther that we see a conspiracy to plunder the Jews, which backfires with the result that the Jews plundered their enemies. This event is then ceremonially sealed with the institution of the annual Feast of Purim." \*\**

Gary DeMar, "LAST DAYS FICTION", Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 2001:12 citing, \*Ralph Woodrow, HIS TRUTH IS MARCHING ON: ADVANCED STUDIES ON PROPHECIES IN THE LIGHT OF HISTORY (Riverside,CA; Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Association, 1977), 43, and \*\*James B. Jordan, ESTHER IN THE MIDST OF COVENANT HISTORY (Niceville, FL; Biblical Horizons, 1995), 5.

## The Beloved City

*They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.*

Revelation 20:9

The reference to *the beloved city* cannot logically mean Old Jerusalem since most of the book has decried this city with such names as Sodom (Rev. 11:8), Egypt (Rev. 11:8), Babylon (Rev. 14:8), and the Harlot (Rev. 17:5).

*But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels*

Hebrew 12:22

Pantelologists claim that Revelation 20 is merely a repeat of the previous visions of Revelation 6 –19 which has detailed the destruction of Jerusalem as the seat of apostate Judaism. But there are serious difficulties with regarding chapter 20 as yet another repeat of the previous visions. Each of the previous visions in Revelation gives a chronological reference point. For example, the seven seals are shown to have taken place during the reign of the Emperors Augustus to Vespasian. The seven trumpets during the time when Rome placed four battalions at the Euphrates River (Rev. 9:14). The seven bowls, when Nero was Emperor (Rev. 17:10). But Revelation 20 makes the point that there is a long time gap between Jerusalem being judged and the events described in verse 9 by its use of the term “thousand years”.

Secondly, Pantelologists claim that the Devil was eternally judged and condemned in 70AD. History and human experience suggest otherwise. There is enough reason to accept that there is still much demonic activity in this world that cannot be simply attributed to human sinfulness. Although defeated and bound at the Cross (Heb. 2:14; 1 Jn. 3:8), the Devil and his demonic forces are still at large and able to hinder the work of God. Note Paul’s statement, which was obviously after the binding of Satan at the Cross.

*Therefore we wanted to come to you; even I, Paul, time and again; but Satan hindered us.*

1 Thessalonians 2:18

Thirdly, the Devil is not the only power judged according to Revelation 21:4. Therefore we have to ask whether there is evidence that these other elements have also been put away in 70AD as claimed by Pantelologists-

*And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.*

Revelation 21:4

Fourthly, in Revelation 20:9, Christ comes to rescue and deliver the city. This is opposite to His coming to judge natural Jerusalem. This coming is associated with God’s sending fire from Heaven which corresponds to Christ’s culminating return as described in Second Thessalonians 1:8.

*in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and  
on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

2 Thessalonians 1:8

Pantelologists simply argue that this verse refers to our heavenly state. But this is somewhat nonsensical. If this refers to heaven, when did those in heaven ever experience death, sorrow, crying, or pain? Therefore the statement that there shall be no more of these things could not logically refer to a change in the heavenly occupants. It demands to be accepted as a cosmic change. Revelation gives us the sense that time is heading somewhere and at the end of time there will be a time of ultimate accountability.

*Seventy weeks are determined  
For your people and for your holy city,  
To finish the transgression,  
To make an end of sins,  
To make reconciliation for iniquity,  
To bring in everlasting righteousness,  
To seal up vision and prophecy,  
And to anoint the Most Holy.*

Daniel 9:24



According to this verse in Daniel when the Old Covenant closed with the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem, “vision and prophecy” regarding Israel was brought to a close (“sealed up”). From Revelation 20 we are given a revelation which affects all mankind for all time.

## The Last Judgment

*Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.*

Revelation 20:11

This final judgment announces a new order. The expression “heaven and earth fled away” is apocalyptic language for great change. This expression only occurs in the New Testament. For example-

*For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.*

Matthew 5:18

We know that the Old Covenant was indeed completely fulfilled in the work of Christ. Therefore a new order was established (heaven and earth fled away). Jesus possibly links the passing away of heaven and earth as proceeding from the destruction of Jerusalem which He had just foretold in Matthew 24.

*The picture of eternal judgment here should cause us to walk in a greater sense of the fear of the Lord.*

*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.*

Matthew 24:35

This would also align with Revelation’s message in that chapters 5 through to 19 have described God’s judgment on Jerusalem, and now this expression is introduced into Revelation for the first time after these prophetic descriptions. What Revelation 20:11 makes clear is that there will be a day of ultimate reckoning. For the Pantelologist this took place in 70AD and continues to take place every time someone dies. But that is clearly not the impression given by this passage from Revelation 20:11 and on. Neither is it how the early Church understood it. Some of the most ancient creeds of the Church, written after 70AD, describe Christ coming to ultimately judge.

*because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.*

Acts 17:31

What is described from this point on should strike terror in the heart of every unredeemed person. They will be condemned for their sin for all eternity. It should also strike terror in the heart of every believer because we too will have to give an account.

*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. <sup>11</sup>Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.*

2 Corinthians 5:10-11

Paul said that Christ would judge the living and the dead at His appearing (after) His Kingdom.

*I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:*

2 Timothy 4:1

The Judgment described here will summon all the dead to appear before God. This appears to be the second resurrection.

*And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

Matthew 10:28

Christ declared that the physical resurrection would be for both the righteous and the unrighteous. It will coincide with the ultimate Judgment which will bring all sin and its consequences to an end.

## **Hell & Ultimate Judgment**

Several years ago I wrote on the subject of Hell (*A Biblical Revelation of Hell*). I was concerned at the growing number of fanciful concepts developing around the subject of Hell. Some of these included concepts which regarded Hell as the Devil's domain, rather than his place of judgment. Other concepts were being developed which taught that it was demonic spirits who carried out divine judgment upon the inhabitants of Hell.

*Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*

Revelation 20:14

A well-versed student of the Bible should readily identify these concepts as completely unbiblical and theologically perilous. I also dealt with some of the seemingly contradictory metaphors used to describe Hell such as-

- *fiery yet completely dark-*

*But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool' shall be in danger of hell **fire**.*

Matthew 5:22

*For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of **darkness**, to be reserved for judgment;*

2 Peter 2:4

How do we reconcile such contradictory concepts such as fiery yet dark? Some people have attempted to make distinctions between *Hell* and *Outer Darkness* (Matthew 8:12; 22:13) to try to resolve this. Still others regard all references to 'Hell fire' as *the Lake of Fire* mentioned in Revelation 20:14. To adequately understand these concepts we must appreciate Biblical language.

The Biblical use of "fire" nearly always metaphorically refers to *God's judgment*. Does Hell have literal flames? No. The language of flames to depict Hell (God's Judgment) was adopted when Israel sinned in the *valley of the son of Hinnom* (first mentioned in Joshua 15:8; 18:16). The Greek word for this place was "Gehenna" and this is the word translated as *hell* in Matthew 5:22.

*The idea of Gehenna originated in the Old Testament. The Valley of Hinnom (...south of Jerusalem) was infamous for pagan rites, especially child sacrifice, that were offered there (2Kings 16:3; 23:10), and Jeremiah prophesied that God's judgment would fall there (eg., Jer. 19:6f.) As the concept of the after-life developed in the intertestamental period, the Valley of Hinnom came to represent the eschatological place of judgment or hell itself.*

ISBE, Vol. 2, page 423



Another Greek word often translated as “Hell” in our English Bibles is *Hades*. But this word merely means the *place of the Dead*. When Jesus died the Scriptures say that God did not leave Him in *Hades*—

*he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ,  
that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.*

Acts 2:31

Hades is nearly always directly associated with *death* in Scripture (note the expression “*death and Hades*”). When Jesus said that the Gates of Hades would not prevail against the Church, the use of the expression “gates” means *power* not some physical *gates* (Matthew 16:18). Thus, Christ was saying that the Church would never be overcome.



Revelation 20:14 describes *death* and *Hades* (not Gehenna) being thrown into the Lake of Fire. We should therefore understand that Hell refers to God’s judgment. Usage of expressions like *fire* merely paint a picture of the severity of this divine judgment. Whether Gehenna should be thought of as the ultimate judgment, the Lake of Fire, and that this

should be referred to as *Hell* and differentiated from *Hades* perhaps misses the point that God’s judgment of the unrighteous now begins at the point of their death and is irreversible.

Revelation 20:14 also announces that after the Ultimate Judgment there will be no further judgment. From the resurrection of all mankind, the wicked will have bodies to endure the suffering of God’s judgment for eternity. Scripture does not teach annihilation.

*And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But  
rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

Matthew 10:28

*Also they are afraid of height,  
And of terrors in the way;  
When the almond tree blossoms,*

*The grasshopper is a burden,  
And desire fails.  
For man goes to his eternal home,  
And the mourners go about the streets.*  
Ecclesiastes 12:5

*And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous  
into eternal life.*

Matthew 25:46

*of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of  
the dead, and of eternal judgment.*

Hebrews 6:2

Understanding this should motivate the believer to do all we can to prevent people from choosing the *path which leads to destruction*.

*Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way  
that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.*

Matthew 7:13

What was a message specifically for some mid-first-century Turkish churches, is now given to all—

*He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and  
he shall be My son. <sup>8</sup>But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable,  
murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall  
have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which  
is the second death.*

Revelation 21:7-8

The picture of eternal judgment here should cause us to walk in a greater sense of the fear of the Lord. When we realise its ramifications for the world it should also cause us to be motivated to try and turn as many as we can away from sin and persuade them as best we can to be reconciled to God.

*And on some have compassion, making a distinction; <sup>23</sup>but others save  
with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled  
by the flesh.*

Jude 22-23

*Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we  
are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your  
consciences...<sup>20</sup>Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though  
God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be  
reconciled to God.*

2 Corinthians 5:11, 20

While the bulk of the Book describes the judgment which would come upon Jerusalem and Judea in 70AD resulting in the destruction of the Temple, the Book concludes with a *New Jerusalem* and the declaration-

*But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.*

Revelation 21:22



Revelation 22 concludes with a glimpse of eternity. I long to see it in person and I hope that you will join me there. It has been my hope to communicate as simply as I can the truth of Revelation's message and its implications for us today. Because the first 19 chapters were fulfilled with such alarming accuracy, it gives me the confidence to trust that its future implications will also be fulfilled just as precisely!

*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

Revelation 22:21



Many have the false concept that Satan dwells in Hell and is its lord.



# BIBLICAL POSITION OF ISRAEL



## *Appendix i*

# **Understanding The Biblical Position of Israel Today**

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One of the most important implications for how we view the Book of Revelation is how we are to regard the place of Israel today. In the Dispensational camp we have people who teach that God is currently restoring the Jews to their homeland of Palestine. In the Reformation camp we have people who claim that God's exclusive and primary dealings with Israel are finished and that He now deals with the Church (made up of Jews and Gentiles). Dispensationalists often disparagingly label this teaching as "Replacement Theology".

## **Dispensational Claims**

*"And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you."*

*Genesis 17:7*

Dispensationalists claim that God has made an "everlasting" covenant with Israel. Therefore, God still has a redemptive purpose for the world through Israel. Intrinsic to this assumption is the belief that Jews have an incontestable and exclusive right to the land of Palestine.

Fundamental to the Dispensational claims about Israel is a unique method of interpreting Bible prophecy called Double Reference. This Dispensational claim is integral and peculiar to its system of hermeneutics.

If it can be shown that there is no such hermeneutical principle as Double Reference (also referred to as “Partial Fulfilment”) then the entire argument for Dispensationalism collapses. The reason for this is that Reformed scholars point out to Dispensationalists that all of the prophecies regarding Israel have already been fulfilled and there is no Scriptural need to await another fulfilment.

***Hosea foresaw that the “everlasting” covenant would one day be superseded!***

Some Dispensationalists acknowledge this, but claim that these prophecies will have a yet future implication. Other Dispensationalists do not acknowledge that all prophecies regarding Israel have been fulfilled and are still forced to appeal to their principle of Double Reference to those prophecies which have clearly been fulfilled. Therefore, these Dispensational claims of an everlasting, unbreakable, covenant with Israel and the land of Palestine being Israel’s divine right, demands to be investigated in the light of Scripture.

## **An Everlasting, Unbreakable Covenant?**

Dispensationalists claim that God’s covenant with physical Israel is still valid today since it is continually described as an everlasting covenant.

*And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you.*

Genesis 17:7

But covenants, even everlasting covenants, can be broken.

*The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants,  
Because they have transgressed the laws,  
Changed the ordinance,  
Broken the everlasting covenant.*

Isaiah 24:5

Covenants should not be confused with the Testament. It is true that the Testament of God has not changed (note Hebrews 9:16). The Older Covenant was a necessary component of the Testament of God. Some have claimed that if this Older Covenant with Israel could be broken, then so could the New Covenant with the Church. The problem with this argument is that it fails to understand that the Older Covenant was always designed as an adumbrated covenant for the New Covenant which completed the Testament. This means that within the Testament of God there was a (i) A will (God's instructions, His Word), (ii) Provisos (first the Older Covenant, then the New Covenant), (iii) an inheritance (salvation), (iv) the Testator (God Himself), and (v) heirs (the redeemed). Differentiating between the Old Covenant and the Testament helps us to understand how the Scripture could describe the Old Covenant as everlasting, yet able to be broken and made obsolete.

In fact, this is largely the main point of the Book of Hosea which describes the unfaithfulness of Israel and its blatant breaking of the everlasting covenant. Hosea's description of how God acknowledged Israel's unfaithfulness is both graphic and intimate when his own wife is used as a type of Israel committing adultery.

*Then God said: "Call his name Lo-Ammi,  
For you are not My people,  
And I will not be your God."  
Hosea 1:9*

Hosea then declares that God would take the typology of all that the Older Covenant represented and fulfil it by superseding the Old Covenant with a newer one. Thus Hosea foresaw that God would one day embrace Gentile people into His covenant-

*Yet the number of the children of Israel  
Shall be as the sand of the sea,  
Which cannot be measured or numbered.  
And it shall come to pass  
In the place where it was said to them,  
'You are not My people,'  
There it shall be said to them,  
'You are sons of the living God.'  
Hosea 1:10*

This is confirmed in Romans, which cites this passage to make this point that God's everlasting covenant would be superseded by a new one and embrace Gentiles as well as Jews.

*even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? <sup>25</sup>As He says also in Hosea:*

*"I will call them My people, who were not My people,  
And her beloved, who was not beloved.  
<sup>26</sup>And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You  
are not My people,'  
There they shall be called sons of the living God."*

Romans 9:24-26

*In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete.  
Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish  
away.*

Hebrews 8:13

Hosea foresaw that the "everlasting" covenant would one day be superseded as stated in Hebrews 8:13. He states this in very poetic language, which symbolically speaks of God introducing Gentiles ("beasts" and other unclean animals which the food laws typified of Gentiles) into this New Covenant.

*In that day I will make a covenant for them  
With the beasts of the field,  
With the birds of the air,  
And with the creeping things of the ground.  
Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth,  
To make them lie down safely.*

Hosea 2:18

Dispensationalists claim that if God would break His "everlasting" covenant with the nation of Israel, then it might be possible for Him to similarly abolish the New Covenant as well. Perhaps this argument could be reworded to more accurately reflect sound theology, since God clearly did cut Israel off without simultaneously abolishing the Old Covenant—

*And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree,*

Romans 11:17

Therefore, the thought that New Covenant people who similarly break covenant with God could be cut off, is actually stated in Scripture—

*For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either.*

Romans 11:21

## Who Really Owns Palestine?

*And confirmed it to Jacob for a statute,  
To Israel as an everlasting covenant,  
<sup>11</sup>Saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan  
As the allotment of your inheritance,"  
Psalm 105:10 - 11*

Some claim that Israel is yet to possess all of its Promised Land. Therefore, based on this assumption, a case is built for modern Israelites to aggressively take by force what they consider to be their divine right. But this claim is instantly dispelled by the very clear teaching in Joshua 21:43-45 -

*So the LORD gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it.  
<sup>44</sup>The LORD gave them rest all around, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers. And not a man of all their enemies stood against them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand.  
<sup>45</sup>Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass.*

Joshua 21:43-45

Some Dispensationalists feel that New Testament statements regarding the “fullness of the Gentiles” or “the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” solve the lack of any direct New Testament reference to Israel’s regaining its Promised Land.

*And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.*

Luke 21:24

*For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.*

*<sup>26</sup>And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:  
“The Deliverer will come out of Zion,  
And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;  
<sup>27</sup>For this is My covenant with them,  
When I take away their sins.”*

Roman 11:25 - 27

In regard to Luke 21:24 this refers to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and has nothing to do with Jews returning to their homeland. Romans 11:25-27 refers to Gentiles coming into the New Covenant with God and thus fulfilling the original call of Israel to be a light to the world. Once again it has nothing to do with Jews returning to Palestine to reclaim it for Zion's sake.

So who owns Palestine? God does. He is the Landlord of all the earth (Psalm 24:1). God never offered ownership of the land to anyone. He offered tenancy of it. He invited Israel to be permanent tenants of the land and warned them of the possibility of eviction from the land if they broke their covenant with Him (refer to Leviticus 20:22; Deut. 29:28). The fulfilment of these warnings is the backdrop to the books of Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

What we have previously seen taking place in Palestine throughout the twentieth century has very little if anything to do with the fulfilment of Bible prophecy. Professor Colin Chapman, an ordained Anglican minister formerly the Lecturer in Islamic Studies at the Near East School of Theology in Beirut Lebanon, has written a well researched book into this subject- *“Who’s Promised Land? The Continuing Crisis Over Israel and Palestine”* (Lion Publishing, Oxford, 2002).<sup>1</sup> In this book Professor Chapman shows how Israel’s possession of Palestine was marred by violent and militant battles against the native Palestinians. In regards to Israel’s legitimacy to occupy the land today, Prof. Chapman asks–

*Could it not be argued that...the targeted assassinations, the confiscation of land, the uprooting of olive groves, the demolition of houses and the constant harassment and humiliation of old and young at checkpoints amounts to a kind of violence that is just as reprehensible as the more obvious terrorism of Palestinian suicide bombers?*

“Apocalypse Now In Israel/Palestine?”, Rev’d Colin Chapman, THE BIBLE IN TRANSMISSION (UK BIBLE SOCIETY JOURNAL), Autumn 2003

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<sup>1</sup> For an excellent discussion of this subject, please refer to Hank Hannegraaff’s online discussion with Prof. Colin Chapman- [http://www.oneplace.com/common/player/oneplace/includes/frame-content.asp?url=http://boss.streamos.com/real/swn/oneplace/rm/bam/bam20041209.ram&AdsCategory=MINISTRY.BAM&Refresh=60&PAGEID=125196177&show\\_id=243&date=12/9/2004&Show\\_Date=](http://www.oneplace.com/common/player/oneplace/includes/frame-content.asp?url=http://boss.streamos.com/real/swn/oneplace/rm/bam/bam20041209.ram&AdsCategory=MINISTRY.BAM&Refresh=60&PAGEID=125196177&show_id=243&date=12/9/2004&Show_Date=)

He goes on to make this plea to Christians around the world who are blindly supporting Israel based on a wrong interpretation of the Bible and especially Biblical eschatology—

*If only the Christian Zionists, not only in America but all over the world, could see how their biblical interpretation and their theology work out in practice in the lives of Palestinians. And if only they could see that their crusade on behalf of Israel creates an enormous stumbling block to the gospel in the minds of Muslims all over the world. There are other ways of interpreting the biblical promises and prophecies which accept the full authority of Scripture but read everything in the Hebrew Bible in the light of Jesus and point to a much more even-handed approach...*

Ibid.

## Who Is The Israel Of God?

*And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.*

Galatians 6:16

Paul introduces the expression the Israel of God in Galatians 6:16 to contrast those who were natural Israelites with those who had become the spiritual Israelites. Indeed the Epistle to the Galatians emphasises that relationship to Abraham, which qualified someone as a Jew, was through faith in Christ not ancestry.

*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup>And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

Galatians 3:28 - 29

Paul stressed something similar to the Romans when he said-

*For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; <sup>29</sup>but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.*

Romans 2:28 – 29

*But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel,*

Romans 9:6

I grew up in a church where I was taught that to be a Jew and a Christian was an extremely privileged position. This Dispensational teaching is however countered by Paul's following statement-

*For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.*

Romans 10:12

To endorse what Paul wrote about true Jews and the Israel of God as referring to those in the New Covenant is not replacement theology, but more aptly described as continuation theology. It is clear from Paul's writings that he regards Christians as entering into the original purpose for Israel.

We have established that the claims made by Dispensationalism require a unique set of creative hermeneutical manoeuvres that are both unbiblical and illogical. Secondly, the claims of an everlasting and unbreakable covenant with physical Israel are shown to be selectively interpreted when they ignore the vulnerability of covenants in the light of one party breaking the conditions of the covenant. Thirdly, the claims made about God's promises to Israel possessing their land can be shown from Scripture as already having been fulfilled. Fourthly, the New Testament teaches that the Church indeed is the will and plan of God and as such is referred to as the Israel of God. Added to this is the complete absence of any New Testament teaching on God restoring Israel to its land with a re-instituted form of Temple-based worship.

Therefore, while it is right to condemn any form of Anti-Semitism, it is surely equally wrong to condone any action taken by modern Israel to use violence or terror against Palestinians. While it is right to support the land claims of any people unjustly deprived of their native land, it is equally wrong to naively base such support on a faulty understanding of Bible prophecy.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For more on this subject I would refer readers to my commentary on the Book of Ephesians available in eBook format from [www.andrewcorbett.net](http://www.andrewcorbett.net).

# WHY THE RAPTURE IS UNBIBLICAL!



*Appendix ii*

# Understanding Why The Rapture Is UnBiblical

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For years I was taught that the coming of Christ was to be in two stages: He would come *for* the Church, then He would later come *with* the Church. The first stage of this coming was called *the rapture*. I grew up in a church where we saw evangelistic films reinforcing this notion. Of late, the *Left Behind* series of books and films has continued to popularise this view as well. The belief that the Church will be raptured has become one of the most popular beliefs in the Western Church today. Yet when one considers how recent this novel doctrine is, it has to be regarded as one of the most amazing doctrinal shifts to have ever taken place in the history of the Church.

## The Origins Of The Rapture

The Reformers of the sixteenth century saw sharp parallels between the apparent evils of an apostate religious group, as described in the Book of Revelation, and the Church of Rome. This opinion was so strong among the Reformers that they went as far as declaring that the Pope was the Anti-Christ, and the Roman Church was the Harlot of Babylon. One only needs to read the Westminster Confession of Faith which plainly states this belief.



Many believe that this attack on the Roman Catholic Church, known as *Historicism*, was strategically countered by a Jesuit, Francisco Ribera (1537 – 1591). He deflected some of this attack by developing the *Futurist* eschatological system. He published a book in 1591, in which he claimed that the Anti-Christ, the Fall of Babylon, and the destruction of a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem would all take place in the final seven years before the commencement of the millennium. Out of the seeds of Futurism grew the teaching of Edward Irving.

Edward Irving (1792-1834) was a minister of the Church of Scotland. He was also influenced by the writings of another Jesuit Priest, Emmanuel Lacunza (pictured above, who used the pseudonym *Juan Josafat Ben-Ezra*) who wrote a book, *'The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty'*. Irving translated this Spanish book into English and added a 203 page Preface.

*When the Lord shall have finished the taking of witness against the Gentiles... he will begin to prepare another ark of testimony... and to that end will turn his Holy Spirit unto his ancient people, the Jews, and bring them unto those days of refreshing... This outpouring of the Spirit is known in Scripture by 'the latter rain'.*

Published by L.B. Seeley & Sons, 1827, London, pp. 5-6.

Irving planted the seeds of Dispensationalism which greatly influenced two other men. The first was John Nelson Darby (pictured right, 1800-1882), an Anglican minister who left the Church of Ireland to commence the *Plymouth Brethren*. The other was Henry Drummond (1786-1860), a banker, who founded the *Catholic Apostolic Church*.



In 1831 both Edward Irving and John Nelson Darby began to postulate a two-staged return of Christ. Some believe that Irving was influenced by a young girl, Margaret McDonald, who apparently received this ‘revelation’ from the Lord of a “rapture” of the Church before a time of Great Tribulation at the end of the age.



Through a series of Prophetic Conferences in England and the United States, this view gained popularity. But its most accelerated acceptance came when Cyrus Schofield (pictured left, 1843 - 1921) published his Reference Bible which incorporated the essential elements of Dispensationalism (including a secret rapture of the Church) into its study notes. This was published in 1909. Other such Dispensational Study Bibles began to appear throughout the twentieth century, including *Dakes Annotated Reference Bible* which almost became the standard text for the growing number of Pentecostals throughout the United States of America and Australia.

***First  
Thessalonians  
4:17 refers to  
Resurrection, not  
Rapture!***

Throughout the twentieth century the Rapture theory has been prolifically promoted by Hal Lindsay’s now discredited book, *Late Great Planet Earth*, and more recently by Tim LaHaye’s and Jerry Jenkins’ fictional *Left Behind* series.

## What Is The Rapture?

John F. Walvoord is perhaps considered the most vocal and prolific advocate for the rapture throughout the twentieth century. In his book, *The Rapture Question*, he defines the rapture as-

*The Scriptures predict that the church will be raptured, or “caught up” to heaven, at the coming of the Lord for them. The word rapture is from rapere, found in the expression “caught up” in the Latin translation of 1Thessalonians 4:17.*

John F. Walvoord, “The Rapture Question”, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1979



Rapture advocates build their case almost entirely on First Thessalonians 4:17.

*Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*

1Thessalonians 4:17

We introduced this commentary by establishing three logical principles for interpreting God's Word. I would also like to point out to those who may object to the association of "logic" with God's Word that the word *logic* is derived from the Greek word, *logos*, which is a title and name of Christ.

*These principles include: Examining the context; Avoiding Contradiction; and Appreciating the original intention.* Generally, even Dispensationalists easily accept these three Hermeneutical principles. But in order for their system to work, they also require the addition of two other invented "laws". These include "*the Law of First Mention*", and "*the Law of Double Reference*." This proposed hermeneutical law flounders immediately when we try to determine when a Biblical text is first mentioned. Should we regard Genesis as occurring before Job since Job was probably written before Genesis? Should we regard the order of Biblical books as they occur in Western or the differing order of Eastern (Orthodox) Bibles?

By employing the sound principles of interpretation to the First Thessalonians 4:17 passage we should see that this refers not to a rapture, but to the resurrection. We draw this conclusion from the context of the passage.

In verse 13 the passage is referring to those Christians who have already died, and Paul is pre-empting their resurrection.

*But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.*

1Thessalonians 4:13

In verse 14 the passage is linked to the resurrection of Christ.

*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.*

1Thessalonians 4:14

In verse 16 the expression most commonly used for resurrection, "rise", is used-

*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.*

1Thessalonians 4:16



Prior to the invention of the rapture doctrine, all published commentators interpreted this First Thessalonians passage as referring to the resurrection. For example, Matthew Henry's commentary on this passage says—

*They shall be raised up from the dead, and awakened out of their sleep, for God will bring them with him, v 14. They then are with God, and are better where they are than when they were here; and when God comes he will bring them with him. The doctrine of the resurrection and the second coming of Christ is a great antidote against the fear of death and inordinate sorrow for the death of our Christian friends...v.17. At, or immediately before, this rapture into the clouds, those who are alive will undergo a mighty change, which will be equivalent to dying...*

Matthew Henry, 1721

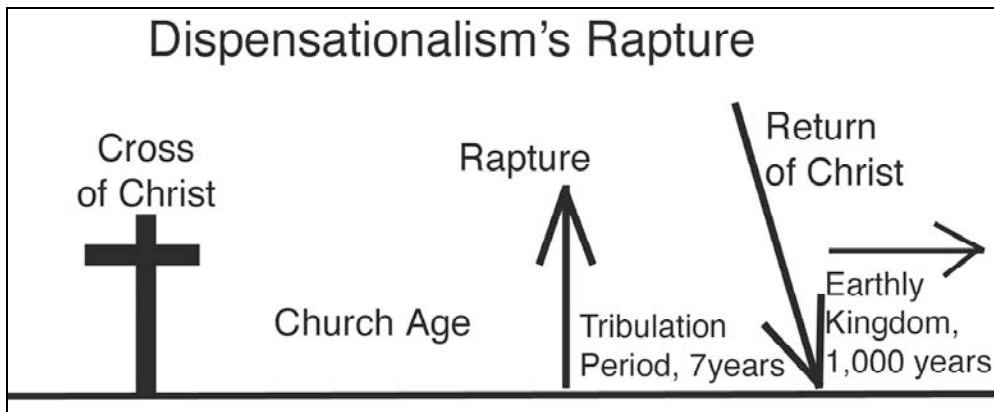
Matthew Henry, along with nearly all other commentators prior to the invention of Dispensationalism, saw the obvious intention of this passage as referring to the resurrection of the dead at the final coming of Christ, not a secret rapture prior to the resurrection.

Applying the principle of Non-contradiction this First Thessalonians 4 passage complements statements in First Corinthians 15.

*in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

1Corinthians 15:52

The whole point to First Corinthians 15 is resurrection, not rapture.



## Does Scripture Teach It?

No. Let's examine some of the key Scriptures used to justify a rapture:

**Matthew 24:40-41** *"Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left."<sup>41</sup> Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left."*

- The context of this reference is clearly the random killings perpetrated by the Romans and their siege of Jerusalem and Judea.

**1Corinthians 15:52** *"in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."*

- The context of this reference is universally accepted as pertaining to the resurrection, not rapture.

**Revelation 4:1** *"After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, 'Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.'"*

- The context of this reference is essential to understanding the nature and perspective of the Book of Revelation. John received this Revelation from God and was able to see things from God's perspective. This is not a reference to the rapture.

**Revelation 12:5** *"She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne."*

- The context of this reference is the ascension of Christ, not the rapture of the Church.

Rapturists claim that there are Old Testament precedents for the rapture. They appeal to both Enoch and Elijah as examples of rapture.

*By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, “and was not found, because God had taken him”; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.*

Hebrews 11:5

We should apply the Hermeneutical principle of Non-Contradiction to this statement by Rapturists.

*And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,*

Hebrews 9:27

How do we reconcile these two seemingly contradictory verses? Are the claims of the Rapturists correct when they imply that Enoch levitated to Heaven? When the Scriptures declare that Enoch did not see/experience/taste death, does this mean that he did not have to go through a “dying” *experience*? Or, does it mean that he is physically in Heaven now and does not need to partake in the resurrection since he has kept his own body? It appears that there is a case to be made for saying that Enoch did not *experience* dying like all others, yet he still “died” in the sense that he was separated from his body (note James 2:26).

In either case, this is more a case of *translation* rather than *rapture*. The same applies to Elijah. Some see Noah’s Ark as a type of rapture. It would be more accurate to see Noah’s Ark as a picture of Christ instead.

## What Then Is Our Hope?

*looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ,*

Titus 2:13

Some Christians have linked their *entire* hope to a future return of Christ. A cursory examination of the topic of “hope” in the New Testament will readily show that hope is not just confined to the statement made in Titus 2:13. For example, we have the hope of the resurrection (Acts 23:6) and, the hope of spending eternity with God (Col. 1:5; Titus 3:7). Indeed the believers who lived before 70AD certainly did have reason to look forward to Christ’s appearing when

He would come to close the amnesty of the Old Covenant and establish His kingdom. At the judgment of Jerusalem in 70AD, Revelation prophetically described as-

*Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"*

Revelation 11:15



This seventh trumpet corresponds to the trumpet of Matthew 24:31-

*And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

Matthew 24:31

The seventh trumpet announced the completion of God's Old Covenant with Israel and the announcement that the Kingdom of Christ had begun (Rev. 11:15). Yet there remains a final trumpet, which we might call the "eighth". Note the comparison between the seventh and the eighth (last) trumpets-

| 7 <sup>th</sup> TRUMPET                                                                                                          | 8 <sup>th</sup> (LAST) TRUMPET                                                                              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A parousia of Christ                                                                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> The Final Parousia of Christ                                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jerusalem                                                                                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Earth                                                                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Judgment on Judaism                                                                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Final Judgment on all                                                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fulfils Matthew 24                                                                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Fulfils Matthew 25; 1Thess. 4;<br>1 Corinthians 15                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ends the Old Covenant Age                                                                               | <input type="checkbox"/> End of <i>the</i> Age                                                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Proceeds from preaching the Gospel to Jews first throughout the <i>oichoumene</i> (Empire) <sup>3</sup> | <input type="checkbox"/> Proceeds from the making of disciples of <i>all</i> the nations (Matthew 28:18-20) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Suffering, misery and death                                                                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Suffering, misery and death done away with (Rev. 21:3-4)                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Satan is bound                                                                                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Satan is damned                                                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The beginning of Christ's Kingdom                                                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> The culmination of Christ's Kingdom (Eph. 1:10; 1Cor. 15:24)                       |

Our hope is grounded in what Christ has done for us by granting us salvation encompassing forgiveness, justification, and glorification. We therefore do not die without hope. Much of the basis for this is grounded in Christ's resurrection and its implication for our resurrection. This is the subject of the next appendix.

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<sup>3</sup> Some Lexicons define *oichoumene* as meaning the "entire world or cosmos". Therefore some claim that *oichoumene* and *kosmos* are interchangeable. But *kosmos* is never rendered as "Empire". To consider that *oichoumene* could equate to *kosmos* in New Testament usage demands a degree of circular reasoning. The parallel passage of Matthew 4:8 (*kosmos*) and retold in Lk. 4:5 (*oichoumene*) is cited as an example as how this word can mean either Empire or whole world. But this usage of the word by Luke in this one instance demands greater consideration since he is so deliberately specific with this word in his writings. This instance is an inadequate disqualification of *oichoumene* meaning Empire rather than whole world. For example, the NIV helps the reader understand Luke's usage of the word in Lk. 2:1 when it renders Augustus' Census involving "*the entire Roman world*" while the NLT says "*the Roman Empire*". In the Olivet discourse Matthew deliberately use both words (*oichoumene* and *kosmos*) to denote different geographies. Significantly Colossians 1:5b-6, 23 use the specific word *oichoumene* as used in Matthew 24:14 to reveal its fulfilment. Added to this is Luke's silence regarding a parallel passage to Matthew 24:14. If he had used *kosmos* as an interchange for Christ's statement in Matthew 24:14 then doubt could be rightly attributed to a narrow usage of the word.



# THE RESURRECTION BIBLICALLY



## *Appendix iii*

# Understanding The Resurrection Biblically

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By now it should be clear that I believe that the Scriptures teach that the Parousia was to take place within the generation of Christ's original audience (Matthew 24:34). If this was not the case then the late Prof. Bertrand Russell was right: *Christ was a liar and the New Testament is false*. I cannot however concede to Prof. Russell. I am now convinced that much of what has been presented within the Dispensational Futurist Paradigm, of which I am a former subscriber, is grossly flawed and borders - at times - on being fanciful! The bulk of that which Futurists claim is yet to happen, has well and truly been fulfilled. The great irony of the Futurist method is that it claims to be taking a "literal" approach to Scripture interpretation, while ignoring or changing the clear and literal time-frame references to prophecy given by the apostles and Christ Himself in Scripture!





For those seeking to show integrity in how they interpret Scripture and rebut critics like Bertrand Russell without proposing fanciful futurist interpretations, many are turning to the writings of a little known nineteenth century Biblical scholar, *James Stuart Russell*. His magnum opus, *The Parousia*, has been republished in recent years to meet the growing demand for an authentic hermeneutic approach to understanding eschatology for those who have realised that both Futurism and Historicism are fundamentally flawed.

*"Although I do not agree with all the conclusions of J. Stuart Russell's: THE PAROUSIA, I highly recommend this well-organized, carefully argued, and compellingly written defense of Preterism to serious and mature students of the Bible. It is one of the most persuasive and challenging books I have read on the subject of eschatology and has had a great impact on my own thinking. Russell's biblico-theological (sic) study of New Testament eschatology sets a standard of excellence."*

Dr. Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., Author of "Before Jerusalem Fell"

*"In view of Dr. Russell's marvelous and insightful observations, no serious student of Biblical eschatology should attempt to construct a systematic scheme of apocalyptic events without first consulting this 19<sup>th</sup> century work, THE PAROUSIA."*

Walt Hibbard, Chairman, Great Christian Books

*"I can never read the New Testament again the same way I read it before reading THE PAROUSIA. I hope better scholars than I will continue to analyse and evaluate the content of J. Stuart Russell's important work."*

Dr. RC Sproul

I am indebted to James Stuart Russell for both his method and genius, but like Dr Kenneth Gentry, I also have a fundamental disagreement with him. Because I adopt the label *Preterist*, I need to make a distinction between the Preterism I am teaching and the Preterism of J. Stuart Russell. Dr Kenneth Gentry has employed the term *Hyper-Preterism* to make this distinction. While those who agree with J.S. Russell also identify themselves as Preterists and feel that the term Hyper-Preterist is unfair, Kenneth Gentry's designation of this teaching is perhaps apt. Yet I wish to state that I greatly respect the hermeneutical motive of those who subscribe to J. Stuart Russell's Preterism.

## Hyper-Preterism Is Pantelogy

What Kenneth Gentry calls Hyper-Preterism may be more accurately labeled *Pantelogy*. The Greek word, *pante* means “entire, fulfilled, ended”. Thus the designation *Pantelogy* is neither pejorative nor an over simplistic caricaturing of what Kenneth Gentry refers to as *Hyper-Preterism*.

In one aspect, since Preterism is *to examine the past*, all Christians are to one extent or another Preterists since we have examined the past and determined that certain prophecies (such as the birth, life and death of the Messiah) have already been fulfilled. But what Kenneth Gentry identifies as *Hyper-Preterist* (and I am referring to as *Pantelogy*) regards *all* prophecies as having been fulfilled by 70AD which the Scriptures relating to the events of 70AD seem to support-

*For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written  
may be fulfilled.*

Luke 21:22

*“Seventy weeks are determined  
For your people and for your holy city,  
To finish the transgression,  
To make an end of sins,  
To make reconciliation for iniquity,  
To bring in everlasting righteousness,  
To seal up vision and prophecy,  
And to anoint the Most Holy.”*

Daniel 9:24

This was James Stuart Russell’s premise that all of Revelation was fulfilled by 70AD. He aligned First Thessalonians 4:13-16 with Matthew 24:29-31. He regarded the resurrection as taking place at the Parousia of 70AD. He saw that when the Old Covenant ended with the destruction of the Temple the Old Covenant place of the dead (referred to as Sheol/Paradise) was also made obsolete. Thus before the Old Covenant ended the dead did not proceed directly to heaven, but to a holding place referred to variously as *Abraham’s Bosom* (refer to Luke 16:23). But when Christ judged Jerusalem in 70AD He judged the wicked, ‘resurrected’ the righteous, and escorted these ‘resurrected’ saints to Heaven. Therefore, whenever a believer dies now, they are assured of entry into Heaven and need not wait for some future resurrection.

To the Pantelologist, our bliss is not some earthly Millennial reign of Christ, but rather our eternal and heavenly relationship with God. They argue strongly that if there has been no resurrection then there remains no current entry into heaven for any believer. Yet from Paul's writings he clearly anticipated spending eternity *with Christ* in Heaven (presumably) very soon without having to wait for a physical resurrection-

*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.*

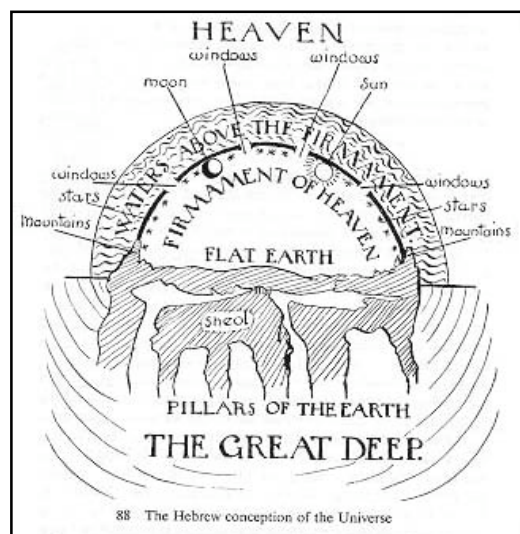
Philippians 1:21-24

This argument can not be dismissed lightly. It is reasoned that since Paul wrote this only a few years before the destruction of Jerusalem that he may have been anticipating this event. Therefore, Pantelogy (Hyper-Preterism) teaches that the Resurrection of 1Corinthians 15 has already taken place and is essentially spiritual in nature. There are several reasons why this is not entirely sufficient or reasonable. Perhaps we too could refer to Paul's warning about the nature of the Second Resurrection-

*who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.*

2 Timothy 2:18

Before investigating what the Biblically orthodox view of the Resurrection is, we need to understand some of the vital concepts involved.



## About Death

We are conditioned to believe that death is the end. But this is not what the Bible teaches since it presents death not as the end but as *separation*. Thus, when we are separated from God and a covenant relationship with Him, we are *spiritually* dead.

*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),*

Ephesians 2:1, 5

*And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,*

Colossians 2:13

When our spirits are separated from our bodies, we become *physically* dead.

*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*

James 2:26

When this deathly separation is removed we have *resurrection*. Therefore when we are saved out of *spiritual* death by the removal of our sin (which separates us from God, Isa. 59:2) we partake in the primary or first resurrection.

*Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.*

Revelation 20:6

Spiritual death, being separated from God by sin, is common to us all. We are all invited to partake in the first resurrection. This is the heart of the Gospel's invitation made possible through Christ's death on the cross who thereby experienced ultimate separation on our behalf. But not everyone accepts this gracious offer of exchanging their spiritual separation from God for the union with God which Christ offers. Due to its central place in Christianity, it is imperative to understand what the Second Resurrection entails.

## Resuscitation

To understand the nature of the Resurrection we need to make a distinction with mere resuscitation, which is the *reviving* of a life. Some Christians have a concept of physical resurrection which is really just a glorified concept of resuscitation. To highlight the similarities but distinctions between resuscitation and resurrection we could draw on the story of Lazarus' rising from the dead.

### Similarities:

- Both Lazarus and Christ had their old physical bodies revived.
- Both were dead for days, therefore their reviving could not be reasonably considered a medically natural event (it was supernatural)

### Differences:

- Lazarus died again and his body has since totally decayed
- Christ did not die again
- Lazarus did not ascend to heavenly glory, Christ did
- Resuscitation was Lazarus' only experience in rising from the dead, but supernatural resuscitation was only a part of Christ's experience in rising from the dead since He also experienced a constitutional change to His physical body which took on immortality. This seems to be the point of what First Corinthians 15:43-44 teaches.

*It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.*

1 Corinthians 15:43-44

*and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,*

2 Timothy 1:10

The New Testament teaches that the Resurrection will not merely be the resuscitation of our existing bodies. Christ's resurrection necessarily involved supernatural resuscitation *but* it also included: (i) a constitutional change from

mortality to immortality; (ii) ‘ascension’ (translation) directly into heaven; and (iii) glorification.

The Resurrection of believers does not require ‘resuscitation’. The Bible says that Christ’s resurrection is the firstfruits of the Resurrection which means it is the prototype of the Resurrection of the believers.

*But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*

1 Corinthians 15:20

It is these aspects of Christ’s resurrection beyond His resuscitation which are crucial to understanding the Resurrection. Pantelogsists claim that these aspects do not in any way demand a physical resurrection. Dr RC Sproul notes-

*Full preterists make two strong assertions about this text: It refers to a spiritual resurrection, not a bodily resurrection; and this resurrection has already taken place. Again the time-frame is crucial to the discussion. Russell stresses the apostle’s words in verse 51: “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed...” “To whom does the apostle refer when he says, ‘We shall not all sleep,’ etc.? Russell asks. “Is it to some hypothetical persons living in some distant age of time, or is it of the Corinthians and himself that he is thinking? Why should he think of the distant future when it is certain that he considered the Parousia to be imminent?”*

RC Sproul, “The Last Days According To Jesus”, Baker Books, 2001:162

But there are a number of problems with the Pantelological (Full or Hyper Preterist) approach to this understanding of the Resurrection. RC Sproul points out that James Stuart Russell departs from his consistent hermeneutical approach when it comes to the Resurrection since he uses (i) established Biblical language and meaning to interpret the events of Matthew 24 and (ii) appeals to the historical evidence of the events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem to support his interpretation. But with 1Corinthians 15 he departs from both of these two approaches completely. That is, the established language and meaning of resurrection does not support his concept of it being solely spiritual (notice that “immortal” is not necessarily the same as “spiritual”). If Resurrection for a deceased believer merely meant a change of location (from Sheol to Heaven), then in what way has the deceased person changed? Using Russell’s own hermeneutic principles we are compelled to interpret First Corinthians 15 as meaning a change of constitutional state for the believer involving a transmutation from mortality to

immortality. This can not be merely spiritual since a human spirit is already immortal (not eternal), given that it will last forever beyond separation from the physical body (death). Therefore, in what way can there possibly be a “second” resurrection for an already redeemed believer in heaven if nothing is to change about them?

*Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—*

1 Corinthians 15:51

Secondly, Paul states that “we” shall not all die. Using sound hermeneutics this must speak of Christians generally and neither him nor the Corinthians specifically. The reasons for this are simple. Firstly, just as Russell can point to real historic data to support his claims that Matthew 24 has been fulfilled, the historic data in this case shows that Paul was executed in 65AD some five years before the final destruction of Jerusalem and Russell’s supposed Second Resurrection. There was nothing that occurred in 70AD which could be reasonably regarded as historical evidence of the Second Resurrection. This immediately rules out an overly rigid sense of the term “we” in this verse.

Therefore using the very hermeneutical method which James Stuart Russell employs we have to reject his interpretation of the events of 70AD being the fulfilment of the Second Resurrection.

## Resurrected Bodies

*For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down—when we die and leave these bodies—we will have a home in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands.*

2 Corinthians 5:1

Where are the dead? More particularly, where are the righteous dead now? Under the Old Covenant it appears that all the dead went to a spiritual holding place referred to as Sheol or Paradise. Christ seems to endorse this view that no one had gone to heaven prior to His coming-

*No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.*

John 3:13

If James Stuart Russell's understanding of the Resurrection is correct, then all it virtually entails is a change of location (or removal of separation). But Paul seems to say that the Resurrection is also a constitutional change in the believer.

*And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.*

1 Corinthians 15:37-43

In Second Corinthians 5:1 Paul describes our bodies as tents, which we will put off when we die. By implication he states that the Resurrection will give us new tents. Our spirits are tainted by sin (hence we need to do now all that we can to keep them purified, note Second Corinthians 7:1). When we enter heaven what we have come to experience legally on earth (that we are new creations –First Corinthians 5:18- with a spirit that has been born again- John 3:3) will be experienced in its ultimate reality. Yet we are fundamentally creatures consisting of body and spirit (which together is referred to Biblically as a soul, note Genesis 2:7, KJV). That is why the Resurrection demands a constitutional change in our bodies. Without a body, we are less than what we were created to be!

In discussing the Resurrection in First Corinthians 15 Paul notes that the righteous put off their earthly bodies (tents) and proceed to Heaven – which in itself becomes our new housing. This in itself can not be regarded as the sum total of the Resurrection. Since Christ is the Proto-type of the Resurrection and Paul stresses His physical resurrection as the basis for our faith *and* our understanding of the resurrection we are compelled to regard the Resurrection of the believer as a change in our physical constitution.

If the Resurrection is to be regarded as just a change in the believer's spiritual location (from Sheol to Heaven) then Paul's argument is not only pointless, but also wrong. He stresses that Christ experienced a re-union between His parted spirit and body. It stands to reason that so will the believer. Just as

Christ's physical body was reconstituted, it is also reasonable to assume that so will the believer's Resurrected body. This point alone dismisses Pantelogy (Full or Hyper-Preterism).

## The Resurrection Must Be Future

Regardless of which eschatological school one subscribes to, there is universal agreement that after the resurrection there is no more death, suffering, pain, or interference from Satan.

*And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.*

Revelation 21:4

Pantelogists appeal to our eternal condition as fulfilment of this prophecy. To them, *in heaven now* there is no pain, death, or suffering. I dealt with this argument in chapter 6 in greater detail than here. Simply countered, when was there ever pain, death, or suffering in heaven? Pantelogists answer this by appealing to the different destinations for the righteous dead from the Old and New Covenants. Under the Old Covenant the righteous were separated from God even after death as they awaited the Old Covenant to be completed, and the benefits of the New Covenant to be initiated. Therefore, when the New Covenant brought the Old Covenant to an end, Revelation 21:4 was fulfilled. But there remains a problem with this prophetic schema: *the second resurrection*.

Pre-Millennialists appeal to First Corinthians 15 where Paul countered the prevalent claim that the Resurrection had already happened as a proof text for disputing the Pantelological view that the Second Resurrection is a change of state, not constitution, for the believer. This is immediately rebutted by Pantelogists with their pointing out to their critics that Paul wrote this prior to 70AD. But First Corinthians 15 is the anchor point for understanding what the New Testament teaches about the Second Resurrection, which I consider to be a promotion of the concept that the Second Resurrection entails a change in the physical constitution of the believer. Since Paul bases his argument for this almost entirely on the resurrection of Christ, it is critical to examine Christ's resurrection.

## The Second Resurrection

*But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.*

Revelation 20:5

This verse clearly implies that there is a second resurrection. The Pre-Millennial explanation for this verse borders on the absurd. It proposes that Christ will rule the earth for a thousand years after He has resurrected the righteous (the first resurrection). At the end of this earthly reign Satan is released to wreak havoc on Christ's kingdom at which point Christ defeats him and then resurrects the remaining dead (including those righteous previously resurrected who had perhaps died during the thousand years?).

Under the Preterist schemata the Devil was "bound" at the close of the Old Covenant. I was once sitting across a restaurant table from a published Dispensational author who took issue with me over my views on the Devil being bound at the end of the Old Covenant. He asked, "*Do you truly believe that the Devil was bound at the end of the Old Covenant?*" I replied, "*Absolutely! He was bound in the Biblical sense.*" He said, "*If the Devil was bound then, he sure has a long leash!*" This kind of statement shows a degree of ignorance about the nature of the Devil's binding.

This Dispensational author's question was actually *not* the right one. A better question would have been, "*With the close of the Old Covenant has anything altered the Devil's authority on earth?*" To which we would have to reply, *absolutely!*

*Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil...*

Hebrew 2:14

*He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.*

1John 3:8

*And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you."*

Luke 10:18 - 19

Clearly the New Testament teaches that something altered the Devil's level of authority from the Old Covenant to the New. Under the Old Covenant he had access to the very presence of God as revealed in the opening chapters of Job. He also stood before God day and night accusing the righteous (Revelation 12:10). Under the Old Covenant he was "the god of this age" due to Adam's rebellion. But with the close of the Old Covenant his access to God has been cut off due to his being cast out of the Heavens (Revelation 12:9-10). He can now no longer accuse the righteous before God. And he is no longer "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4) because with the close of the Old Covenant (which took place with the destruction of the Temple in 70AD), Christ is Lord of all! That's why when the Old Covenant ended with the judgment of Judaism it was announced-

*Then the seventh angel sounded:  
And there were loud voices in heaven, saying,  
"The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and  
of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"*  
<sup>16</sup>*And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on  
their faces and worshiped God, <sup>17</sup>saying:*  
*"We give You thanks,  
O Lord God Almighty,  
The One who is and who was and who is to come,  
Because You have taken Your great power and reigned."*  
Revelation 11:15-17

Another better question would be, "*Is the Devil now restricted in any way?*" If the Devil has not been curtailed by the close of the Old Covenant then why doesn't he use his unrestricted power to destroy the world and especially God's people? After all, couldn't the Devil just push a couple of buttons on some Presidential desks either side of the Atlantic and destroy all mankind in one gigantic mushroom cloud?

An equally good question would be "*Could the sinfulness of man produce the evil acts which we see committed by people against others?*"

*The heart is deceitful above all things,  
And desperately wicked;  
Who can know it?*  
Jeremiah 17:9  
  
*Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come  
from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?*  
James 4:1

The point to the timing of the Devil's actual demise is a critical element in understanding when the Second Resurrection takes place. Both Preterists and Hyper-Preterists agree that the First Resurrection is our salvation. This has been discussed in chapter 6 in greater detail. But Hyper-Preterists claim that the Second Resurrection took place in 70AD. Since the Devil is eternally damned after the Second Resurrection it becomes critical to determine what the Scripture teaches about the timing of Satan's end. The New Testament teaches that judgment on Satan was impending immediately prior to 70AD-

*And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*

Romans 16:20

The Book of Revelation reveals that Satan was indeed crushed and bound with the close the Old Covenant- but he was not eternally damned at that point. Again, this argument is dealt with in chapter 6 within the commentary on this passage.

We should therefore correctly understand the Second Resurrection to be the general "physical" of all the dead, including the wicked.

*And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

Matthew 10:28

## **The Resurrection Of Christ**

Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Christ did not rise physically. Execrably, so do some "Christian" church leaders. There are at least 8 classic reasons why this is absolutely illogical.

1. Christ said He would rise from the dead physically. If He did not He is a liar and would be totally discredited.
2. The tomb was most definitely empty of Christ's body at the time it is claimed He was resurrected, and it has still failed to have been found. Contemporaries of Christ and opponents of Christianity

merely had to present Christ's dead body to the world to completely dispel all of Christ's claims.

3. Christ appeared to His disciples after they had witnessed His death and burial where He ate food with them, and was touched by them.
4. Christ appeared at one time to 500 people who testified to having seen and been with Him.
5. The disciples who claimed to have seen and been with the resurrected Christ refused to deny this even in the midst of suffering and martyrdom. The lives of these resurrection witnesses were so radically changed that they went from sheer doubt to absolute faith.
6. The calibre of the witnesses adds tremendous weight to their claims of Christ's resurrection. These disciples were not scurrilous opportunists. They stood to gain nothing and lose everything from their claims. They were known to be honest.
7. The events of the Day of Pentecost confirm the resurrection of Christ. Christ told His disciples after His resurrection that He would send the promised Holy Spirit who would supernaturally fill them with power to speak unlearned languages (tongues) and share the Gospel with signs and wonders. This happened; therefore it confirms the factuality of Christ's resurrection.
8. Believers today, around the world, and throughout all time have experienced the results of Christ's resurrection in the form of spiritual regeneration. Every time a new believer is baptised it is a celebration of Christ's physical resurrection and His defeat of death.

Lee Strobel deals with this topic eruditely in his popular book, *"The Case For Christ"*. I strongly recommend this easy to read book where he interviews some of the world's leading experts in a variety of fields regarding the scientific and theological aspects of Christ's resurrection.

Paul the Apostle devoted an entire chapter of First Corinthians to make the case for Christ's physical resurrection. First Corinthians 15 has become the pre-eminent chapter on Christ's resurrection. Paul argues that if Christ did not physically rise from the dead then it is an absolute fallacy to claim that He conquered death.

*But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. <sup>14</sup>And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. <sup>15</sup>Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up; if in fact the dead do not rise. <sup>16</sup>For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen.*

1 Corinthians 15:13 - 16

We need to understand that the Bible speaks of the coming of Christ in two contexts: (i) "Coming" in the heavens to judge Judaism and thus end the Old Covenant (Matthew 24); (ii) Coming to resurrect and judge the living and the dead which aligns perfectly with my comments on Revelation 20 (refer to chapter 6).

*But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. <sup>24</sup>Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. <sup>25</sup>For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. <sup>26</sup>The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.*

1 Corinthians 15:23-26

This also corresponds with the statement in Ephesians 1:10 where it talks about the culmination of time and the Father giving everything to Christ-

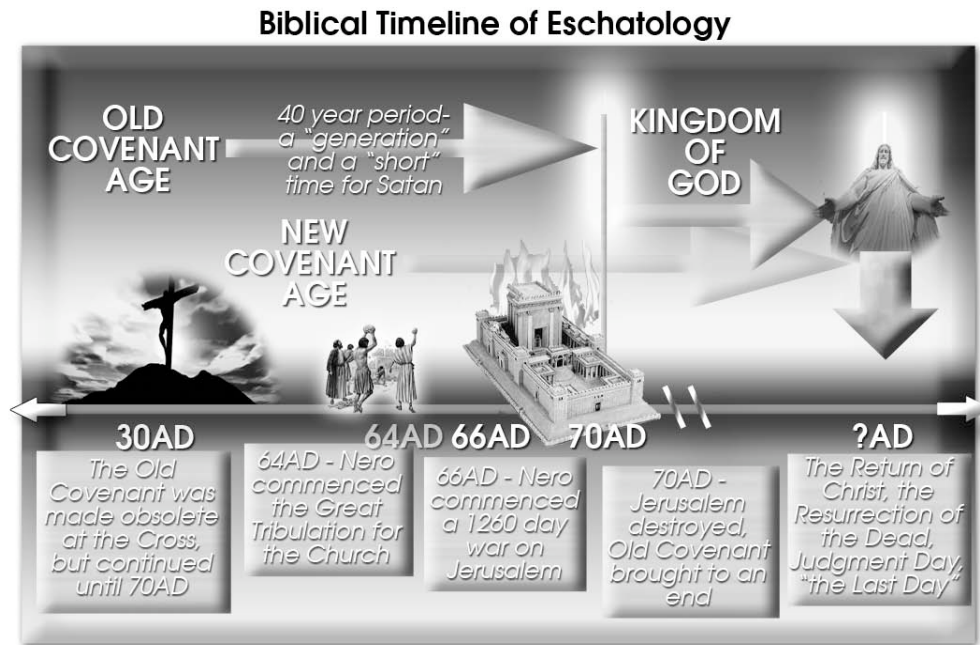
*that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; in Him.*

Ephesians 1:10

Because Christ's resurrection was physical and it is described as the prototype ("firstfruits") for the second resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20), we are at least reasonable in assuming that the second resurrection will also be physical. In Romans 8 it looks forward to the day when redemption will be made complete thus reversing the curse entirely on the earth. It then links this very physical aspect of "all of creation" looking forward to redemption with the clear statement this would also involve our bodies-

*For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. <sup>23</sup>Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.*

Romans 8:22-23



## The Future...

Whenever I've presented this teaching on Revelation to people they have invariably asked, "Then what is yet to happen?" My simple response is "The Resurrection." I trust that I have proven to you (or at least have made a strong case for believing) that all of Matthew 24 and Revelation 1-19 is fulfilled. We are living in the first part of Matthew 25 and Revelation 20 now. The Kingdom of God on earth began with the close of the Old Covenant in 70AD. We need to take a fresh look at the parables of the Kingdom which Christ gave and reassess our theology of the Christian's role in society today. Within this Kingdom there is no longer ethnic distinction in the eyes of God for surely the wolf (Gentiles) and lamb (Jews) now lay side by side in the eyes of God.

*The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,  
The leopard shall lie down with the young goat,  
The calf and the young lion and the fatling together;  
And a little child shall lead them.*

Isaiah 11:6

Isaiah goes on to prophesy that-

*They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,  
For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD  
As the waters cover the sea.*

*<sup>10</sup>And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse,  
Who shall stand as a banner to the people;  
For the Gentiles shall seek Him,  
And His resting place shall be glorious.*

Isaiah 11:9-10

We are living in the day which Isaiah saw. The earth *is* being filled with the knowledge of the *LORD* and both Jews and Gentiles are coming to the Lord's Banner, Christ, in greater numbers now than anytime in history.

I pray that you will join with me in lifting high the Banner of the Lord (Jesus) before people who desperately need a second chance since becoming deeply dissatisfied with all that the world and its religions have had to offer. I don't pretend to have everything precisely right in these matters of eschatology, but I trust that I have made at least a reasonable case for abandoning highly pessimistic views about what the future holds. I have researched and studied these matters rather intensely over the past 3 years. With every other eschatological system I have always had problems making every piece of Scripture fit. But with the Preterist system I no longer have such difficulties.

For those who have read this and still disagree with my conclusions, I welcome constructive criticism and thoughtful corrections. Again, I stress that I have endeavoured to undertake exegesis, not eisegesis. One reviewer has stated to me that I have stressed the destruction of Jerusalem too much throughout this commentary. He requested that I emphasise the victory of Christ rather than the judgment on Jerusalem. My response to him was that I have not emphasised anything other than what the text itself presents. This is not to undermine Christ's victory, the glory of the New Covenant, and the promise that ultimate justice will one day finally be wrought. In the meantime we are to take seriously Christ's instructions for His Church found in the parables of the Kingdom which He gave. The Bible student will notice that these contain both warnings and mandates. May we take both to heart in a far more positive approach than ever before. This world is not Satan's, but Christ's. Let's live that way.



# THE OLIVET DISCOURSE



## *Appendix iv*

# Understanding The Olivet Discourse

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\* This Appendix is an excerpt from a much lengthier treatment of this subject called “The Most Embarrassing Verse In The Bible!” available in eBook format from [www.andrewcorbett.net](http://www.andrewcorbett.net)

*“The doctrine of the last things never stood in the centre of attention, is one of the least developed doctrines, and therefore calls for no elaborate discussion. ... It may be that, as Dr. Orr surmises, we have now reached that point in the history of dogma in which the doctrine of the last things will receive greater attention and be brought to further development.”*

Louis Berkhof , *The History of Christian Doctrines*, page 259

I had recently preached a message entitled *What The Bible Says About The Future* based entirely on Matthew 24 when I revisited the text to take a closer look. What I saw for the first time totally rocked me! Having a teaching and apologetic ministry I was used to being highly analytical and precise. When teaching about why the cults are in error I have often pointed out that they tend to twist Scripture by altering either words or the accepted meaning of words in significant verses to make them align with their doctrinal positions. As I looked at Matthew 24 again I realised that I had been just as guilty as the cults! Here’s why:

*Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.*

Matthew 24:34

I had always deliberately altered two key words within this verse because the *actual* wording did not fit my ideas of eschatology. As I have stated throughout this book I basically commenced my eschatological journey as a Pre-Millennial, Pre-Tribulational, Dispensationalist. I was then challenged by Trevor Chandler and others to consider Amillennial-Historicism. And while I am not an Amillennial-Historicist it did help me to arrive at my final conclusions.

As a tongue-speaking Pentecostal I was already used to taking a fresh look at Scripture rather than merely accepting the ultra-conservative cessationism of those who claimed that tongues and the other gifts of the Holy Spirit ceased with the close of the New Testament Canon. Two hermeneutical terms are important to introduce at this point. The first is *eisegesis* where we read into Scripture what we want to see. The second term is *exegesis* where we take out of the text what it is actually saying. The object of sound hermeneutics is *exegesis*. This means we must have the courage to accept what the text says rather than what we want it to say. So, we return to the verse in question, Matthew 24:34.

*Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away  
till all these things take place.*

Matthew 24:34

Jesus did not say “that” generation. This is verified by Christ’s consistent use of the term “this generation”. He never meant any other generation than the generation He was addressing. Attempts to make Christ’s statement here in this verse refer to some other audience (such as a future one) rather than the one Christ was talking to is nothing short of *eisegesis*.

Naturally some will refuse to acknowledge this and persist in claiming that “this” actually means “that”. But such attempts by well meaning Dispensationalists only invites scorn and ridicule from critics of Christ and the Scripture. The most prominent example of this in recent times was undertaken by Professor Bertrand Russell. He became one of the most vocal and prolific atheists of the twentieth century. He said that both Christ and the Bible could be discredited on this one verse. He made sincere Christians who taught that Jesus didn’t actually mean *this* generation, but *that* generation look very, very silly.

*I am concerned with Christ as He appears in the Gospels...there one does find some things that do not seem to be very wise... For one thing, He certainly thought that His second coming would occur in clouds of glory before the death of all the people who were living at the time. There are a great many texts that prove that....He believed that His coming would happen during the lifetime of many then living. That was the belief of his earlier followers, and it was the basis of a good deal of his moral teaching.*

Bertrand Russell, *Why I am Not A Christian*, pg. 16, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1957

C.S. Lewis, author and apologist, stated plainly what many Christians actually mean when they change the plain teaching of Christ to make it more palatable:

*“Say what you like,” we shall be told, “the apocalyptic beliefs of the first Christians have been proved to be false. It is clear from the New Testament that they all expected the Second Coming in their own lifetime. And, worse still, they had a reason, and one which you will find very embarrassing. Their Master had told them so. He shared, and indeed created, their delusion. He said in so many words, ‘this generation shall not pass till all these things be done.’ And he was wrong. He clearly knew no more about the end of the world than anyone else.”*

*It is certainly the most embarrassing verse in the Bible.*

*Yet how teasing, also, that within fourteen words of it should come the statement “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.” The one exhibition of error and the one confession of ignorance grow side by side....”*

C.S. Lewis

Implicit in C.S. Lewis’ comments about Matthew 24:34 is that there is no way we can do plastic surgery on what Jesus said using the surgical procedure known as “*He said this but He actually meant something else.*” By changing the wording of Matthew 24:34 to prevent Christ from being both embarrassed and embarrassing, we make ourselves look silly to critics of Christianity such as Bertrand Russell.

I have enough trouble looking silly even when I’m trying my best to look and sound smart rather than being deliberately silly by changing what everyone knows is the plain meaning of the text! We will do ourselves a service as Christians if we remain committed to the process of exegesis rather than eisegesis!

Therefore I have to accept that when Jesus said “*this*” generation would not pass away until all these things take place, He meant it.

The other emphatic statement in this verse is that Christ said “all” these things would take place. For those who discover that there is a vast body of historical evidence to show that the events of Matthew 24 have already happened and are yet still loath to admit the possibility that all the details of Matthew 24 are past, they *eisegetically* change the word “all” to “some”. In this way they say that Christ actually meant that this generation would not pass away until *some* of these things take place. For those seeking hermeneutical integrity the illegitimacy of such a rendering is immediately obvious.

## A DIFFERENT PARADIGM

When I was prepared to accept what Jesus said rather than what I thought He should have said it was as if the scales from my eyes fell off and I was unplugged from the Matrix. I saw that the disciples did not ask Christ when the end of the *world* would be, but the end of the “*age*”. The real question is what “Age” were they referring to? Secondly, since they didn’t understand that Christ was “going” what did *they* mean by the word translated in most English Bibles as “coming”?

*Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”*

Matthew 24:3

The Old Covenant Age was epitomised by four elements: the Temple, the Priesthood, the Sacrifices, and the Ceremonies. The Disciples’ questions had been preceded by Christ’s statement that the Temple would be destroyed. Since the Temple epitomised the Old Covenant they asked when this (the Old Covenant Age) would end.

The English word “coming” is the Greek word *parousia*. It is better understood as *appearing* in the sense of a King being installed or royally arriving to make a public edict. Strong’s Dictionary and Concordance defines *parousia* as-

#3952. parousia, par-oo-see'-ah; from the pres. part. of G3918; a being near, i.e. advent (often, return; spec. of Christ to punish Jerusalem, or finally the wicked); (by impl.) phys. aspect:--coming, presence.

Throughout the New Testament it is translated as *arrival, coming, presence*, and *appear*. It is never translated as “return”. It is illogical to consider that the disciples were asking when Christ would return since they had little concept of Him ‘going’. Therefore it is betraying their bias when the translators of the New Century Version render “parousia” in Matthew 24:3 as “*come again*.”

*Later, as Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, his followers came to be alone with him. They said, "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that it is time for you to come again and for this age to end?"*

Matthew 24:3 New Century Version

The Biblical use of the expression *the Lord is coming* in the Old Testament was most commonly associated with Him *judging*.

*Then the trees of the woods shall rejoice before the LORD, For He is coming to judge the earth.*

1 Chronicles 16:33

*Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent;  
A fire shall devour before Him,  
And it shall be very tempestuous all around Him.  
<sup>4</sup>He shall call to the heavens from above,  
And to the earth, that He may judge His people:*

Psalms 50:3-4

When Christ uses the same expression in the New Testament it is reasonable to conclude that He is using Old Testament Biblical language.

*For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the **coming** of the Son of Man be.*

Matthew 24:27

## THE TEMPLE

When Christ prophesied that the Temple would be destroyed it must have echoed of the Old Testament judgment upon Jerusalem when the original Temple was destroyed. Thus their question about Christ “coming” can not be construed as question relating about anything other than when *He* would *judge* Jerusalem.

What makes Christ's statement about the Temple being destroyed all the more staggering was that this Temple (Herod's Temple) was so much larger than Solomon's.

*The layout of Herod's Temple was patterned after Solomon's. The two-story temple building was in the shape of a "T." The porch of the building (the cross member of the "T") was a vestibule 100 cubits long and 100 cubits high, with an opening 70 cubits high and 25 cubits wide. In front of the porch at the foot of the steps, surrounded by a cubit-high stone barrier, was the altar of burnt offering (15 cubits high and 50 cubits square). At the back of the vestibule were the main double doors (16 cubits wide and 55 cubits high) that led into the Holy Place...The Holy Place was 40 cubits long, 20 cubits wide, and 60 cubits high.*

Youngblood, Ronald F., General Editor; F.F. Bruce and R.K. Harrison, Consulting Editors, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997

*Whether we consider its architecture, its dimensions, its magnificence, its splendor, or the sacred purposes to which it was dedicated, it must equally be regarded as the most astonishing fabric that was ever constructed. It was erected partly on a solid rock, which was originally steep on every side. The foundations of what was called the lower temple were 300 cubits in depth, and the stones of which they were composed, more than sixty feet in length, while the superstructure contained, of the whitest marble, stones nearly sixty-eight feet long, more than seven feet high, and nine broad. The circuit of the whole building was four furlongs ; its height one hundred cubits; one hundred and sixty pillars, each twenty seven feet high, ornamented and sustained the immense and ponderous edifice.*

George Peter Holford, "The Destruction of Jerusalem", 1805

## FALSE MESSIAHS

*And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. <sup>5</sup>For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ' and will deceive many."*

Matthew 24:4-5

This was definitely fulfilled during the time frame that Christ gave. Matthew Henry cites Josephus, who recorded-

*...of several such impostors between this and the destruction of Jerusalem; one Theudas, that was defeated by Cospus Fadus; another by Felix, another by Festus. Dositheus said he was the Christ foretold by Moses. Origen adversus Celsum. See Acts 5:36, 37. Simon Magus pretended to be the great power of God, Acts 8:10.*

*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) 1997.

*(285) A false prophet was the occasion of these people's destruction, who had made a public proclamation in the city that very day, that God commanded them to get up upon the temple, and that there they should receive miraculous signs of their deliverance. (286) Now, there was then a great number of false prophets suborned by the tyrants to impose upon the people, who denounced this to them, that they should wait for deliverance from God: and this was in order to keep them from deserting, and that they might be buoyed up above fear and care by such hopes.*

Josephus, Flavius, *The Works of Josephus*, War of the Jews, Book 6, Chapter 5

### Even the Book of Acts and subsequent historians record -

*For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing.*

Acts 5:36

*Josephus informs us that an Egyptian false prophet led 30,000 into the desert, who were almost entirely cut off by Felix, the Roman procurator. And that in the reign of Claudius, 'the land was overrun with magicians, seducers, and imposters, who drew the people after them in multitudes into solitudes and deserts, to see the signs and miracles, which they promised to show by the power of God.'*

Josephus, *Antiq. lib. 20, c. viii., § 6 (p. 409)*

Johann Philip Schabalie (1635)

*"...from the death of Herod the Great...to the destruction of the Temple, the Jewish History is filled with the names of false Christs and false prophets who deceived both the Jews and Samaritans. None appeared before this period, and not more than one for five or six centuries after it."*

Kett's History (Prior to 1787), Kett, 3rd Edit. Vol I, page 168

## WARS

*And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.*

Matthew 24:6

The period between AD30 to AD 70 was indeed a time of many wars throughout the Empire. Pliny the Elder records that the Romans were fighting major wars in Germany, and Britain with skirmishes were continually being put down around the Empire as various tribes revolted. One commentator said of this period-

*The forty years that intervened before the destruction of Jerusalem were full of these in all directions; but we may probably think of the words as referring specially to wars, actual or threatened, that affected the Jews- such, e.g., as those which we read under Caligula, Claudius, and Nero (citing Plumptre).*

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary on the New Testament, Lewis and Booth, London, 1896, page 552

## FAMINES & EARTHQUAKES

*For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.*

Matthew 24:7

Once again, both the New Testament and the first century historian, Josephus, record that there were an increasing number of severe earthquakes leading up to 70AD-

*(286) for there broke out a prodigious storm in the night, with the utmost violence, and very strong winds, with the largest showers of rain, with continual lightnings, terrible thunderings, and amazing concussions and bellowings of the earth, that was in an earthquake. (287) These things were a manifest indication that some destruction was coming upon men, when the system of the world was put into this disorder; and anyone would guess that these wonders foreshowed some grand calamities that were coming.*

Josephus, Flavius, *The Works of Josephus*, Wars of the Jews, Book 4 Chapter 4

*But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. <sup>26</sup>Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.*

Acts 16:25-26

The New Testament records that these earthquakes commenced at the crucifixion of Christ (Matthew 27:54) and at His resurrection (Matthew 28:2).

The story is the same for famines.

*Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar.*

Acts 11:28

*(368) Now every sort of death was thought more tolerable than the famine, insomuch that, though the Jews despaired now of mercy, yet would they fly to the Romans, and would themselves even of their own*

*accord, fall among the murderous rebels also. (369) Nor was there any place in the city that had no dead bodies in it, but what was entirely covered with those that were killed either by the famine or the rebellion; and all was full of the dead bodies of such as had perished, either by that sedition or by that famine.*

Josephus, Book 6, Chapter 7

*4. (428) Now this vast multitude is indeed collected out of remote places, but the entire nation was now shut up by fate as in a prison, and the Roman army encompassed the city when it was crowded with inhabitants. (429) Accordingly the multitude of those that therein perished exceeded all the destructions that either men or God ever brought upon the world; for, to speak only of what was publicly known, the Romans slew some of them, some they carried captives, and others they made search for underground, and when they found where they were, they broke up the ground and slew all they met with. (430) There were also found slain there above two thousand persons, partly by their own hands, and partly by one another, but chiefly destroyed by the famine.*

Josephus, Book 6, Chapter 9

*Our Lord adds "pestilences" likewise. Pestilence treads upon the heels of famine, it may therefore reasonably be presumed, that this terrible scourge accompanied the famines which have just been enumerated. History, however, particularly distinguishes two instances of this calamity, which occurred before the commencement of the Jewish war. The first took place at Babylon about A. D. 40, and raged so alarmingly, that great multitudes of Jews fled from that city to Seleucia for safety, as hath been hinted already. The other happened at Rome A.D. 65, and carried off prodigious multitudes. Both Tacitus and Suetonius also record, that similar calamities prevailed, during this period, in various parts of the Roman empire. After Jerusalem was surrounded by the army of Titus, pestilential diseases soon made their appearance there to aggravate the miseries, and deepen the horrors of the siege. They were partly occasioned by the immense multitudes which were crowded together in the city, partly by the putrid effluvia which arose from the unburied dead, and partly from spread of famine.*

Holford.

## MARTYRDOM

*Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.*

Matthew 24:9

The early chapters of the Book of Acts confirms that all this took place within the immediate generation of Christ's audience. Stephen was martyred in

Acts 7. Other disciples were martyred in Acts 8. James was martyred in Acts 12. Other sources document the martyrdom of nearly all the remaining original apostles.

*And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.*

Matthew 24:10

Paul records some of this betrayal which had affected him—

*having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.*

1 Timothy 1:19-20

*Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works.*

2 Timothy 4:14

## GOSPEL TO “ALL THE WORLD”

*And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.*

Matthew 24:14

As a young man I first heard a message preached based on this verse that the end of the world was near, and thus the return of the Lord Jesus could be expected at any moment, since the gospel was now about to be preached to the last nations of people on the face of the earth.

But there is an amazing problem with this interpretation. Firstly, the word used for *world* is not the common Greek word *kosmos* but the less common and more narrowly defined term *oichoumene*. It is translated as world in the New Testament but must be qualified to be correctly interpreted. Strong’s Concordance and Dictionary of New Testament Words defines *oichoumene* as—

*3625. oikoumene, oy-kou-men'-ay; fem. part. pres. pass. of G3611 (as noun, by impl. of G1093); land, i.e. the (terrene part of the) globe; spec. the Roman empire:--earth, world.*

The same word for world is used in Luke 2:1 where several English translations add the qualifying word “Roman” to help the reader understand the proper meaning of oichoumene (world) -

*In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.*

Luke 2:1 (New International Version)

Jesus was saying that the Gospel would be preached to everyone throughout the *Empire* before the coming judgment on Jerusalem. Thus Paul could say toward the end of that generation as a matter of fact that-

*because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the **world**, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth;*

Colossians 1:5-6

*if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which **was** preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.*

Colossians 1:23

Paul uses the same word as Christ in Matthew 24:14 for world (oichoumene) and states as completed what Christ had foretold almost a generation earlier.

## ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

*Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), <sup>16</sup>then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. <sup>17</sup>Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. <sup>18</sup>And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. <sup>19</sup>But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! <sup>20</sup>And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.*

Matthew 24:15 - 20

Christ is citing the prophet Daniel which gives us a clue to unravelling what ‘language’ He is actually using. Josephus records that in 66AD General Cestius invaded Jerusalem and the Temple precincts and eventually set up the Roman

insignia as an object of worship. Cestius then inexplicably withdrew from Jerusalem for three days in which time all remaining Christians fled the city.

*But on the next day, Cestius took a great many of his choicest men, and with them the archers, and attempted to break into the temple at the northern quarter of it; (536) but the Jews beat them off from the cloisters, and repulsed them several times when they were gotten near to the wall, till at length the multitude of the darts cut them off, and made them retire; (537) but the first rank of the Romans rested their shields upon the wall, and so did those that were behind them, and the like did those that were still more backward, and guarded themselves with what they call Testudo, [the back of] a tortoise, upon which the darts that were thrown fell, and slid off without doing them any harm; so the soldiers undermined the wall, without being themselves hurt, and got all things ready for setting fire to the gate of the temple... 7. (540) It then happened that Cestius was not conscious either how the besieged despaired of success, nor how courageous the people were for him; and so he recalled his soldiers from the place, and by despairing of any expectation of taking it, without having received any disgrace, he retired from the city, without any reason in the world... 1. (556) After this calamity had befallen Cestius, many of the most eminent of the Jews swam away from the city, as from a ship when it was going to sink...*

Josephus, War of the Jews, Book 2, Chapter 19-20

Josephus notes that many people fled Jerusalem when the Romans set up their insignia (a Roman object of Emperor worship). He assumes that they were deserting to the Roman side. But Christians in Jerusalem were probably among the ones who fled since they no doubt solemnly recalled the dire warnings of Christ to flee the city when this event happened.

## GREAT TRIBULATION

*For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.*

Matthew 24:21

The period between 66AD, when the siege of Jerusalem commenced, and 42 months later when it ended in 70AD, was indeed a time of great tribulation for Israel. The horrors of their suffering were described by Josephus. They were forced to endure starvation and famine, disease and pestilence, treachery, and even cannibalism. During this time the Romans bombarded them with flaming missiles the weight of which were around 25 kilograms each (a “talent” weight,

note Revelation 16:21) which randomly killed the inhabitants of Jerusalem. At one point the blood was flowing so high from under the gates of Jerusalem that Josephus said it was as high as the horses' bridles (note Revelation 14:20). As gruesome and as abhorrent as the Holocaust of WW2 was, this time described as Christ was indeed *Great Tribulation*.

## COMING OF THE SON OF MAN

*For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*

Matthew 24:27



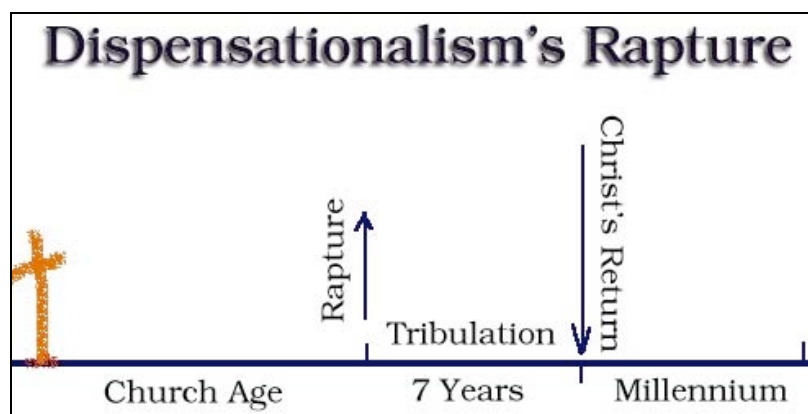
J. Edwin Orr has noted profoundly that the doctrine of last things (eschatology) is ironically the last doctrine to be fully developed by the Church. In its infancy and adolescence the Church was rightly concerned more with discovering the truth about the critical issues of (i) salvation by grace and faith in Christ alone (*sola fide*, Acts 15 First Church Council), (ii) the Canon of Scripture (*sola scriptura*, countering the Marcion heresy), (iii) the deity of Christ and His place within the Trinity (*sola deo*, Nicene Creed), and (iv) the incarnation of Christ (the Hypostatic union of Christ, the Chalcedon Creed).

During what we refer to as *the Reformation*, eschatology became a weapon with which to attack the Papal Church. Sound exegesis and hermeneutics was abandoned as the Reformers' bias caused them to eisegetically force the Papacy into those Scriptures relating to the Anti-Christ, and the Beast of Revelation 13. This school of eschatology is known as *Historicism*. It viewed the coming of Christ primarily to deal with a corrupted and compromised Church.

Another school of eschatology developed in the nineteenth century, three hundred years after the Reformation. It arose against the cultural backdrop of "enlightenment" and rationalism where civic leaders openly scorned the Church and created a dividing wall between them and the Church known as *secularism*. Edward Irving, John Nelson Darby, Cyrus Schofield each built on each other's

work to develop an eschatology of futurism which attempted to incorporate a Christianised form of Neo-Zionism. To futurists the coming of Christ was divided into two events, (i) a coming *for* the Church, and then (ii) a coming *with* the Church, some seven years later, and He was coming to deal with those who were secularists.

Futurism has gained the upper hand of popularity in modern times due to its unquestioned acceptance by the fastest growing elements of the western Church (Brethren, Baptists, Pentecostals).



But as Dispensational Futurism has repeatedly proven to be faulty in its eschatological predictions, more and more believers have realised that this form of eschatology is hermeneutically bankrupt. I am assuming that there is no need to list some of these faulty predictions, but included in such a list would be—

- Mussolini, an Italian military leader of the Second World War, would prove to be the Anti-Christ and usher in Armageddon.
- Henry Kissinger would be revealed as the Anti-Christ
- Communism would prove to be the vehicle of the Beast of Revelation 13
- The Soviet Union would invade Israel and commence the battle of Gog and Magog which would result in most of the USSR being slaughtered
- Saddam Hussein would rebuild the ancient ruins of Babylon and to prepare the way for its destruction as stated in Revelation 18

Needless to say each of these Dispensational predictions have proven to be false. But there is one Dispensational prediction which has continued to become increasingly grounded in speculation: *the coming of Christ*. Some of the more bizarre claims made about this event is that it will be broadcast live on CNN (since “every eye will see Him”, Rev. 1:7)!

I believe every believer is obligated to have their assumptions about the coming of Christ challenged so that we can arrive at the true Biblical position.

## QUESTIONS ABOUT THE COMING OF CHRIST-

- Is the reference to Christ’s coming mentioned in Matthew 24:29-31 the same as that mentioned in Matthew 25:31? *I suggest that it is not.*
- Does Matthew 24:29-31 equate to 1Thessalonians 4:16? *I suggest that it does not.*
- Does the 7<sup>th</sup> Trumpet of Revelation 11 equate to the “last” trumpet of First Corinthians 15? *I suggest that it does not.*
- Do the seals of Revelation 6 equate to the descriptions in Matthew 24? *I suggest that they most certainly do.* Considering Matthew 24:34 this must have been fulfilled by 70AD otherwise Christ is a false prophet. When Revelation was written around 64AD (not 95AD!) what was immediately future to them is now past to us.
- Could the expression “the Lord is coming on the clouds” or its variants found in the Old Testament to describe God judging the nations, be the thought behind the same expression found in the New Testament? *I suggest that it most certainly does.*
- Does First Thessalonians 4:13-17 teach a secret coming of Christ to “rapture” the Church before/during/after the commencement of a seven year Tribulation period? *I strongly suggest that it does not* (see my appendix on “The Questionable Nature of the Rapture”).

To understand what the Bible truly teaches about the coming of Christ I once again urge you to read my commentary on Revelation (“Understanding Revelation- A Revelation of the Glorious Christ”). This sets out an exegetical analysis of the Book showing that Revelation 1-19 has been fulfilled and that Revelation 20 has commenced and contains future elements through to the end of the Book.

*For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*

Matthew 24:27

The Bible uses numbers redemptively. That is, numbers often convey symbolism designed to convey a message from God. Most significantly is the use of the number *seven* which generally means *complete*. But what many Christians do not realise is that God also uses direction redemptively. The direction “east” often speaks of man moving away from God—

- Adam and Eve sinned in Eden and were removed from there through the East gate of Eden (Gen. 3:24)
- When Cain killed Abel he fled East to the Land of Nod (Gen. 4:16)
- When Abram and Lot separated, Lot went East to Sodom (Gen. 13:11)
- When Israel sinned they were taken East to Assyria
- When Judah sinned they were exiled East to Babylon

In same way the direction “west” often speaks of coming to God—

- When God called Abram, he was called to head West
- When the Tabernacle was built, the presence of God was positioned West in the Holy of Holies
- When wise men came looking for the Messiah, they headed West

The expression “*as lightning flashes from the east to the west*” is a very deliberate order of direction. In essence it refers to God redemptively intervening into the affairs of man. This expression occurs nowhere else in Scripture. “Lightning” is often associated with the presence of God (note Exodus 20:18; Daniel 10:6). Thus it appears that Christ is saying that He will manifest His presence and intervene redemptively into our world.

## SUN, MOON & STARS

*Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*

Matthew 24:29

The expression *sun, moon, and stars* is an apocalyptic metaphor for *Israel*. This expression is first used in Genesis 37:9 where he describes Israel as the sun, moon, and stars.

*Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me."*

Genesis 37:9

In Isaiah 13:10 the prophet uses exactly the same expression about Israel to give reason why God was about to use Babylon to judge them.

*For the stars of heaven and their constellations  
Will not give their light;  
The sun will be darkened in its going forth,  
And the moon will not cause its light to shine.*

Isaiah 13:10

When the Bible says that the sun does not give forth its light, the stars fall from sky, and moon does not shine, it is saying that Israel has abandoned God. In this verse in Matthew 24, Christ is saying that Israel is about to be judged because they have abandoned God.

## THE SIGN OF THE SON OF MAN

*Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*

Matthew 24:30

It's eye opening to realise what this verse does *not* say. It does not say that Christ will appear on the earth. Again Christ is using Old Testament language to convey His message-

*I was watching in the night visions,  
And behold, One like the Son of Man,  
Coming with the clouds of heaven!  
He came to the Ancient of Days,  
And they brought Him near before Him.*

Daniel 7:13

Christ appears to be quoting Daniel 7:13. This verse gives us increased insight into what Christ is saying in Matthew 24:30. Many have assumed that Christ is describing His descent to earth. But these verses actually describe an *ascent* to the Father (the Ancient of Days). This is why we must reject links made between First Thessalonians 4:17, which describes Christ descent, and Matthew 24:30. They are two separate events!

Christ is stating, and Daniel 7:13 affirms, that His parousia will be with the clouds of Heaven- not earth!

The expression “the Lord coming on the clouds” and its variants are Old Testament metaphors describing God judging a nation. These times are often described as *a day of the Lord*.

*He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters;  
**He makes the clouds His chariot;**  
He walks upon the wings of the wind;  
<sup>4</sup>He makes the winds His messengers,  
Flaming fire His ministers.  
Psalm 104:3-4*

***Behold, he goes up like clouds,**  
And his chariots like the whirlwind;  
His horses are swifter than eagles.  
Woe to us, for we are ruined!  
Jeremiah 4:13*

*For the day is near,  
Even the day of the LORD is near;  
**It will be a day of clouds,**  
A time of doom for the nations.  
Ezekiel 30:3*

What is also enlightening is the following verse in Daniel 7 from where Christ is quoting. It is my solid conviction that Christ is describing the close of the Old Covenant and the beginning of His Kingdom on earth (not a “millennial reign” but a New Covenant Kingdom). Otherwise Matthew 16:28 not only makes no sense, it actually makes Christ a liar!

*Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.*

Matthew 16:28

When we understand that the expression “Son of Man coming” speaks of God’s judgment (in this case on the nation of Israel) we can see that God closed the Old Covenant Age and commenced the New Covenant Kingdom. This is also confirmed by Daniel 7:14 which prophetically stated that when Christ would judge Israel He would then establish His Kingdom-

*Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom,  
That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.  
His dominion is an everlasting dominion,  
Which shall not pass away,  
And His kingdom the one  
Which shall not be destroyed.*

Daniel 7:14

Thus after the close of Matthew 24 when Christ has come and done away with the elements of the Old Covenant (it was legally done away with at the Cross), the opening line of Matthew 25 begins to describe His Kingdom.

*Then the kingdom of heaven shall be...*

Matthew 25:1

## THE TIME WAS NEAR THEN

*Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near.*

Matthew 24:32

Christ has just described events which He said some in His audience would live to see. He reinforces this by stating emphatically that “you” (that is, those listening to Him) would know that the time was near when they began to see the signs which He mentioned.

*So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near; at the doors!*

Matthew 24:33

And thus we return to our key verse: Matthew 24:34—

*Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.*

Matthew 24:34

# WHAT THE SCRIPTURES REALLY TEACH ABOUT THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

What may come as a surprise to the Bible student is that the expression “second coming of Christ” does not occur in the Bible. What we have called and depicted as “the second coming of Christ” is thought of only in terms of the end of the world (the consummation of time). But this is Biblically unsustainable because it can be demonstrated that much of what the New Testament describes as the return of Christ refers to His apocalyptic coming to judge Jerusalem and has been fulfilled.



The New Testament does however refer to Christ coming to judge all the living and the dead (thus the need for the Resurrection) at the end of time.

*Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.*

John 5:25-27

*He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him; the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.*

John 12:48

*And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.*

Acts 10:42

*I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:*

2 Timothy 4:1

When I teach this view of eschatology I am usually asked, “*So you believe in a third coming of Christ?*” This question creates hurdles for people who have fixed paradigms about what the return of Christ means. For those who realise that

the Scripture speaks of Christ coming to judge Judaism and that this is what the writers of the New Testament were immediately expecting, the term “the second coming” of Christ becomes unnecessary. We are hermeneutically safer to use the Biblical expression of the Lord “coming” to describe what has happened and will yet happen.

Thus, the Lord said He would “come” within the generation of His audience to judge Jerusalem (Matthew 24:34). I trust that I have proved to you from this appendix and my commentary on Revelation that this was indeed fulfilled. This is clearly what the first believers expected. Yet we have too often tried pathetically to redefine their clear time-frame references into the absurd equation that *near means far away* or that *the time is at hand* somehow means a gap of more than 2,000 years!

*But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.*

1 Peter 4:7

Biblical Exegete, Arthur Pink, commenting on Hebrews 10:37 makes this point as well-

*“The Greek is very expressive and emphatic. The apostle used a word which signifies ‘a little while,’ and then for further emphasis added a particle meaning ‘very,’ and this he still further intensified by repeating it; thus, literally rendered this clause reads, ‘For yet a very, very little while, and he that shall come will come.’... ‘For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.’ The reference here is to the person of the Lord Jesus as is evident from Hab. 2:3, to which the apostle here alludes.*

Pink-Commentary on Hebrews-Pg 145

Yet the Scripture also speaks of the Lord “coming” at the point of the Resurrection to judge the living and the dead. The Pantelologist claims that this has somehow occurred in 70AD.

The Partial Preterist position is that Christ did indeed *come* to judge Jerusalem *and* that He will *come* to judge the world. Matthew 24 is fulfilled. We are in Matthew 25. Therefore, when people ask me what does the Bible say is yet to happen, we must heed the warnings contained in Matthew 25. These include-

- *Be fervent and passionate for Christ especially by being filled with the Spirit of God (Parable of the virgins)*
- *Live each day as if we will meet the Lord*
- *Be diligent and fruitful with what the Lord has given us (Parable of the talents)*
- *Live as if we will give an account of our lives*

In Matthew 24:29-31 Christ describes the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and glory. But in Matthew 25:31 He describes the Son of Man coming in His glory. In Matthew 24 the emphasis is on judging the nation of Israel. In Matthew 25 the emphasis is on Him judging the nations.

Christians are often quick to criticise Jewish people for failing to see that the Old Testament foretold of the Messiah coming to redeem through his suffering and death before He would come again to rule then judge. But have Christians been guilty of a similar error when it pertains to the “Second Coming” of Christ? The New Testament alludes to the Old Testament Prophets failing to distinguish between Christ coming to suffer and Christ coming in glory.

*Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, <sup>11</sup>searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.*

1 Peter 1:10-11

What for a long time we have assumed would be achieved in a single return of Christ, when we look closer at Scripture and history we observe that it speaks of a twofold return. For those serious about unravelling this, I urge you to read and perhaps re-read my commentary on Revelation. I hope that I have made an historic contribution to the Church’s development of what J. Edwin Orr has described as *that point in the history of dogma in which the doctrine of the last things will receive greater attention and be brought to further development.*

*Father, where I have erred please forgive me and give  
others the grace to do the same.*

*Where I have got things wrong please correct me.*

*Where I am right may others receive it in the spirit in  
which it was discovered.*

*I thank You for giving me a mind with which to reason to  
Your most reasonable truth.*

*I thankyou for giving me a heart with which to experience  
Your love. I thank you for giving me a spirit with which to  
be connected to You. I thank you for giving me a wife who  
keeps me guessing.*

*Amen.*



# INDEX:

## **I**

144,000, 59, 61, 87

## **A**

Amillennialism, 102, 103, 105, 106  
angel, 11, 12, 13, 29, 38, 63, 64, 66, 67, 68,  
69, 70, 71, 72, 88, 89, 90, 100, 140, 156  
Anti-Christ: Antichrist, 11, 81, 134  
apocalyptic, 3, 20, 53, 57, 59, 65, 66, 115,  
146  
apologetic, 165  
apostasy, 31, 66, 84, 87  
apostate, 30, 44, 57, 65, 67, 96, 113, 134  
apostle, 15, 22, 23, 64, 95, 151  
apostles, 15, 23, 41, 59, 145  
Ark, 43, 139  
Armageddon, 92  
Assemblies of God, 100  
Augustus, 5, 48, 49, 95, 113

## **B**

Babylon, 54, 89, 92, 93, 97, 112, 134  
Babylonians, 39, 53, 54, 93  
barcodes, 85  
beast, xiii, 74, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 87, 89, 94,  
95, 96, 107; beasts, 71, 73, 81, 82, 83, 86,  
91, 94, 95, 97  
*beloved city*, 112  
Bertrand Russell, 145, 146, 166, 167  
blasphemy, 33, 58, 83, 94  
bound, 69, 100, 103, 104, 105, 106, 113,  
141, 155, 157  
bowls, 41, 42, 59, 90, 91, 113  
bride, 15  
bridle, 90

## **C**

C.S. Lewis, 167

Caesar, 5, 6, 14, 27, 34, 38, 48, 49, 50, 51,  
52, 54, 82, 84, 86, 87, 94, 95  
Caligula, 49, 95  
cannibalism, 176  
Canon, 20, 72, 166, 177  
catapult, 62, 63, 93  
catapults, 93, 94  
Catholic, 28, 134  
cessationism, 166  
Cestius, 52, 62, 175, 176  
Chalcedon Creed, 177  
cherubim, 43  
Claudius, 5, 50, 95  
Cross, 14, 21, 80, 96, 101, 103, 105, 106,  
108, 113

## **D**

*Dakes Annotated Reference Bible*, 135  
Daniel, 3, 4, 11, 62, 65, 66, 79, 81, 114, 147,  
175, 180, 182, 183, 174  
Darby, 134, 135  
Deacons, 24  
death, x, 6, 16, 25, 27, 33, 34, 50, 51, 73, 75,  
80, 82, 83, 109, 113, 114, 116, 118, 119,  
137, 139, 141, 147, 149, 150, 152, 154,  
155, 158, 159  
demonic, 69, 70, 91, 105, 113, 116  
Devil, 14, 21, 79, 80, 100, 103, 104, 105,  
106, 107, 113, 116, 155, 156, 157  
Dispensational: Dispensationalism, 2, 48,  
97, 101, 123, 124, 130, 135, 145, 155  
Dispensationalism's, 100  
Donna Maree Hill, xii  
Double Reference, 7, 124, 136  
Dragon, 6, 7, 79, 91  
Drummond, 134

## **E**

earthquake, 32, 51, 52, 76, 92

earthquakes, 50, 52, 53, 92  
 Edward Irving, 134, 135, 177  
 eisegesis, 161, 166, 167  
 Elders, 24, 41, 42, 156  
 Elijah, 73, 139  
 Emperor, 48, 51, 83, 86, 95, 113  
 Empire, 6, 15, 22, 27, 31, 38, 48, 64, 69, 71,  
 74, 75, 82, 83, 95, 96, 141  
 end-time, 1, 90  
 Enoch, 73, 139  
 Ephesus: Ephesian, 19, 21, 23, 25, 34  
 Euphrates, 69, 70, 113  
*exegesis*, 13, 161, 166, 167, 177

## F

famine, 50  
*fornication*, 70, 89, 94  
 Futurism, 134, 146, 178  
*Futurist*: Futurism, 3, 102, 134, 145  
 Futurists, 3, 30, 64, 65, 145

## G

Gaius, 5, 49  
 Gary DeMar, 112  
 Gehenna, 117, 118  
 generation, x, 2, 54, 61, 84, 85, 87, 96, 105,  
 107, 145  
 Gentiles, 58, 73, 84, 123, 126, 127, 128,  
 134, 160, 161  
 Gentry, 5, 82, 90, 94, 146, 147  
 Gog, 109, 112  
 Gospel, 4, 22, 23, 61, 62, 80, 88, 89, 96,  
 105, 106, 141, 149, 158  
 grace, 23, 61, 87, 88, 120, 149, 157, 187  
 Great Commission, 41, 102  
*Great Tribulation*, 11, 30, 177

## H

*Hades*, 50, 116, 118  
 harlot, 15, 94, 95, 96, 97, 112, 134  
 heaven, xi, 25, 34, 37, 38, 39, 40, 42, 43, 51,  
 53, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70,  
 71, 76, 79, 80, 83, 88, 93, 96, 97, 100,  
 104, 108, 112, 114, 115, 135, 137, 138,

140, 147, 148, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155,  
 156, 159  
 heaven and earth, 68, 69, 70, 71, 88, 115  
 Hebrews, xi, 37, 40, 54, 90, 96, 108, 119,  
 125, 126, 139  
 Hell, 95, 116, 117, 118, 120  
 hermeneutical, 28, 124, 130, 146, 151, 152  
 hermeneutics, 73, 124, 152, 166, 177  
*Hinnom*, 117  
*Historical*: Historicism, 3, 6  
*Historicism*, 134, 146, 166, 177  
 Historicist, 28, 47, 102  
 Historicists, 31, 64, 65, 90  
 history, 3, 14, 19, 20, 30, 31, 64, 65, 72, 75,  
 79, 91, 93, 112, 133, 161  
 Hitler, 11  
 horns, 4, 42, 69, 81, 83, 94, 95, 96  
 Horsemen, 47  
 Hyper-Preterism, 105, 146, 147, 148, 154

## I

idolatry, 25, 34, 70  
 immorality, 22, 26, 28, 34, 47, 70  
 incense, 41, 42, 74  
 interpretation, 3, 4, 5, 6, 19, 31, 59, 64, 68,  
 85, 86, 91, 101, 102, 103, 136, 145, 151,  
 152  
 Irenaeus, 5  
 Israel, x, 20, 39, 40, 41, 44, 53, 57, 58, 59,  
 60, 61, 65, 66, 69, 73, 74, 79, 80, 83, 87,  
 91, 92, 101, 114, 117, 123, 124, 125, 126,  
 127, 128, 129, 130, 140

## J

*James Stuart Russell*, 57, 146, 147, 151,  
 152, 153  
 Jehovah's Witnesses, 157  
 Jerusalem, 6, 15, 30, 31, 34, 39, 51, 52, 53,  
 59, 61, 62, 63, 66, 67, 68, 70, 71, 72, 73,  
 75, 76, 80, 82, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94,  
 95, 96, 97, 102, 105, 108, 112, 113, 114,  
 115, 117, 120, 127, 128, 134, 138, 140,  
 141, 146, 147, 148, 151, 152, 161

Jews, 6, 27, 30, 33, 34, 40, 52, 54, 57, 58,  
62, 63, 67, 71, 76, 80, 84, 92, 93, 94, 112,  
123, 126, 128, 130, 134, 141, 160, 161  
Jezebel, 26, 27  
John F. Walvoord, 135  
John Nelson Darby, 177  
Josephus, 5, 33, 52, 53, 62, 63, 76, 82, 90,  
92, 93, 94, 170, 171, 172, 173, 175, 176  
Judaism, 15, 33, 44, 83, 84, 86, 87, 88, 91,  
94, 97, 107, 113, 141, 156, 159  
Judaizers, 33  
Judge, 44  
judgment, 15, 16, 21, 31, 33, 38, 39, 40, 44,  
47, 65, 70, 71, 72, 88, 89, 91, 93, 94, 105,  
107, 108, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120,  
139, 140, 156, 157, 161

## **K**

Kenneth Taylor, 70  
kingdom, x, 4, 39, 44, 50, 58, 80, 95, 103,  
105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 116, 140, 141,  
155, 159, 160, 161  
Kissinger, 11

## **L**

Lacunza, 134  
Lake of Fire, 105, 106, 117, 118  
Lamb, 4, 15, 39, 41, 42, 47, 52, 53, 54, 57,  
61, 62, 80, 84, 87, 89, 120  
lampstand, 12, 24  
Lampstands: lampstand, 73, 74  
Laodicean, 31, 32  
last days, 2, 12  
*Late Great Planet Earth*, 135  
Lee Strobel, 158  
*Left Behind*, 133, 135  
Leon Morris, 5  
Lightfoot, 40  
locusts, 68  
lukewarm, 32

## **M**

Magog, 109, 112  
Margaret McDonald, 135  
mark, 84, 85, 87, 89, 107

martyrdom, 25, 34, 51, 75, 80, 158, 174  
martyred, 6, 22, 34, 75, 83, 107  
Matthew Henry, 64, 137  
Megiddo, 92  
Mercy Seat, 43  
Messiah, 7, 60, 70, 71, 79, 84, 90, 94, 134,  
147  
millennial, 100, 102, 103, 106  
miracles, 73, 86  
miraculous, 84  
Moses, 5, 43, 73

## **N**

Neo-Zionism, 178  
Nero, 5, 6, 34, 51, 52, 53, 75, 82, 86, 87, 95,  
113  
New Covenant, 41, 57, 59, 80, 87, 96, 107,  
108, 125, 126, 128, 130, 154, 161  
New Testament, 25, 26, 27, 29, 31, 40, 58,  
61, 64, 72, 84, 86, 88, 105, 115, 127, 130,  
139, 145, 146, 150, 154, 156, 157  
Nicene Creed, 177  
Nicolaitans, 24, 26

## **O**

oichoumene, 141, 174, 175  
oikoumene, 31, 96  
Old Covenant: Old Testament, 6, 20, 44, 59,  
62, 76, 80, 89, 90, 96, 104, 108, 109, 114,  
115, 125, 126, 140, 141, 147, 152, 154,  
155, 156, 157, 159, 160  
Old Testament, 3, 4, 5, 7, 21, 29, 43, 53, 59,  
60, 65, 92, 107, 108, 117, 139  
Olford, 51  
Olive Trees: olive tree, 73, 74  
Olivet, 31  
One World, 2, 11  
Orr, 165, 177, 186

## **P**

Palestine, 63, 66, 83, 123, 124, 127, 128  
*Pantology*, 106, 147, 148, 154  
Paradise, 15, 25, 34, 147, 152  
Parousia, 86, 141, 145, 146, 147, 151, 168,  
169, 182

*Partial Preterist*, 4

Patmos, 14, 39

patriarchs, 41

*Pax Romana*, 48

Pentecostal, 2, 11

Pergamos, 19, 21, 25

persecuted, 84

persecution, 6, 13, 34, 47, 73, 75, 83, 95,  
112

pestilence, 27

Philadelphian, 28, 30, 31

phylacteries, 84

*Pontifex Maximus*, 48

Post-Millennialism, 102, 105

prayer, 32, 34, 42, 69

Pre-Millennialism, 102, 103

Prophet, 91

## **R**

*rapture*, xiii, 1, 11, 97, 133, 135, 136, 137,  
138, 139

redemption, 41, 59, 60, 159, 160

Reformation, 28, 123, 177

Reformers, 28, 30, 134

resurrection, 4, 14, 30, 61, 82, 106, 109, 116,  
118, 119, 136, 137, 138, 139, 141, 145,  
147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154,  
155, 157, 158, 159, 160

Ribera, 134

Romans, 6, 31, 48, 58, 59, 62, 63, 67, 68, 69,  
70, 72, 74, 75, 82, 89, 93, 126, 127, 128,  
129, 130, 138, 157, 159, 160

Rome, 5, 15, 44, 50, 51, 53, 69, 71, 73, 75,  
82, 83, 84, 86, 89, 91, 94, 95, 97, 113,  
134

## **S**

sacrifices, 52, 65, 66, 108

saints, 30, 38, 41, 42, 83, 91, 95, 107, 112,  
147

Sardis, 19, 21, 28, 29, 34

Satan: Devil, 7, 25, 30, 58, 70, 79, 80, 86,  
91, 95, 100, 103, 104, 105, 106, 109, 113,  
120, 141, 154, 155, 157, 161

Schofield, 135, 177

scroll, 38, 41, 51

seals, 4, 38, 47, 51, 52, 57, 81, 113

Sheol, 147, 151, 152, 153

Smyrna, 19, 21, 24, 25, 34

sorcery, 70

spiritual warfare, 25, 104

Sproul, 146, 151

*sun moon and stars*, 53, 66

synagogue, 30, 58, 86

## **T**

Tabernacle, 59, 73, 82, 83

talent, 63, 93, 94

*Talmud*, 40

Tasmania, 2, xiii, 69, 177

Temple, 2, 5, 6, 31, 34, 39, 52, 66, 72, 73,  
82, 89, 92, 108, 110, 111, 114, 120, 130,  
134, 147, 156, 168, 169, 170, 171, 175

thousand years, 100, 102, 103, 107, 109,  
113, 149, 155

Thyatira, 19, 21, 26, 28, 34

Tiberius, 5, 49, 95

Titus, 27, 95, 139

Transfiguration: transfigurations, 73

tree of life, 25, 34

Trevor Chandler, 166

tribulation, xiii, 2, 11, 24, 27, 30, 53, 58, 61,  
66, 68, 71, 97, 135

Trinity, 42

Trumpets, 37, 57, 62

twelve tribes, 41, 60

*two witnesses*, 60, 73, 74, 75

## **V**

vengeance, 40, 63, 71, 91, 114, 147

Vespasian, 27, 63, 82, 95, 113

vials, 90

visions, 38, 39, 57, 81, 91, 113

## **W**

watch, 29

witnesses, 73, 74, 75, 95, 158, 159

woes, 67, 69

wormwood, 63, 64, 65

worship, 24, 30, 42, 43, 70, 72, 83, 84, 86,  
88, 89, 130  
wrath, 11, 12, 38, 52, 53, 54, 67, 89, 90, 92,  
93

## **Z**

Zechariah, 3, 37, 58, 73

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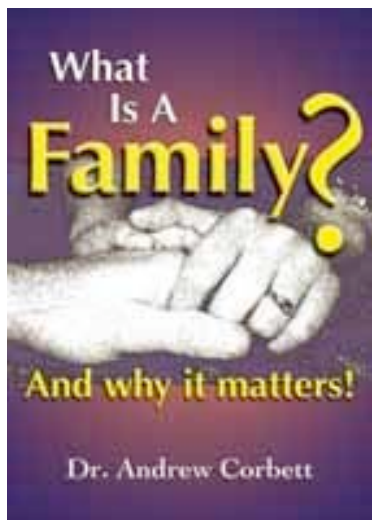
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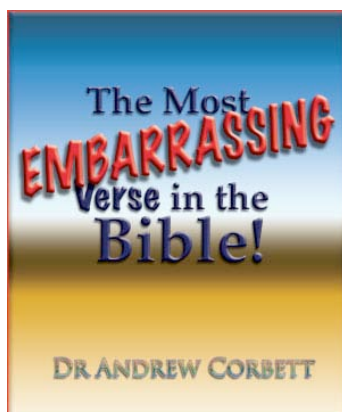
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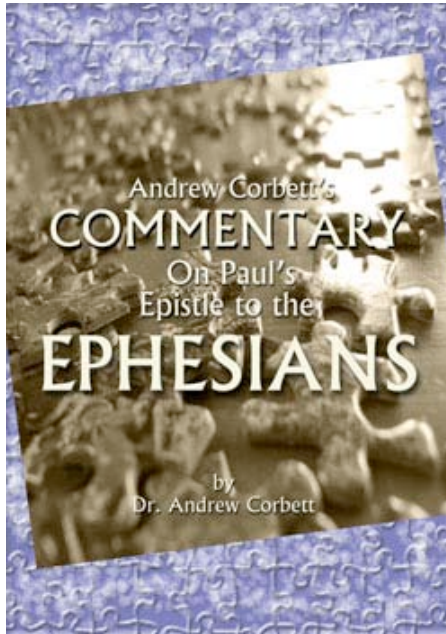


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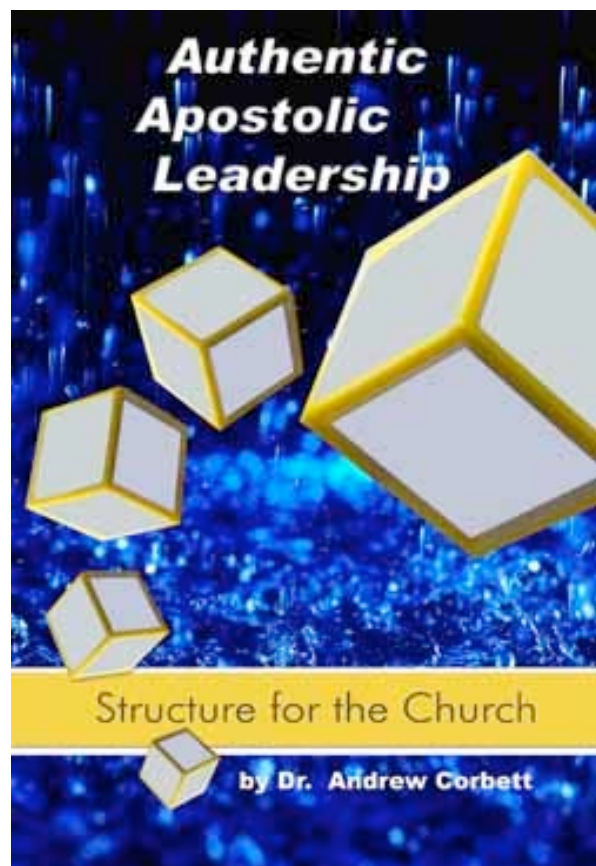
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