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I. Introduction:

There can be no doubt that God wants His people to know about future events. One-quarter of Biblical books are prophetic with fully one-fifth of all Biblical material being prophetic in content.

The study of prophecy can be discredited by those who go beyond the Bible’s statements about the future. It is clear that some things God has simply not revealed to man (Deut. 29:29; Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32; Acts 1:7). Nevertheless, the Bible teaches much about the future even if it does not teach all about the future. Whatever it says is certainly a valid area for study and must not be neglected. The early church, for its first three centuries, understood the importance of eschatology. However, detailed Biblical knowledge about future events was lost during the dark ages. The Reformers were too busy at soteriological battlefronts to research eschatology. It is only within the last two centuries that Bible students have renewed concentration upon eschatology.

One story is illustrative of a previous neglect. Dr. Dabney was one of the most respected of American theologians of the 19th century. “Dr. R. L. Dabney, the honored theologian of the South, when asked by a former student whether certain interpretations of prophecy were correct, replied, ‘you are probably right. I have never looked into the subject.’ ”

The excesses of those who go beyond the Bible in prophetic assertions must not force the church to a return to its traditional neglect and/or ignorance of future events. The Lord told us that the Holy Spirit would “show you things to come” (John 16:13), and there is a special blessing for those who read and understand prophecy (Rev. 1:3). Knowledge of eschatology is not only intellectually rewarding but also spiritually enriching. The Bible teaches this repeatedly.

Knowledge of future judgment may bring a person to salvation by faith in Christ. The following passage ties knowledge about the Second Coming and judgment to a person finding salvation for his soul.

“For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds” [Matt. 16:26-27].

For those who are already believers, the study of future events should purify their lives. The following verses link the Lord’s coming to believers and holiness in life.

Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near [Phil. 4:5].

When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come [Col. 3:4-6].

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the com-

1 Quoted by Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology (Dallas Theological Seminary Press, 1948), IV: 256.
Not By Bread Alone

ing of our Lord Jesus Christ [1 Thess. 5:23].

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus [Titus 2:11-13].

Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness [2 Pet. 3:11].

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure [1 John 3:2-3].

Knowledge of the future helps produce what the Bible calls “sobriety of life”. Believers who ponder the future know that life has a serious side to it with responsibilities for serious pursuits. Sobriety of perspective overlaps with an awareness of the need for purity, but it also includes an awareness of the need for service. Eschatology should make believers sense the urgency of their work. (See also in addition to the following printed texts: Matt. 25:14ff.; Luke 12:42ff.; 19:12ff.; 1 Thess. 5:4-9).

“Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes” [Luke 12:43].

“We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work” [John 9:4].

And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy [Rom. 13:11-13].

Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For [because] we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad [2 Cor. 5:9-10].

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction [2 Tim. 4:1-2].

Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ [1 Pet. 1:13].

The end of all things is at hand; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer [1 Pet. 4:7].

Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; not yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be
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examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory [1 Pet. 5:1-4].

In addition to stimulating purity and providing motivation for work, knowledge of future events gives comfort in suffering and in times when believers face the ridicule of the world. The informed believer need fear neither his personal future nor premature world destruction.

“Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way where I am going.” Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” [John 14:1-6].

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us [Rom. 8:18].

Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men’s hearts; and then each man’s praise will come to him from God [1 Cor. 4:5].

For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison [2 Cor. 4:17].

And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary [Gal. 6:9].

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. 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. Therefore, comfort one another with these words [1 Thess. 4:13-18].

Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay [Heb. 10:35-37].

Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand [James 5:7-8].

[T]hat the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise
and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ [1 Pet. 1:7].

[But to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation [1 Pet. 4:13].

God intends that the study of eschatology be spiritually stimulating, intellectually satisfying and psychologically stabilizing. In order to build a foundation for the intelligent study of eschatology it is best to define some common terms. Also, one will have to understand the typical pretribulational/pre-millennial time chart before it can be intelligently defended and discussed. Here are some basic eschatological terms with the prophetic time line that will be taught in the course of this study.

**Eschatology** - This term is from two Greek words (*eschatos* - last, and *logos* - word). Eschatology means a word or study about last things, meaning the future.

**Rapture** - This word is the Latin translation of the phrase “caught up” in 1 Thess. 4:17. It refers to Christ coming in the clouds to take all believers with Him.

**Tribulation** - As a technical term “tribulation” refers to a time of great suffering which Jesus predicted in Matt. 24:21 (see also Jer. 30:7, Dan. 12:1). Dan. 9:27 indicates the period will be 7 years long (a “week” here means a seven-year cycle). The last half of the Tribulation is called the Great Tribulation and is 3 1/2 years long. (See Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 12:14; “time, times, dividing of time;” Rev. 11:2; 13:5; “forty-two months;” Rev. 11:3; 12:6; “1260 days”).

**Pretribulational Rapture** - The view that believers will not go through the Tribulation but will be raptured before it begins. This is the best view.

**Partial Rapture** - The view that Christ will remove “spiritual” Christians before the Tribulation but allow others to remain to face the Tribulation.

**Midtribulation Rapture** - The view that believers will be on earth for the first 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation but will be raptured before the Great Tribulation (i.e., the last 3 1/2 years).

**Posttribulation** - The view that believers must go through the entire 7 year Tribulation. Then Christ will come again. (With this view there is no difference between Rapture and Revelation or Second Coming. Both would occur at the same time).

**Judgment Seat of Christ** - This judgment pertains only to Christians. It occurs after the Rapture while there is the Tribulation on the earth. Christians will be judged on the basis of works for rewards. Salvation is not the issue (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:14-15).

**Marriage of the Lamb** - The church is the bride of Christ in the sense of being engaged to Him (2 Cor. 11:2). Revelation 19 places the wedding itself in heaven just before the Revelation, or Second Coming.

**Revelation or Second Coming** - Though the phrase “Second Coming” is used loosely to refer to either Rapture or Revelation, technically the terms “Second Coming” and “Revelation” refer to Christ’s coming to the earth with His saints at the end of the Tribulation. (The Rapture refers to His coming in the clouds for His saints before the Tribulation.) There are 7 years between the Rapture and the Revelation. At the Revelation, Christ is coming to destroy the Antichrist at Armageddon and to set up His Kingdom on earth (Jude 14-15).

**Judgment of The Nations** - This is the judgment that takes place after the Revelation when the Lord is beginning to set up His rule on earth. The word “nations” comes from the word *ethna* (ethnic) in Matt. 25:32,
and it should be understood to mean a judgment of individuals who are of different ethnic groups. Christ will start His Kingdom by removing all non-believers to judgment (v. 46) and permitting those who have been saved in the Tribulation to enter the Kingdom (v.34).

**Kingdom or Millennium** - After the Revelation of Christ, the Lord will remove all of the unbelievers and rule on the throne of David in Jerusalem for 1,000 years. The word *mille* is the Latin word for 1,000, and it comes from Rev. 20:1-8.

**Premillennialism** - The belief that Christ will come before the 1,000 year period and will be present to rule over the earth from Jerusalem. This is the best view.

**Amillennialism** - The position that there will be no earthly rule of Christ over the Jews from Jerusalem. One basic view among amillennialists is that the Jews rejected their King and, therefore, are not entitled to have the Old Testament promises fulfilled.

**Dominion Theology, Reconstructionism, Neo-postmillennialism** - These are all terms for a movement that teaches the church should and eventually will dominate the world. Those in this movement believe in political involvement with the goal and the expectation that the world will become

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### Pre-Tribulational/Pre-Millennial Time Chart

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Heaven</th>
<th>Earth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Great Tribulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage of the Lamb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapture (1)</td>
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<td>† Church</td>
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<td>The Tribulation Period</td>
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<td>Revelation or 2nd Coming</td>
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<td>Great White Throne Judgment (3)</td>
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<td>Armageddon (2)</td>
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<td>Millennium (1000 Yrs.)</td>
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<td>Judgment of Nations</td>
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<td>New Heavens and Earth</td>
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**Acts 2**

(1) Resurrection of Church Saints  
(2) Resurrection of O.T., Tribulation Saints  
(3) Resurrection of Unsaved / Second death

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better and better spiritually. With postmillennialism there will be a 1,000-year Christian kingdom on earth before the Second Coming.

**Great White Throne Judgment** - At the end of the Millennium the unsaved dead will be raised to stand trial and to be formally condemned for not receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior (Rev. 20:11-15).

**Eternal State** - At the end of the 1,000 years the Kingdom on earth merges with the Kingdom in heaven. The Eternal State is the same as heaven.

There are several good ways to organize a study on eschatology. One could profit from building a prophetic system logically (as opposed to chronologically), reasoning from clear truths to the more complex points. First, it is relatively easy to prove that the Bible promises Israel a Kingdom on earth (see Section XIII “Christ’s Kingdom on earth”, pp. 471ff.). Next Christ, in the Olivet Discourse, clearly teaches that His coming to the earth will precede this Kingdom and that prior to His arrival there will be a period of tribulation (e.g., Matt. 24:21,29-31). The next step would be to explain that texts which refer to Christ’s Second Coming seem to involve two phases of that coming (one in which He comes in the clouds for His saints to receive them to heaven and another in which He comes all the way to the earth with His saints and remains here for a Kingdom). A final step would be to argue that there must be a time span between these two phases and that the first aspect occurs prior to the Tribulation. Advanced students would probably benefit more from this strictly logical approach to building an eschatological system. However, the same approach could be very confusing to beginners. This study will follow the more chronological approach for the sake of those who may not be familiar with Biblical eschatology.

**II. Scriptural Expectations for the Course of the Church System**

With the evident decline in morals and spirituality, the call for Christian political action is quite valid. All Christians can agree that “righteousness exalts a nation” (Prov. 14:34). Virtue for virtue’s sake alone is good, and all Christians should be sensitive to their civic responsibilities.

However, modern Christians view political involvement from widely divergent philosophical grounds. Some believe that the primary mission of the church is to rescue individuals from the world through the gospel. These would make political and social efforts to be at best secondary projects. They maintain that the best a government can do for the Church is to leave it alone (cf. “peace” in 1 Tim. 2:1-2), granting the freedom to fulfill its mission. The government is accountable to God for the promotion of basic natural law (Rom. 2:14-15), but Christians should not desire the imposition of the entire Law of Moses on society, and they certainly do not want a theocratic state with compulsion to worship, believe, or give.

Other Christians approach political/social action with different expectations. They believe that Christians can actually reconstruct society through dominating its social/political institutions. They believe that the end result will be a Christian society (essentially a theocracy ruled by Biblical law including the Law of Moses) which is prepared to receive its King at His Second Coming. This later school of thought goes by various names, “theocratic postmillennialism”, “reconstructionism” or “dominion theology.” It is growing among charismatics who tend to transfer their belief in individual miracles to hope for a miraculous transformation of the whole society. Also, it is strong in conservative Reformed/Presbyterian circles.

While all conservatives have far more similarities than differences, it is proper to criti-
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cize the unrealistic expectations of dominion theology and to point out the dangers of sidetracking the church from its more important goal, evangelization. The bringing in of the Kingdom is not the task of the church. While tolerant relationships between church and state can enhance the furtherance of the gospel, those who think society can be transformed by law and politics will experience disillusionment. The Bible does not picture the church age as one of complete triumph of the gospel, nor does it teach that the spiritual condition of the world must be or will be at a high point for the Second Coming of Christ. It pictures the opposite as will be evident in the course of this study.

In addition, while the church is a form of the Kingdom of God, God will work through Israel in the future, not the church in the present, to bring in the period of peace, righteousness, and holiness which the Bible promises.

It is true that the world will not extinguish the church during the present dispensation (Matt. 16:18). It is just as true that the church will not “conquer” the entire world either spiritually or politically. There will be a mixture of good and evil. This is the whole point of several of Christ’s most notable parables.

Then He left the multitudes, and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, “Explain

2 Texts that predict that the gospel will permeate the world before Christ returns need not pertain to the church dispensation. While the gospel should go throughout the world during the Church dispensation, it is possible that predictions of a worldwide presentation of the Gospel will be fulfilled only in the tribulation period, not the Church period. Verses like Matt. 24:14 technically involve the tribulation period. The Gospel will be presented to the world in the Tribulation by means of two witnesses (Rev. 11:3-12), a flying angel (Rev. 14:6) and probably the 144,000 witnesses who are sealed (i.e., protected from death, Rev. 7:3-8).

...to us the parable of the tares of the field,” And He answered and said, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world, and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. Therefore just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear” [Matt. 13:36-43].

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind; and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down, and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away. So it will be at the end of the age; the angels shall come forth, and take out the wicked from among the righteous, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” [Matt. 13:47-50].

In this same sermon the Lord teaches that His Kingdom will indeed make progress during the period between His first and second comings. Consider the parables of the mustard seed and leaven (Matt. 13:31-33). Nevertheless, even at the end of the age the world will be a mixture of good and evil.
The church can be optimistic relative to delivering individuals from the world by the gospel (and every soul is important, see Luke 15:7,10). There should be no fear of the church failing (Matt. 16:18; Acts 1:8). Christians should pray for and work toward regional and temporal revivals, for they are most certainly possible. Nevertheless, despite these hopes for limited success, the Bible simply does not present the Church age as one in which the world will be brought into submission to Christ; and it certainly would not encourage Christians to view God’s work as involving the imposition of the Law of Moses upon society in order to transform it.

“Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it [Matt. 7:13-14].

But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these….And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived [2 Tim. 3:1-5, 12-13].

III. The Rapture as a Valid Concept:

Despite the fact that some have ridiculed the concept of a “secret rapture,” the Bible does seem to give two phases or elements to Christ’s return. The first phase has been customarily called the “Rapture” after the Latin translation in 1 Thess. 4:17 meaning, “to snatch away.” The KJV phrase is “caught up.” Oddly enough “rapture” and “rape” are related in origin. Both include the notion of snatching away.

After laying some foundational points to enhance understanding of the issue, this section will develop the propositions that there are two phases to Christ’s return and that the first of these, called the Rapture, occurs before the Tribulation and is the very next prophetic event. Nothing needs to be fulfilled before the Rapture can occur. We will follow a question-answer format.

A. How do we know that there is a Future “Tribulation Period”?

The Scriptures predict a time of great trouble for the earth. Jer. 30:7 mentions “a time of Jacob’s trouble” with deliverance from it. This pertains to a future time because v. 9 teaches God will “raise up” David to be king as a part of the deliverance. Also, Jer. 30:24 says, “In the latter days you will understand this.” Daniel 12 also teaches about a time of great trouble for Israel.

“Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress [tribulation] such as has never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued” [Dan. 12:1].

The New Testament is just as clear as the Old on the point that the earth will experience a time of deep horror in the end times. Christ’s teachings are conclusive proof for the existence of a tribulation period (see Matt. 24:15-30; Mark 13:1-37; Luke 21:1-38). Note that the Lord equates this dreadful time with teachings from the book
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“Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; let him who is on the housetop not go down to get the things out that are in the house; and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak. But woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babies in those days! But pray that your flight may not be in winter, or on a Sabbath; for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginnings of the world until now, nor ever shall be. And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short. Then if anyone says to you, ‘behold, here is the Christ,’ or ‘there He is’ do not believe him. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you in advance” [Matt. 24:15-25].

The Apostle Paul refers to a time when sudden destruction will overtake those on earth who think that all is “peace and safety” (1 Thess. 5:1ff.). He also taught that conditions would degenerate to the point of great apostasy and the wicked man of sin demanding worship as God (2 Thess. 2:3-12).

Finally, any literal interpretation of the Book of Revelation leads to the conclusion that the events of Chapters 4 through 19 have not yet occurred and are not in progress. The miseries described in Revelation 4-19 are future and pertain to a time of tribulation.

Specific teachings about the tribulation period must await further sections. The immediate task is merely to establish that a tribulation period is a Biblical concept. Thus, it makes sense to argue over whether the Rapture occurs before or after it.

B. Why do many theologians view the Tribulation as a 7-year period?

In Matthew 24:15ff. Jesus identifies the future tribulation period with the period of time spoken of in Daniel 9:27. Daniel refers to a one “week” period, and he also gives significance to the middle of the week as being another sub-division of time. An evil prince who is coming will violate his peace pact with Israel in the middle of the “week.” He will cause sacrifices in the temple to cease and desire that he be honored as God (see also Daniel 11:36; 2 Thess. 2:4ff.).

“Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains” [Matt. 24:15-16].

“And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate” [Daniel 9:27].

The word translated “week” in Daniel 9 simply means a group or cycle of seven and does not by itself give the unit of time. Jewish people were just as accustomed to seven-year cycles as we are to seven day weekly cycles. They were supposed to work their land for six years and then give it rest in the seventh (Lev. 25:3-4). The Hebrews had failed to observe the seventh year of rest for
a period of 490 years. Therefore, God imposed a 70-year captivity upon them to recover the neglected sabbatical years (2 Chron. 36:21). The context of Dan. 9:27, specifically v. 2, concerns this 70-year punishment and leads one to believe that the “weeks” in Daniel 9 refer to cycles of seven years, not cycles of seven days. When the “weeks” are interpreted as cycles of seven years, then a very specific and accurate prediction for the time of Messiah’s first coming unfolds. This confirms the interpretation of Daniel’s weeks as weeks of seven years.

The “one week” period of Daniel 9:27, which Christ associates with the Tribulation in Matt. 24:15, must be a period of seven years, not just seven days.

Other time notations concerning the Tribulation clearly give a period of 3 1/2 years. The phrase “time, times, and dividing of time” means “one year plus two years plus 1/2 year” or 3 1/2 years. It occurs in Dan. 7:25, 12:7, and Rev. 12:14. This time corresponds to the second half of the Tribulation. In the Book of The Revelation the holy city is desecrated for 42 months, and the Beast speaks blasphemy for 42 months (see Rev. 11:2 and 13:5). Forty-two months equals 3 1/2 years and also corresponds to the time from the middle of the week to its end in Daniel 9:27. Thus, the entire “week” must be seven years. The two witnesses in Rev. 11:3 will prophesy for 1,260 days (which equals 3 1/2 years of 42 months of 30 days), and the woman in Rev. 12:6, Israel, will also undergo deep persecution for 1,260 days. The latter period corresponds to the last half of Daniel’s week (9:27).

All lines of evidence indicate that the period from the middle of the Tribulation to the end is 3 1/2 years (time, times, and a dividing of time, or 42 months or 1,260 days). The entire period will be approximately seven years in duration.

There will be a tribulation period. It will be seven years long. Furthermore, it will precede the Second Coming and the millennial Kingdom.

C. Why do we place this coming tribulation period prior to Christ’s return to the earth to set up His millennial Kingdom?

Both the Gospels and the Revelation present the tribulation period as ending with the King’s return to destroy His enemies and set up a Kingdom. Matt. 24:15-25 teaches about the Tribulation, with vv. 29-31 stressing that it will end at the Son of Man’s return. On the same occasion Christ taught that He would judge the nations at His return and initiate a Kingdom into which only His own sheep can be admitted (Matt. 25:31ff.).

The Book of Revelation also teaches that the time of tribulation precedes and will be ended by Christ’s coming to earth (Rev. 19:11ff.). Following the Lord’s return there will be a complete destruction of His adversaries and a reign that is 1,000 years in duration (see Rev. 19:19-20:6. 1,000 years occurs six times in Rev. 20:2-7).

Although a more complete defense for the concept of premillennialism is forthcoming, this material should be enough to prove that the following segment of the prophetic time line is very much Scriptural. Rapture is not included in the following chart since evidence for the time of the Rapture is presented later in the text.

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3 For an excellent study on Daniel’s 70 weeks as it relates to Messianic prophecy, see Harold W. Hoehner, Chronological Aspects of the Life Of Christ (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing Co., 1977), pp. 115-39.
4 Dan. 12:11-12 also mentions 1,290 days and 1,335 days. This could mean the Great Tribulation ends on day 1,260 while it takes 30 more days to judge and cleanse the world and still 45 more days to install the millennial Kingdom.
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Now we must study whether the Bible presents two distinct phases to the Lord’s return and whether the first of these occurs prior to the Tribulation.

D. Why should a distinction be drawn between the Rapture and the Revelation of Christ?

Careful students of the Bible note that the Scriptures indicate there will be two phases or aspects to Christ’s Second Coming. Teachings about various details of the Lord’s return seem to be in conflict unless some sort of distinction is drawn. When used in a technical sense, “Rapture” refers to one aspect of the Lord’s return, and “Revelation” refers to another aspect. The following contradictory propositions ought to show the wisdom of concluding there are two phases to the Lord’s return. In each of the five examples, contrast statement “a” with statement “b”.

1. Contrast One

a. The Lord will return to take saints unto Himself up to the clouds and/or to heaven. **Saints do not remain on earth** after Christ’s return.

“In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” [John 14:2-3].

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 be **always with the Lord** [1 Thess. 4:17].

b. When the Lord returns, He and His **saints will remain on the earth to enjoy the Kingdom.**

“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne….Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, **inherit the kingdom** prepared for you from the foundation of the world’ “ [Matt. 25:31, 34].

It ought to be obvious, especially to premillennialists, that these two future truths concern two different aspects to the Lord’s return. In one phase He will come to take believers away with Him. In another phase He will come and remain with believers on earth. Admittedly, we could merge these two details into one occasion if we adopt a “heavenly yo-yo” view where Christians are raptured up to the sky to peep at the heavenly mansions only to return immediately to earth for the Kingdom. However, it is preferable to understand these Scriptures to refer to different events. Both are true. One time Christ will return to take His followers up and **away from the earth**. Another time He will return and **keep His followers on the earth for a Kingdom**. At the Rapture believers **leave** the earth. At the Revelation believers **stay** on the earth.

2. Contrast Two

a. **The Lord’s return can happen at any time** and is the next event the church should anticipate.

[S]o that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting **eagerly** the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ [1 Cor. 1:7].
If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed. Maranatha (Our Lord, come!) [1 Cor. 16:22].

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ...[ Phil. 3:20].

Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near [Phil. 4:5].

And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come [1 Thess. 1:10].

Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus [Titus 2:13].

You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand [James 5:8].

In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but to all who have loved His appearing [2 Tim. 4:8].

“And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book”....He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly,” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus [Rev. 22:7, 20].

b. The Lord’s return cannot take place until many signs and wonders are fulfilled including the proclamation of the gospel to the whole world.

And as He was sitting 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?” And Jesus answered and said to them, “See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many. And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name. And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. And because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come....even so you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door.” [Matt. 24:3-14,33].

“And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” [Luke 21:25-28].

How shall we reconcile these details about the Lord’s return? In one sense it must be
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the very next thing to occur. The church must look for the “Blessed Hope”, Christ Himself, to return at any possible moment. It need not wait for any more wars or famines than have already occurred. It need not wait until the gospel goes any further than it has at the present. Yet, in another sense the Lord’s return can not take place until the gospel penetrates the world and until many signs come to pass.

Either we leave the Scriptures in confused contradiction, or we conclude there must be two phases to Christ’s return. The first aspect of His return is imminent. It can transpire at any moment without need for any sign to be fulfilled. Another aspect of His return can not occur at any moment for many signs must yet come to pass, including worldwide proclamation of the Gospel. It is nonsense to try to merge these contradictory points in one event. If Christ cannot return until the Gospel goes into the entire world, then it was foolish for the early church to look for His return. It would still be foolish for us to look for the Lord’s return for the Gospel still must penetrate the whole world. This would be true unless, of course, there are indeed two aspects to that return. The early church anticipated the Rapture. After the Rapture will come to pass the signs and wonders and the world-wide proclamation of the gospel (by the 144,000 in Rev. 7:4ff., by the two witnesses in Rev. 11:3ff., even by an angel flying in heaven in Rev. 14:6ff.). After these signs, the second aspect to the Lord’s return, the Revelation, will take place. Tribulational saints are commanded to look for signs of the Lord’s return. The church is commanded to look for the Lord Himself. There are two phases or aspects of the Lord’s return.

3. Contrast Three.

a. The Lord will return to the clouds in the air.

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 [1 Thess. 4:17].

b. The Lord will return all the way to the earth.

And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south [Zech. 14:4].

The first point in this section concerns the location of the saints. Some texts say Christ will return, and saints will leave the earth. Others say He will return, and saints will remain on earth. This third point concerns the location of the Lord. Why does the Bible stress in some places that Christ will return to the earth? To be specific, He must return to the Mt. of Olives near Jerusalem. Yet, in other places Christ comes in the clouds but not all the way to the earth. Some might suggest that He comes and meets believers in the air only to bring them immediately back to earth (the heavenly yo-yo again). The next point will show this cannot be true. It is better to view the Lord’s return as involving two distinct aspects. In one phase He comes in the air to the clouds. In another phase He comes completely to the earth.

4. Contrast Four.

a. At the time of the Lord’s return believers will receive glorified bodies like the Lord’s. For them there will be no more marriage or children.

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is [1 John 3:2].
Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed [1 Cor. 15:51-52].

“[B]ut those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; for neither can they die anymore, for they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection” [Luke 20:35-36; also Matt. 22:30; Mark 12:25].

These texts prove that at the Lord’s return all believers, dead and living, will obtain glorified bodies. After the return those of the Church will no longer marry or produce children.

b. At the Lord’s return He will establish a Kingdom, and saints will repopulate the earth after the destruction of the tribulation period.

“No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his days; for the youth will die at the age of one hundred and the one who does not reach the age of one hundred shall be thought accursed. And they shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall also plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build, and another inhabit, they shall not plant, and another eat; for as the lifetime of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, and My chosen ones shall wear out the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they are the offspring of those blessed by the LORD, and their descendants with them. It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall graze together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and dust shall be the serpent’s food. They shall do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain,” says the Lord [Isa. 65:20-25] (see also Deut. 30:9).

These observations illustrate the difficulty of trying to merge all the details of the Lord’s return into one event. Those who maintain that there should be no distinction between the Rapture and the Revelation are going to have trouble explaining how the same people who have been raptured and glorified can immediately return to the earth to repopulate it.

Clearly, it is better to view a distinction between two phases of the Lord’s return with a time interval separating them. In the first phase all believers obtain the glorified state. Then before the second phase occurs more people trust in Christ. These are the ones who are still able to produce children after the final aspect of the Lord’s return.

5. Contrast Five.

a. The Lord will return to meet His saints.

“Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way where I am going.” Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” [John 14:1-6].
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But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. 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. Therefore, comfort one another with these words [1 Thess. 4:13-18].

b. The Lord will return with His saints.

[S]o that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints [1 Thess. 3:13].

Some would interpret “saints” in 1 Thess. 3:13 and Jude v. 14 as angels (holy ones), but Paul uses the term saints of believers, not angels (e.g., 1 Cor. 1:2 and many other places). Also, the return with saints may refer to the souls of departed Christians coming with Christ in order to obtain resurrection bodies. Such a returning of saints with Christ is even taught in the 1 Thessalonians 4 passage (v. 14 - “even so will God bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus”). Yet, the word “all” in 1 Thess. 3:13 does not favor the view that “all His saints” refers only to the souls of departed Christians coming at the Rapture, for they constitute some, but not all the saints. It is better to conclude that one aspect of the Lord’s return is for His saints. Another is “with all His saints.”

The contrast between coming for His saints and coming with all His saints can be considered important if the distinction between Rapture and Revelation can be proven by other means. Those who are convinced by other Scriptures that there must be two aspects to the Lord’s return can justifiably point to the difference between “coming for His saints” and “coming with His saints” as another support for their view. In the first phase Christ comes for His saints. In the next phase He comes with all His (Church) saints. Given that the Rapture/Revelation distinction has other stronger evidence, this interpretation just adds more credibility to it.

Bible students cannot be faulted for thinking that the Lord’s return involves two different phases, the Rapture, as distinct from the Revelation. It is virtually impossible to blend all of the specific details about the Lord’s return into a single event. It is difficult to see how Christ can return to take saints away from the earth and also remain with the saints on the earth unless there are two phases to His return. It is impossible that the Lord’s return can be at any moment without intervening events and yet cannot transpire until many signs come to pass (including worldwide proclamation of the gospel) unless there are two aspects to His coming. It is just as impossible to think that Christ will return to give believers glorified bodies, but they at the same time will repopulate the earth after the decimation caused by the Tribulation. There must be a time interval between two distinguishable aspects to His return. Finally, it is best to place a distinction between the Lord coming in the clouds to meet His saints and the Lord coming all the way to the earth with His saints.

The distinction between Rapture and Revelation as two phases to the Lord’s return is credible to say the least. Specific teachings
about the Lord’s return force it upon Bible students.

At this point it is established that there is coming a seven-year tribulation period followed by the Lord’s return to the earth to set up His Kingdom. Therefore, there is no debate as to the time for the second phase of the Lord’s return, the Revelation. It occurs at the close of the Tribulation. When does the Rapture occur? A credible case can be made for a pretribulational Rapture.

IV. The Pretribulational Rapture

An argument can be weakened by the multiplication of tenuous supports. There is wisdom in adopting the strategy of emphasizing only the very best arguments, and then letting the position stand or fall on its own merits. Some books will give fifty or more arguments for the pretribulational Rapture. There simply are not fifty good supports for pretribulationism. However, there are about six primary points that do add weight to other “secondary” proofs (such classifications are admittedly subjective).

A. Primary Support for the Pretribulational Rapture

1. The Rapture is Imminent

The Bible presents the Rapture as an impending event that need not wait for any intervening events. Therefore, theologians should not place any intervening events before the Rapture. Since the Rapture could take place at any possible time, it ought to be the first event of a prophetic time chart.

The Bible commands Christians to await the Lord’s return with eager anticipation. How can this be a realistic command if the Rapture cannot take place for at least seven more years? Seven years surely blunts anticipation. Furthermore, if the Rapture is posttribulational, then the majority in the church will be slaughtered before the Rapture. This would also tend to reduce eager anticipation for the Lord’s return (see point 4). These verses support an imminent Rapture:

And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light [Rom. 13:11-12].

[S]o that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ [1 Cor. 1:7].

If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed. Maranatha (Our Lord come!) [1 Cor 16:22].

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly await for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ [Phil. 3:20].

Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near [Phil. 4:5].

[A]nd to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come [1 Thess. 1:10].

[L]ooking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus [Titus 2:13].

You too be patient; strengthen Your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand [James 5:8].

And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near”....He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus [Rev. 22:10, 20].
Paul himself expected to take part in the Rapture (note the plural “we” in 1 Cor. 15:51 and 1 Thess. 4:17). The New Testament church looked to Christ Himself as being the next eschatological event. Placing all of the tribulational events (signs, wonders, judgments, and battles) before the Rapture destroys the doctrine of the Rapture’s imminence. Thus, it is best to view the Rapture as the next (and the very first) prophetic event without any intervening events that must occur before the Rapture can take place.

2. Separation of sheep from goats is sensible only with pretribulational Rapture.

If the Rapture is posttribulational and occurs along with the Revelation, then there would be no need to separate the “sheep” from the “goats” upon the Lord’s return to earth (Matt. 25:31-46). Suppose for the sake of argument that the Rapture in which believers are snatched away to the clouds occurs at the same time as the coming of Christ to the earth at the end of the Tribulation. If all believers on earth had been taken to Christ in the clouds, then believers have already been separated from unbelievers. This would make the separation during the Judgment of the Nations in Matt. 25:31-46 nonsense. (The only other post-tribulational alternative scheme would be to view the Judgment of the Nations as taking place in the clouds at the same time as the Rapture, but this clearly contradicts 1 Thess. 4:14, which limits the rapture to believers. Also, the Judgment of Israel that separates believers from unbelievers definitely takes place on earth not in the clouds, Ezek. 20:35-38. Joel 3:2 and 14 appear to place the Judgment of the Nations in a valley on earth.)

This line of reasoning shows that there must be a time interval between the Rapture and the Revelation and that the Rapture does not take place at the end of the tribulation period in conjunction with Christ’s descent to the earth.

The same argument can be made for the judgment that separates believing Israel from unbelieving Israel (Ezek. 20:34-38). A posttribulational Rapture would make such a separation unnecessary and is, therefore, an incorrect view.

3. Only the pretribulational view allows for remaining saints who can repopulate the world.

If the Rapture is posttribulational, then there would be no remaining saints in a non-glorified state who could repopulate the earth during the Kingdom. This point has already been covered on pp. 385-86. This truth makes it difficult to place the Rapture at the end of the Tribulation.

4. The Rapture is supposed to be a “Blessed Hope.”

“Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” [John 14:1-3].

Therefore, comfort one another with these words [1 Thess. 4:18].

[Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus [Titus 2:13].

How can the Rapture be a time of comfort and a blessed hope if believers face seven years of terror and probably horrible deaths before it can occur? If the Rapture is posttribulational, then the present generation would be better off if the Lord delayed His return until the next generation. A posttribulational Rapture would give believers grounds for hoping that Christ does not return within their lifetimes! It turns the blessed hope in to a dreaded horror and
thoughts of comfort into worries about impending catastrophe. The Biblical portrayal of the Rapture as a blessed hope and as a comforting thought definitely favors the pretribulational view.

5. Revelation 3:10 promises that the Church will be kept from the Tribulation.

   “Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth” [Rev. 3:10].

This promise concerns a period of testing for those “who dwell upon the earth.” This phrase also occurs in Rev. 6:10, 13:8 and 17:8 and definitely refers to people in the coming tribulation period.

Although Rev. 3:10 addresses the church at Philadelphia, it should not be construed as a promise restricted to the Philadelphian church. No one would think of restricting Rev. 3:20 to Laodicea. Furthermore, the early chapters of Revelation give constant invitation for all to apply the message to the seven churches (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). In fact, what sense would there be in restricting application to only the Philadelphian church when all believers of the 1st Century Philadelphian church died long before the Tribulation?

Thus, Rev. 3:10 promises some sort of immunity for the whole church from the Tribulation. Posttributationalists maintain that Rev. 3:10 promises that the church will be kept “through” the Tribulation. Noah provides a parallel. He was not taken out of the flood but rather kept safe through the flood. Nevertheless, Rev. 3:10 does not say kept “through” the hour. It says kept “from” or “out of.” Greek for “through” is dia (as in diameter, the measure through a circle). Greek for “out of” is ek (as in exit or exodus, a way out). Rev. 3:10 promises the church will be kept “out of” the Tribulation. Notice the important point that the verse provides a keeping from the time period, the hour of tribulation. The promise is not so much that the church will be delivered through suffering. It will be kept from the time period of such suffering. In fact, in order to be protected from suffering, the church has to be removed. Those who believe after the Rapture will most definitely suffer during the Tribulation. Thus, the analogy with Noah would not be accurate. Tribulation saints will not be totally protected from the Tribulation. Rev. 3:10 cannot be interpreted as opponents of pretribulationism might wish.

   “I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them” [Dan. 7:21].

   “And he will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One…”[Dan. 7:25].

And when He broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” [Rev. 6:9-10].

   “And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death....”And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus [Rev. 12:11, 17].

And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them; and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him....If anyone is des-
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tined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints....And there was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast might even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed....and he provides that no one should be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name [Rev. 13:7,10,15,17].

The posttribulationalist way of handling Rev. 3:10 makes the Bible contradict itself. It simply is not true that God’s people will be delivered safely through the horror of the Tribulation. The only means of immunity from the Tribulation is a removal from it. That is the promise of Rev. 3:10 for the Church.

B. Evaluation of Secondary Supports for the Pretribulation Rapture

The following points alone would probably not be convincing for a pretribulational Rapture. However, taken in conjunction with stronger evidence, they do help confirm the pretribulational viewpoint.

1. The Church is Immune to God’s Wrath.

Pretribulationalists usually contend that since believers are not subject to God’s eternal wrath or to condemnation, they will be removed before the time God pours out His wrath on the earth. Although this argument has weaknesses, it is valid as a secondary point if the pretribulational position can be secured on other more firm grounds. The following verses teach that all believers are immune from God’s wrath.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life” [John 5:24].

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God, through Him [Rom. 5:9].

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus [Rom. 8:1].

And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come [1 Thess. 1:10].

For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ [1 Thess. 5:9].

The tribulation period will definitely be a time of God’s wrath. In addition to the wrath of the dragon (Rev. 12:12), the Tribulation is a time of the Lamb’s wrath (Rev. 6:16). Posttribulationalists counter by saying that the church will indeed be protected from God’s wrath but must endure the time of Satan’s wrath. The fact that some believers (tribulational saints from the pretribulational viewpoint, church saints from the posttribulational viewpoint) will be on earth during the time of the Tribulation undercuts the philosophical premise that those under Christ’s blood could not possibly remain on earth during a time of God’s judgment. Thus, the doctrine of immunity from God’s wrath cannot by itself establish the pretribulational Rapture. That is the reason for

5 Some try to pinpoint a time in the Tribulation when the wrath of God begins. Then they claim a pre-wrath Rapture. The author believes the time for the Rapture must be determined on other grounds than the time for God’s wrath. Obviously, believers (even if only those called tribulational saints) can reside in the world during a time of God’s wrath. Thus, all arguments for the time of the Rapture which are based upon the time for God’s wrath are weak. It is better to
placing it in the category “secondary supports.”

Nevertheless, even after a realization of its weakness it remains true that believers’ immunity from God’s judgment fits nicely with the pretributational view. Since pretributationalism is credible on other more solid grounds, the point that believers are not subject to God’s judicial wrath (as opposed to His paternal wrath as a Father) favors the view that the church will not be present in the time of the Lamb’s wrath.

The 1 Thessalonians 5 passage deserves special attention. Verse 9, quoted above, says that believers are delivered from the wrath to come. The context refers to the Tribulation. Sudden destruction will come as a “thief in the night” (vv. 3-4). The promise of 1 Thess. 5:4 is most relevant to the time of the Rapture.

But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day (likely, the time period) overtake you like a thief [1 Thess. 5:4].

A thief brings unexpected peril and destruction. One might be able to say all this verse promises is that the Tribulation will not be a surprise to the church. Yet, it is also reasonable to think in terms of a promise to Paul’s readers of deliverance from the time period of the Tribulation’s destruction as a thief (by way of a pretributational Rapture).

2. The word church does not occur in Revelation Chapters 4-18.

The word “church” occurs 19 times in Revelation 1-3. Then it disappears throughout the portion of Revelation that gives details about the tribulation period. Posttribulationists will interpret “saint” as a reference to those in the church, and it occurs many times in materials about the Tribulation (Rev. 11:18, 13:7, 10, 16:6 etc.). However, the concentrated use of the word church in Revelation 1-3 followed by its abrupt absence starting in Chapter 4 can be best explained by a pretributational Rapture. In its early chapters Revelation gives constant appeals for the church to listen. Rev. 13:9 presents a noticeable change. Since the pretributational view has stronger supports, the absence of the word church in Revelation Chapters 4-18 may be legitimately used to strengthen the pretributational position.

3. The Church was not involved in the first 69 weeks of Daniel. It should not be placed in the 70th.

Dan. 9:24-27 contains Daniel’s prediction of 70 weeks (i.e., weeks of years). The first 69 weeks occurs before the death of the Messiah. The 70th week is the tribulation period (Matt. 24:15ff.; Daniel 9:27). The Church obviously did not play a role in the first 69-week period before the crucifixion. Thus, it is probable the Church will not play a role during the 70th week, the tribulation period.

This point does favor a pretributational Rapture. Still, arguments from silence should remain secondary.

4. If the 24 elders in Rev. 4:4 represent the church, then the church will be in heaven before the Tribulation.

And around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads [Rev. 4:4].

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argue for the timing of the Rapture on stronger grounds then to classify immunity from God’s wrath as a secondary point.

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6 Rev. 5:9-10 was not used in this study to help identify the elders because it has textual variants. Rev. 5:10 in the New American Standard Bible uses the third person, meaning the elders are speaking about others and do not necessarily include themselves as part of the church. “And Thou has made them to be a kingdom of priests to our God, and they will reign on the earth.”
It is likely that the elders of Rev. 4:4 do represent the church in heaven. These elders seem to be human as distinguished from angelic creatures with four faces and six wings. Elder is a term used of church leaders, and many of the descriptions of these 24 elders are appropriate for church saints (enthroned, Rev. 3:21; dressed in white, Rev. 3:5; 19:8; crowns, 2 Tim. 4:8).

However, pretribulationism cannot stand by this verse alone. Would it not be possible for dead and departed church elders to be around God’s throne in heaven while living church saints are still on earth? Are there not many church leaders in heaven at this very moment? Those who come to Revelation Chapter 4 already believing in the pretribulation Rapture find that it fits their system well as a confirmation that they are on the right track. It is fair to list the elders in heaven as a secondary but not a primary evidence for pretribulationism.

5. The Restrainer must be removed before the Tribulation.

It is difficult to conceive of the Holy Spirit’s removal without the church’s removal.

Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God….And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming [2 Thess. 2:3-4, 6-8].

2 Thessalonians 2 teaches that God restrains the rise of the man of sin, the Antichrist, until the appointed time. Some have interpreted the restraint to be human government. Yet, human government is not powerful enough to withstand Satan’s program, nor does it always try to resist the rise of evil. Even more damaging to the view that takes the restrainer as human government is the masculine form of the participle in v. 7, “he who restrains.” Government is not a person.

It is best to interpret the restrainer as a person. Only God Himself is powerful enough to withstand Satan’s program of world domination. The neuter of v. 6, “what”, indicates that Paul has the Person of the Holy Spirit in mind, for although He is a person, the word “spirit” is grammatically neuter. In some sense the Holy Spirit will remove Himself before the Tribulation begins. This does not refer to absolute removal, as the Spirit is omnipresent, but there will be a termination of His special presence relative to the work of restraining evil.

Is it possible to think that the Holy Spirit might remove His influence for restraint while the Church remains on the earth? Pretribulationists should concede such a possibility. It is only fair because all must agree that the Holy Spirit will be present and operative in other ministries among tributional saints (e.g., convicting the lost).

It would be possible for the Holy Spirit to remove His presence relative to restraint but still continue to work in other areas among God’s people.

Yet, the Church does act as a primary instrument through which God curtails evil. It is as the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world” (Matt. 5:13ff.; Phil. 2:15-16). It may not be impossible to conceive of the Holy Spirit’s removal of restraint without a removal of a primary instrument of restraint, the Church; but it is difficult to conceive of such. The cessation of one of the Church’s
primary functions implies a cessation of all the church’s work on earth. If one views the pretribulational position as correct before coming to 2 Thessalonians 2, he finds that it fits the proposed scheme of events nicely and enhances his view.

6. The Bible gives examples of God removing believers before inflicting temporal judgments upon the world.

Doctrine should not be built upon types or examples alone. Yet, if a doctrine can be established by other teachings, examples or types may be used as secondary confirmation or illustrations.

The examples of Noah, Lot, and Rahab show that God does not judge believers with unbelievers. This supports a pretribulational position. However, posttribulationists have a point when they note that God protected these individuals from His own wrath but did not remove them from the world. Maybe God would protect believers from His own wrath in the Tribulation (as distinct from the devil’s wrath) but would do so without removing them from the world.

7. The coming of Christ is not as much a purifying hope if it is at least seven years away.

1 John 3:3 says that Christ’s return has a purifying effect. Perhaps a seven-year delay would not totally eliminate any purifying effect of the Rapture, but it would reduce it. An imminent Rapture produces a more intense purifying effect.

C. Summary on the Pretribulational Rapture.

Pretribulationists have been guilty of using arguments that are weak and unconvincing to those inclined to belief in a posttribulational Rapture. They do themselves no favor by arguing boldly for weak points. It is best to bring forward the strongest of arguments, and then let the case stand or fall on its own merits. Having pursued this strategy, the author must conclude that the pretribulational case is credible enough that it should be viewed as correct doctrine. Secondary supports that may not prove pretribulationalism alone still have a role in confirming that the pretribulational scheme fits well with known Biblical facts.

V. Posttribulational Arguments Refuted

A good defense is part of a good offense. Therefore, the pretribulational position can be strengthened by meeting challenges posed by posttribulationists.

A. Posttribulationists Often Employ an *Ad Hominem* Approach.

They may assert pretribulationalism is based upon a spineless and cowardly attitude, or they use guilt by association tactic where pretribulationalism appears wrong because one with heretical views in other areas might say he is a pretribulationalist. Propaganda is not evidence. The fact that a isolated pretribulationalist holds false views in other areas has nothing to do with the validity of the Biblical case for a pretribulational Rapture. Likewise, the assertion that pretribulational theology rests in cowardice is absurd. Posttribulationists must deal with the issues and arguments without name-calling or propaganda techniques.

B. Posttribulationists Charge that Pretribulationalism is Relatively Recent.

Again the age of a position is not the final indication of its truth. Do we want to assert that truths maintained before the Reformation are superior to those taught after the Reformation? Actually, it is only a half-truth to teach that pretribulationalism is relatively recent. Early Church writings indicate that the Church believed in the imminent return of Christ. It also tended not to have any definite views about the Tribulation. Thus, the Church after the apostolic age was neither pretribulational nor posttribulational in the modern conception of these two terms. Both are relatively new as developed systems. The real issue is the position of the original New Testament church. It
clearly believed that the Rapture was imminent and that the Tribulation was a future time period. Thus, pretribulationalists are compatible with the eschatological views of the early N.T. church. That is what ought to matter.

C. Posttribulationalists Deny the Doctrine of Christ’s Imminent Return.

Despite the fact that many Bible verses present the Rapture as the next event on God’s timetable, posttribulationalists deny that the New Testament church believed Christ could return at any moment. They raise the following typical objections:

1. The early church could not have believed in an imminent Rapture because Peter had to grow old before the Lord’s return (John 21:18-19).

The obvious rebuttal to this objection is that Peter was older by the time the epistles were written with their teachings about Christ’s imminent return. Peter was old enough and could have been martyred anytime without the majority of Christians across the world having any news of such an event. Therefore, the prediction that Peter would live to be old is quite compatible with the early Church’s belief (based in the epistles) that Christ could return at any moment.


Therefore, the New Testament Church expected Christ to be gone a long time and must not have adhered to an imminent view of the Rapture.

He said therefore, “A certain nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and then return” [Luke 19:12].

Here is another very weak argument. By the time the epistles were written with their teachings about Christ’s imminent return, the Lord had been gone nearly 20 years. By any standard a 20-year trip qualifies as a “long journey.” Nothing in the parable of the nobleman’s long journey would have prevented the early Church from believing in an imminent Rapture. The early Church expected Him back at any time.

3. The early Church could not have believed in an imminent Rapture because Jerusalem had to be destroyed before Christ’s return.

“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand” [Luke 21:20].

By hindsight we understand that Luke 21:20 refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70. However, for all the early Church knew such a destruction would occur after the Lord’s imminent Rapture but before His return all the way to earth (i.e., in the tribulation period).

Posttribulationalists use several other points to skirt the idea of Christ’s imminent return. The fact remains, however, that the early New Testament Church expected Christ to return at any moment without intervening events. This is among the strongest of supports for a pretribulational Rapture.

D. Revelation 3:10 does not promise removal from the tribulation period but rather a protection during it.

The posttribulational view of Rev. 3:10 is covered on pp. 389-391. Its promise is not just to be kept from the suffering of the Tribulation. It is to be kept from or out of the hour of the Tribulation. The only way of preserving a body of saints from suffering during the Tribulation is to remove them out of it. Otherwise, they will suffer (Dan. 7:21, 25; Rev. 6:9-10; 12:11, 17; 13:7,10,15,17).

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Rev. 3:10 clearly supports a pretribulational Rapture. Attempts to circumvent it are subjective and unsatisfying.

E. Since a resurrection occurs after the Tribulation (Dan. 12:1-2; Isa. 26:16-19; Rev. 20:4-5) and since the Rapture occurs at a time of resurrection, (1 Thess. 4:13ff.; 1 Cor. 15:51ff.), then the Rapture must occur at the end of the Tribulation.

This is one possible conclusion. However, pretribulationists also include resurrection as a factor at the close of the Tribulation. They usually place the resurrection of Old Testament saints and martyred tribulational saints at the end of the Tribulation in accordance with Dan. 12:1-2; Isa. 26:16-19; and Rev. 20:4ff.

Pretribulationism is not incompatible with placing some kind of resurrection at the close of the Tribulation. It just maintains that the Church is resurrected before the Tribulation while verses speaking of resurrection at the close of the Tribulation refer to either Israel or the martyred tribulational saints. Placing a resurrection of some at the close of the Tribulation has no bearing on whether the Church could or could not be resurrected before the Tribulation.

In fact, it is the posttribulational view concerning the time for resurrection that leads to serious problems. If one lumps the resurrection and glorification of all saints, dead and living, at the end of the Tribulation, then no saints remain in an unglorified state to repopulate the world in the Millennium. It is better to place the Church’s resurrection and glorification before the Tribulation with a resurrection for Old Testament and martyred tribulational saints after the Tribulation. Those believers who survive the Tribulation continue in the Kingdom in their natural bodies. They are the ones who repopulate the world during the Millennium.

F. The order of events in the Gospels is the Tribulation, Second Coming, and then Kingdom.

Pretribulationists agree with the order of the gospels, i.e., Tribulation, Second Coming to the earth, then Kingdom, but they maintain a distinction between Rapture and Revelation. The Rapture was a “mystery” (1 Cor. 15:51ff.; 1 Thess 4:13ff.), which means it is a truth that had been hidden but was revealed to the church. At the time of the Olivet Discourse, God had not revealed anything about the Rapture. One should not expect teachings about the Rapture to be included in the gospels. Christ taught that the Tribulation would end in the Second Coming and the Kingdom. The pretribulational system abides by this teaching just as well as does the posttribulational system. The difference is that pretribulationists are sensitive to more complete revelation on the subject of eschatology, and they try to make all Biblical teachings consistent.

G. The Book of Revelation Portrays Saints as Present on Earth during the Tribulation.

Groups that tend not to distinguish Israel from the Church (Old Testament saints from Church saints) also have a hard time conceiving of the possibility that the Scriptures refer to more than one kind of “saint.” Both theological camps agree that there will be believers on earth during the Tribulation (Daniel 7; Matthew 24 and 25; Revelation 7 and 13). The issue is whether they are Church saints or tribulational saints.

Pretribulationists find significance in the observation that Revelation does not use the word church in conjunction with the “saints” in its teachings about the tribulation period.

H. The Church is Promised Tribulation.

There is a difference between experiencing sorrow or persecution and passing through the tribulation period. The Bible indeed warns Christians of the world’s hatred (John 15:18-19; 16:1-2,33; Acts 14:22; Phil. 1:29; 1 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 3:12), but this has no relevance as to whether the church will en-
dure a period of God’s wrath upon the world.

I. The Rapture takes place at the last trump (1 Cor. 15:52) and the last trumpet recorded in Scripture occurs at the end of the tribulation period (Matt. 24:31).

If a posttributional Rapture could be proven on other clearer grounds, this point about the trumpet call could be a confirming factor. However, by itself it is not enough to prove posttributionalism. When a schoolboy talks about the “last bell,” he means the last bell in the series for the day, not absolutely the last bell that will ever ring in world history. To a pretribulationalist the “last trump” of 1 Cor. 15:52 has reference to the last trump of the church age, not to the absolutely last trumpet call for all eternity. Actually, it is unreasonable to suppose that there never could be a trumpet sound in heaven for an eternity. Therefore, “last” in “last trump” should be viewed as last for a time period. Pretribulationists think it is the last trump of the church age. Posttribulationists think it is the last trump of the Tribulation. By itself the idea of the last trump has no bearing on the time of the Rapture.

J. Summary

Posttribulation objections to pretribulation arguments do not stand up under scrutiny. There are many valid reasons for placing a distinction between the Rapture and Revelation, and there are several strong reasons for believing the Rapture will take place before the Tribulation. While the issue is ultimately a secondary one relative to fellowship among, the pretribulation view has superior evidence and does a better job of synthesizing all Biblical facts into a harmonious system. Most who have a definite view of the subject are going to fall into either the pretribulation or posttribulation camp. Only a small number adhere to either a midtribulation or partial Rapture.

VI. The Midtribulation Rapture Theory.

The Bible does indeed note a distinction in time at the midpoint of the Tribulation. Virtually all time notations concerning the tribulation period refer to the last three and one-half years (see pp. 381-82, “Why do many theologians view the Tribulation as a seven-year period?”). The only clear exception is Dan. 9:27, and even this verse shows the tribulation period is divided in half.

The midtribulation view contends that Christ will rapture the church after the first three and one-half years of the Tribulation. Next to the pretribulation view a midtribulation position is the second most acceptable position. Indeed, Charles Ryrie has written, “…midtribulationism is sometimes described as a form of pretribulationism.”

If one places all the distinctive events of the Tribulation in the last half, then it is conceivable the church could endure three and one-half years of terrible conditions before anyone would even realize the Tribulation has begun. World history has been replete with wars, rumors of wars, famines, pestilence, and earthquakes. Thus, from an earthly viewpoint a midtributional Rapture need not necessarily cancel out the idea of an imminent Rapture. Christians at such times could still expect an imminent Rapture because they would not be certain when the Tribulation began. For all they know the conditions would just be a troublesome time in world history. However, many prophecies concerning the last three and one-half years are so unique and unmistakable that their fulfillment would destroy the concept of imminency (e.g. a world dictator demanding worship in a rebuilt temple, a Russian invasion of Israel with supernatural destruction, the mark of the beast, etc.). Fulfillment of such things would be impossible without identifying the time period as the Tribulation. It would be impossible for the church

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to go through such things without destroying the imminence of the Rapture. Thus, the church could not pass through the last three and one-half years (so often described as time, times, dividing of time, or 42 months, or 1260 days).

Thus, while a posttribulational Rapture would destroy the doctrine of imminency, a midtribulational Rapture would not necessarily do so. If one places all the unique horrors in the Great Tribulation, (the last three and one-half years), then a midtribulational view is possible. It is interesting that a leading pretribulational scholar, John Walvoord, interprets all the details of Revelation Chapters 6-18 as pertaining to the last three and one-half years.  

To preserve imminency a midtribulationalist should agree and see all unique predictions about the Tribulation as taking place in the last three and one-half years (Rev. 6:8, 1/4 of world dies; Rev. 8:7, 1/3 of the earth burned). Then from a human perspective imminency is preserved. If one interprets the time in the phrase “kept from the hour” (Rev. 3:10) as the hour of the Great Tribulation, the last three and one-half years, then a midtribulation Rapture is possible. In essence midtribulationalism is an option if it is conceived as a form of pretribulationism as far as the human perspective is concerned.

VII. The Partial Rapture View

The partial Rapture view divides spiritual Christians from unspiritual Christians. Those who adhere to a partial Rapture maintain that spiritual Christians will be raptured before the Tribulation, but unspiritual Christians must endure the Tribulation. This is sort of an evangelical purgatory.

A. The Partial Rapture and Rev. 3:10

Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth [Rev. 3:10].

Rev. 3:10 definitely promises some sort of removal prior to the tribulation period. It is a major argument against a strictly posttribulational Rapture. However, when studied in isolation, Rev. 3:10 could support either a pretribulational Rapture or a partial Rapture. It clearly teaches a Rapture before the Tribulation, but the next issue is whether this Rapture is for all or part of the church. Partial rapturists feel that the phrase “Because you have kept the word of my perseverance” limits the promise of a pretribulational Rapture to only spiritual Christians. This would be a possible interpretation if Rev. 3:10 were the only verse in the Bible. However, other Biblical facts show that the pretribulational Rapture will involve the involvement of the entire Church.


10 Some midtribulationists place the Rapture in Revelation 11. Thoughts about the Rapture would not occur to most people who read Revelation 11. There are some superficial similarities, but there is no basis for equating the events of Revelation 11 with the Rapture.

1 Cor. 15:52 associates the “last trump” with the Rapture. Pretributionalists contend this is the last trump of the church age and not the last trump in all of eternity. It is true that Rev. 11:15 gives the last angelic trumpet in the book of Revelation, but if one insists that “last” means “absolute last in time”, then the last trumpet of the Bible occurs at the close of the Tribulation (see Matt. 24:31) not the middle of it. Another difference between the doctrine of the Rapture and Revelation 11 concerns the order of resurrection and the sound of the trumpet. In Revelation 11 the dead rise, and later the seventh trumpet sounds. At the Rapture there will be a trumpet sound followed by the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:51ff.;1 Thess. 4:13ff.). Revelation 11 only involves a special raising of two witnesses from the dead (vv. 3,7, and 11). Clearly, the special resurrection of two men cannot be equated with the Rapture of the entire Church.
whole church. This makes it preferable to take the phrase “have kept the word of my perseverance” to refer to all who have believed in Christ despite the hostility or persecution that comes from the world toward believers.

Rev. 3:10 teaches a pretribulational Rapture. In isolation it is compatible with either a partial Rapture or the Rapture of all the church. The latter is the correct view as the following section shows.

B. Inclusive Statements about the Rapture

The typical pretribulationalist will not accept a partial Rapture because Scripture presents the Rapture as an all-inclusive event. 1 Cor. 15:51-52 teaches “we shall all be changed” at the Rapture. 1 Thess. 4:13ff. includes all church saints in the Rapture. The only condition is “if we believe that Jesus died and rose again” (v. 14). Those in this class can be divided into those sleeping (v. 14) and those who are alive and remain (vv. 15 and 17). However, Paul does not further divide the “alive and remain” category into spiritual and unspiritual. At the Rapture all that are alive and remain go to be with the Lord.

Near the end of the Bible, Christ promises that He will return quickly and then make judgment in order to give rewards to “every” believer (Rev. 22:12).

“For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day overtake you like a thief….For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him [1 Thess. 5:2-4, 9-10].

The key word in the statement of 1 Thess. 5:10 is the word “sleep.” If it refers to the “sleep of death,” then 1 Thess. 5:10 would be saying all Christians, whether alive or sleeping in death, will live together with Christ at the Rapture. By such an interpretation 1 Thess. 5:10 is parallel to 1 Thess. 4:13-14. All Christians whether awake (living) or asleep (dead) will participate in the Rapture.

However, Greek students know that the Greek word for “sleep” in 1 Thess. 4:13-14 is not the same Greek word for “sleep” as in 1 Thess. 5:10. Furthermore, taking 1 Thess. 5:10 to mean the sleep of death is not the only or the best alternative. The word Paul uses for sleep in 1 Thess. 5:10 seems to mean death 3 times in the New Testament but in approximately 17 cases it means either physical sleep or the drowsiness of one who is lazy or inactive. The same word occurs in Eph. 5:14 where it definitely speaks of spiritual laziness.
For this reason it says, “Awake sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you” [Eph. 5:14].

Even more significant is Paul’s usage of this same word for *sleep* in the context of 1 Thessalonians 5:6.

[S]o then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober [1 Thess. 5:6].

*Sleep* in 1 Thess. 5:6 does not refer to death but to spiritual laziness or inactivity. It is contrasted with one who is spiritually active, vigilant, and alert. Unless there are very strong reasons to the contrary, “sleep” and “awake” in 1 Thess. 5:10 should be given the same meaning that they clearly have in 1 Thess. 5:6. *Awake* in v. 6 does not refer to one who is merely living but to one who is spiritually active and vigilant. *Sleep* in v. 5 cannot mean the sleep of death but refers to the stupor of spiritual inactivity and drowsiness. Thus, 1 Thess. 5:10 should be paraphrased “whether we are spiritually active or spiritually lazy, we shall live together with Him.” This verse supports Eternal Security. Yet, given that the previous verse, (v. 9), likely refers to deliverance from the tribulation period of God’s wrath, then v. 10 also promises that all Christians, spiritually active or spiritually lethargic, will enjoy life together with Christ at the Rapture. If one comes to 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5 with a belief in the pretribulational view, then the best interpretation to 1 Thess. 5:10 is that it promises rapture for all the Church, not a partial Rapture.

D. The Full Scope of Salvation by Grace, not Works

When most Christians hear the word “salvation” they think exclusively in terms of salvation from sin’s penalty. Yet, there is a future tense aspect to salvation. Future deliverance from the very presence of sin is an aspect to salvation. The Bible associates the Lord’s return as bringing this fullest sense of salvation to believers.

And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand…[Rom. 13:11-12].

[S]o Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him [Heb. 9:28].

The Rapture with its associated glorification of believers is actually a part of salvation. At the Rapture believers will obtain their glorified bodies which are not subject to the sin nature. The Rapture is ultimately the “day of redemption” (Eph. 1:14; 4:30; cf. Rom. 8:23).

If the partial Rapture view were true, then those Christians who work hard enough will be rewarded with their full salvation before the Tribulation. Those who do not work hard enough do not obtain the salvation promised by Christ’s return but must suffer martyrdom or endure the “Protestant purgatory.” The partial Rapture view makes one aspect of salvation dependent upon works, and, therefore, must be rejected as error.

E. Summary

The arguments for either the posttribulational or partial Rapture views are weak. It is preferable to accept either pretribulationalism or a form of midtribulationalism in which the Church is raptured before any of the unique features of the Tribulation period come to pass. This ends up being a form of pretribulationalism as far as the Christians living in that time will be able to tell. Again, the author does not regard any of these views as heretical, for they do not concern a core issue of the faith. The next point concerns a topic upon
which evangelicals find greater agreement, the believer’s resurrection.

VIII. Believer’s Resurrection

Although the resurrection of Old Testament believers and also martyred tribulational saints will occur at the end of the Tribulation, 1 Thess. 4:13ff. and 1 Cor. 15:51ff. teach that the resurrection of Church saints (also the glorification of those who have not died) occurs at the Rapture. Thus, a chronological study of eschatology best covers resurrection along with the Rapture.

A. General Promises of Resurrection

Many verses guarantee the bodily resurrection of believers. The majority of promises about resurrection occur in the New Testament. Yet, the Old Testament also contains ample material on the subject of the believer’s resurrection.

“Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God” [Job 19:26].

Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, for your dew is as the dew of the dawn, and the earth will give birth to the departed spirits [Isa. 26:19].

“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt” [Dan. 12:2] (see also Heb. 11:19 for an Old Testament saint’s understanding of resurrection).

“For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken to you by God, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? God is not the God of the dead but of the liv-


“Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live. For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment” [John 5:25-29].

“For this is the will of My Father, that every one who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day” [John 6:40].

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” [John 11:25-26].

Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on the immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death,
where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord [1 Cor. 15:51-58].

Who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself [Phil. 3:21].

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. 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. Therefore, comfort one another with these words [1 Thess. 4:13-18].

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is [1 John 3:2].

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years [Rev. 20:6].

B. The Nature of the Resurrection Body

There are at least three angles to approach a study about the resurrection body. One can study Christ’s resurrection body in order to infer various points about the resurrection body of believers. Of course, several passages teach directly on the nature of the glorified state. Finally, several truths about our resurrection bodies can be gleaned from materials that describe heaven.

1. The Resurrection Body as Patterned after Christ

The Bible promises that believers are going to obtain a body like Christ’s resurrected body. Therefore, it is fair to draw truths about our eventual resurrection from facts about His historical resurrection.

The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven….And just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly [1 Cor. 15:47,49].

Who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself [Phil. 3:21].

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is [1 John 3:2].

a. Ability to Eat

The Lord consumed food on at least two occasions after His resurrection. In the glori-
fied state believers will eat not from necessity due to physical exhaustion (as there will be no weakness, see 1 Cor. 15:43) or hunger pains Rev. 21:4, but for pure enjoyment.

And while they still could not believe it for joy and were marveling, He said to them, “have you anything here to eat?” And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; and He took it and ate it before them [Luke 24:41-43].

And so when they got out upon the land, they saw a charcoal fire already laid, and fish placed on it, and bread ….Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples ventured to question Him, “Who are You?” knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread, and gave them, and the fish likewise [John 21:9,12-13].

In addition to Christ’s example, many verses confirm the practice of eating will continue in the glorified state (taking of the vine in the Kingdom, Luke 22:16,18; the wedding supper of the Lamb, Rev. 19:9; and the river of the water of life and tree yielding 12 kinds of fruits, Rev. 2:7; 22:2,17). The resurrection body may not need food, but it can and will enjoy it.

b. Tangible with Flesh and Bones

The resurrection body is a spiritual body (1 Cor. 15:44), but this should not conjure up ideas of being a ghost or phantom. It refers to a body that is spiritual in the sense of being suited to a sin-free environment, a body that is suited to dwelling in the presence of a holy God. Christ Himself had a resurrection body composed of flesh and bones. He could show Thomas the marks in

His hands and side and had to command eager followers to stop clinging to Him. The glorified state is not going to involve the absence of a body but rather perfection for the body.

And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him [Matt. 28:9].

“See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have” [Luke 24:39].

Jesus said unto her, “Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father…”[John 20:17].

Then He said to Thomas, “Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing” [John 20:27].

c. Rapid Transportation without Barriers


While these abilities could pertain to His deity and not humanity, many conservative theologians feel that believers in a glorified state will virtually travel at the speed of thought without any subjection to hindrance by physical objects or gravity.

Hebrews 2 implies that believers will someday be superior to angels. With the curse lifted and with Christ Himself as our teacher, it stands to reason that the true mental, as well as, physical capacities of humanity will obtain fruition in heaven. Believers will not become “gods,” as some cults teach, but the Bible presents a glorified state that we cannot now begin to imagine.
2. Direct Teachings about the Resurrection

a. Continuity yet Change

In the resurrection our bodies will be different and yet bear similarities to our present bodies. The repeated illustration of resurrection being like a seed implies these points.

But someone will say, “How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?” You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies; and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own [1 Cor. 15:35-38].

And Jesus answered them, saying, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” [John 12:23-24].

In 1 Cor. 15:36, Paul expresses very little patience with those who would deny the resurrection of believers. He calls them fools and asks them to consider the nature of seeds. No one fully understands how a seed works, but everyone knows that it does. Even seeds found in Egyptian tombs that appear dead for thousands of years can sprout new life. The fact that we do not understand every detail and can not answer every question about resurrection does not make its eventual occurrence ridiculous. The inability to explain resurrection no more eliminates the fact of resurrection than does the inability to explain seed decay and growth cancel out the obvious fact that it happens. If one plants an apple, it will result in something similar to an apple but also with roots, branches, and leaves. The result of a seed’s “death” is both dramatic change and continuity with the past. A kernel planted yields a root, stalk, leaves, husk, and additional kernels of grain. There is both dramatic change and continuity with the past.

Just as in the natural seed process, so believer’s resurrection bodies will be similar to our present bodies: similar but not identical! Consider Christ’s resurrected body. It was similar to the old but yet different. All who saw Him recognized Him as human. His glorified body had normal human features. He walked, talked, and ate food. However, despite the similarity with the past, He was also very different. While others immediately recognized Him as human, they did not immediately recognize Him as the same Jesus. This came only with time. There was at the same time a large degree of continuity with the past but also drastic differences.

The nature of seeds and the nature of Christ’s glorified body cause us to expect that our future resurrection bodies will have some similarities with our present bodies. Yet, there will also be drastic changes for the better. The transformation to physical perfection will be such a great alteration from our present state that there will be a faint or vague recognition of each other as opposed to an immediate and obvious recognition (Luke 24:16,31; John 20:14-16; 21:4,12).

b. Individuality and Diversity

But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish. There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of

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12 In the Lord’s case this involved a God-imposed blindness to recognition (Luke 24:16,31,35).
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death, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him [Rom. 6:5,9].
The last enemy that will be abolished is death....But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality then will come about the saying that is written, “Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ [1 Cor. 15:26, 54-57].

“[A]nd He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away” [Rev. 21:4].

d. Perfection in Appearance: a Glorious Body

[It] is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory...[1 Cor. 15:43a].

“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever” [Dan. 12:2-3].

“And the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear” [Matt. 13:43].

[Th]rough whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we

the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead...[1 Cor. 15:38-42a].

Just as there are many kinds of bodies on earth and varieties of stellar bodies, so there will be diversity and individuality to resurrection bodies in the future. Heaven will not be inhabited by clones. It will not be populated by those who all came off the same assembly line or printout. There will be diversity and also individuality. There is even reason to believe that the human race will retain ethnic diversity in the glorified state (see following Section 3, a, “Ethnic Diversity”, p. 407).

c. Perfection in Duration: an Imperishable Body

...It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body [1 Cor. 15:42b].

Bible teachers make a valid distinction between restoration and resurrection. Although the terms are loosely interchangeable, it is true that there is a great difference between those whom a prophet, apostle, or Christ raised from the dead and those who are raised in the end time resurrection unto life. The former died again. The latter are immortal. Funerals, cemeteries, bereavement, will never again be a part of our human experience.

But those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; for neither can they die anymore, for they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection [Luke 20:35-36].

For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection....knowing that Christ, having been raised from the
not by bread alone

exult in hope of the glory of God [Rom. 5:2].

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us….For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body [Rom. 8:18, 22-23].

When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory [Col. 3:4].

All humans have some defect in appearance. No one looks good in death. Ravaging diseases, old age, accidents, wars, all result in bodies that die in a dishonorable appearance. Yet, no believer will remain in a decayed, mangled, shrunken condition, for the resurrection brings glory, perfection in appearance. Believers will be free from all defect, flaw, or blemish. (Christ Himself, seems to be the only exception as He bears evidence of His sacrificial love in His scars, which are regarded as marks of love and victory not flaws.)

It is probable that some believers will have a greater capacity to reflect God’s glory than others. This point overlaps with that of rewards. In 1 Cor. 15:41 Paul teaches that “star differs from star in glory”, and then adds, “so also is the resurrection of the dead” (v. 42). Dan. 12:2-3 also compares the glory of the resurrection body to stars. All those who trust in Christ will obtain glorious resurrection bodies. However, it is best to include the probability that individual believers will not possess the same amount of glory, just as stars do not have the same amount of glory. Believers who obtain greater reward will probably be given a greater glory in their resurrection bodies. Such increased glory will not lead to pride. Humans were created to bring glory to God (Rev. 4:11). Increased ability to reflect Christ’s glory will be considered a very prized reward and a wonderful privilege in heaven. Unlike the present world’s warped values where almost anything - money, possessions, appearance, popularity, - is deemed more important than glorifying Christ, heaven will have true priorities with glorifying Christ at the top of the list. No one will then care who was rich and popular on earth. Glorifying Christ will not sound unappealing or receive a low evaluation in heaven.

All believers will obtain a glorious body. It will be truly dazzling, full of splendor and light. We will shine like the sun sharing “His glory” (Col. 3:4). If we were able to see it now, we probably could not bear the experience (Rev. 1:17). However, those who live to glorify Christ on this earth will be privileged to reflect His glory even more by their glorified bodies in heaven. Such individuals will be very glad that they lived to glorify Christ on earth.

e. Perfection in Endurance: a Powerful Body

…it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power [1 Cor. 15:43b].

The Greek word for weakness could be translated infirmity and includes the idea of sickness (Rom. 8:22; 2 Cor. 5:2). By contrast the resurrection body is totally incapable of sorrow and pain (Rev. 21:4). It will never be low on energy. It will never be unhealthy. The handicapped or deformed will be raised whole. It is probable that infants will be raised as adults, and the elderly will be raised in a condition of youthful vigor. Hospitals, nursing homes, and healthcare professionals will not exist in eternity.

f. Perfection in Spirituality: a Spiritual Body
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[I]t is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body...[1 Cor. 15:44].

While 1 Cor. 15:44 teaches that the resurrection body will be a spiritual body, this does not mean believers will be disembodied spirits as ghosts or phantoms. Christ specifically denied that this was the nature of His resurrected condition.

And while they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst. But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. And He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have” [Luke 24:36-39].

By the phrase “spiritual body” Paul means a body that is perfectly adapted to spirituality, i.e., one suitable for living in sinless perfection. The natural body suits this earthly environment where it is surrounded by wickedness and quite capable of yielding to it. After resurrection a believer’s body will no longer be permeated with a sinful behavioral mechanism. It will be a spiritual body as opposed to one capable of carnal-like behavior.

g. Marriage and Children

Despite the claims by false religions and cults that heaven will be similar to a harem, the Bible is very clear that marriage is an earthly relationship that is broken by death (e.g., Rom. 7:3; 1 Cor. 7:39). Undoubtedly, our family ties from days on earth will not be forgotten and love for relatives will increase rather than diminish. Yet, believers in heaven will in reality be part of one family. There will be no marriage, no conception, and no childbirth in heaven.

And Jesus said to them, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage” [Luke 20:34-35] (see also Matt. 22:30).

3. Inferences about the Resurrection from Texts on Heaven

Revelation 21 and 22 give the Bible’s most extensive teaching on heaven. Some of its details have implications for the nature of the resurrection body of believers.

a. Ethnic Diversity

The Greek word for nations is ethna from which we derive the word ethnic. It is likely that resurrected humanity will still be divided into various ethnic groups.

And the nations shall walk by its light, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it....and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it....And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the trees were for the healing of the nations [Rev. 21:24,26; 22:2].

b. No Need for Rest

The fact that night will not exist in the Eternal State seems to imply that those in glory will not need rest.

And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever [Rev. 22:5].

c. The Lord’s Name

Several verses indicate that Christ’s name will be written upon glorified believers in some manner.
“He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write upon 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 My new name” [Rev. 3:12].

And they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads [Rev. 22:4].

d. Work
The fact that the heavenly city never closes its gates implies that resurrected believers will be busy coming and going in some unspecified work assignments.

And in the daytime (for there shall be no night there) its gates shall never be closed [Rev. 21:25].

IX. The Judgment Seat of Christ:
Following the Rapture (with its simultaneous resurrection/glorification), the next event for believers will be the Judgment Seat of Christ. This judgment is sometimes called the “Bema Seat” using the Greek word found in Rom. 14:10 and 2 Cor. 5:10. This word occurs in reference to several historical trials and spectacles that are recorded in the New Testament (Christ before Pilate, Matt. 27:19 and John 19:13; Herod’s speech from the “rostrum”, Acts 12:21; Paul before Gallio, Acts 18:12,16,17, and before Festus, Acts 25:6,10,17). While athletic imagery does play a role in the subject of the judgment of believers (the word for crown in 1 Cor. 9:24ff. is an athlete’s wreath worn on the winner’s head), one should not restrict the Judgment Seat of Christ to imagery of handing out trophies to celebrating victors. The word bema in the New Testament is primarily used of courts of justice involving a critical evaluation.

This is not to say that believers need to fear a loss of salvation at the Judgment Seat, but they should know that the Lord’s evaluation might well involve some criticism and some unpleasant aspects. Although God in grace will find something desirable in every believer’s life (1 Cor. 4:5), the Judgment Seat of Christ will not be just a victory party and celebration for those believers who have wasted life on earth.

A. The Time for the Judgment Seat of Christ
There is more than ample evidence to make a conclusion as to the time for the Judgment Seat.

“But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous” [Luke 14:13-14].

Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men’s hearts; and then each man’s praise will come to him [1 Cor. 4:5].

[In] the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing [2 Tim. 4:8].

“Behold, I am coming quickly, and my reward is with Me to render to every man according to what he has done” [Rev. 22:12].

Luke 14:14 associates resurrection with reward. Therefore, one may conclude that reward follows resurrection. For church saints this means that the Judgment Seat of Christ occurs after the Rapture. 1 Cor. 4:5 and 2 Tim. 4:8 seem to link the Lord’s re-
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turn with judgment and reward. Finally, Rev. 22:12 is probably the clearest verse on the time for reward. Since the Lord’s return brings a reward, Bible teachers usually place the Judgment Seat of Christ as the next event after the Rapture (i.e., the next event for the Church. There is, of course, a tribulation period on earth).  

B. The Place for the Judgment Seat of Christ

The Bible does not specifically indicate the place for the tribunal. Since Christ’s return will bring believers to heaven (John 14:1 ff.), many Bible teachers place the judgment in heaven. It is safe to say it will not be on earth.

C. The Judge

Obviously, the Judge at the Judgment Seat of Christ is Christ.  

For we must all appear before the **judgment seat of Christ**, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad [2 Cor. 5:10].

Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve [Col. 3:23-24].

This could be inferred even if it were not specifically taught because God the Father has delegated all judgment to the Son.

“For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son” [John 5:22].

D. Those Judged

The Judgment Seat of Christ is for believers only. It must not be confused with The Great White Throne Judgment which is for unbelievers, i.e., the “dead” (see Revelation 20:11-15). In both the context of Romans 14 and 2 Corinthians 5 the term “we” has reference to believers. Thus, the scope of the Judgment Seat should be restricted to believers in Rom. 14:10 and 2 Cor. 5:10.

But you, why do you judge your **brother**? Or you, again, why do you regard your **brother** with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God [Rom. 14:10].

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad [2 Cor. 5:10].

When God judges believers, it will be at a judgment that is exclusively for believers. All at the Judgment Seat of Christ are saved.

If any man’s work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire [1 Cor. 3:15]

One should not conceive of the Judgment Seat as a group judgment with a mob of nameless Christians from many nations and centuries being judged in mass. Although “time” in heaven is probably different than time on earth, and it is difficult to conceive of Christ spending the time to judge millions of believers individually, the Bible clearly teaches that the Judgment Seat of Christ is some kind of individual judgment.

But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you, again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God….So then

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13 Other verses seem to link the Lord’s return with an evaluation or reward (1 Cor 1:8; 2 Cor 1:14; 1 Thess. 2:19; 1 John 2:28).

14 Heb. 9:27-28 also teaches that Christ will judge at His coming.

15 Rev. 20:11-15 even uses a different word for the tribunal. There we find *thronos* not *bema*.
each one of us shall give account of himself to God [Rom. 14:10,12].

Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor [1 Cor. 3:8].

[E]ach man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. If any man’s work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire [1 Cor. 3:13-15].

Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men’s hearts; and then each man’s praise will come to him from God [1 Cor. 4:5].

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad [2 Cor. 5:10].

For each one shall bear his own load [Gal. 6:5].

E. The Basis for the Judgment

1. Non-Issues at the Judgment Seat

It is very important to understand that salvation or entrance into heaven is not the issue at the Judgment Seat of Christ. All those being judged are believers. Since salvation comes through believing, all those at the Judgment Seat of Christ are saved. In fact, they are probably already in heaven. The Bible teaches that believers cannot face any condemnation for sin and are not subject to God's judicial wrath. Sins are not the issue at the Judgment Seat. 1 Cor. 3:15 specifically teaches that all those at the Judgment Seat of Christ are saved.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life” [John 5:24].

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him [Rom. 5:9].

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus....Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us [Rom. 8:1,33-34].

If any man’s work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire [1 Cor. 3:15].

And you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions [Col. 2:13].

“And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more” [Heb. 10:17].

For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ [1 Thess. 5:9].

And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this, love is
perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love [1 John 4:16-18].

There is no double jeopardy in God’s system of justice. While believers can and do sin against God in His role as Father, and while this may bring temporal chastisement, all sin has been forgiven relative to God in His role as Judge. The issues at the Judgment Seat of Christ are not salvation or entrance into heaven, nor will that judgment be for sins that have already been forgiven. The verdict of “justification by faith” means that no charge will ever by entertained in God’s courtroom against any believer.

2. Works Done on Earth

a. Works in General

The issues at the Judgment Seat are not salvation, entrance into heaven, or even sins on earth. The purpose for the Judgment Seat of Christ is to determine reward or loss of reward based upon works done on earth. Paul stresses works as the basis for judgment.

Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor [1 Cor. 3:8].

[Each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. If any man’s work, which he has built upon it, remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire [1 Cor. 3:13-15].

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad [2 Cor. 5:10].

b. Specifically Quality not Quantity of Work

The word translated “bad” in 2 Cor. 5:10 is not the normal Greek word for evil. It means “worthless.” 16 The Judgment Seat of Christ will evaluate not so much whether ones works have been good versus evil (for condemnation due to sin is not the issue) but whether they have been good in the sense of worthy or bad in the sense of worthless. Notice that the stress in the contrast is not even between works done and works undone. The work has been done. The judgment determines whether it is worthy or worthless. Christ will be more interested in the quality of work than the quantity (though it must be said that quality and quantity may be related in some people’s lives). The Judgment Seat will evaluate works as to quality, especially whether they were done to glorify Christ or for some other goal such as enhancing self (see 1 Sam. 16:7). God is more interested in the quality of a faithful, obedient and, yes, loving heart than in popular or sensational results. Noah was a preacher of righteousness for 120 years (Gen. 6:3, 2 Pet. 2:5), but the quantitative results were meager. Few listened to Isaiah (Isa. 6:9-10) or Jeremiah (Jer. 1:19, 15:15,17; 20:7-10). In fact, the Messiah was despised and rejected of men (Isa. 53:3; John 1:11). While results are desirable and a blessing, God-honoring faithfulness (with or without results) is the main criteria for judgment at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master

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Not By Bread Alone

builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it...each man’s work will be evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work [1 Cor. 3:10,13].

Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men’s hearts; and then each man’s praise will come to him from God [1 Cor. 4:5].

In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy [1 Cor. 4:2].

c. Works that Especially Please God When Accompanied by a Loyal Heart

There are some questions about the various crowns offered as rewards that the Bible does not answer. Perhaps God wants His people to focus attention more on the nature of their responsibilities than the exact nature of potential rewards. Rather than dwelling on the precise nature of what we can obtain, God wants believers to concentrate more on what they should be doing. A following section will address the nature of the rewards offered by the “crowns” of the Bible. Here we look into what must be done in order to obtain these crowns. Remember again that a reward comes not just from doing but from doing that arises from a pure heart, a heart whose goal is to honor, love, and please God Himself.

(1) Imperishable (Incorruptible) Crown

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore, I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified [1 Cor. 9:24-27].

There is a special reward for those who exhibit discipline, dedication, and self-control in their Christian experience just as an athlete in training. Christ is central to their lives, and they strive to be and to do as He directs through His Word.

(2) Crown of Exultation (rejoicing)

For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy [1 Thess. 2:19-20].

God is especially interested in rewarding those who work to lead others to salvation in Christ. Daniel 12:3 also associates “leading the many to righteousness” with future glory. Paul’s Thessalonian converts would be his crown of rejoicing.

(3) Crown of Righteousness

In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing [2 Tim. 4:8].

It is fair to say that those who love Christ’s appearing love the Person of Christ. Furthermore, those who love Christ do not love the world. Rather than conformity with the world they choose conformity to Christ. Thus, loving Him and His return goes together with righteous living (see 1 John 3:2-3). There is a special reward for believers who work at righteousness while they wait for His return. In fact the phrase
“crown of righteousness” can be interpreted as a crown that comes from righteousness.

(4) Crown of Life

Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him [James 1:12].

Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life [Rev. 2:10].

It is easy to let spirituality slip in times of pressure and crisis. Yet, pressure tests character. God gives a special reward to those who endure temptations, trials, persecution, or death for His sake. He especially appreciates those who remain faithful in hardship.

(5). Crown of Glory

And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory [1 Peter 5:4].

The crown of glory awaits Christian leaders who are faithful as undershepherds. There is a special reward for Christian leaders but also a more strict judgment (Luke 12:48; James 3:1; Heb. 13:17).

d. Contributions to the Lives of Other Believers

1 Cor. 3:12-13 says that God will evaluate whether one builds “gold, silver, precious stones” or “wood, hay, straw” upon the “foundation”. In the context the church is God’s building (v. 9). Therefore, the building materials must be people. One way that God will evaluate a believer is to look at his works relative to building up or tearing down other believers within his sphere of influence. This is certainly true of leaders (see Heb. 13:17) although it is ultimately true that every Christian is accountable to God for his own faithfulness or lack thereof (Rom. 14:12; 1 Cor. 4:5; Gal. 6:5). Each Christian is responsible for efforts to influence other Christians for good. He or she must try to bring about enduring permanence, value, and spiritual quality in the lives of other Christians rather than transitory cheapness (i.e., the character of precious stones as opposed to stubble). There is no guilt if others rebel or fail after we have tried to help, but the failure to show any interest in the spiritual welfare of other believers is a serious sin of omission. There is a special reward for Christians who use their lives to edify, enrich, and benefit others.

Now we who are strong ought to bear the weakness of those without strength and not just please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification [Rom. 15:1-2].

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus [Phil. 2:3-5].

3. Standards for Judging Believer’s Works

One of the lessons in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16) is that there will be great surprises when God gives rewards. There is no way that we can presently anticipate the level of reward a particular believer will obtain. If we were to guess, we would be wrong. Some who ex-
pect to receive a great reward will have a more modest one. Others anticipate little but will obtain much. Will the pastor of a church with 5,000 members or a godly mother with five children receive greater praise at the Judgment Seat of Christ? There is no way to know during the present time. We do know that God has full knowledge of all circumstances and will judge fairly. We also know some of the standards He will employ.

a. God will judge Christian leaders by a stricter judgment.

One of Paul’s points in 1 Cor. 9:14-17 is that his great missionary efforts were part of his calling. His labors were only a duty not something of special merit. His attitude was that expressed by the Lord’s parable in Luke 17:7-10. Paul felt that given his calling, he would have to work extra hard to do something meritorious. James is clear on the point that God judges teachers by a higher standard than others.

“So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done’ “ [Luke 17:10].

For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel [1 Cor. 9:16].

Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment [James 3:1].

b. God takes advantages and disadvantages into account in His judgment.

Unlike man, God can judge with perfect judgment. He will take into account those with advantages or disadvantages in areas like salvation at an early age, backgrounds in Christian or non-Christian homes, advantages to learn of God in a good church, natural aptitudes, and spiritual gifts. God not only sees the results in a life but also any special struggles or handicaps. At the Judgment Seat some of the first will be last and the last first. God is aware of all factors and will make a completely fair judgment.

...And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more [Luke 12:48b].

c. God will judge works but with an emphasis upon character. Jonah led a great revival but with a bad attitude. From a human perspective he may seem to deserve a great reward for his ministry, but God’s standards for judgment are different from man’s standards (1 Sam. 16:7).

Eph. 6:6 and Col. 3:22 mention those who work hard only to please men and contrast those who work “as to the Lord.” Both contexts go on to mention God’s evaluation (Eph. 6:8; Col. 3:24). At the Judgment Seat of Christ, God will judge each believer’s works to determine reward or loss of reward. However, He will place heavy emphasis upon the motivation for a person’s works, whether to please man or to please Christ. The Sermon on the Mount addresses those whose religious deeds arose from a motive to be seen of man as “pious.” Twice Christ says of them, “they have their reward in full” (Matt. 6:2,5, see also John 12:43). All their religious deeds were done to gain attention from men. They got the reward they sought but will have none from God. There are likely some Christians today who are faithful only when watched, or others who work hard but do so only to be noticed or praised without any special love for God. The focus of judging a believer’s works is upon the inner spirit that led to those works (see 1 Cor. 4:5).

F. The Nature of Future Rewards

One cannot stress enough that the Judgment Seat of Christ concerns rewards or loss of rewards, not salvation or entrance into
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heaven or even personal sins. God has not told us everything about the nature of the rewards that He will bestow, but we do know some important facts.

1. Degrees of Rewards

God in His grace is going to find something praiseworthy in every believer’s life (1 Cor. 4:5). However, one of the Lord’s parables indirectly teaches that God rewards His servants in varying degrees (Luke 19:11-19).

2. Glory in the Resurrection Body

Dan. 12:3; Matt. 13:43; Rom. 8:16-17; Phil. 3:21; Col. 3:4 and several verses in 1 Peter (1 Pet. 4:13; 5:1,10) mention the prospect of believers having a glorious resurrection body and sharing in Christ’s glory. In a context that concerns the resurrection body, Paul in 1 Cor. 15:41-42, seems to teach that there will be various degrees of glory in the resurrection body of believers: “There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead.”

Based upon this text, many Bible teachers believe that God will reward believers with different degrees of glorification. All will obtain a glorified state, but perhaps some will have a greater ability to praise and honor God, and some will have resurrection bodies that are more resplendent and brighter than others. Since God created man to glorify Himself (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 4:11), a greater capacity to glorify God either by increased ability to praise or increased service and an greater capacity to reflect Christ’s visible glory in ones body would be a truly desirable reward (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18).

3. Positions of Service and Authority

Christ told the apostles, the founders of the Church (see Eph. 2:20), that they would sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel in the coming Kingdom (Matt. 19:28). The Bible does not restrict participation in ruling over Christ’s future Kingdom to only the apostles.

If we endure, we shall also reign with Him...[2 Tim. 2:12a].

[And] He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen [Rev. 1:6].

“And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth” [Rev. 5:10].

…and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years....Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years [Rev. 20:4c, 6].

In Luke 19:11ff., the nobleman who returns as a king gives one of his servant’s “authority over ten cities” (v. 17) and another servant authority “over five cities” (v. 19). It is safe to conclude that God rewards believers with different positions of authority in the Millennium and probably also in the Eternal State. Increased position and increased service for God will not be deemed a burden but an honor.

4. Crowns

The Bible promises various crowns as rewards for believers. With the exception of the “golden crowns”, which the 24 elders in heaven wear on their heads (Revelation 4), it is preferable to interpret these crowns as figurative symbols for unspecified rewards that are valuable and noticeable. The word employed is stephanos (the name Steven), and it does not refer to a gem-filled crown of a monarch but to a laurel made of ivy worn by a victorious athlete. It is a garland as opposed to a diadem. Do we seriously
want to conclude that believers will be wearing green laurels for eternity in heaven? It does seem these crowns are better interpreted as figurative. In fact, 1 Cor. 9:25 makes a specific contrast with a literal “wreath” or “crown” and eternal rewards. 1 Thess. 2:19-20 provides even more impressive evidence that the Biblical crowns are figurative. The Thessalonian believers themselves are Paul’s crown (see also Phil. 4:1).

For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy [1 Thess. 2:19-20].

The “crown” in 1 Thess. 2:19 is obviously figurative. This bolsters the argument that the rest are also intended as figures. They speak of victory, reward, and visible honors that God will give believers at the Judgment Seat of Christ. It is difficult to be any more precise than this.

God wants believers to focus not so much on the nature of future rewards but on the basis for these rewards (particularly the quality of their hearts). Our main pursuit is to love Christ and work to honor Him. Any rewards obtained are incidental and secondary to a deeper satisfaction in pleasing Him and contributing to His exaltation. Therefore, it is best for us at the present to worry less about the nature of coming rewards and more upon what pleases God and thus the bases for those rewards: the imperishable crown for discipline, dedication, self-control; the crown of rejoicing for evangelism; the crown of (or from) righteousness for loving His appearing and thus loving Him, not the world; the crown of life for enduring trials and temptations; the crown of glory (appositional genitive, meaning glory will be the crown) for being a faithful leader.

5. Loss of Reward/ Shame

God will reward work done from the devoted heart with a higher degree of glory, with increased authority in the Kingdom, and with crowns. There is, however, another possible outcome to the Judgment Seat, shame and loss of reward. All believers will obtain salvation (1 Cor. 3:15). All believers will obtain glorification in some degree (1 Cor. 15:51). God will give some praise to every believer (1 Cor. 4:5). Yet, some will find their works “burned up” by Christ’s judgment. The Bible presents the possibility of shame and of loss of reward.

And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming [1 John 2:28].

Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of angels…[Col. 2:18].

Watch yourselves, that you might not lose what you have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward [2 John 8].

“I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have in order that no one take your crown” [Rev. 3:11].

G. Future Evaluation and Present Competition

A word should be given about the relationship between the future judgment of believers and present competition among believers. God did not teach us about future rewards so that we could entertain rivalry in the present. Real love for Christ involves the attitude that we are delighted when another excels at honoring Him. While self-evaluation is a part of Christian living, a spirit of competition between Christians does not please God even if the work that is generated is in itself legitimate.
So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one...[1 Cor. 3:7-8].

...when they measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding [2 Cor. 10:12b].

But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another [Gal. 6:4].

Competition and comparison leads to pride, envy, possibly laziness, coveting another’s abilities, and bitterness (maybe even bitterness against God). A better method for self-evaluation is to judge one's own efforts against one's own potential and also to measure present progress over past performance.

H. Positive and Negative Incentive from the Judgment Seat

The Bible teaches that the coming judgment of believers is both a negative and positive incentive for diligence in the present. Negatively, Christians will want to avoid the possibility of shame. Positively, we will be glad on the judgment day if we serve faithfully now. Just as an examination is terrifying to an unprepared student but brings promotion to a diligent one, so too one’s experience at the future Judgment Seat of Christ will depend upon his degree of faithfulness and preparedness now. Paul viewed the coming judgment as giving both negative and positive incentives for service.

Therefore, also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For (because) we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men...[2 Cor. 5: 9-11a].

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing [2 Tim. 4:7-8].

X. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb
A. Introduction

There were three main aspects to a Jewish wedding. The engagement (betrothal) was considered binding and caused the couple to be viewed as husband and wife. It took a formal divorce to break a betrothal (see Matt. 1:18-19). The church is Christ’s bride in this first sense. She is betrothed to Christ, but the actual wedding has not yet taken place (see also John 3:29; Rom. 7:3-4; Eph. 5:22ff.; Rev. 19:7ff.; 21:2,9; New Jerusalem is Christ’s bride in the sense that the church dwells there, Rev. 22:17).

For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin [2 Cor. 11:2].

One may view the Holy Spirit as a token of a promised future relationship. He is like an engagement ring (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14) (The meaning of the word translated “earnest” or “pledge” in modern Greek is “engagement ring”).

In the second phase of a wedding the groom would come to the bride’s home to take her in a procession back to his home for an official wedding ceremony. This seems to correspond to the Rapture, in which Christ comes to lead His bride in a procession to His home in heaven for the actual wedding. It is best to place the marriage of the Lamb and the church in heaven at a time after the Judgment Seat of Christ. Rev. 19:8 identi-
plies the bride’s white garments as the “righteous acts of the saints” (righteous in Greek is plural). Apparently, the fact that the bride is clothed in white indicates that her righteous deeds have already been evaluated at the Judgment Seat.

The third phase of a wedding was the wedding feast or supper. Some students of prophecy distinguish between the wedding, which occurs in heaven (during the tribulation period on earth), and the wedding feast or supper that occurs back on earth after the Tribulation. Others think that both the wedding and wedding feast occur in heaven before Christ’s Second Coming to earth. This disagreement is not a major one in overall theology, but it does affect teachings about the place, time, and nature of the marriage feast. Is it in heaven or earth? Does it occur during the tribulation period or at the beginning of the Kingdom? Is the feast itself a celebration around fellowship with Christ in heaven, or a celebration that the King finally rules on earth?

B. Evidence for Marriage in Heaven with a Marriage Feast on Earth

Although most passages that concern the marriage supper of the Lamb can be explained by either view, it is better to distinguish between the marriage of Christ and the church in heaven and the marriage feast which takes place on earth after the Second Coming. Indeed, the marriage feast may in actuality be a celebration throughout the entire 1,000 years.

And the LORD of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain (i.e., on earth in Israel); a banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow, and refined, aged wine [Isa. 25:6].

“[F]or I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes” [Luke 22:18].

Although Christ is the groom and the church is the bride, a wedding feast could be expected to involve guests who are not actual participants. The best interpretation of the parable of the ten virgins is that the girls represent Israel (Matt. 25:1ff.). Indeed, John 3:29 likens John the Baptist, definitely Jewish, to a friend of the groom. If Israel participates in the wedding feast for Christ and the church, it is best to place this feast back on earth because the resurrection of Old Testament saints occurs after the Tribulation (Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:1-2; Ezek. 37:12-13).

Several parables give even stronger evidences that while the marriage of the Lamb may take place in heaven, the marriage feast seems to have an earthly setting. In Matthew 22 the Lord speaks of a wedding feast that the king gives for his son. The setting is definitely earthly. Some who are invited refuse to come. Although one might argue the parable refers only to Israel’s treatment of Christ at His first coming, there do seem to be eschatological overtones in such phrases as “outer darkness” and “weeping, and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 22:13).

“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king, who gave a wedding feast for his son. And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come. Again he sent out other slaves saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited, “Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatted livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast.”’ “But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. But the king was enraged and sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and set their city on fire. Then he said to his slaves, “The wedding is ready, but
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those who were invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast.’ “And those slaves went out into the streets, and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests. But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw there a man not dressed in wedding clothes, and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?’ And he was speechless. “Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth’ ” [Matt. 22:2-13].

If the teachings of Matt. 22:1ff. extend beyond the single point of Christ’s rejection at His first coming, then it presents a future wedding feast on earth after the Second Coming. The parable fits well with the supposition that invitations to the Kingdom will be presented through the “gospel of the Kingdom” during the Tribulation (Matt. 24:14; Rev. 14:6). All who reject the invitation will be excluded from the joy of the wedding celebration (by the Judgment of Israel and the Judgment of the Nations). If the marriage feast takes place in heaven, who are those who refuse to come and are cast out? While we can envision exclusion from Christ’s Kingdom on earth, we should rule out an interpretation in which some unsaved sneak into heaven and must then be tossed out.

Matt. 25:1ff. gives even stronger evidence for the distinction between a marriage in heaven and a marriage feast on earth. It definitely refers to the Kingdom of heaven (v. 1) and is future (all of Matthew 24, Matt. 25:31, etc). References to the Lord’s coming involve His Revelation at the end of the Tribulation (see Matt. 24:21, 29-31). Matt. 25:10 clearly places the “feast” on earth after the groom’s return.

“And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut” [Matt. 25:10].

The parable of the ten virgins pictures a wedding feast on earth after the groom’s return. Therefore, the doctrinal point involves a marriage feast on earth after Christ’s return at the close of the Tribulation. Those in Israel who are prepared are welcome. Those unprepared are excluded. If the marriage feast is in heaven, who are those removed from it? 18

The parable of Luke 14:16-24 refers to a man giving banquet invitations to all after those initially invited decline to come. Yet, the word for “wedding feast” does not occur, nor is there any imagery of the king’s son being married or a groom returning. It would be hard to prove that Luke 14:16-24 is an exact parallel to Matt. 22:1-13. Yet, there are some indications that Christ also has the future in mind in giving this parable. Luke 14:14 mentions rewards for the resurrection of the righteous, and v. 15 shows that the parable is about the “Kingdom of God.” If we view the “parable of the dinner” as teaching about future events, as well as the rejection of Christ by His own generation, then it also presents a feast on earth and gives a secondary support to the idea of the marriage supper occurring on earth.

18 Those who accept Eternal Security can hardly take the virgins to be Christians who lose their welcome at the wedding feast. Also, the Church is the bride. Wedding guests are best viewed as Israelites. Some are saved. Some are unsaved. This mixture of the two can only occur in an earthly setting not heaven. Therefore, the wedding may take place in heaven after the Rapture, but it seems best to locate the wedding feast back on earth after the Second Coming.
C. Texts Compatible with the Marriage Supper in Heaven or on Earth

The single factor that creates the most confusion about the marriage supper is that the Greek word (gamos) can mean either “wedding” or “wedding feast.” Only the context, or additional descriptions, make it clear which is intended.

Luke 12:36ff. could be fairly used to teach that the wedding supper occurs in heaven before Christ’s return (v. 40). He comes to earth from the wedding feast.

“And be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks” [Luke 12:36].

Luke 12:36 is capable of two translations. He returns from either the wedding feast (NASB, NIV) or the wedding itself (KJV). Yet, it is probably better to translate as the KJV does. The understanding given by the King James Version translation would be that the Master returns from the wedding (in heaven) and then has a banquet on earth for His servants (Israel, v. 37).

“And ye yourselves like men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to eat, and will come forth and serve them....Be ye, therefore, ready also; for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect” [Luke 12:36-37,40 (KJV New Scofield)].

The parable of Luke 12:35ff. does not prove that the marriage supper of the Lamb occurs on earth, but it can be legitimately translated to fit that conclusion if one has been swayed in that direction by Matt. 22:1-13, 25:1-13; Luke 14:16-24.

Rev. 19:7-9 is another text that is capable of placing the marriage supper of the Lamb either in heaven before the Second Coming or on earth after the Second Coming.

“Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.” And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And he said to me, “Write, ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’ “ And he said to me, “These are true words of God” [Rev. 19:7-9].

19 The standard Greek lexicon states the plural of gamos is generally used when a “wedding celebration” is in view. However, Matt. 22:8 is singular; but the context clearly involves a feast. Also, the same lexicon says, “sg. an. pl. are oft. used interchangeably w. no difference in mng.” See Walter Bauer, The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, translated by Wm. F. Arndt and F. Wilber Gingrich (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 150.
Verse seven says that the wedding of the Lamb has already taken place (aorist). This statement occurs before the discussion about the Second Coming in v. 11. Nearly all agree that the actual marriage takes place in heaven before Christ’s return. Verse 8 indicates that the righteous acts of the church have already been judged and rewarded. Thus, most place the actual marriage of Christ and the church in heaven at some point after the Judgment Seat of Christ but before the Second Coming.

John adds the word “supper” after marriage in v. 9. There is no vagueness as to the event discussed, but his statement lacks references to time. It says those who are invited to the marriage supper are blessed. Does this mean those in heaven who have already participated in the marriage supper are blessed? Or is this a heavenly announcement of blessings upon those who will be soon enjoying a sharing in the marriage supper after the Second Coming, which takes place in vv. 11ff.? Those who want to place the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven will take v. 9 as a statement of blessing already enjoyed in heaven. Those who want to place the marriage supper of the Lamb on earth will take v. 9 as an announcement that will soon take place back on earth after the Second Coming. Rev. 19:7-9 is capable of fitting either view.

D. Conclusions on the Distinction between a Marriage in Heaven and a Marriage Feast on Earth

While the issue is relatively minor, it is best to see a distinction between the marriage of the Lamb as taking place in heaven and the marriage supper as occurring on earth. The marriage between Christ and the church occurs while the Tribulation rages on earth. The marriage feast probably occurs as a part of the transition from the Tribulation to the Kingdom after the Second Coming. The unsaved survivors of the tribulation period who had declined the invitation to the wedding celebration are excluded from the Kingdom by the Judgment of Israel and of the Nations. Perhaps some change their minds and want to enter the celebration when they see others admitted to glory (Matt. 25:34), but the King will exclude them (Matt. 25:41, 22:11-14). The survivors of the Tribulation who believed in “the gospel of the kingdom” (Matt. 24:14) are welcome to the marriage feast that may include a celebration for the entire 1,000 years.

XI. The Tribulation Period

After the Rapture (with its simultaneous resurrection) the Church undergoes the Judgment Seat of Christ and the Marriage of the Lamb (again the marriage feast may be after the Second Coming). While the Church enjoys its rewards and union with Christ, the Tribulation brings unimaginable horror to the world. Major sections of the Bible discuss this coming tribulation period (e.g., Ezekiel 38-39; Daniel 9-11; Matthew 24-25 and parallels; 1 Thess. 5; 2 Thessalonians 2; Revelation 6-18). It will be impossible to cover every detail in this topical study, but the main truths about the Tribulation may be classified under “Major Gentile World Powers During the Tribulation,” “The Antichrist”, “Battles in the Tribulation”, and “God and the Saints in the Tribulation.”

A. Major Gentile World Powers during the Tribulation

The purpose for this section is simply to identify the major players in the world during the Tribulation. Following sections attempt to give a chronology of tributional battles.

1. Revived Rome (a European confederation of ten kings that soon turns into a dictatorship).

The surge in Arab economic power has caused some interpreters to drop the idea of a revived Roman Empire in favor of taking the Babylon of Revelation 17-18 as literal Babylon and not a revived Rome. This interpretation of Revelation 17-18 has merits,
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but it need not exclude the concept of a revived Roman Empire. The case for a revived Rome does not depend on Revelation 17-18.

a. The 69th week of Daniel’s prophecy (Dan. 9:24-27) ended with Rome as a world power. Since the intervening Church age is not in view, we would anticipate that Rome will also be a major power during the 70th week (which is the Tribulation as identified in Matt. 24:15).

b. Dan. 9:26 predicts that the people of the (evil) prince to come will destroy Jerusalem after the Messiah is “cut off” (i.e., crucified). The Romans destroyed Jerusalem after Christ’s death. Therefore, the (evil) prince that shall come is the leader of Rome, and the Antichrist should be leading a revived Roman Empire (see also Luke 21:20ff. where the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by Rome also seems blended with similar conditions of the end time.)

“Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the (evil) prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. And he (the evil prince) will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate” [Dan. 9:26-27].

c. Dan. 2:36-45 and 7:2-14 speak of four gentile world powers that arise before Christ sets up His Kingdom. The book identifies the first three as Babylon (Dan. 2:38), Medo-Persia (Dan. 5:28, 8:20, 11:2) and Greece (8:21, 11:2). The fourth empire from Daniel’s own time in terms of the chronological sequence of ancient history was Rome. It was theoretically possible for Christ the King to have set up His Kingdom at His first coming. The fourth kingdom that Christ would have had to destroy in the first century was Rome (Dan. 2:44-45, 7:11-14; 8:11, 23-27). It is likely that the power Christ will destroy at His Second Coming will also be Roman.

d. The Nature of Revived Rome

(1) The confederation begins with 10 kings in association. This is the symbolism behind 10 toes (Dan. 2:41), and 10 horns (Dan. 7:7, 20, 24; Rev. 12:3; 13:1 and 17:12). This is the Bible’s own explanation.

“…As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise” [Dan. 7:24a].

“And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings…”[Rev. 17:12].

Revived Rome is usually viewed as a Western European confederation because the ancient Roman Empire was centered in Europe. Other nations such as Iran, Turkey, Libya, and Ethiopia, and possibly east Europe seem to be allied with Russia in the Tribulation (see below and Ezek. 38:5-6).

(2) The little horn (the Antichrist) destroys three of the ten kings and assumes dictatorship. It seems that he replaces the three kings and continues to rule over an empire with ten kings as subordinates.

“While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth uttering great boasts….As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings” [Dan. 7:8,24] (see also 7:20).
“And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings, who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. These have one purpose and they give their power and authority to the beast” [Rev. 17:12-13].

The time at which the Antichrist gains full control over revived Rome is not certain. However, he dominates the entire earth for the last 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation.

And there was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies; and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is those who dwell in heaven. And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them; and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him [Rev. 13:5-7].

Daniel 9:27 teaches that this evil ruler will make a peace treaty to protect Israel for the first 3 1/2 years. However, at the middle of the Tribulation he will break the treaty and begin to persecute both Israel (Dan. 12:1; Rev. 12:1-6, 13-17) and all believers (Dan. 7:21; Rev. 13:7).

It is logical to assume that many of the international “wars and rumors of wars” (Matt. 24:6) in the Tribulation take place during the first half because no one will be able to oppose the Antichrist during the second half (The Great Tribulation, Rev. 13:4). The final half, however, will be worse because of God’s judgments upon the world and worse in terms of persecution for Israel and the saints. The Antichrist is studied in greater detail on pp. 429-440.

2. The Kings of the East

Rev. 16:12 mentions “the kings of the east.” These are apparently in an alliance with the Antichrist as he controls the whole world at this time (Rev. 13:7-8). The kings of the east come to assist the Antichrist and battle the Lord Jesus Christ at Armageddon. (Despite the titles in many study Bibles, Rev. 9:13ff. seems to describe a demonic horde and not the armies of the east. Unless they are highly figurative, vv. 17 and 19 are not describing a human army, and the first part of Chapter 9 definitely concerns demons from the abyss.)

And the sixth angel poured out his bowl upon the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, that the way might be prepared for the kings from the east. And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty….And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon [Rev. 16:12-14,16].

3. Gog and Magog (Russia and Allies)

Ezekiel 38-39 teaches about the end time invasion of Israel by Gog of the land of Magog. These names also occur in Rev. 20:8. The invasion will be studied separately. The present purpose is to identify “Gog of the land of Magog” (Ezek. 38:2).

And the word of the LORD came to me saying, “Son of man, set your face toward Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “Behold, I am against you, O Gog,
prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. And I will turn you about and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out, and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them splendidly attired, a great company with buckler and shield, all of them wielding swords; Persia, Ethiopia, and Put with them, all of them with shield and helmet; Gomer with all its troops; Beth-togarmah from the remote parts of the north with all its troops - many peoples with you” [Ezek. 38:1-6].

a. Several times Ezekiel says that Israel’s enemy is from the “remote parts of the North.” This phrase alone is enough to suggest that the prophet has in mind the area that we now call “Russia.”

“Gomer with all its troops; Beth-togarmah from the remote parts of the north with all its troops - many peoples with you” [Ezek. 38:6].

“And you will come from your place out of the remote parts of the north…” [Ezek. 38:15].

“[A]nd I shall turn you around, drive you on, take you up from the remotest parts of the north, and bring you against the mountains of Israel” [Ezek. 39:2].

b. Magog

Gog is the leader of Magog. It is interesting that Bible teachers identified Magog as Russia long before Russia was a superpower. Lindsey mentions a British bishop who taught that Magog was Russia in 1710. 20

Ancient sources identify Magog with the “Scythians” who are the peoples north of the Black Sea, i.e., modern Russia (see Col.

3:11). Josephus, the 1st century Jewish historian writes:

“Magog founded those that from him were named Magogites, but who are by the Greeks called Scythians.” 21 (Antiquities 1:6:1)

Modern commentators claim that the ancient Roman Pliny said, “Heirapolis, taken by the Scythians, was afterward called Magog” and that Jerome (A.D.345-420) claimed the Jews in his time identified Magog with the Scythians. 22

The identification of Magog with the Scythians and the phrase “remote parts of the north” give solid evidence that Ezekiel 38-39 refer to what we now call “Russia”.

c. Rosh

Despite the temptation to identify “Rosh” with Russia, the word is a perfectly normal Hebrew word meaning “chief” or “first” as in “Rosh Hashanah,” the first of the year. The phrase is probably best translated as in the KJV “the Chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.” (Ezek. 38:3). Another support for this more simple translation is that while Meshech and Tubal appear together many times (Gen. 10:2; 1 Chron. 1:5; Ezek. 27:13, 32:26), there would be no occurrence of three nations named, “Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal”, unless it be in Ezekiel 38-39.

Feinberg traced an ancient Greek usage of “Rosh” for Russia in the Iliad, XIII. 5-6, and “Rosh” does appear as a proper name in Gen. 46:21. 23 He also cites later Byzantine and Arabic writers as mentioning a people called “Rus”. 24 Gesenius’ Hebrew dictionary agrees and defines “Rosh” as “undoubt-


23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.
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edly Russians.” 25 Yet, evidence as late as the 10th century AD and coming from Greece and not Israel is not sufficient to deny the normal meaning of “Rosh”.

Ezek. 38:2 should probably be translated “chief (Hebrew “Rosh”) prince of Meschech and Tubal.” It is possible but not probable there is any reference to Russia even though the words sound the same. Ultimately, the view that Ezekiel 38-39 speaks of Russia does not depend on equating it with “rosh”.

d. Meshech and Tubal

Pentecost and Lindsey identify “Meschech” as “Moscow”. 26 However, similar sounds are not a sufficient basis for equating two words. Standard evangelical Bible encyclopedias cite impressive evidence from ancient inscriptions that Meshech and Tubal refer to places that are now in areas we call Turkey or maybe even Armenia.27 Feinburg seems to accept this location and does not identify Meshech and Tubal with Moscow. 28 It is best to identify Meshech and Tubal with ancient Phrygia/Cappadocia, which is modern central to east Turkey and possibly Armenia. The area may be in Armenia and does feel Russian influence, but it is not likely that “Meshech” is Moscow.

e. Persia, Ethiopia, Put

These are three allies of Magog listed in Ezek. 38:5. Persia is modern Iran. The Hebrew word for Ethiopia is “Cush.” Most Bible teachers identify “Cush” with Ethiopia or Sudan, both near Egypt. 29 The Septuagint translates Cush as “Ethiopia”, and Ezek. 29:10 makes “Cush” border Egypt (see also Gen. 10:6; Mizraim is the Hebrew word for Egypt). Also, many Bible verses support the identification of Cush with Ethiopia (2 Chron. 21:16; Esther 1:1; 8:9; Psa. 68:31; Isa. 20:3,5; 45:14; Jer. 13:23 dark-skinned people; Ezek. 30:4).

Put can be identified with Libya. Josephus says (Antiquities 1:6:2), “Phut also was the founder of Libya...” 30 The Septuagint translates “Put” as Libya and Pliny equates “Put” with “Mauritania” in Africa. 31 Russia will be Israel’s main adversary, but it has some important allies in Iran, Ethiopia, and Libya.

f. Gomer

Gomer was the father of Ashkenaz and Togarmah (Gen. 10:3). The ancient Talmud and modern Jews identify “Ashkenaz” with Germany and East Europe. Most evangelical Christians conclude that Akkadian “gimirra” equals the Greek “Cimmerians” (a mobile group variously located in Eastern Europe, or the Caucasus Mountains, or Asia Minor). 32 Dyer identifies Gomer with Turkey

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26 Lindsey, The Late Great Planet Earth, p. 53; Dwight Pentecost, Things To Come, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p. 328. Dr. Pentecost is quoting Louis Bauman who in turn quotes William Gesenius. The author was not able to find the original quote in Gesenius’ lexicon (see p. 516 of lexicon under Meschech).
29 See Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia, p. 411; Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia, 1:1047; and Feinburg, The Prophecy of Ezekiel, p. 221.
30 Josephus, Complete Works, p. 31.
32 Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, 2:774-775; Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia, p. 710; Lindsey, The Late Great Planet Earth, p. 58; Feinburg, The Prophecy of Ezekiel, p. 221; Pentecost, Things To Come, p. 330.
g. Togarmah

Togarmah had already been mentioned in the book of Ezekiel and linked with Meshech and Tubal (Ezek. 27:13-14). Jer. 51:27 links Ashkenaz (the brother of Togarmah Gen. 10:3) with Ararat. This indicates an area in Eastern Turkey or what is now Armenia. Most authorities agree. Pentecost quotes evidence from the ancient historian Tacitus and from the Assyrian Chronicles to support the idea that Togarmah equals Armenia. The Armenians claim they descend from the “House of Togarmah.”

h. Conclusions

Although some identifications for the places in Ezekiel 38 are tenuous (e.g., Rosh with Russia and Meshech with Moscow), there is enough evidence from the phrase “remotest parts of the North” and from the identification of Magog with Scythia to support the view that Russia will invade Israel in the Tribulation. Her allies will include Iran, Ethiopia, Libya, Turkey, Armenia and likely (but not as certainly) the Eastern Europeans.

The existence of a strong Russia in the end times coupled with the absence of any Scriptural reference to the United States makes for interesting speculation. It is possible that the United States will be a second rate power in the end times. This may or may not signal its destruction as a nation for it is possible that America will be allied with or is under the protection of the other major end-time confederation in Western Europe.

The presence of all of these end-time powers will always make present world conditions interesting. Date setting is not proper, and one must remember that nothing needs to be fulfilled before the Rapture (prophetic fulfillment could all come together early in the Tribulation). Nevertheless it will continue to be reasonable to think that ongoing political, economic, and other conditions regarding Israel, western Europe, Russia, and lesser (in terms of prophetic emphasis) nations will be consistent with the Bible’s picture of the world in the Tribulation.

4. Restored Babylon

Although many Bible teachers understand the “Babylon” of Rev. 17-18 to be figurative for a revived Rome, the view that Babylon in Rev. 17-18 refers to a literal Babylon has advocates. This is not the place for a complete exegesis of Isaiah Chapters 13-14, Jeremiah Chapters 50-51 and Revelation Chapters 17-18, but enough can be given to make the case for a revived Babylon credible.

a. Literal Interpretation

One of the main tenets of the dispensational/pretribulational camp is that of literal interpretation. We should interpret literally if possible.


“And the woman whom you saw is **the great city**, which reigns over the kings of the earth” [Rev. 17:18].

“And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, ‘Woe, woe, **the great city**, Babylon, **the strong city**! For in one hour your judgment has come’ “ [Rev. 18:9-10].

b. Old Testament Prophecies about Babylon

Several Old Testament prophecies concern Babylon’s destruction. Have they or have they not been fulfilled?

(1) Supernatural Destruction/Never to be Inhabited Again

Isaiah and Jeremiah depict a supernatural destruction upon Babylon from which the city is never rebuilt or inhabited.

And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, the glory of the Chaldeans’ pride, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It will **never be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation**; nor will the Arab pitch his tent there, nor will shepherds make their flocks lie down there. But desert creatures will lie down there, and their houses will be full of owls, ostriches also will live there, and shaggy goats will frolic there. And hyenas will howl in their fortified towers and jackals in their luxurious palaces. Her fateful time also will soon come and her days will not be prolonged [Isa. 13:19-22].

“You will not be united with them in burial, because you have ruined your country, you have slain your people. May the offspring of evildoers not be mentioned forever….And I will rise up against them,” declares the LORD of hosts, “and will cut off from Babylon name and survivors, offspring and posterity,” declares the LORD. “I will also make it a possession for the hedgehog, and swamps of water, and I will sweep it with the broom of destruction,” declares the LORD of hosts [Isa. 14:20, 22-23].

“And they will not take from you even a stone for a corner nor a stone for foundations, but you will be desolate forever, declares the LORD…Her cities have become an object of horror, a parched land and a desert, and **a land in which no man lives**, and through which no son of man passes” [Jer. 51:26,43].

All must agree that the destruction of Babylon by the Medes and Persians (539 B.C.) is at least a partial fulfillment of these predictions and that the prophets included this historical destruction of Babylon in their predictions. Yet, Babylon was not overthrown by a directly supernatural manner at that time (i.e., fire and brimstone as in Sodom and Gomorrah), and it did not totally cease to be inhabited as proven by Allen and McDowell. 37

If Babylon was still inhabited centuries after its destruction in 539 B.C., then it is possible to view a complete fulfillment occurring in the end times by another divine destruction of a rebuilt (and literal) city of Babylon.

(2) Contextual Indications of an End-time Event

Isaiah 13-14 is replete with indications that Isaiah also had in mind an eschatological destruction for the city of Babylon. This bolsters the view that the city of Babylon in

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Revelation 17-18 is literal and not a figure for Rome.

Isa. 13:6 refers to the Day of the LORD, and 2 Thess. 2:2-4 equates the Day of the LORD with end times.

Wail, for the day of the LORD is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty [Isa. 13:6].

That you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the LORD has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God [2 Thess. 2:2-4].

If Isa. 13:10-11 is literal, then the complete fulfillment of Babylon’s destruction must be future. These things did not literally happen in 539 B.C. (i.e., cosmic changes, world punishment).

For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not flash forth their light; the sun will be dark when it rises, and the moon will not shed its light. Thus I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud, and abase the haughtiness of the ruthless [Isa. 13:10-11].

Isa. 14:7-8 predicts that after Babylon’s destruction the whole world will be at “rest” and possess “joy”. This fits a time of destruction followed by the Millennium.

“The whole earth is at rest and is quiet; they break forth into shouts of joy. Even the cypress trees rejoice over you, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, ‘Since you were laid low, no tree cutter comes up against us’ ” [Isa. 14:7-8].

If Isa. 14:10-17 refers to “Satan” as the power behind the king of Babylon, then complete fulfillment of Babylon’s destruction occurs at the time Satan is cast into the pit, i.e., the end times (as shown in Rev. 20:1-3).

“Your pomp and the music of your harps have been brought down to Sheol; maggots are spread out as your bed beneath you, and worms are your covering….But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north’….Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit. Those who will see you will gaze at you, They will ponder over you, saying, ‘Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world like a wilderness and overthrew its cities…’ ”[Isa. 14:11,13, 15-16, 17].

And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time [Rev. 20:1-3].

c. Conclusions
Eschatology: The Doctrine of Future Events

The notion of a rebuilt city of Babylon deserves more attention than it has gotten in the past (it is also interesting in the light of increasing Middle Eastern wealth). Revelation 18 presents Babylon as a great economic power.

A possible role for rebuilt Babylon might be as follows: Babylon will be rebuilt primarily as an economic as opposed to a military power (through there may be some religious power as well). It is possible to view Babylon as an ally of Russia before the fiasco of its invasion of Israel. After Russian decline Babylon becomes supported (militarily) by the Beast (the Antichrist), but she is so wealthy that Babylon threatens to dominate him economically.

And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns....”And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings, who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour” [Rev. 17:3,12].

The Antichrist will grow jealous and feel so threatened by Babylon (perhaps through economic dependence) that he destroys it. In doing so he unknowingly does the will of God! God destroys Babylon for its greed, sensuality, and probably its apostate religion (which the antichrist has been using).

And he said to me, “The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues. And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire. For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God should be fulfilled. And the woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth” [Rev. 17:15-18].

Admittedly, other interpretations can be developed; but all things being equal “Babylon” in Revelation 17-18 should be taken as a literal city. Babylon deserves to be listed among the gentile powers of the Tribulation period.

5. King of the North and King of the South

Dan. 11:36-45 mentions a tremendous end-time battle involving the king of the North and the king of the South. The description of this battle awaits a coming section. Our present goal is merely to identify the main nations in the tribulation period. While some believe the king of the North and the king of the South refer to additional powers in the Tribulation, it is preferable to link Dan. 11:36ff. with the invasion of Israel by Russia in Ezekiel 38-39. This makes the king of the North to be the same as the ruler of the nation from the “remotest part of the North,” i.e., likely Russia. The king of the South would probably be one of his prominent allies (Dan. 11:43 mentions Libya, Ethiopia, Egypt).

In addition to the location “north”, the timing for the battles favors the linking of Dan. 11:36-45 with Ezekiel 38-39. Evidence for this statement will come in a following section, “Battles in the Tribulation” (p. 441).

B. The Antichrist

1. The Origin of the Antichrist

a. Social Origin - Anarchy

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39 Unlike Libya and Ethiopia, Egypt is never specifically said to be an ally of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38-39; Dan. 11:42-43 teaches that the Antichrist will conquer Egypt.
The Antichrist will arise out of chaotic world conditions. This is obvious from general teachings about the Tribulation (Matt. 24:6 “wars and rumors of wars”, and also Rev. 6:1ff.). The four horsemen of the apocalypse bring war, famine, and death. The first horseman (white) is probably the Antichrist. He will rise out of the sea, which stands for the turbulence of the nations (cf. Rev. 13:1, 17:15). No doubt the Antichrist will make great promises of hope as is customary for tyrannical movements (e.g., as in the French and Russian revolutions or the Nazis). People will look to him as a deliverer who can straighten out a world in a first rate mess.

b. Geographical or National Origin - Rome

Dan. 9:26 says that after Messiah’s death “the people of the [evil] prince that shall come will destroy the city.” The Romans destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70. It is likely that the Antichrist will rule over a revived Roman Empire. Luke 21:5ff. also intertwines the historical destruction of Jerusalem by Rome in A.D. 70 with end-time events.

Dan. 7:8-9 talks about a “little horn” rising out of the fourth beast or empire. The context of Daniel 7 is discussing end-time events (see vv. 13-14). Furthermore, Dan. 7:15ff. can be equated with the end-time evil empire. The description of the evil ruler as speaking blasphemy for 3 1/2 years and as waging war on the saints fits the end-time kingdom of the Antichrist (Rev. 13:1ff.). Also, both the fourth kingdom in Daniel and the beast in Revelation are described as having 10 horns (cf. Dan. 7:7-8, 19-20, 23-24; Rev. 13:1; 17:11-14). The fourth kingdom in Daniel is the Antichrist’s kingdom. Yet, historically the next great kingdom that followed Greece (definitely the third of Daniel’s kingdoms, Dan. 8:21, 11:2) was Rome, and the fourth great kingdom from Daniel’s time was Rome. Thus, it is likely that the Antichrist will rule over a revived Roman Empire.

c. Racial Origin

Ethnic derivation and citizenship are two different classifications. One can be American in citizenship and be Chinese in racial derivation. The conclusion that the Antichrist will rule over a revived Rome does not necessarily mean he will be Roman.

One idea is that he must be Jewish in order to pose as the false Christ. Antichrist means “in opposition” to Christ but also “in place of” Christ. It seems logical that being Jewish would assist the Antichrist in deceiving others about being the Messiah. Dan. 11:37 says that the Antichrist “will show no regard for the God of his fathers.” Some take this to mean he must be an apostate Jew. There is even the theory that the Antichrist will rule over an American Jew. There is the theory that the Antichrist will be Syrian (despite the difficulty in imagining a Syrian ruling the modern world).

The Antichrist will very likely be Roman in citizenship. He will come from some Western European nation. It is best to remain open as to his racial derivation. Of his spiritual origin there can be no doubt.

d. Spiritual Origin

The Antichrist comes from the Devil. It is logical to assume that the Devil always has a potential Antichrist waiting in the wings because he is ignorant about the time for the Rapture.
And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved [2 Thess. 2:8-10].

And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon [Rev. 12:9] gave him his power and his throne and great authority....and they worshiped the dragon, [Rev. 12:9] because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?” [Rev. 13:2,4]

And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs [Rev. 16:13] (The satanic trinity).

e. Providential Origin

God does not directly cause the rise of the Antichrist, but He will permit it and will use it. Thus, it is true to say that the Antichrist cannot rise to power without God allowing it. 2 Thessalonians 2 goes further by teaching that God will actually promote the advance of the Antichrist by reprobating the lost so that they fall for the Antichrist’s propaganda. (The context has been quoted above).

And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed [2 Thess. 2:6].

And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness [2 Thess. 2:11-12].

Notice that the “Lamb” is the one who has authority to begin the rise of the conqueror.

And I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, “come”. And I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him; and he went out conquering, and to conquer [Rev. 6:1-2].

2. Names for the Evil End-time Ruler

The Scriptures give various names and/or descriptions for an evil end-time ruler. Although the names are usually not equated by direct statement, common characteristics point to the same individual (e.g., blasphemy, war on the saints, sitting in the temple demanding worship).

a. Little Horn (Dan. 7:7-28)

The little horn arises from a beast with ten horns and destroys three of them (Dan. 7:7-8, 20, 24). Dan. 7:24 teaches that the horns refer to kingdoms. He is a braggart (Dan. 7:8,11,20,24-25), and a blasphemer (7:25) who attacks the saints (7:21,25) and subdues them for 3 1/2 years (i.e., time, times, and a half a time, 7:25).

“After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed, and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. While I was contemplating the
horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth uttering great boasts” [Dan. 7:7-8].

“I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom. Thus, he said: ‘The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms, and it will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings. And he will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.' “ [Dan. 7:21-25].

b. The Coming Evil Prince

Daniel 9:26 mentions a coming prince who is in contrast to the Messiah. His people (apparently the Romans) will destroy the city (Jerusalem) and put a stop to the sacrifices in the temple. Verse 27 describes a period of seven years, which Christ associates with the Tribulation, (Matt. 24:15-21).

“This Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the [evil] prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. And he [the evil prince] will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate” [Dan. 9:26-27].

c. The Willful King

Dan. 11:35-12:3 concerns end-time events (see 11:35 and 12:1-3). The “king” who does as he pleases fits the blasphemous description given of the Antichrist in other places (especially Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:3-4; Rev. 13:15).

“There then the king will do as he pleases and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god, and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done. And he will show no regard for the gods (or God) of his fathers or for the desire of women, nor will he show regard for any other god; for he will magnify himself above them all. But instead he will honor a god of fortresses...”[Dan. 11:36-38a].

d. Man of Sin (or Lawlessness), Son of Perdition (or Destruction), Wicked One (or Lawless One)

It ought to be clear from the New Testament that the temple in Jerusalem has to be rebuilt during (or perhaps before) the tribulation period (Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14; 2 Thess. 2:3-4, Rev. 11:1-2). The most common traits that link all of these names are persecution of the saints and unparalleled blasphemy to the point of demanding worship in the temple.

Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apos-
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tasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God....And then that lawless one will be revealed...[2 Thess. 2:3-4, 8].

e. Abomination That Makes Desolate

There is a definite link between the “ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION” (Matt. 24:15) and the evil end-time ruler. It is possible that the “Abomination” has reference to a statue of the Antichrist, the familiar image of the beast from Rev. 13:14-15, standing in the temple. Yet, since the Antichrist himself will demand direct worship in the temple, it is just as likely that “Abomination” refers to the evil ruler himself.

“Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains” [Matt. 24:15-16].

f. The Beast

The Book of Revelation has much material about the beast. “Beast” can refer to the entire evil empire. Yet, sometimes Revelation views “the beast” as an individual, the wicked ruler who represents the whole kingdom. There are many parallels between the description of Revelation’s “beast” (Revelation 13 and 17) and the end-time ruler described by these other names (Little Horn, Evil Prince, Willful King, Man of Sin, Abomination). Practically all the names involve one who is blasphemous and persecutes believers. Parallels between “Beast” in Revelation 13 and 17 and “Little Horn” in Daniel 7 are especially close: (ten horns - Dan. 7:7,20,24 cf. Rev. 13:1; 17:3,7,16-17, which are ten kingdoms - Dan. 7:24 cf. Rev. 17:12; demands worship and/or blasphemes God - Dan. 7:8,11,20,24-25 cf. Rev. 13:3, 6,8,12,15; war on the saints - Dan. 7:21,25 cf. Rev. 13:7; 3 1/2 years of total dominion - Dan. 7:25 cf. Rev. 13:5. Finally, both the Beast and the Man of Sin use false signs to evoke worship, cf. Rev. 13:13-15; 2 Thess. 2:9-10).

g. The Antichrist

Ironically the only name disputed in this list of names for the “Antichrist” is Antichrist. That name occurs five times in Scripture, all in John’s epistles (1 John 2:18 twice, in 2:22, 4:3; 2 John 7). Regardless of whether the Scripture uses the name of “Antichrist” for the wicked end-time ruler, it is so entrenched in theology as to be irrevocably linked with him as a theological term. Nevertheless, “Antichrist” almost certainly ought to be taken to refer to the “Little Horn, The Coming Evil Prince, The Willful King, The Abomination, The Man of Sin, The Beast” (especially the first reference in 1 John 2:18). Even if John sometimes refers to more than an individual, the end-time tyrant is the ultimate example of the coming Antichrist among lesser antichrists.

Revelation 13 mentions a second beast called the “false prophet” (Rev. 13:11-17; 16:13). This second beast acts as a cheerleader to promote worship of the first beast. Some think that the second beast (false prophet) provides a better parallel to Christ than does the first beast and that the second beast is the “Antichrist.” Christ is a prophet. The second beast is a prophet. Christ promotes worship of God the Father. The second beast promotes the worship of the Man of Sin. Thus, it is reasoned that the term “Antichrist” fits the second beast not the first.

This is definitely a minority view and with good reason. The better parallel for the Satanic trinity (see Rev. 16:13) is Dragon (God the Father), Beast (God the Son), and False Prophet (God the Spirit). If the Beast
Not By Bread Alone

parallels the Father and the False Prophet the Son, who corresponds to the Holy Spirit? The first beast seizes the world kingdom, which is rightfully Christ’s Kingdom. Thus, the first beast best qualifies for the term “Antichrist” both in the sense that he tries to substitute for Christ, and he is the main opposition to Christ. It is true that Christ promotes worship of God the Father but just as true that He Himself is the object of worship and that the Holy Spirit promotes worship of Christ (John 16:14). If we must parallel the second beast to a member of the Trinity, then the Holy Spirit is a better candidate than the Son. The false prophet actually has the role and power of Elijah (Rev. 13:13, fire out of heaven, prophet, forerunner, see Mal. 4:5). It is far better to view the first beast as paralleling Christ. Thus, “Antichrist” is a fitting name for him.

3. The Antichrist’s Rise to World Power

a. The Time for the Antichrist’s Rise

The Antichrist cannot have dominion until God allows it (Rev. 6:1-2). The Restrainer of 2 Thessalonians 2 is the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Spirit prevents the rise of the Lawless One until such time as God wills. The idea of a removal of the Holy Spirit’s restraining ministry is enough to favor (but alone not quite enough to prove absolutely) the removal of the church before the Antichrist comes to power. Other texts that more clearly teach the pretribulational Rapture make definite the implication from 2 Thessalonians 2 that the church will depart along with the removal of restraint by the Holy Spirit. With the Restrainer gone and the church raptured, evil will run rampant to unparalleled, unimaginable depths. The Antichrist can now rise through the chaos brought on by such deep evil. He will claim to be the answer to world anarchy.

And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming [2 Thess. 2:6-8].

b. Inconspicuous Beginning

Ill-advised people make all kinds of sensational guesses as to the identity of the Antichrist. However, the title “Little Horn” (Dan. 7:7-8) implies that the Antichrist seems to come from nowhere to rise from relative obscurity. He will rise among the ten horns (10 kings) but not as one of them. The Antichrist will be what pundits call a “darkhorse” candidate for world dictator. It is a waste of time for those who live before the Rapture to try to identify him. Only after the Rapture can the “Little Horn” begin his meteoric rise to power.

“And while I was considering the horns, I looked up and there was another horn, a little one, which had grown up among them. It was one of the first horns, but I saw it grow up at its roots and it seemed to have eyes like a human being and to be speaking. And it began to whisper against the most high and against his holy ones. It wanted to change the times and laws...” [Dan. 7:8].

c. Treaty with Israel

The Antichrist will make a treaty with Israel at the beginning of the Tribulation. Although he does not yet rule the world, his support will be most welcome by the Jews. One may safely infer that the rebuilding of the temple will arouse great hostility toward tiny Israel who will need “friends” in the West.

“And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week...” [Dan. 9:27].

d. Rise to Power within the Empire

The Antichrist does not begin the Tribulation in control of the world. He must gradu-
ally conquer it (Rev. 6:2). His first move brings him control over the revived Roman Empire. The original New Rome will consist of a ten-nation confederation. The Antichrist will destroy three of these kings and gain control over the whole. The books of Daniel and Revelation refer to ten toes (Dan. 2:41) and ten horns (Dan. 7:7, 20, 24; Rev. 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 16). Dan. 7:24 and Rev. 17:12 make it clear that the ten horns stand for the kings and/or kingdoms.

“As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise…” [Dan. 7:24].

“And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings…” [Rev. 17:12].

Daniel 7:8 and 7:24 give the basis for thinking the Antichrist destroys three kings in his conquest of New Rome.

“But I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth uttering great boasts….As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings.” [Dan. 7:8, 24].

Apparently, the Antichrist replaces the three destroyed kings with puppet leaders, and then rules over the entire empire with ten kings subordinated to him (see Rev. 17:12-13). His power over New Rome must occur sometime in the first half of the Tribulation (or at least at the very beginning of the second half of the Tribulation). This inference follows from the fact that he will control the entire world for 3 1/2 years (see Dan. 7:25; Rev. 13:5).

e. The Antichrist and the Russian Invasion of Israel

Evidence for the equation of Dan. 11:36ff. with Ezekiel 38-39 will come in a following section (see p. 441). If the king of the North at the close of Daniel 11 is identified as “Gog of the land of Magog” in Ezekiel 38-39, then the Antichrist plays some role in the invasion of Israel by the Northern federation (Russia and allies). Some speculate that it is the violation of the Antichrist’s peace treaty with Israel at mid-tribulation that emboldens Russia to dare attack defenseless Israel. On the other hand, since Israel feels security before the Russian invasion (Ezek. 38:8, 11, 14), it is probably better to suppose Israel thinks the Antichrist is still her protector (through he may have told the Russians of a secret plan to turn on Israel). Regardless of the covenant status, the Antichrist plays some role in the fighting. Perhaps God destroys Magog before the Antichrist even has time to mobilize against Russia in Israel proper, but Daniel 11:42ff. pictures the Antichrist as invading northeast Africa either to confront Russia’s allies as they invade or to mop up after God has sent them retreating by a more supernatural battle.

“Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god, and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done….And at the end time the king of the South will collide with him, and the king of the North will storm against him with chariots, with horsemen, and with many ships; and he will enter countries, overflow them, and pass through. He will also enter the Beautiful Land, and many countries will fall….Then he will stretch out his hand against other countries and the land of Egypt will not escape. But he will gain control over the hidden treasures of gold and silver, and over all precious things of Egypt; and...
Libyans and Ethiopians will follow at his heels” [Dan. 11:36, 40-41a, 42-43].

The Antichrist will definitely benefit from God’s destruction of the Northern Confederation headed by Russia. As odd as it sounds, by destroying Russia God indirectly helps the Antichrist. Yet, it is time for God’s plan to go forward including the world’s first worldwide dictator. The Antichrist immediately occupies Israel, Egypt, Libya, and Ethiopia. It will not take long for everyone to realize that the defeated Northern powers had been the only human alliance strong enough to hinder the Antichrist from world domination. Now he can do as he pleases (including an occupation of Israel that signals the final demise of any treaty with the Jews).

f. Final World Dominion

During the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation, The Antichrist (and thus Satan) will exercise world dominion (see also Isa. 14:16-17; Matt. 4:8-9).

And there was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies; and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him….And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them; and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain [Rev. 13:5,7-8].

Although the last half of the Tribulation will be worse in terms of God’s judgment upon the world and the Antichrist’s persecution of the saints, the first half will be the primary time for “wars and rumors of wars.” The question, “who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?” (Rev. 13:4) shows that human wars will tend to be reduced under the Antichrist’s world dictatorship. No human power can fight him.

g. The Means of the Antichrist’s Rise to World Power

The Antichrist will take advantage of chaotic world conditions (Matt. 24:6-8; Luke 21:25-26; Rev. 6:3-8) and use his demagoguery to its fullest potential (Dan. 7:8 “great boasts,” etc.). He also deceives through Satanic signs and wonders (2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:2,4,13-15; 16:13-14). There are indications that possibly Satan will give power to resurrect the Antichrist after a fatal wound (Rev. 13:3,12). However, “beast” in Revelation can also refer to the whole kingdom so that the coming to life may refer to the Roman Empire, which will be “resurrected” in the end time. In addition to miracles, the Antichrist definitely uses a false religion to consolidate power with commercial/penal sanctions to those who resist worshiping him (Rev. 13:8-18; 17:1-5). Finally, God assists in his rise to ascendancy in order to destroy him (2 Thess. 2:11-12).

4. The Antichrist’s Personality Traits and Policies

a. He will make and break his treaty with Israel. He is capable of any treachery that will serve his ends (Dan. 9:27).

b. The Antichrist will deeply hate all Jews and all tribulational saints. It is clear that many, both Jews and gentiles, will trust in Christ after the Rapture (Rev. 6:9-11, 7:3,9,14).

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands…..And one of the elders answered, saying to me, “These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and from where have they
come?” And I said to him, “My lord, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” [Rev. 7:9, 13-14].

These saints, along with all Jews, whether believing or unbelieving Jews, will face great persecutions by the Antichrist (see also Rev. 11:7-8). Zech. 13:8-9 leads to a conclusion that two-thirds of all Jews will perish.

“I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them….And he will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time” [Dan. 7:21, 25].

“And it will come about in all the land,” declares the LORD, “that two parts in it will be cut off and perish; but the third will be left in it. And I will bring the third part through the fire, refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them; I will say, ‘they are My people, and they will say, the LORD is my God’ “[Zech. 13:8-9].

“And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short” [Matt. 24:22].

And leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months [Rev. 11:2].

And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; and she was with child; and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth….And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she might be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days….And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child. And the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, in order that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. [Rev. 12:1-2,5-6,13-14].

And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them; and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him [Rev. 13:7].

If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints [Rev. 13:10].

And there was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast might even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed. And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the
Not By Bread Alone

slaves, to be given a mark on their
right hand, or on their forehead, and
he provides that no one should be
able to buy or to sell, except the one
who has the mark, either the name of
the beast or the number of his name
[Rev. 13:15-17].

c. As already mentioned under several other
categories, the Antichrist will be a gifted
orator who can sway people with smooth
words. He will be extreme and arrogant in
blasphemy.

“While I was contemplating the
horns, behold, another horn, a little
one, came up among them, and three
of the first horns were pulled out by
the roots before it; and behold, this
horn possessed eyes like the eyes of
a man, and a mouth uttering great
boasts” [Dan. 7:8].

“Then I kept looking because of the
sound of the boastful words which
the horn was speaking…”[Dan.
7:11].

 “[A]nd the meaning of the ten horns
that were on its head, and the other
horn which came up, and before
which three of them fell, namely, that
horn which had eyes and a mouth
uttering great boasts, and which
was larger in appearance than its as-
sociates” [Dan. 7:20].

“And he will speak out against the
Most High…”[Dan. 7:25].

“Then the king will do as he pleases,
and he will exalt and magnify him-
self above every god, and will speak
monstrous things against the God of
gods…”[Dan. 11:36].

…And I saw a beast coming up….on
his heads were blasphemous
names….his mouth like the mouth of
a lion [Rev. 13:1-2].

And there was given to him a mouth
speaking arrogant words and blas-
phemies; and authority to act for
forty-two months was given to him.
And he opened his mouth in blas-
phemies against God, to blaspheme
His name and His tabernacle, that is,
those who dwell in heaven [Rev.
13:5-6].

And he carried me away in the Spirit
into a wilderness; and I saw a woman
sitting on a scarlet beast, full of
blasphemous names, having seven
heads and ten horns [Rev. 17:3].

d. The Antichrist will claim to be deity. He
will not stop at desiring worship. He will
demand it (implied Dan. 9:27, 12:11).

“Then the king will do as he pleases,
and he will exalt and magnify him-
self above every god, and will speak
monstrous things against the God of
gods; and he will prosper until the
indignation is finished, for that which
is decreed will be done” [Dan.
11:36].

“Therefore, when you see the
ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION
which was spoken of through Daniel
the prophet, standing in the holy
place (let the reader understand)”

Let no one in any way deceive you,
for it will not come unless the apos-
tasy comes first, and the man of law-
lessness is revealed, the son of de-
struction, who opposes and exalts
himself above every so-called god
or object of worship, so that he takes
his seat in the temple of God, dis-
playing himself as being God [2
Thess. 2:3-4].

[A]nd they worshiped the dragon,
because he gave his authority to the
beast; and they worshiped the beast,
saying, “Who is like the beast, and
who is able to wage war with him?”…And **all who dwell on the earth will worship him**, every one whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain….And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to **worship the first beast**, whose fatal wound was healed [Rev. 13:4,8,12].

The False Prophet (Rev. 13:11ff.; 16:13; 19:20) leads a propaganda program to create worship for the Beast. It may involve a restoration of the Beast from a fatal wound (Rev. 13:3,12,14) and will involve miracles (Rev. 13:13-14; 16:13-14; 19:20) such as causing an image of the Beast to speak (Rev. 13:15).

Those who refuse to worship the Beast will suffer economic penalties (Rev. 13:16-17) and death (Rev. 13:15), perhaps sometimes caused by miraculous fire from heaven (Rev. 13:13). The combination of propaganda and penalties will cause most of the world to worship the Antichrist (Rev. 13:8) and to receive his mark (666, Rev. 13:17-18).

e. The Antichrist and Babylon

Babylon in Revelation 17 may include a reference to a false religious system because “harlot” can connote spiritual harlotry and because Babylon has been historically associated with false religion. The Antichrist will definitely use a false religious system.

However, Babylon is primarily a city and primarily a center of commerce (Rev. 17:18, 18:3, 10ff.). Although Babylon seems allied with the Antichrist (at least after the destruction of Russia), the Antichrist will turn on Babylon and destroy it (in God’s plan). This seems to take place just prior to the Second Coming.

And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire. For **God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose**, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the works of God should be fulfilled [Rev. 17:16-17].

f. Miscellaneous Facts about the Antichrist

During his rule the Antichrist will seek to change traditional customs. Daniel 7:25 teaches, “…he will intend to make alterations in times and law…”. Perhaps the traditional calendar reminds the world of the real Christ and will need to be abolished.

The Antichrist will have no respect for morality. He will “do as he pleases” (Dan. 11:36) showing “no regard for the God (or gods) of his fathers” (Dan. 11:37). Paul’s titles in 2 Thessalonians 2 aptly describe his character as the “Man of Sin” and “the Wicked or Lawless One.” He will obviously be a military and political genius honoring “a god of fortresses” (Dan. 11:38). Both Daniel and Revelation stress that the Antichrist and his kingdom will be different from all previous rulers and kingdoms (Dan. 7:7,19,23,24, notice the word different; Rev. 13:4b).

5. The Doom and Destiny of the Antichrist

The demise of Satan’s worldwide rule through the Antichrist will come about as described in the closing chapters of the Book of The Revelation. The kings of the East proceed toward the Middle East (Rev. 16:12). They are probably included in the forces prompted by demons to resist Christ’s Second Coming.

And the sixth angel poured out his bowl upon the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, that the way might be prepared for the kings from the east. And I saw
coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon [Rev. 16:12-14,16].

Around this time God destroys the city of Babylon as described in Revelation 18 (see Rev. 18:20-21). According to Rev. 17:17, God uses the Antichrist as an instrument of judgment upon Babylon (is there some bickering in the godless camp as the heathen await the inevitable doom?). The Antichrist and his armies will make war with the Lamb, but it will not be much of a “war” for the entire world’s military forces do not amount to any resistance at all for Christ.

“And he will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain; yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him” [Dan. 11:45].

And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming [2 Thess. 2:8].

“These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful” [Rev. 17:14].

And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war. And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself. And He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies, which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the winepress of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, “Come, assemble for the great supper of God; in order that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.” And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies, assembled to make war against Him who sat upon the horse, and against His army [Rev. 19:11-19].

After Armageddon the Beast and the False Prophet are cast into the Lake of Fire. An angel casts Satan into the abyss (Rev. 20:1-3). While Satan will experience a short release at the end of the Kingdom (Rev. 20:7-9), the Beast and False Prophet never have so much as a moment’s release from eternal damnation. (The battle of Armageddon and its results are covered extensively on pp. 446-452). After the 1,000 year Kingdom Satan joins them in the Lake of Fire.

And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which
he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat upon the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh [Rev. 19:20-21].

And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever [Rev. 20:10].

C. Tribulational Battles

The Tribulation will be a time of unprecedented warfare (Matt. 24:6; Rev. 6:4 etc.). Scripture gives the details of two primary tribulational battles, Magog’s invasion of Israel and Armageddon.

1. Magog’s Invasion of Israel: the Participants

An earlier section identified the names in Ezek. 38:1-6 (See pp. 423-26). The land of Magog is the area we now call Russia. Meshech and Tubal can be associated with Turkey and perhaps Armenia. Persia, Ethiopia and Put refers to Iran, Ethiopia, and Libya respectively. Gomer may be either Eastern Europe or another part of Turkey. Togarmah is Armenia. This group may be called a Northern Confederation with Arab allies (some countries being culturally but not racially Arab). They will invade Israel.

2. Texts Concerning the Battle

Most premillennialists agree that Ezekiel 38-39 concerns this invasion. It is likely that Ezekiel 38-39 portrays the battle from God’s perspective, and Dan. 11:36-45 describes the battle from a human perspective. There is no direct connection between Ezekiel 38-39 and Dan. 11:36ff., and they could be describing different battles. However, it is unlikely that there would be two battles of such intensity in the same area within the same time frame. Who else is the “king of the North” (Dan. 11:40) if he is not the leader of the nation from “the remote parts of the North” (Ezek. 38:6,15, 39:2)? The following ideas establish the probability that the battle in Dan. 11:36ff. should be equated with the battle in Ezekiel 38-39.

a. Since the Antichrist rules the entire world for the last 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation (Rev. 13:4-7), it is likely that both battles in Ezekiel 38-39 and Dan. 11:36ff. must occur in the first 3 1/2 years.

b. It is unlikely that the battle in Dan. 11:36ff. could occur before the one in Ezekiel 38-39 because then Israel would not be “dwelling securely” as Ezek. 38:8,11 and 14 requires. If Daniel 11 describes an invasion of the area before Ezekiel 38-39, then one would suppose Israel would feel great insecurity. Another consideration involves the African allies of Russia. Dan. 11:36ff. could not occur before Ezekiel 38-39 because it would mean that the Russian allies (Libya, Ethiopia) would have already been destroyed (Dan. 11:43). Dan. 11:36ff. cannot be easily placed before Ezekiel 38-39.

c. It is just as unlikely that Dan. 11:36ff. follows the Russian invasion of Israel. Presumably the destruction in Ezekiel 38-39 would mean that African allies such as Ethiopia and Libya would be too devastated to mount another serious invasion any time within the short time span of the tribulation period. The same weakness would be true of the nations to the north of Israel and especially true if “the King of the North” refers to any Russian leader.

d. Conclusions about the Equating of Daniel 11:36ff. with Gog’s Invasion in Ezekiel

There may be possible scenarios to separate Dan. 11:36ff. from Ezekiel 38-39. However, based upon what we do know from Biblical details, it is best to view Daniel and Ezekiel
as teaching about the same battle. It is unlikely there could be any invasion of the promised land before the Russian-Arab one that could still allow Israel to have a sense of security, unsuspecting of any attack from the North or from Africa, and that would still preserve any strength for Russian allies in northeast Africa. It is just as improbable that any “king of the North,” especially Russian, and African states such as Libya and Ethiopia (Dan. 11:43) could mount another serious invasion a few years after the utter defeat described in Ezekiel 38-39. Thus, there are probably two texts describing Russia’s invasion of Israel, Ezekiel 38-39 and Dan. 11:36ff. Ezekiel gives the battle from God’s viewpoint. Daniel gives the battle from a human viewpoint.

3. The Time of the Battle
a. The Time in General

The prophets place the invasion of Israel by Magog in future contexts concerning end time events. It will occur after Israel has been restored to the Land (Ezek. 36:24ff.; 38:8,12; 39:25), near a time of resurrection (Ezek 37:12), near the future Kingdom (Ezek. 37:24-26). Both the contexts before (Chapters 36-37) and after (Chapters 40-48 on the millennial temple) the battle in Ezekiel 38-39 concern end time events. Ezekiel 38 places the battle in “the last days” (see also Dan. 11:35, “until the end time”).

“And I shall magnify Myself, sanctify Myself, and make Myself known in the sight of many nations; and they will know that I am the LORD” [Ezek 38:23].

“And I shall set My glory among the nations; and all the nations will see My judgment which I have executed, and My hand which I have laid on them. And the house of Israel will know that I am the LORD their God from that day onward” [Ezek. 39:21-22].

b. The Specific Future Time for a Russian Invasion of Israel

(1) Before the Rapture

One popular commentator on the book of Revelation places the battle of Ezekiel 38-39 “before the Tribulation.” 40 This supposedly fits better with Israel dwelling in peace and safety (Ezek. 38:8,11,14) and the fact that it takes a full seven years to burn debris from the battle (Ezek. 39:9-10). However, Israel might also dwell in relative security any time during the first 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation because of her covenant of protection with the Antichrist (Dan 9:27). Furthermore, some battle debris may be burned during the transition period from the Tribulation to the Kingdom.

The greatest objection to placing this invasion before the Tribulation is that it also likely places the invasion before the Rapture and destroys the imminence of the Rapture. Phrases such as “the latter days” (Ezek. 38:8,16) refer to a latter time for Israel not the latter days of the Church Age.

40 Tim LaHaye, Revelation, p. 268. LaHaye concludes the battle is before the Tribulation but may not be before the Rapture. In theory there could be a gap between the Rapture and the Tribulation. Yet, it is improbable that Satan will waste any time in starting the rise of the Antichrist to power once the church and the Restrainer are removed.
(2) The Beginning of the Millennium

Another respected Bible teacher placed the battle of Ezekiel 38-39 during the beginning of the Millennium. 41 If anything this second view has even less to commend it. Again, the main argument is that the Millennium is a better time in which to view Israel as dwelling securely in her land (Ezek. 38:8,11,14). However, at the beginning of the Millennium, there will be no unsaved people on planet earth that could generate an invasion of Israel. At the Second Coming Christ separates and removes all the unsaved from the earth (Matt. 25:31ff.; Rev. 19:15-18), wars cease with plowshares being turned into pruning hooks (Isa. 2:1-4, 9:6-7; Micah 4:3), and Satan is bound (Rev. 20:1-3). It does not make any sense to place an invasion by a rebellious horde of unbelievers into such a time period. In addition, the land of Israel would then begin the millennial Kingdom in a state of defilement for it will take seven months to purify the land from dead bodies (Ezek. 39:12-16).

(3) The End of the Millennium

Gog and Magog will definitely revolt against Christ’s rule at the very end of the 1,000-year Kingdom. While the Millennium will begin with a world devoid of unbelievers, some of those born during the Millennium will reject Christ and will start a revolution under the lead of Satan during his short release from the abyss. The question remains as to whether Rev. 20:7ff. concerns the same or a different occasion than Ezekiel 38-39. The region is the same, but the time is not.

And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever [Rev. 20:7-10] (see also 20:1-3).

Ezek. 39:12,14 teaches it will take seven months to bury the dead after the battle. Yet, fire from heaven “devours” God’s enemies in Rev. 20:9. If Dan. 11:36ff. concerns the invasion of Israel by Magog, then the Antichrist will be a participant. By contrast the battle of Rev. 20:7ff. concerns a time 1,000 years after (see Rev. 20:7) the “beast” has been permanently confined to the Lake of Fire (See Rev. 19:20 and 20:10). The invasion in Ezekiel 38-39 concerns an attack mainly from the North with a limited number of allies. The destruction occurs on the mountains of Israel (Ezek. 39:4). Rev. 20:7ff. involves an invasion by “the nations which are in the four corners of the earth” (Rev. 20:8) and its defeat occurs in the vicinity of “the beloved city” (i.e., Jerusalem, Rev. 20:9). The preceding context of the battle in Ezekiel 38-39 concerns events that transpire at the beginning of the Millennium, while Rev. 20:7ff. concerns only the very end of the Kingdom just before the new heavens and the new earth (Revelation 21). Although the places are the same, there are too many differences to equate Ezekiel 38-39 with the battle at the end of the Millennium described in Rev. 20:7ff.

(4) In the Tribulation; Probably Sometime in the First Half

Although many prophetic students place the invasion of Israel by Magog near the end of the Tribulation, it is better to place the battle

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41 Arno C. Gaebelein quoted in J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come, p. 348.
during the first half of the Tribulation or at the very beginning of the second half.

Ezekiel says three times that Magog will invade Israel at a time when Israel feels secure (Ezek. 38:8,11,14). Israel cannot possibly be said to be a place of safety during the last half of the Tribulation (see Dan. 7:21,25; Zech. 14:2; Rev. 11:2; 12:3-6, 13-14; 13:5-7). The Antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel at the mid-point in the tribulation (Dan. 9:27) and persecutes her intensely for the last 3 1/2 years. While there will be many wars during the first half of the Tribulation, trouble for Israel will multiply during the second half. If one must find a time in the Tribulation for relative peace and security in Israel, it must be during the first half.

The burial period of seven months following the invasion (Ezek. 39:12,16) also creates a problem for viewing Magog’s invasion of Israel at the very end of the Tribulation. Uncleanliness would carry over into the Millennium. It is best not to view the land of Israel as in a state of defilement during the first months of the Kingdom. Therefore, it is best not to place Magog’s invasion at the end of the Tribulation.

The Antichrist completely dominates the world during the last half of the Tribulation (e.g., Rev. 13:4-8,12,14-17). No one is able to wage war on him or challenge his authority. Thus, the majority of strictly human wars between nations will occur during the first half of the Tribulation (Matt 24:6; Rev. 6:1ff.). It is best to view any strong confederation of nations, such as Ezekiel 38-39 describes, as having been destroyed before the second half of the Tribulation. Past the mid-point the Antichrist will consolidate power into a world dictatorship. Dan. 11:40 pictures the king of the South and the king of the North as attacking the willful end time king who considers himself a god (v. 36). Yet, the Antichrist will have no rivals during the last 3 1/2 years. It is far better to suppose that Russia and its allies meet doom sometime in the first half of the Tribulation. In fact, destruction of Russia at mid-tribulation would nicely explain how the Antichrist can dominate the rest of the world for the next 3 1/2 years and would also help explain a sudden breach of the covenant with Israel.

Finally, Ezekiel 38:23 and 39:21-22 teach that God’s destruction of Magog becomes a sign to the nations and to Israel that God is the true God. If this sign brings many to the Lord, it must not occur at the very end of the Tribulation, as this would leave little time for conversion and refusal of the Beast’s mark. Placing this battle earlier in the Tribulation better explains the conversions that result. By the end of the Tribulation virtually everyone will either have trusted Christ already or have accepted the mark of the Beast. Mass conversions at the very end of the Tribulation are harder to envision.

“And I shall magnify myself, sanctify Myself, and make Myself known in the sight of many nations; and they will know that I am the LORD...And I shall set My glory among the nations; and all the nations will see My judgment which I have executed, and My hand which I have laid on them. And the house of Israel will know that I am the LORD their God from that day onward” [Ezek. 38:23; 39:21-22]

Several lines of evidence indicate that the most likely time for a Russian invasion of Israel is during the first half of the Tribulation, perhaps at mid-tribulation. Neither the description of Israel dwelling in safety nor the presence of a Northern Confederation...
that is powerful enough to challenge the Antichrist fits well with known conditions for the last 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation. 43

4. The Results of the Battle

“…and say, ‘Thus, says the Lord God, “Behold, I am against you O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. And I will turn you about and put hooks in your jaws, and I will bring you out, and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them splendidly attired, a great company with buckler and shield, all of them wielding swords….And it will come about on that day, when Gog came against the land of Israel,” declares the Lord God, “that My fury will mount up in My anger. And in My zeal and in My blazing wrath I declare that on that day there will surely be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. And the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all the creeping things that creep on the earth, and all of the men who are on the face of the earth will shake at My presence; the mountains also will be thrown down, the steep pathways will collapse, and every wall will fall to the ground. And I shall call for a sword against him on all My mountains,” declares the Lord God. “Every man’s sword will be against his brother. And with pestilence and with blood I shall enter into judgment with him; and I shall rain on him, and on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, a torrential rain, with hailstones, fire, and brimstone. And I shall magnify Myself, sanctify Myself, and make Myself known in the sight of many nations; and they will know that I am the LORD. And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “Behold, I am against you, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal; and I shall turn you around, drive you on, take you up from the remotest parts of the north, and bring you against the mountains of Israel. And I shall strike your bow from your left hand, and dash down your arrows from your right hand. You shall fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops, and the peoples who are with you; I shall give you as food to every kind of predatory bird and beast of the field. You will fall on the open field; for it is I who have spoken” declares the Lord God. “And I shall send fire upon Magog and those who inhabit the coastlands in safety; and they will know that I am the LORD” [Ezek. 38:3-4; 18-23; 39:1-6].

God Himself wills that Magog with her allies invade Israel (Ezek. 38:8, “will be summoned”; v. 16, “I shall bring you against My land”). He does so, however, in order to draw her to a supernatural destruction. Fire from heaven destroys the horde (Ezek. 38:22). The prophet uses personal language to convey God’s hatred of Magog and His personal involvement in her downfall. “I am against you…I shall turn you around…I shall strike your bow…I will give you as food to every kind of predatory bird…I shall send fire upon Magog” (see Ezek. 39:1-6). It will take seven years to burn the weapons of battle (39:8-10) and seven months to bury the dead (39:11-16).

“Then those who inhabit the cities of Israel will go out, and make fires...
with the **weapons** and burn them, both shields and bucklers, bows and arrows, war clubs and spears and **for seven years they will make fires of them.** And they will not take wood from the field or gather firewood from the forests, for they will make fires with the weapons; and they will take the spoil of those who despoiled them, and seize the plunder of those who plundered them,” declares the Lord God. “And it will come about on that day that I shall give Gog a burial ground there in Israel, the valley of those who pass by east of the sea, and it will block off the passers-by. So they will bury Gog there with all his multitude, and they will call it the valley of Hamon-gog. For **seven months** the house of Israel will be burying them in order to cleanse the land. Even all the people of the land will bury them; and it will be to their renown on the day that I glorify Myself,” declares the Lord God. “And they will set apart men who will constantly pass through the land, burying those who were passing through, even those left on the surface of the ground, in order to cleanse it. At the end of seven months they will make a search. And as those who pass through the land pass through and anyone sees a man’s bone, then he will set up a marker by it until the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamon-gog. And even the name of the city will be Hamonah. So they will cleanse the land” [Ezek. 39:9-16]

If Dan. 11:36ff. describes the same battle as Ezekiel 38-39, then the Antichrist plays a role in it. Daniel never says that the Antichrist does any fighting in Israel proper although he will be able to occupy “The Beautiful Land” as a result of the battle (Dan. 11:41). Perhaps God has already destroyed Magog before the Antichrist can mobilize in Israel. The Antichrist either plays a secondary role in fighting Magog’s African allies during the invasion, or else he finishes them off after a more supernatural destruction by God.

“Then he (the “willful” end-times king) will stretch out his hand against other countries and the land of Egypt will not escape. But he will gain control over the hidden treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; and Libyans and Ethiopians will follow at his heels” [Dan. 11:42-43].

It seems that the Antichrist benefits greatly from Magog’s (Russia’s) destruction. He occupies the Promised Land, breaking any treaty with Israel. He also immediately occupies Russia’s allies in northern Africa. Most important is that Russia’s demise eliminates all challenge to world conquest. No one is left who can oppose the Antichrist.

If the idea of God giving indirect assistance to the Antichrist (by destroying Magog) seems troubling, remember that God wants the Antichrist to rise at this time in order that He may shortly destroy him.

5. A Question of Weapons

Ezekiel’s prophecy contains references to ancient means of battle; horses (38:15), bows and arrows (39:3), shields, bucklers, war clubs, and spears (39:9). How could end time battles between armies that are now technologically advanced be fought by such primitive means? It is hard to imagine any future Russian army using bows, arrows, spears, and war clubs. Some interpreters believe that Ezekiel used terms from his own times to describe weapons that were beyond his ability to comprehend or explain. They accept some elements of the battle as figurative. Others believe that the world will suffer such devastation in the early years of the Tribulation that there will be a reversion to primitive warfare. If wars, famines, earth-
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quakes are severe enough, worldwide changes will result. Perhaps industry and transportation will break down to the point that nations cannot produce metals or secure oil. While it is silly to argue over such fine points, literal interpretation ought to be adopted as a primary method unless contextual evidence or parallel texts suggest figurative language. Ezekiel’s statements sound very straightforward. “And you will come from your places, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses” (Ezek. 38:15).

6. The Battle of Armageddon

The Greek word for battle, polemos, (cf. polemics) need not be limited to a single military encounter such as the English word “battle” may imply. It might be clearer to refer to the “War of Armageddon” or the “Armageddon Campaign” which seems to involve a series of military encounters.

a. The Place

The Hebrew word “har” means “mountain or hill”. Har-Megiddo means Mt. Megiddo and refers to a mountain and strategic mountain pass in Northern Israel. It stands at the entrance to a pass between the plain of Esdraelon (or Jezerel) and the Plain of Sharon. Armies that desire to move toward central Israel must come through this area. Likewise, armies that want to defend central Israel tend to make a stand here.

The plain gives adequate room for battle. Many Biblical battles (Deborah and Barak, Judges 4-5; Jehu, 2 Kings 9:27; Josiah, 2 Kings 23:29-30, 2 Chron 35:22) and non-Biblical battles (Crusaders, Napoleon, even World War 1) have occurred near Mt. Megiddo. The Greek transliteration of Har-Megiddo has come down into English as Armageddon (Rev. 16:16).

b. Texts Concerning the Armageddon Campaign

Many texts make a brief reference to Christ destroying His enemies upon His return (Dan. 2:35,44; 7:11-14, 21-22; 2 Thess. 2:8). Some texts give extended reference to an end time battle between all nations and God Himself.

“For behold, in those days and at that time when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations, and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat. Then I will enter into judgment with them there on behalf of My people, and My inheritance, Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; and they have divided up My land….proclaim this among the nations; prepare a war; rouse the mighty men! Let all the soldiers draw near, let them come up! Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, I am a mighty man. Hasten and come all you surrounding nations, and gather yourselves there. Bring down, O LORD, thy mighty ones. Let the nations be aroused and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the winepress is full; the vats overflow, for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon grow dark, and the stars lose their brightness. And the LORD roars from Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth tremble. But the LORD is a refuge for His people and a stronghold to the sons of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD...
your God, dwelling in Zion My holy mountain, so Jerusalem will be holy and strangers will pass through it no more” [Joel 3:1-2, 9-17] (see preceding context for evidence that this battle refers to the end times.)

“Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the people around; and when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah, and it will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it” [Zech. 12:2-3].

“In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the one who is feeble among them in that day will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the angel of the LORD before them. And it came about in that day that I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born. In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo” [Zech. 12:8-11].

For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished, and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. And you will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD, my God, will come and all the holy ones with Him [Zech. 14:2-5].

And I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head, and a sharp sickle in His hand. And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle and reap, because the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.” And He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple, and he also had a sharp sickle. And another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, “Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe.” And the angel swung his sickle to the earth, and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. And the wine press was
trod in outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses’ bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles [Rev. 14:14-20].

And the sixth angel poured out his bowl upon the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, that the way might be prepared for the kings from the east. And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty….And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon [Rev. 16:12-14, 16].

And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in mid-heaven, “Come, assemble for the great supper of God; in order that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.” And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies, assembled to make war against Him who sat upon the horse, and against His army. And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat upon the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh [Rev. 19:17-21].

c. The Location of Battle

Armageddon seems to be a campaign with a series of encounters. The location ranges in a north to south direction for a distance of approximately 200 miles.

(1) Mt. Megiddo

The Bible teaches that Mt. Megiddo is an end-time rendezvous spot for the world’s armies. The Satanic trinity of Dragon, Beast, and False Prophet bring the “kings of the world” together to make war on Christ (Rev. 16:13-16). Zech. 12:11 also mentions the plain of Megiddo.

(2) The Valley of Jehoshaphat (The Valley of Decision)

Joel 3:2 and 3:12 place a final battle for the nations of the world in the “Valley of Jehoshaphat.” Because Jehoshaphat means “God judges,” Joel may intend for his readers to understand “Valley of Jehoshaphat” as a reference to an unspecified place where God judges the world. Emphasis would be upon God’s judgment with the specific location less important than the decisions made there.

Perhaps the geographical place called the “Valley of Jehoshaphat” cannot be identified with any certainty. One idea is that it is the Valley of Beracah (2 Chron. 20:26) where Judah’s King Jehoshaphat assembled after a victory. Another guess is that the Valley of Jehoshaphat is the Kidron Valley just outside of Jerusalem. This fits the location given in Zech. 14:4. A final suggestion is a brand new valley created by Christ’s coming to earth (Zech. 14:4). Although a location near Jerusalem is the most prob-

45 Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come, p. 341; Tim LaHaye, Revelation, p. 266ff.
able, none of these places can be proven to be “The Valley of Jehoshaphat.”

(3) Jerusalem

Zechariah’s prophecies give Jerusalem as the location of a great end time battle between God and the world’s nations.

“Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around; and when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah….In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the one who is feeble among them in that day will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the angel of the LORD before them….In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Haddarimmon in the plain of Megiddo [Zech. 12:2,8,11].

For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished, and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city [Zech. 14:2].

(4) Edom

In language similar to Revelation 14 and 19, Isaiah 63 seems to refer to God’s final vengeance upon the nations (see also Isaiah 34). Isaiah pictures God as returning from a battle that had concluded in Edom.

Who is this who comes from Edom with garments of glowing colors from Bozrah, this One who is majestic in His apparel, marching in the greatness of His strength? “It is I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.” Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like the one who treads in the winepress. “I have trodden the wine trough alone, and from the peoples there was no man with Me. I also trod them in My anger, and trampled them in My wrath; and their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments, and I stained all My raiment. For the day of vengeance was in My heart, and My year of redemption has come” [Isa. 63:1-4].

(5) Conclusion

There is justification for viewing Armageddon as a campaign that ranges in the north near Mt. Megiddo to Edom, 200 miles to the south, with a major conflict around Jerusalem. This view corresponds to Rev. 14:20, which tells of blood splattered for a distance of 200 miles. It is difficult to know the precise geographical order of battle. While the Antichrist’s armies initially gather at Megiddo, the Lord initially returns to the Mount of Olives near Jerusalem. Because an assault against Jerusalem is underway at Jesus’ coming (Zechariah 14), it seems Jesus Christ will not fight elsewhere prior to the clash at Jerusalem.

And the angel swung his sickle to the earth, and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses’ bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles [Rev. 14:19-20].

d. Participants at Armageddon

(1) The World’s Nations Led by the Antichrist

Unlike Magog’s invasion of Israel, which involves a few nations, Biblical accounts of Armageddon picture a gathering of all the world’s nations.

“I will gather all the nations…” [Joel 3:2].

“…I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples…” [Zech. 12:3].
For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle...[Zech 14:2].

...the kings of the whole world to gather them together for the war... [Rev 16:14].

And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies, assembled to make war against Him who sat upon the horse, and against His army [Rev 19:19].

(2) Israel

It is possible to view the early stages of the Armageddon campaign as a war between humans, the Antichrist and allies versus Israel. Zech. 14:2 pictures the nations engaged in an effort of genocide against Israel (cf. Matt. 24:22). Israel will not be able to withstand the onslaught and would be exterminated except for God’s intervention (see also Dan. 11:45-12:1a).

For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished, and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle [Zech. 14:2-3].

And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus [Rev. 12:17]. (See Rev. 12:5, where the woman gives birth to a male ruler. The woman is best understood as Israel).

(3) Christ the Lamb of God

At a point where conditions could not be more hopeless from a human perspective, the Lamb, the rider on the white horse called Faithful and True, will come to rescue His people and destroy all opposition (see all of Rev. 19:11-20).

“These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful” [Rev. 17:14].

And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies, assembled to make war against Him who sat upon the horse, and against His army [Rev. 19:19].

e. The Time

Revelation 19-20 presents the time for this great final battle at the time of transition from the end of the Tribulation to the beginning of the Kingdom.

f. The Outcome

From God’s perspective the Battle of Armageddon is no battle at all. Christ slays the man of sin by a word from His mouth and by the brightness of His coming (2 Thess. 2:8). The Antichrist’s world army becomes prey for birds to consume (Rev. 19:17-21). The Beast and False Prophet are thrown into an eternal lake of fire (Rev. 19:20). Satan is thrown into the abyss for the 1,000 years of Christ’s earthly Kingdom (Rev. 20:1-3). From Satan’s perspective, Armageddon results in total destruction. From Christ’s perspective Armageddon is a complete victory (Rom. 8:37; 1 Cor. 15:57).

And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming [2 Thess. 2:8].

And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war. And His eyes are a flame
of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself. And He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies, which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the winepress of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in mid-heaven, “Come, assemble for the great supper of God; in order that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves and small and great.” And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies, as assembled to make war against Him who sat upon the horse, and against His army. And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who had worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword, which came from the mouth of Him who sat upon the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh. And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the

dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time [Rev. 19:11-20:3].

D. God and the Saints in the Tribulation

It would take an extensive study of the Book of The Revelation to give all the details of God’s workings during the Tribulation. A survey is adequate for this more general study. God’s work in the Tribulation will consist of judgment upon the world and evangelization of the world. Even in direct judgment God still offers grace.

1. God’s Judgment in the Tribulation

The judgments of the “seals,” “trumpets,” and “bowls” in the Book of The Revelation give many examples of God’s wrath which He unleashes against the world during the Tribulation. Many have equated the four horsemen of the apocalypse (Revelation 6) with Christ’s predictions in the Olivet Discourse of wars, famines, and pestilence (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21). Revelation 5 pictures a scroll that has been wound shut and sealed at seven different spots with seven seals. This scroll is similar to a “title deed” to the world and speaks of control over world history. The one who has the authority to open the seals also has the authority to allow events that bring calamity upon the world and bring the history of a rebellious world to an end. No one has the authority to open the seals and reveal world events except the Lamb who had been slain. He takes the scroll from God the Father and begins to break the seals. By doing so He reveals and permits calamities that usher in the end of the world as a system in rebellion against God. The first seal unleashes the Antichrist on a white horse that he may destroy many in his effort to conquer the
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world. A second seal permits a rider on a red horse to bring war. The opening of a third seal gives permission for a third rider on a black horse to bring famine. The fourth horseman sits on a yellowish-green horse (NASB ashen, Greek cloros, as in chlorophyll), which probably speaks of sickness, the plagues of the Olivet Discourse (Luke 21:11). The fifth seal speaks of believers on earth being killed for their faith. The sixth seal brings an earthquake and changes in the heavenly bodies (see Joel 2:30ff.; Matt. 24:29). The judgment of the seventh seal contains seven trumpet judgments (see Rev. 6:8-9).

The first trumpet brings hail, fire, and blood raining down upon the earth. The second trumpet is a burning mountain that destroys one-third of the world’s oceans. The third trumpet brings a burning star (meteor?) that pollutes one-third of the world’s fresh water. The fourth trumpet causes darkness to be one-third longer each day. The fifth trumpet unleashes a horde of demonic creatures from the abyss that can torment but not kill humans for five months. Men will seek death rather than face the demonic peril. Yet, the sixth trumpet seems to unleash 200,000,000 more demons. This time they do kill.

The seventh trumpet announces that “the kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15). Because this final trumpet announces the end is near, it is safe to presume that the seven bowl judgments occur rapidly in the final days of the Tribulation (Revelation 16). The first bowl brings pitiful sores upon those who worship the Antichrist. The second bowl makes the sea like blood and kills all marine life. The third bowl destroys the world’s drinking water. The fourth bowl increases the sun’s heat in order to scorch humanity. The fifth bowl creates worldwide darkness. The sixth bowl dries up the already polluted Euphrates River to make it easier for the eastern armies to begin their trek to Armageddon. The final bowl brings earthquakes to destroy the world’s major cities, to sink islands, and to topple mountains. As an extra measure of wrath, the seventh bowl also brings 100-pound hailstones. Numerical references in Revelation show that the majority of the world’s population will die in the Tribulation.

And authority was given to them [the four horsemen] over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth [Rev. 6:8b].

And the first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burnt up… [Rev. 8:7].

And the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released, so that they might kill a third of mankind….A third of mankind was killed by these three plagues, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone, which proceeded out of their mouths 46 [Rev. 9:15,18].

46 One can compute these fractions in two ways. One way is to subtract from the original total (100% minus 25%, minus 33 1/3%, minus another 33 1/3%). This means over 90% of the world’s population would die in just three judgments, not even counting wars caused by humans. Another way would be to view the fractions as concerning the remaining population after the previous disasters. After the first disaster 75% of the original population would remain. The next judgment that comes with a fraction reduces those who survive by another one-third, leaving 50% of the original population. The final horror reduces those who survive by another one-third, leaving 33 1/3% of the original population. Again, this includes only the three judgments that give a fraction. Millions more will die in other judgments and wars. By either method the great
Not By Bread Alone

Destruction on the scale described in Revelation 6-18 could indeed force the world back to primitive living standards where horses and ancient battle weapons are used in warfare. Only Christ’s coming will save planet earth from total annihilation. The fact that God will offer salvation during this period of His wrath speaks of His deep grace.

2. God’s Program of World Evangelization during the Tribulation

The Rapture will remove all believers from the world. Thus, the Tribulation begins with a world in total unbelief. However, God will still be active in a program of calling out people from darkness into His salvation. Many people will respond to God’s grace even in the midst of a time of great judgment. There are many references to “saints” in tribulational contexts (see next section for additional references). The “Gospel of the Kingdom” will offer salvation through Christ’s blood and also announce the soon arrival of the King. It must penetrate the entire world during the Tribulation.

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come” [Matt. 24:14].

“And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations” [Mark 13:10].

God will send two special witnesses to earth during the Tribulation (probably during the first half of the Tribulation). Revelation 11 does not identify these witnesses, but their actions parallel those of Elijah and Moses. They restrain rain, bring fire from heaven (1 Kings 17-18; 2 Kings 1; James 5:17), turn water into blood, and bring plagues (cf. Ex. 7-11). In addition, several verses predict that Elijah will come to earth before Christ comes in power (Mal. 4:5; Matt. 17:10-11).

No doubt the work of these prophets will serve to bring greater condemnation upon a rejecting world. Yet, some do trust in Christ. At one point in the Tribulation God even announces the gospel by means of an “angel flying in mid-heaven” (Rev. 14:6).

Rev. 7:3-8 teaches that God will seal 144,000 Jewish believers during the Tribulation. They will be especially protected from the perils of the Tribulation (cf. Ezek. 9:4-6). The text does not specifically teach that they will be involved in evangelism. Yet, it is safe to assume that 144,000 “bond-servants” will be doing much witnessing during a time in which the gospel must go to the ends of the earth within a few years. Although it is difficult to think of revival in the Tribulation and of the Tribulation as a time of blessings, many will find salvation despite intense pressure to side with the Antichrist.

After these things I looked, and behold a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb”….And He said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great Tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” [Rev. 7:9,10,14b ].

3. The Saints in the Tribulation

The experiences of tribulational saints can be summed up by two contrasting words, “persecution” and “preservation.” The topic of persecution for tribulational saints has already been covered as a part of the study of the Antichrist. Here are several examples (see also pp. 436-37 or Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1;
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Zech. 13:8-9; Matt. 24:16ff; Rev. 11:2, 7-8; 12:1-2; 13:10; 14:13):

“I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom....And he will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time” [Dan 7:21-22, 25].

And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them; and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him....And there was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast might even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed. And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand, or on their forehead, and he provides that no one should be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name [Rev. 13:7, 15-17].

Many believers will suffer martyrdom during the Tribulation. The aforementioned “sealing” does not pertain to all believers for God does not choose to protect all from death (see Rev. 13:10). Their deaths bring about a greater judgment for the Antichrist and his followers.

And when He broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, should be completed also [Rev. 6:9-11].

After these things I heard, as it were, a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; because his judgments are true and righteous; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and he has avenged the blood of his bond-servants on her” [Rev. 19:1-2].

Although not all tribulational saints will obtain God’s protection, He definitely has a program to protect some of the tribulational saints from death. This is part of the purpose for sealing 144,000 Jewish believers (Rev. 7:3-8, cf. Ezek. 9:4-6). The refuge given to the “woman” in Revelation 12 teaches God will give some earthly protection to believing Israel during this terrible time.

And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she might be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days....And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child. And the two
wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, in order that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus [Rev. 12:5-6,13-17].

Along with the program of God’s protection for tributational saints, we must include the thought that God’s intervention through the Second Coming of Christ protects believers from a total extermination that would otherwise take place.

For, I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished, and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. And you will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the Lord, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him! And it will come about in that day that there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle [Zech. 14:2-6].

“And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short” [Matt. 24:22].

XII. The Transition from Tribulation to Kingdom

Many eschatological events happen as the Tribulation closes and the millennial Kingdom begins. The Second Coming results in the Battle of Armageddon, the destruction of the Antichrist, and the binding of Satan for 1,000 years. Also, the resurrection of Old Testament saints and martyred tributational saints takes place at this time. Furthermore, Scriptures teach about two judgments that will result in the separation of believers from unbelievers. The Judgment of Israel and the Judgment of the Nations (gentiles) brings about the removal of all unsaved people from the world and the entrance into the Kingdom of all the saints who have survived the Tribulation.

A. The Second Coming or Revelation of Christ

Most eschatological details are not so important as to cause a division of fellowship. However, the Second Coming of Christ rightfully belongs among the fundamentals of orthodox Christianity. It is taught so thoroughly and clearly in Scripture that there can be no reason for denial, other than blatant unbelief and heresy. In addition to the verses below see also: Job 19:25; Zech. 12:10; 14:4; Matt. 16:27; 24:42-44; Mark 13:26-27; Luke 12:40; 21:25-27; Rom. 11:26-27; 1 Thess. 3:13; 2 Thess. 2:8; 2 Peter 3:8-10; Jude 14-15; Rev.19:11-21.
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“I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. and to Him was given dominion, Glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed” [Dan. 7:13-14].

“And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other” [Matt. 24:30-31].

“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne” [Matt. 25:31].

“And they also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven” [Acts 1:11].

“And to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus [2 Thess.1:7-8].

Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen [Rev. 1:7].

1. The Time of Christ’s Second Coming

The Old Testament portrays God’s coming to cut short a time of terrible destruction. In Daniel 7 the Son of Man comes to earth and destroys the kingdom of the “little horn”, the Antichrist. He establishes a worldwide Kingdom that is eternal in duration. Zechariah says that God Himself will come to Jerusalem to rescue it from an otherwise destructive conflict (Zech. 14:2ff.). Then Israel “will look on Me whom they have pierced” (see Zech. 12:2-3,10).


“For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall....But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other” [Matt. 24:21,29-31].

2. The Place
Christ will return to the Mount of Olives outside Jerusalem.

And in that day **His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives**, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south [Zech. 14:4].

And they also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven”. Then they returned to Jerusalem from the **mount called Olivet**, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away [Acts 1:11-12].

3. **Participants with Christ in the Second Coming**


“And then they will see the **SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS** with great power and glory. And then He will send forth the **angels**, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth, to the farthest end of heaven” [Mark 13:26-27].

b. The Saints (see p. 387 for a discussion of 1 Thess. 3:13)

And about these also Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of **His holy ones**, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him” [Jude 14-15].

[S]o that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus **with all His saints** [1 Thess. 3:13].

Perhaps the armies of heaven mentioned in Rev. 19:14 include both the elect angels and glorified saints (see also Zech. 14:5). Christ returns with myriads of followers and a display of unlimited power and glory.

And the armies which are in heaven clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses [Rev. 19:14].

4. **Circumstances Relative to Christ’s Second Coming**

a. Jerusalem in Ruins

The world’s armies will have already been gathered at Armageddon (Rev. 16:13-16). Some of the force will sweep aside all initial Jewish resistance and will begin to destroy Jerusalem, the holy city (Zech. 14:1-4). It is possible that two-thirds of Israel has died (Zech. 13:8-9) with half of Jerusalem’s population already captured (Zech. 14:2). Satanic forces are probably sitting in the Kidron Valley outside Jerusalem planning their final genocidal assault. This may be the Valley of Jehoshaphat where God meets the nations (see Joel 3:2,12,14). No doubt the heathen rage against God and His armies, confident of impending victory (Psalm 2).

b. Cosmic Wonders

Satan thought he had victory at the cross only to discover the cross was his doom. Surely, at the Second Coming he knows the end is near despite outward evidences of victory (Rev. 12:12). At a time when the situation is utterly hopeless from a human perspective, the skies portend a dramatic and unstoppable reversal.
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“But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky...” [Matt. 24:29-30] (see also Mark 13:24-25, 28-29; Luke 21:25-28).

c. The Glorious Descent

The Son of Man (a messianic title from Daniel 7) will descend with the clouds with power, great splendor, and possibly with a flame of fire. Wearing bloody garments, He rides a white horse upon which are emblazoned: “King of kings and Lord of lords.” (Rev. 19:16) Myriads of angels and saints follow in His train (see also: Matt. 24:30; Mark 13:26; Acts 1:9-11; 2 Thess. 2:8).

“And then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory” [Luke 21:27].

Jesus said to him, “You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven” [Matt. 26:64] (see also Mark 14:62).

And to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire [2 Thess. 1:7]. (The phrase in flaming fire can also be taken with 1 Thess. 1:8).

And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war. And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself. And He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the winepress of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” [Rev. 19:11-16].

d. The World’s Reaction: Tears

Christ’s return will be as noticeable as a lightning bolt (Matt. 24:27). The entire world sees Him. As the defeated Jews in Jerusalem see the Lord coming to their rescue, they weep bitterly. Although many Jews are still unsaved and will not enter the Kingdom (Luke 13:28), it seems that some of this weeping involves tears of relief that the Antichrist’s siege against the city will fail, and likely some will also shed tears of repentance. Perhaps many Jews now regret the fact that Christ had been rejected by His own at the first coming (John 1:11). The pouring out of the “Spirit of grace” must indicate some sort of spiritual response by the Jews at this time. Zech. 13:9 may teach that one third of the Jews will be believers.

“And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born” [Zech. 12:10].

Gentile nations will also see Christ and will weep. Obviously, those who have refused the mark of the beast will weep for joy, but
Not By Bread Alone

the Bible stresses a weeping that has the nature of frustration at the turn of events and sheer terror.

“[A]nd then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory” [Matt. 24:30].

Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen [Rev. 1:7].

e. Touchdown

As Christ’s feet touch the Mt. of Olives, it will split into a great valley. Perhaps the rift creates room for the “armies of heaven.” The believing remnant in the vicinity will flock to Christ for refuge.

And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. And you will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him [Zech. 14:4-5].

If Joel’s Valley of Jehoshaphat is near Jerusalem, then the armies of Christ and the armies of the Antichrist face each other, perhaps only for a moment.

Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread for the winepress is full; The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision [Joel 3:13-14].

f. Persistent Rebellion

The nations had gathered to oppose Christ’s coming (Rev. 16:13-16). Although they mourn for fear, nothing stops their insane hatred. Incredibly, the Beast still has the audacity to engage in war. This can only be explained by Satan’s blindness. God has decreed that those hardened nations will still believe the delusion (2 Thess. 2:11-12).

“And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings, who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. These have one purpose and they give their power and authority to the beast. These will wage war against the Lamb… [Rev. 17:12-14a].

And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies, assembled to make war against Him who sat upon the horse, and against His army [Rev. 19:19].

g. Effortless Victory

History’s fiercest battle is from Christ’s perspective as easy as breathing or manifesting His unbearable glory (2 Thess. 2:8). Christ destroys the armies of the Antichrist from Megiddo to Edom (see pp. 446-452 for details on Armageddon). There is a 200-mile swath of blood. Isaiah 63 pictures Christ as ending His conquest in Edom.

Revelation 19 says that heaven’s armies follow Christ to earth, but it does not teach that He actually employs His army in the battle. Christ Himself destroys the collected armies of the world, although one should leave room for some participation by a few angelic subordinates.
And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty [Rev. 19:14-15].

And I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden sickle in His hand. And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle and reap, because the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.” And He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. And another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, “Put in your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe”. And the angel swung his sickle to the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses’ bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles [Rev. 14:14-20].

The Antichrist’s army dies to the last man. It becomes food for birds (Rev. 19:17-18). Only the Beast and False Prophet remain alive from the forces in Israel. They are thrown alive into eternal damnation (Rev. 19:20).

And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat upon the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh [Rev. 19:20-21].

h. Angelic Escorts, Satanic Imprisonment

The Beast and False Prophet face eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire. By contrast an angel places Satan in another place, the abyss. Unlike the Lake of Fire, the abyss is not a place of eternal punishment. It is a temporary place of punishment where confined fallen angels await a future transferal to permanent punishment in the Lake of Fire. Satan goes here because God will allow him a short release at the end of the Kingdom, in which he displays the incorrigible nature of his wickedness. Satan is bound for the entire Millennium.

And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time [Rev. 20:1-3] (see also vv. 7-10).

47 The Beast and False Prophet presumably die physically after being thrown alive into the Lake of Fire. They seem to be its first inhabitants because prior to the Great White Throne judgment those who die in unbelief enter Hades to await judgment and transferal into the Lake of Fire.
Armageddon leaves the Antichrist’s kingdom in ruins. Yet, there will be many people remaining alive, saved and unsaved, who were not in the vicinity of Jerusalem at the Second Coming. Christ sends His angels to gather the elect by means of sorting out believers from unbelievers at two major judgments that occur during the transition from Tribulation to Kingdom, the Judgment of Israel and the Judgment of the Nations. Angelic work in bringing the survivors of the Tribulation to and from judgment will cause these judgments to occur in a relatively short time. Each judgment will be studied in following sections.

““The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” [Matt. 13:41-42].

“So it will be at the end of the age; the angels shall come forth, and take out the wicked from among the righteous, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” [Matt. 13:49-50].

“And he will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other” [Matt. 24:31] (see also Mark 13:27).

i. The Time Frame for the Transition from Tribulation to Kingdom

The duration between the Antichrist’s breaking his covenant with Israel and the end of the Tribulation is 1,260 days (see pp. 381-82). Although the Antichrist’s rule is 1,260 days, Daniel 12:11 mentions 1,290 days as a special marking time. Daniel is even more excited about day 1,335.

“How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days” [Dan. 12:12].

The Bible does not say exactly what happens on day 1,290 and day 1,335. We do know that day 1,290 is a special day relative to sacrifices in the temple and that day 1,335 is a very special event. Dogmatism is most out of place, but one can hazard a reasonable attempt at interpretation. Presumably, the actual rule of the Antichrist ends at day 1,260, but it takes an additional 30 days to purify the earth from destruction and to judge and remove the lost from the Kingdom. Day 1,290 is likely the time for temple worship of the true God to begin or the day on which the last rebellious soul is taken away.

The most blessed day, 1,335, is perhaps “Inauguration Day” or “the 4th of July” for the Kingdom of Christ on earth. If these interpretations are valid, it takes 30 days to purify the earth through the Judgment of Israel and the Judgment of the Nations. Perhaps in the next 45 days the Old Testament and martyred tribulational saints (who are resurrected at the end of the Tribulation) receive their reward, and the Lord installs His followers to various positions of authority around the now submissive world (Matt. 19: 28; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:4).

The world has never seen anything like the transformation that takes place in the transition between the Tribulation and the Kingdom, and it probably takes place in 75 days. The resurrection of Old Testament saints (and martyred tribulational saints), the Judgment of Israel, and the Judgment of the Nations are topics that deserve separate attention.

B. The Resurrection of Old Testament and Tribulational Saints

Some theologians advocate a general resurrection of all, saved and unsaved, at the same time. Several verses such as Dan. 12:2 and John 5:28-29 could be understood to
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teach a general resurrection. However, other verses force another conclusion.

“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt” [Dan. 12:2].

“Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment” [John 5:28-29].

1. Time between Resurrection unto Life and Resurrection unto Judgment

Revelation 20 speaks of two kinds of resurrection, the first, and by implication, the second. By any premillennial scheme, whether pretribulational or posttribulational, there must be an interval of 1,000 years between the resurrection unto life and the resurrection unto condemnation. Church saints must be resurrected at the Rapture, that is, before the Millennium (by either view of the Rapture). The unsaved dead according to Revelation 20 are not resurrected until after the 1,000 years Kingdom. The idea of a general one-time resurrection cannot be true. Revelation 20 clearly places a 1,000 year interval between the resurrection of martyred tribulational saints and the resurrection of the unsaved dead.

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection….And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison…. And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever….And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds [Rev. 20:4-5,7, 10-12].

2. Two Kinds of Resurrection

Daniel 12 and John 5 concern kinds of resurrections, not time of resurrection. If we were to assume passages like Dan. 12:2 and John 5:28-29 teach a general resurrection of all, saved and unsaved, at the same time, we would be mistaken. Apparently, these verses are not so much stressing the time of resurrection as they are two kinds of resurrection, i.e., one unto life and another unto punishment or the second death. Furthermore, if these texts do not teach a general resurrection of the saved and unsaved at the same time, one cannot assume they inherently prove that all the saints are resurrected together at the same time. Yet, all believers will experience resurrection unto life, and all unbelievers will experience a resurrection unto judgment. Daniel 12 and John 5 do not teach about the time of resurrection. They refer only to the two kinds of resurrection. Other passages, primarily Revelation 20, show that the saved and unsaved are not
resurrected at the same time; and this opens the door to the possibility that those who experience the resurrection unto life are not resurrected at the same time. If other texts suggest various times for the resurrection of the just, Daniel 12 and John 5 cannot be used as objections.

3. Times for the Resurrection of the Saints

a. The Church

The “dead in Christ” rise at the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:16). Since the Rapture is pretribulational, church saints rise before the Tribulation.

b. Martyred Tribulational Saints

Tribulational saints who die in the Tribulation cannot be raised until after the Tribulation! Rev. 6:10-11 pictures the disembodied souls of martyred tribulational saints as crying out for vengeance during the Tribulation. According to Rev. 20:4-6 these souls were “beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus” and “come to life” just before the 1,000-year Kingdom, and share in Christ’s rule. In the context, this resurrection occurs after the Second Coming and after Armageddon (Rev. 19:11ff.). Although the Bible does not specifically give a time for the rewarding of the tribulational saints, presumably they are rewarded in conjunction with the resurrection during the transition between Tribulation and Kingdom.

c. Old Testament Saints

There is evidence that places the resurrection of the Old Testament saints after the Tribulation. Dan. 12:1 mentions the Tribulation and Dan. 12:2 teaches about resurrection. Daniel 12 addresses Israel, “your people” (that is, Daniel’s people). After the Tribulation “many” (but not all) Jews will rise. Unsaved Israelites who lived under the Law will not be raised to enjoy the Kingdom. They rise with the rest of the “dead” to stand before the Great White Throne, but saved Israel rises after the Tribulation to enter the Kingdom.

“Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt” [Dan. 12:1-2].

Isaiah 26 also teaches about the resurrection of Old Testament saints. Although Isaiah 26 is not as clear as Daniel 12, it is interesting that the verse about resurrection is sandwiched between material about the Tribulation and references to the Second Coming.

“We were pregnant, we writhed in labor, we gave birth, as it were only to wind. We could not accomplish deliverance for the earth nor were inhabitants of the world born. Your dead will live; their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy for your dew is as the dew of the dawn, and the earth will give birth to the departed spirits….For behold, the LORD is about to come out from His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; and the earth will reveal her bloodshed, and will no longer cover her slain” [ Isa. 26:18-19, 21].

Ezek. 37:12 can be taken as a figurative reference to the restoration of Israel as a nation, but it also can be understood as speaking of bodily resurrection. If the latter is correct, then the context places the resurrection of Old Testament saints after the Tribulation and just before the Millennium, the rule of David in Ezek. 37:24.
“Therefore prophesy, and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people, And I will put My Spirit within you, and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken and done it,’” declares the LORD. “And My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances, and keep My statutes, and observe them” [Ezek. 37:12-14, 24].

It is best to place the resurrection of the church at the Rapture, and the resurrection for martyred tribulation saints and Old Testament saints after the Tribulation. Presumably, these saints obtain rewards at this time (see Luke 14:14). They seem to be resurrected before the Judgment of the Israelites who have survived the Tribulation and the Judgment of the Nations, because the Lord warned that unbelieving Jews will weep when they see gentiles feasting with “Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets” while they are cast out of the Kingdom (Matt. 8:11-12; Luke 13:28-29). 48

d. Millennial Saints

Although effects from the curse of sin will be greatly minimized during the Millennium, they are not eradicated. Lifespans increase, but death is still a reality (see Isa. 65:20). It is safe to assume that saints will die during the Kingdom age, even if some do live many hundreds of years. Scripture says nothing about their resurrection and reward. Some adhere to the idea of instantaneous resurrection and reward for each saint who dies. Others believe that there will be group resurrection of all millennial saints at the end of the Kingdom.

C. Judgment for Israel

1. Texts

Ezekiel 20 and Malachi 3 warn of a future Judgment for Israel. In addition, several of Christ’s parables concern a Lord who will return and cast unprofitable servants into outer darkness (see Luke 12:41ff., especially v. 46; Luke 19:14 and 27; Matt. 25:14ff., especially v. 30). The doctrine of Eternal Security compels one to adopt the view that these “servants” who end in torment are not part of the church, but rather they are unsaved Jews. Being Jewish, they are in a sense servants of God. Yet, when Christ returns some are excluded from Kingdom blessings. Details about a future judgment for Israel come primarily from the Old Testament.

“As I live,” declares the Lord God, “surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you. And I shall bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out; and I shall bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I shall enter into judgment with you face to face. As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will...
enter into judgment with you,” declares the Lord God. “And I shall make you pass under the rod, and I shall bring you into the bond of the covenant; and I shall purge from you the rebels and those who transgress against Me; I shall bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they will not enter the land of Israel. Thus you will know that I am the Lord. As for you, O house of Israel,” thus says the Lord God, “Go, serve everyone his idols; but later, you will surely listen to Me, and My holy name you will profane no longer with your gifts and with your idols. For on My holy mountain, on the high mountain of Israel,” declares the Lord God, “there the whole house of Israel, all of them, will serve Me in the land; there I shall accept them, and there I shall seek your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your holy things. As a soothing aroma I shall accept you, when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered; and I shall prove Myself holy among you in the sight of the nations. And you will know that I am the Lord when I bring you into the land of Israel, into the land which I swore to give to your forefathers. And there you will remember your ways and all your deeds, with which you have defiled yourselves; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for all the evil things that you have done. Then you will know that I am the Lord when I have dealt with you for My name’s sake, not according to your evil ways or according to your corrupt deeds, O house of Israel,” declares the Lord God [Ezek.20:33-44].

“Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the Lord of hosts. “But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap. And He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord, as in the days of old and as in former years. Then I will draw near to You for judgment and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien, and do not fear Me,” says the Lord of hosts. “For I, the Lord do not change; therefore, you, O sons of Jacob are not consumed” [Mal. 3:1-6].

2. The Subjects of the Judgment of Israel

Ezekiel 20 and Malachi 3 refer to a judgment for Israel, more specifically, living as opposed to resurrected Israel. Ezek. 20:39-40 addresses the “house of Israel.” Verse 42 says the land of Israel is the land of the forefathers of those judged. Verse 36 speaks of these forefathers as being “in the wilderness in the land of Egypt”. This means Israelites. Verse 34 says those who will be judged are brought “out from the peoples.” Malachi 3 just as clearly speaks of a judgment for the “sons of Levi” (v. 3), “Judah and Jerusalem” (v. 4), and the “sons of Jacob” (v. 6). Thus, Israel will be judged.
Neither chapter teaches about a resurrection from the dead. On the contrary, the people that Ezekiel has in mind come not from graves but out from the countries where they have been living (vv. 34 and 38). This judgment concerns living Israel and is not the same as a judgment for resurrected Old Testament saints.

3. The Time for Judgment on Living Israel

Ezek. 20:34-38 speaks of a time of restoration after dispersion. It is at a time of the direct rule of God, for this judgment is “face to face” (v. 35) with God Himself as king (v. 33). It is at a time when the New Covenant will be ratified with Israel (v. 37). After this judgment everyone left in Israel will be saved because v. 40 says “…the whole house of Israel, all of them will serve Me in the land; there I shall accept them” (see also v. 43). Rom. 11:26 says the time when all Israel is saved is at Christ’s coming. All lines of evidence from Ezekiel 20 point to a judgment for living Israel, after the Second Coming but before the Kingdom.

Mal. 3:1-2a also places a judgment for living Israel at the time of the Lord’s coming. “…And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple...behold He is coming...who can endure the day of His coming...” (Mal. 3:1-2a).

By virtue of being a chosen people all Jews are in a sense the servants of God. Christ gave several parables in which a lord judges his servants after a return from a long journey. Some obtain rewards. Some obtain punishment with unbelievers (Matt. 24:50-51; 25:30 etc.).

When Christ returns He will judge all the Jews who have survived the tribulation period. The saved can enter the Kingdom. The unsaved cannot. 49

49 One arrangement places the judgment of Jews who survive the Tribulation before the judgment of the gentile survivors. The thinking is that gentiles will be evaluated on how they treated Christ’s Jewish brethren (Matt. 25:40,45). Thus, perhaps believing Jews must be first distinguished from unbelieving Jews so they can be used as examples for the judgment of gentiles that follows. That could be true. However, since unsaved Jews must see gentiles enjoying the Kingdom with the patriarchs (Matt. 8:11-12; Luke 13:28-29), we could easily argue the Judgment of the Nations comes before the Judgment of Israel.
God’s purpose guarantees the results. The flock “passes under the rod” (Ezek. 20:37) so the shepherd can identify those who are His.

5. Results from the Judgment of Israel

a. Negative Results

All the unsaved Jews who have survived the Tribulation will be excluded from the Kingdom and cast into punishment. (See also Ezek. 20:38; probably Matt. 8:11-12; probably Luke 13:28-29, unless they refer exclusively to the Great White Throne).

“[T]he master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, and shall cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; weeping shall be there and gnashing of teeth” [Matt. 24:50-51].

“And cast out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” [Matt. 25:30].

“[T]he master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him, and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers” [Luke 12:46].

b. Positive Results

The Judgment of Israel will be a blessing to the saved Jews who have survived the Tribulation. They can enter the Kingdom. Another result will be the fulfillment of those prophecies that predict a time when every Israelite on earth shall be saved (see also Ezek. 20:37-38).

“But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD. “I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, know the LORD. For they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, declares the LORD, for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” [Jer. 31:33-34] (see also Heb. 8:11-12).

“For on My holy mountain, on the high mountain of Israel,” declares the Lord God, “there the whole house of Israel, all of them, will serve Me in the land; there I shall accept them, and there I shall seek your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your holy things” [Ezek. 20:40].

“For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean, I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols” [Ezek. 36:24-25] see also v. 26).

“And I will bring the third part through the fire, refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them; I will say ‘They are My people’, and they will say, ‘The LORD is my God’ “ [Zech. 13:9].

And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one [Zech. 14:9].

[A]nd thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob” [Rom. 11:26].

D. The Judgment of the Nations
After the Second Coming, the Old Testament saints will be raised and living Israel will be judged. Christ will also judge all the gentiles who have survived the Tribulation to determine entrance into or exclusion from the Kingdom.

1. Texts Concerning the Judgment of the Nations

Two main texts cover the Judgment of the Nations that will take place after Christ’s return (see also Matt. 13:41-43, 49).

“For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations, and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat. Then I will enter into judgment with them there on behalf of My people and My inheritance, Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; and they have divided up My land….Let the nations be aroused and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, For there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations….Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision” [Joel 3:1-2, 12,14]. (This text stresses Armageddon as God’s judgment, but it might also include the Judgment of The Nations which follows the battle).

“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, saying ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe you? And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that You did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’ Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’ Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of these, you did not do it to Me.’ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” [Matt. 25:31-46].

2. The Time for the Judgment of the Nations

The section in Matthew 25 which teaches about a coming Judgment of the Nations begins with a reference to Christ’s Second Coming (Matt. 25:31) and the formation of the Kingdom (v. 34). It also occurs in a context dealing with end-time events including the Second Coming (Matt. 24:30-31, 25:13). The Judgment of the Nations occurs after Christ’s return to earth (see Matt. 8:11-12; Luke 13:28-29).
3. The Place for the Judgment of the Nations

Given that this judgment occurs after Christ’s return, it follows that it takes place on earth. Joel 3 mentions a location that seems to be near Jerusalem, although the identity of the Valley of Jehoshaphat is not completely certain.

4. The Subjects of the Judgment of the Nations

There is no mention of resurrection in Matthew 24-25. Thus, the subjects for this judgment are those who have lived through the Tribulation. The word translated “nations” is etnē which could also be translated “gentiles.” In the KJV, etnē was translated “nations” approximately 61 times, but translated “gentile” approximately 93 times. Upon His return Christ the King will judge all living gentiles. The word “nations” can be misunderstood if by it a reader thinks in terms of Christ’s judgment upon Brazil, Germany, Egypt, or the United States. The judgment of the gentiles is a judgment of individual gentiles who have survived the Tribulation. By this judgment Christ determines who may enter and who may not enter His Kingdom. He uses angels to transport people to this judgment that sorts the “sheep” from the “goats”, the “wheat” from the “tares”, and the “good” fish from the “bad” (Matt. 25:32-34, 41, 46; 13:30, 36-43, 47-50).

6. The Basis for Judgment

The Bible teaches that salvation is by grace through faith (see pp. 130-32). The Lord specifically teaches that being “born again” is a qualification for entrance into the Kingdom (John 3:3; Matt. 18:3). Therefore, ultimately the issue at the Judgment of the Nations must be to separate those with faith from those without faith.

By the Judgment of the Nations (gentiles), Christ determines who may enter and who may not enter His Kingdom. He uses angels to transport people to this judgment that sorts the “sheep” from the “goats”, the “wheat” from the “tares”, and the “good” fish from the “bad” (Matt. 25:32-34, 41, 46; 13:30, 36-43, 47-50).

5. Purpose

No unsaved person may enter the Kingdom.

Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” [John 3:3].

And said, “Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven” [Matt. 18:3].
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in which the Antichrist has been slaughtering Jews. During the Tribulation only believing gentiles will refuse to worship the Beast and reject participation in his program of anti-Semitism. It is not that salvation can be earned because of kindness to Jews, but **salvation will definitely be exhibited by a person’s kind treatment of Jews during the Tribulation.** The only friends Jewish people will have during this time of horrible persecution are going to be believers. Therefore, Christ can examine the matter of gentile deeds toward tribulational Jews as a **sure indication of whether a person has faith or not.** It is not that He grants salvation on the basis of works, rather He can examine attitudes and actions toward the Jews as a certain evidence of either the presence or absence of faith. Those who defy the Antichrist by protecting Jews demonstrate a heart of faith. Those who actively destroy or who are passively unconcerned about tribulational Jews demonstrate their unbelief.

7. Results of the Judgment of The Nations

The gentile “sheep” on the King’s right have given a demonstration that they are believers through their willingness to befriend the Jews. They enter the Kingdom (Matt. 25:34), and have eternal life (v. 46b). Christ told the Jews of His day that many gentiles would enjoy the Kingdom (Matt. 8:11-12; Luke 13:28-29; see also Isa. 2:3, 55:5ff.; Dan. 7:14; Micah 4:2; Zech. 14:16-17 for gentiles in the Kingdom).

The gentile “goats” on the King’s left have shown their lack of faith by helping the Antichrist persecute the Jews. They will enter eternal fire (Matt. 25:41,46a). 50

50 From the description in Matt. 25:41,46 it seems those unbelievers who survive the Tribulation are cast directly into the eternal Lake of Fire following the Judgment of the Nations. Perhaps they avoid Hades (the place of departed unsaved spirits prior to judgment at the Great White Throne). Perhaps these who have already been personally condemned by the Lord Jesus Christ need not face Him again at the Great White Throne Judgment following the Millennium.

The combined result of both the Judgment of Israel and the Judgment of the Nations will be that the **Kingdom begins with only saved people** (see also John 3:3, Matt. 13:41,49 18:3).

E. Appointments to Authority in the Kingdom

If the interpretation of Dan. 12:11-12 given earlier is adopted, then the judgment of all tribulational survivors, Jews and gentiles, takes about 30 days (p. 462).

It is possible that the next 45 days involve the appointment and installment of believers in various positions of authority around the world. Regardless of the exact time frame involved, the transition from Tribulation to Kingdom will involve a placement of saints in positions to share in Christ’s reign (see also Rom. 4:13-15).

And Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” [Matt. 19:28].

[O]r do you not know that the saints will judge the world…[1 Cor. 6:2a].

If we endure, we shall also reign with Him…[2 Tim. 2:12].

“And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him will I give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father” [Rev. 2:26-27].

“And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and
Not By Bread Alone

they will reign upon the earth” [Rev. 5:10].

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; on these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years [Rev. 20:6] (see also v. 4).

F. Summary of Events in the Transition from Tribulation to Kingdom

At the close of the Tribulation, Christ returns to the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem. He destroys the Antichrist’s armies. Tribulation and Old Testament saints are resurrected to enjoy the Kingdom. Those who have survived the Tribulation will be judged to determine eligibility for entrance into the Millennium. Christ will separate believing Israel from unbelieving Israel at the Judgment of Israel and believing gentiles from unbelieving gentiles at the Judgment of the Nations. Then Christ’s glorious reign on earth begins by placing glorified believers in leadership positions in His Kingdom.

XIII. Christ’s Kingdom on Earth (Millennium)

The Bible uses the word kingdom with several nuances. It can refer to God’s general rule over the entire universe at all times (Psa. 103:19). The church is also a form of God’s kingdom. Those who trust in Christ are translated from the kingdom of darkness to the “kingdom of His beloved Son” (Col. 1:13). This portion of prophetic study will show that many texts, if interpreted in a literal (normal) manner, teach that Christ will come to earth to rule over the world from Jerusalem in a literal earthly Kingdom of God.

Many Biblical references to the Kingdom of God or to the Kingdom of heaven refer to this coming Messianic reign of our Lord Jesus Christ.51

Because large numbers of conservative Protestants do not adhere to premillennialism, it is necessary to prove that Christ will establish a Kingdom on earth before giving conditions that will exist during that Kingdom. It can be asserted without reservation that literal interpretation of the Old Testament will lead to premillennial theology. Furthermore, God’s covenants with Abraham, David, and the nation of Israel guarantee that Israel will have a future Kingdom.

A. The Abrahamic Covenant and Premillennialism

1. Scriptural Texts

God made His initial promises to Abraham in Gen. 12:1-3, 7, and He also repeated and expanded upon them in Gen. 13:14-17; 15:1-7, 18; 22:15-18. God also repeated His promises to Isaac in Gen. 26:3-5 and to Jacob in Gen. 28:12-15 (see also Gen. 35:9-12; 48:4).

2. Recipients of the Promises

The Abrahamic Covenant involves three main recipients: Abraham himself, Abraham’s seed, and all the nations of the world.

a. Abraham Himself

God promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation, a great “seed”, (Gen. 12:2; 13:15-16; 15:5). He would even father kings and other nations beyond the main nation (Gen. 17:6). Abraham himself would be blessed, his name would be great, and he would be a blessing to others (Gen. 12:2).

b. Abraham’s Seed

51 There need not be any great difference between the terms “Kingdom of God” and “Kingdom of heaven”. Because Hebrews were hesitant to overuse the name “God”, they would substitute “heaven” as the prodigal son does in Luke 15:21.
Abraham’s seed would become a great nation (Gen. 12:2). It would possess the land of Israel forever (Gen. 13:14-15,17; 15:18; 17:8). This seed would be innumerable (Gen. 15:5). It is clear from Gen. 17:19 and other passages that Abraham understood “seed” to mean physical descendants.

c. All the Nations (Gentiles)

Genesis 12:3 promises that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through Abraham. The main, but not exclusive, blessing would be justification by faith through Abraham’s seed, the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:8). Those who blessed Abraham would be blessed. Those who cursed him would be cursed (Gen. 12:3).

3. The Nature of the Abrahamic Covenant

It may seem odd that much of ones eschatological system comes from the interpretation of passages found in Genesis. Nevertheless, the nature of the Abrahamic Covenant is a major topic in eschatology.

If God’s promises to Abraham were conditional and/or temporary, then one need not worry about a future for the Jewish people in a scheme of future events. On the other hand, if God’s promises to Abraham are unconditional and eternal, then there must yet be an eternal possession of the land by the Jewish people by means of Christ’s Kingdom on earth (the Millennium).

Premillennialists accept the point that faith is a requirement for individual enjoyment of Abrahamic blessings, but they would insist that unbelief and/or disobedience by many individual Israelites cannot cancel out full Abrahamic blessings for the remaining believers among Abraham’s offspring. The Abrahamic Covenant provides a major support for premillennialism if it can be defended as an unconditional covenant that is literal and eternal.

a. One Condition

The only condition in the Abrahamic Covenant is that Abraham leave his land and his family. The Hebrew sentence contains an indirect volitive chain, which means that all the following verbs after “go” have the nuance of purpose or result. Thus, Gen. 12:1ff. can be translated:

“Go...with the result that I will make of you a great nation...with the result that I will bless you...with the result that I will make your name great...with the result that you will be a blessing.”

Abraham obeyed the stipulation of leaving his homeland, and God provided his descendants the land (Genesis 12). This was really not much more than an invitation to enter God’s blessings. Additions to the Abrahamic Covenant in Gen. 13:14-17 and 15:5 occur without any conditions. Abraham himself met the only condition that God required to bring the covenant into force. When the covenant promises are repeated to Israel, they are based upon Abraham’s obedience (see Gen. 26:5). Thus, the belief/disobedience of following generations of Abraham’s offspring does not break the covenant. It is based upon Abraham’s single act of obeying the call to leave his land and family and move to the Promised Land.52

52 Abraham also obeyed in the matter of circumcision (Gen 17:11ff.) and the preparation to sacrifice Isaac (Gen 22:18). These seem to be examples of ongoing obedience that display the same character as Abraham’s original obedience in leaving his homeland. Perhaps continued obedience confirmed God’s wisdom in His choice of Abraham in the original covenant or deepened Abraham’s own personal enjoyment of blessings under it. However, the Abrahamic Covenant was already operative before Genesis 17 and 22. Additional tests just proved Abraham to be as obedient as he had been in leaving his native land. They can be viewed as extensions of Abraham’s original obedience. Gen. 22:18 expresses God’s delight in Abraham’s recent obedience and a deeper emotional commitment to give His chosen servant what He had already promised. The fulfillment of the Covenant was not in doubt until
b. The Eternal Nature of the Abrahamic Covenant

The Bible stresses the eternal (and thus unchangeable and unbreakable) nature of the Abrahamic covenant. If “eternal” means “eternal”, then Israel must yet obtain possession of the land to the borders promised in Gen. 15:18 and must retain eternal possession of it. Notice that many of these verses reaffirm the covenant to Abraham after literally centuries of failure by the bulk of the Jewish nation. Promises relative to other covenants are also repeated long after Israel’s deepest failures.

“For all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever” [Gen. 13:15].

“And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you… A servant who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall my covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.” But God said “No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him” [Gen. 17:7,13,19].

“And He said to me, “Behold, I will make you fruitful and numerous, and I will make you a company of peoples, and will give this land to your descendants after you for an everlasting possession.” But God said “Nevertheless, I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you. Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you receive your sisters, both your older and your younger; and I will give them to you as daughters, but not because of your covenant. Thus, I will establish My covenant with you and you shall know that I am the LORD” [Ezek. 16:60-62].

“And they shall live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons, and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant shall be their prince forever. And I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever” [Ezek. 37:25-26].

c. The Failures of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

God promised blessing to Abraham conditioned upon his leaving his land and family. Abraham complied. In the narratives about Abraham’s subsequent life, God reiterates and enlarges His promises despite Abraham’s disobedience. After Abraham sinned in Egypt (Gen. 12:10-20), God confirmed
His promise (Gen. 13:14-17). Even after Abraham worked outside of God’s will by fathering Ishmael (Gen. 16:1-16), God still restated His promise (Gen. 17:1-8).

The same chapter that describes Isaac’s failure also confirms the covenant to him (Gen. 26:3-5). Likewise, after Jacob’s treachery in Genesis 27, God still transfers the promise to him (Gen. 28:12; 35:9-12; 48:4). God did not place any conditions upon either Isaac or Jacob. The Abrahamic Covenant is based upon a single act of Abraham’s obedience. Subsequent failure by either Abraham or his seed cannot abrogate the promise of everlasting possession of the land.

d. One-Sided Contract

Gen. 15:8-17 discusses a ritual that confirms the Abrahamic Covenant. In ancient times parties to an agreement would walk between the carcasses of sacrificial victims to seal a treaty (see Jer. 34:18-19 for an example). The symbolism probably involves a curse that one who broke treaty stipulations would end up like the bloody and torn animals. In the ceremony relative to the Abrahamic Covenant, God put Abraham in a deep sleep and God alone passed between the parts of the sacrifice. This means that Abraham had no further obligation to meet in order for the covenant to be fulfilled. Relative to any further requirements for Abraham to meet, the covenant was totally unconditional. God alone incurred all the obligations to fulfill His promise.

e. The New Testament on the Abrahamic Covenant

Two key New Testament passages teach that the Abrahamic Covenant is unchangeable. It is significant that texts coming after God had set aside Israel and started the church still say the covenant to Abraham can not be changed. Thus, Abraham’s seed, Israel, must obtain eternal possession of the land to the borders mentioned in Gen. 15:18.

What I am saying is this; the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise [Gal. 3:17].

For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself....In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, in order that by two unchangeable things, in which is it impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement, we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us [Heb. 6:13,17-18].

f. Expansion of the Abrahamic Covenant in other Old Testament Covenants for Israel

The Abrahamic Covenant is foundational to the other Old Testament covenants that follow it (Palestinian, Davidic, New). The following materials will argue that these other covenants are unconditional and must still be fulfilled. If these covenants are unconditional, then the foundational promises to Abraham must also be unconditional. Any verse that shows that God has a future work with the nation of Israel also proves the unconditional nature of the Abrahamic Covenant. Most of these verses will be used in following sections (see Jer. 31:35-37; Matt. 19:28; 20:20-23; Luke 1:32-33; 22:29-30; Acts 3:17-26; Rom. 11:1,25-27; Rev. 7:3-8; 20:1-6).

g. Literal Fulfillment

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53 Gen. 26:3 does not condition the Abrahamic Covenant upon Isaac remaining in Canaan. Rather, the fact that God would give his descendants the land is the basis for staying. Though Isaac’s level of personal blessing would increase by the obedience of remaining in the land, the overall covenant was already secure.
Portions of the Abrahamic promise have already been fulfilled in a very literal sense. Therefore, we should anticipate that in the future all the remaining items in the covenant will be fulfilled in a literal, not symbolic, sense. Abraham did become great materially (Gen. 13:2,5-7; 24:34-35) and spiritually (Gen. 18:19ff.; 22:10ff.). He was called the “friend of God” (2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; James 2:23). Abraham did gain a great name. To this day Jews, Christians, and Moslems revere him. Abraham did become the father of a great nation, Israel, and the ancestor of kings. He also became the progenitor of other peoples, Midianites, Edomites, Amalekites, and various Arab tribes. He has been a blessing to all the families of the earth in that the written Word of God has come through Israel and the Living Word of God was born an Israelite.

The many literal fulfillments of the Abrahamic Covenant provide a strong basis for expecting a literal fulfillment of the promise that the nation that arose from Abraham must yet possess the land to the extent promised in Gen. 15:18 and possess it eternally.

h. Summary of the Nature of the Abrahamic Covenant

God promised that Abraham’s seed would possess the land of Canaan to the borders mentioned in Gen. 15:18 and would hold it in an eternal sense. This promise is eternal in duration and unconditional in nature (i.e., unconditional after Abraham’s initial obedience in leaving his family and homeland). The many promises to Abraham that have already been fulfilled literally mean that unfulfilled aspects must also be fulfilled literally.

Abraham would have understood his seed to be his physical descendants, Israel. Israel must yet possess the land eternally. Among the eschatological systems, premillennialism makes room for a future Kingdom that is largely Jewish in nature.

B. The Davidic Covenant and Premillennialism

1. Texts

God gave David a covenant in 2 Sam. 7:12-16 and in 1 Chron. 17:11-14. Notice that God does not make any requirements of David.

“When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever” [2 Sam. 7:12-16].

“And it shall come about when your days are fulfilled that you must go to be with your fathers, that I will set up one of your descendants after you, who shall be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build for Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be his father, and he shall be My son; and I will not take My lovingkindness away from him, as I took it from him who was before you. But I will settle him in My house and in My kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever” [1 Chron. 17:11-14].

2. Promises in the Davidic Covenant

a. Temporal Promises

Through Nathan, God promised David that one of David’s sons (Solomon) would suc-
ceed him and establish David's kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12; 1 Chron. 17:11). This son would build the temple instead of David (2 Sam. 7:13; 1 Chron. 17:12). Though God might chasten David's son, He would never remove his crown, as happened to Saul (2 Sam. 7:14-15; 1 Chron. 17:13). The covenant leaves open the possibility that those ruling after David's son might lose their power. All of these temporal provisions were fulfilled literally, which indicates that the eternal provisions of the Davidic Covenant must also be fulfilled literally.

b. Eternal Promises

The throne of Solomon's kingdom would be established forever.

“...and I will establish the throne of his [Solomon's] kingdom forever” [2 Sam. 7:13b].

“...and I will establish his [Solomon's] throne forever” [1 Chron. 17:12b].

“...and his [Solomon's] throne shall be established forever” [1 Chron 17:14b].

God gave a very specific and carefully worded prediction concerning David's son, Solomon. Nathan did not say that Solomon's seed would endure or rule forever, only that the throne of his kingdom would endure forever. Actually, Solomon's direct line was cut off from the right to rule by Jeremiah.

“Thus says the LORD, 'Write this man down childless, A man who will not prosper in his days; For no man of his descendants will prosper Sitting on the throne of David or ruling again in Judah' “....”Therefore thus says the LORD concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah, 'he shall have no one to sit on the throne of David, and his dead body shall be cast out to the heat of the day and the frost of the night’ “ [Jer. 22:30; 36:30].

Mary, the mother of our Lord, was indeed a descendant of David but not through Solomon (see Luke 3:31). Jesus Christ is a Son of David but not a son of Solomon (who was a remote great uncle). God predicted that Solomon's throne would be eternal but did not specifically say a son from Solomon would rule on it. It is fascinating that the line of Israel's eternal monarchy that actually sits on the throne runs directly from David to his Son, Jesus Christ. The only one of Christ's physical ancestors to ever rule over Jerusalem was David himself. The observation that God promised Solomon's throne but not necessarily his seed would be eternal says something about the precise nature of Biblical prophecy. Every word has significance. Amillennialists who interpret prophecy in a non-literal fashion do not give the details of the prophetic word the careful attention that they deserve.

God promised that Solomon’s throne (but not necessarily his seed) would reign forever, but to David God promised that his house, kingdom, and throne would be eternal. Each element of the promise deserves attention.

“And your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever” [2 Sam. 7:16] (see also 1 Chron. 17:14).

When God promised David an eternal house, He was not referring to the eternality of the temple building. “House” in 2 Sam. 7:11,16 and 1 Chron. 17:10,14 refers to a

55 Joseph did arise from Solomon’s line and was Jesus’ legal father (Matt. 1:7ff.). However, since Jesus was not biologically related to Joseph, he avoided Jeremiah’s curse. See J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), pp. 33-39 for support on these remarks about the Lord’s genealogy.
dynasty or family. Historians speak of the “House of York” or the “House of Lancaster.” The Bible uses the phrase “the House of Saul” or “the House of Ahab” to speak of royal families. The promise that David’s “house” would be eternal is a guarantee that his family line would never end. Sometimes when a wicked king was overthrown his entire family would be massacred to end the dynasty. This happened to Ahab (see 2 Kings 10:10-11). God promised that there would be no end to David’s line. His royal lineage would never be exterminated.

Next, God promised David an eternal Kingdom. This means that at some point in time David’s descendants must come to power with such authority that the Israelite Kingdom would be eternal from that time forward.

Finally, God promised to David an eternal throne. This does not mean that one of David’s descendants had to have actual political authority at all times. It means that the royal Davidic family would always have the divine right to legitimate power over the nation. The ultimate right of sovereignty would never be transferred to another family regardless of who may have temporarily occupied the throne.

The covenant guaranteed that David’s family would always exist and that it would always be the rightful royal dynasty with a moral right to rule. Furthermore, there must at sometime be the establishment of a Davidic Kingdom and a Davidic throne that can never cease.

The fact that a Davidic king is not now ruling in Jerusalem is evidence that the eternal Kingdom and to some degree the eternal throne aspects to the Davidic Covenant are unfulfilled.

Premillennialists believe that the Davidic Covenant is still in force and must yet be fulfilled. A Davidic descendant must usher in a Kingdom and a throne that cannot end. Since no such Kingdom exists at the present time, it must be that Jesus Christ, the Son of David, will bring in this great and eternal Kingdom at His Second Coming.

c. The Davidic Covenant and the Broken Line of Rule

The fact that David’s seed have not enjoyed unbroken rule and his kingdom has not lasted is no embarrassment to the promises made in the Davidic Covenant. The Davidic Covenant does not necessitate an unbroken succession of rule by David’s descendants. It promised that David’s family would endure, that it would always have the right to rule, and that eventually one of David’s sons would indeed establish an eternal throne and Kingdom. However, the original covenant included the possibility that some of David’s sons would lose actual rule before the establishment of this eternal Kingdom. David believed the promise that his family would endure and would at a certain point in time establish an eternal throne and Kingdom, but even he anticipated that in the meantime there need not be a completely unbroken succession of kings from his line (see Psa. 89:38-52 which stresses the eternal nature of the Davidic Covenant).

Thou hast made his splendor to cease, and cast his throne to the ground [Psalm 89:44].

In fact, the “royal line” through which the ultimate Son of David, Christ Himself, comes never had actual control over the ancient kingdom of Israel. The lineage from David through Nathan, through Mary to Jesus, which will fulfill the promise of an eternal throne and Kingdom, has never actually ruled in Jerusalem. On the other hand, the line of Davidic kings that did rule over Israel and Judah from Solomon to the Babylonian exile is not the lineage that brings in

56 This explains why King Herod (who was not racially Jewish) felt so threatened by one from David’s line being born King of the Jews (Matt. 2:1ff.).
the eternal Davidic Kingdom. These facts ought to demonstrate that the Davidic Covenant never promised an unbroken line of kings who actually rule from David’s own time into eternity. The covenant guarantees that David’s family would endure and that royal prerogative and right to the throne would always belong to it. The right of David’s line to the throne would never be lost even in sin, captivity, and dispersion. Eventually, one of David’s descendants would establish an eternal Kingdom, but prior to that a continuous unbroken line of sons in control of government in Jerusalem is not necessary to the original stipulations of the covenant. In fact, while the house, right to the throne, and eventually the whole Kingdom must be eternal, the privilege of any given Davidic king ruling in Jerusalem was conditioned upon his obedience (1 Kings 8:25; 2 Chron. 6:16; Psa. 132:11-12).

In addition, every promise about the Davidic Kingdom written after the exile (586 B.C.) proves that God still considered the Davidic Covenant to be in force even though the Davidic line no longer actually ruled over Israel. By New Testament times David’s descendants had not ruled over any part of Israel for between 500 and 600 years. Yet, the New Testament still teaches that a Son of David will bring in an eternal rule. God preserved David’s “house” (family). It still had an eternal right to the throne. One of David’s “sons”, Christ, the Son of David, must still bring in an eternal throne and an eternal Kingdom in order to fulfill the Davidic Covenant. Nearly 600 years after the last Davidic king actually reigned in Jerusalem, God made this announcement about one who came from a branch of David’s family that had never ruled:

“He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob for-

ever; and His kingdom will have no end” [Luke 1:32-33].

3. Nature of the Davidic Covenant

There is little excuse for neglecting the truth that God’s promises to David came without conditions and were eternal. The Davidic Covenant supports the premillennial system. Christ will return to bring in a literal/political dominion over the earth with Jerusalem as its capital.

a. The Davidic Covenant Stated to be Eternal

“He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever….And your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever” [2 Sam. 7:13, 16].

“Truly is not my house so with God? For He has made an everlasting covenant with me, ordered in all things, and secured; for all my salvation and all my desire, will he not indeed make it grow” [2 Sam. 23:5].

“He shall build for Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever….But I will settle him in My house and in My kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever” [1 Chron.17:12,14].

“Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, according to the faithful mercies shown to David” [Isa. 55:3].

And the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, “Thus says the LORD, if you can break My covenant for the day, and My covenant for the night, so that day and night will not be at their appointed time, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant
that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levitical priests, My ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be counted, and the sand of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me.” And the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah saying, “Have you not observed what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the LORD chose, He has rejected them? Thus they despise My people, no longer are they as a nation in their sight.” Thus says the LORD, “if My covenant for day and night stand not, and the fixed patterns of heaven and earth I have not established, then I would reject the descendants of Jacob and David My servant, not taking from his descendants rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them” [Jer. 33:19-26].

b. The Davidic Covenant Confirmed with an Unchanging Oath

“I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to David My servant, I will establish your seed forever, and build up your throne to all generations....My loving kindness I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall be confirmed to him. So will I establish his descendants forever, and his throne as the days of heaven....But I will not break off My loving kindness from him, nor deal falsely in My faithfulness. My covenant I will not violate, nor will I alter the utterance of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David. His descendants shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me. It shall be established forever like the moon, and the witness in the sky is faithful” [Psa. 89:3-4, 28-29, 33-37].

The Davidic Covenant is in reality an extension of the Abrahamic Covenant. Both are unconditional. Both are eternal. Just as God confirmed the Abrahamic Covenant with an oath (Heb. 6:17-18), so also He swore an unchangeable oath to David.

c. The Covenant Reaffirmed after Sin

Many of the following verses could be placed in previous categories. However, it is good to stress that God repeated His intention to keep His covenant with David even after generations of faithless apostasy. Reassurance that God considers the Davidic Covenant still operative was given when exile was certain, during the exile, and even in New Testament times. The first ancestor associated with Christ is David in Matt. 1:1. The first quotation in the New Testament reads, “Joseph, son of David”....Throughout the New Testament (which is long after the exile and cessation of David’s rule), there are still constant references to a Kingdom with Christ (David’s son) being the King: Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; 19:28; 20:20ff.; 21:5,9,15; Luke 10:9; Acts 1:6-7; 3:19ff.; Rom. 11:25-27; Rev. 20:4).

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the

57 Although the Davidic covenant is not mentioned directly in Romans 11, that chapter was written long after the exile and demise of the Davidic dynasty. Despite Israel’s failures, Romans 11 clearly promises a future for Israel (see vv. 25-29).
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LORD of hosts will accomplish this [Isa. 9:6-7].

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, ‘The LORD our righteousness’ “ [Jer. 23:5-6].

“And it shall come about on that day”, declares the LORD of hosts, “that I will break his yoke from off their neck, and will tear off their bonds; and strangers shall no longer make them their slaves. But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them” [Jer. 30:8-9].

“Behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, “when I will fulfill the good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth. In those days Judah shall be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell in safety; and this is the name by which she shall be called; the LORD is our righteousness. For thus says the LORD, David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel...Thus says the LORD, “if you can break My covenant for the day, and My covenant for the night, so that day and night will not be at their appointed time, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant that he shall not have a son to reign on this throne, and with the Levitical priests, My ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be counted, and the sand of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me”....Thus says the LORD, “If My covenant for day and night stand not, and the fixed patterns of heaven and earth I have not established, then I would reject the descendants of Jacob and David My servant, not taking from his descendants rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them” [Jer. 33:14-17, 20-22, 25-26].

“And My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances, and keep My statutes, and observe them. And they shall live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they and their sons, and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant shall be their prince forever” [Ezek. 37:24-25].

For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, and without ephod or household idols. Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days [Hosea 3:4-5].

“In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David, and wall up its breaches; and rebuild it as in the days of old” [Amos 9:11].

“And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of
the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end” [Luke 1:31-33].

Both the force of the language and the timing of the restatement (after much sin by Israel) make the Davidic Covenant as certain as human words can. If a Davidic Kingdom is still being promised after the exile and after six centuries without a descendant of David sitting on the throne, then what can possibly cancel the Covenant with David? If Israel still has a future even after it had rejected the King at His first coming (Rom. 11:1,25-27), then what sin would possibly negate the promise of an eternal throne and an eternal Kingdom? There must be a future Kingdom with David’s Son on an eternal throne. Only the premillennial position does justice to the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants.

The third covenant that provides an important basis for premillennialism is the New Covenant.

C. The New Covenant and Premillennialism

The Bible predicts that God will make a New Covenant with Israel.

The New Covenant provides additional guarantees that Israel must yet enjoy a great Kingdom. Since the New Covenant has not yet been fulfilled relative to Israel, it must be that this Kingdom will come to pass after Christ’s return (premillennialism).

1. Texts Concerning the New Covenant.

Many texts refer to a future covenant that God will make with Israel in contrast to the Old Covenant, which is the Law of Moses. Sometimes this future covenant is called the “New Covenant.” Other designations that seem to be equivalent are “covenant of peace” and “everlasting covenant.” 58 There are many texts which do not give any special name to the future covenant, but theologians usually prefer to call it the New Covenant because of the Lord’s usage at the Last Supper. New Testament references to the New Covenant will be covered in a separate section as they raise some questions about whether the New Covenant is or is not currently in force (pp. 487-89). 59

“Behold, days are coming”, declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them”, declares the LORD. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days”, declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD’, for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them”, declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day, and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its

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waves roar; The LORD of hosts is His name, “If this fixed order departs from before Me”, declares the LORD, “then the offspring of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me forever”. Thus says the LORD, “if the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out below, then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done”, declares the LORD…. And the whole valley of the dead bodies and of the ashes, and all the fields as far as the brook Kidron, to the corner of the Horse Gate toward the east, shall be holy to the LORD; it shall not be plucked up, or overthrown anymore forever” [Jer. 31:31-37,40] (see also Ezek. 36:25ff. and 37:12-14ff. for predictions of similar spiritual conditions).

“And I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me” [Jer. 32:40].

“And say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations, and they will no longer be divided into two kingdoms. And they will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions: but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God. And My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances, and keep My statutes, and observe them. And they shall live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons, and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant shall be their prince forever. And I will make a covenant of peace with them, it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever’ ” [Ezek. 37:21-28].

2. Promises in the New Covenant

a. Salvation for All Jews

How does amillennialism incorporate into its system the prediction that at a point in time all Jews on earth must be saved? Pre-millennialists find fulfillment early in the Kingdom after Christ judges Israel and allows only believing Israel to remain on earth. The New Covenant includes a promise of an Israel that is totally accepting of her Messiah.

“At that time, declares the LORD, “I will be the God of all families of Israel, and they shall be My people” [Jer. 31:1].

“But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach again each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, know the LORD, for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity and their sin I will remember no more”
“And they will no longer be prey to the nations, and the beasts of the earth will not devour them, but they will live securely, and no one will make them afraid” [Ezek. 34:28].

“And they shall live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons, and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant shall be their prince forever. And I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them, and I will place My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever” [Ezek. 37:25-28].

“In that day I will also make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, the birds of the sky, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and will make them lie down in safety” [Hosea 2:18].

The promise of an eternal return to the land was not fulfilled in the return after the Babylonian exile and certainly has not been fulfilled in the Church age. Attention to the contexts of promises concerning the New Covenant leads to the conclusion that its fulfillment comes in end times (see especially Jer. 30:8-9, 24). Thus, Israel must yet have a glorious Kingdom at Christ’s return (i.e., premillennialism).

The context of Jer. 31:31ff. contains references to the tribulation period, “the time of Jacob’s Trouble” (30:7), the total destruction of Israel enemies (30:11, 16, 20), and a restoration of Israel to the land (30:3,18-20;
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31:8,23-28). The context surrounding Ezek. 37:21ff. is entirely eschatological. Ezek. 36:8-15, 30 teaches that Israel will return and never again be subject to her enemies. Ezek. 37:12 gives a reference to a resurrection from the dead. Finally, all of Ezekiel 38-39 is eschatological in nature (Magog’s invasion of Israel). The New Covenant concerns Israel’s future (not just the church’s present as amillennialism would assert).

d. Material Blessings

Passages which contain the promise of a New Covenant with Israel also speak of material prosperity. The temple will be built (Ezek. 37:26,28). There will be great agricultural production.

Instead of your shame you will have a double portion, and instead of humiliation they will shout for joy over their portion. Therefore they will possess a double portion in their land, everlasting joy will be theirs. For I the LORD love justice, I hate robbery in the burnt offering; and I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them [Isa. 61:7-8].

“And I will make them and the places around My hill a blessing. And I will cause showers to come down in their season; they will be showers of blessing. Also the tree of the field will yield its fruit, and the earth will yield its increase, and they will be secure on their land. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bars of their yoke and have delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them. And they will no longer be a prey to the nations, and the beasts of the earth will not devour them; but they will live securely, and no one will make them afraid” [Ezek. 34:26-28]60.

e. Spiritual Blessings

Section “a” developed the point that the New Covenant promises a time when all Israelites are saved. The New Covenant also promises the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jer. 31:33 with Ezek. 36:27 and 37:14) and that all will be well taught in the things of God (Jer. 31:33-34). Israel will experience eternal forgiveness of sins (Jer. 31:34). The New Covenant does not just offer a return to the land (as after the Babylonian captivity) but an eternal return to the land accompanied by the salvation of all Jews and the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of all believing Jews. The indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of all believing Jews did not occur at a past restoration to the land but rather refers to a future regathering of Israel after the Second Coming (i.e., premillennialism).


The New Covenant promises a time when the Redeemer comes to Zion and all Israel is saved. There will be an eternal restoration to the land without fear of enemies imposing another exile. This time also results in showers of blessings both spiritual and material. By any literal sense the New Covenant promises a future for the nation of Israel.

Jer. 30:24b says, “...in the latter days you will understand this.” When all the information in contexts pertaining to a New Covenant with Israel is correlated, it is impossible to escape the conclusion that the New Covenant concerns Israel’s future, and it cannot

60 Ezek. 34:25 and 28 may also link the New Covenant with the taming of wild animals as a reduction of the curse. Isa. 11:6-9 is even more clear on this. Certainly, wild animals are not now tame. Thus, the New Covenant has aspects that must be fulfilled in a future Kingdom with Israel.
be totally fulfilled by the church in the present time.  

3. The Nature of the New Covenant as Unconditional and Eternal

Literal interpretation of the New Covenant supports premillennialism. Furthermore, it is virtually impossible to argue that the New Covenant was temporary and/or subject to conditions that would cause its cancellation.

“All in one ear and come to Me. Listen that you may live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, according to the faithful mercies shown to David” [Isa. 55:3].

...And I will make an everlasting covenant with them [Isa. 61:8].

Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar: The LORD of hosts is His name: “If this fixed order departs from before Me” .... “Then the offspring of Israel also shall ease from being a nation before Me forever.” Thus says the LORD, “If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out below, then I will also cast off the offspring of Israel for all that they have done,” declares the LORD [Jer. 31:35-37].

“A Redeemer comes to Zion. All Israel is saved. There is a resurrection and eternal restoration of Israel to the land along with the complete and eternal destruction of Israel’s enemies. The New Covenant is fulfilled after a time of Jacob’s trouble (the Tribulation), and while King David rules over Israel. Other features surrounding a fulfillment of the New Covenant include a temple in Jerusalem, the reduction of the curse among wild animals, and the Holy Spirit’s indwelling of Israel. How could we conclude these were fulfilled in the return of the exiles from Babylon or are being fulfilled in the present church dispensation?

“And I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me” [Jer. 32:40].

“They will ask for the way to Zion, turning their faces in its direction; they will come that they may join themselves to the LORD in an everlasting covenant that will not be forgotten.” [Jer. 50:5].

“Nevertheless, I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, I will establish an everlasting covenant with you” [Ezek. 16:60].

“And I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them...” [Ezek. 37:26].

The phrase “I will” occurs seven times within the four verses of Jer. 31:31-34. The New Covenant is a one-sided contract that depends upon God alone for its completion. No conditions for man are given (p. 494ff).

The Abrahamic Covenant is the foundation for the Palestinian, Davidic, and New Covenants. God’s promises to Abraham concerned land, seed, and blessing. Each of the succeeding covenants seems to emphasize and enlarge a particular aspect of the Abrahamic covenant. The Palestinian covenant (Deut. 30:1-10) concerns the land, the Davidic concerns seed, and the New Covenant enlarges upon future blessings. Just as the Abrahamic Covenant was eternal and unconditional, so the New Covenant is unconditional and eternal. It guarantees a future for Israel and supports premillennialism.

4. The Church and the New Covenant

New Testament references to the New Covenant (New Testament means New Covenant) raise questions about the rela-
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The relationship of the church to the New Covenant.

Is the New Covenant fulfilled presently in the church, or will it find completion with Israel in the future? Of course, the amillennialist position is that the church fulfills the New Covenant and that this means Israel has no future Kingdom on earth.

It is quite true that the church shares in some of the blessings of the New Covenant at the present time. Nevertheless, this is not the same as viewing the church as experiencing a complete fulfillment of the New Covenant. Complete fulfillment awaits a future time and must involve the nation of Israel.

Forgiveness of Israel’s sin is a major blessing of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:34). In order to forgive Israel’s sin, the true Lamb of God had to be slain. Of course, the same cross, which forms a basis for future blessing upon Israel in the New Covenant, is a means of blessing the church in the present. Thus, the church does indeed share in the benefits of the New Covenant. We share in the benefit of the broken body and shed blood, which will be the basis for Israel’s eventual blessing under the New Covenant.

However, the fact that the church benefits from the New Covenant and shares “partially and presently” in its blessing does not mean that all aspects of the New Covenant are now in force or that Israel has lost its promises.

Regardless of present blessing for the church, the New Covenant must still be ratified with Israel and thereby fulfilled completely. The church without Israel cannot and will not totally fulfill the New Covenant even though the church does indeed presently enjoy some benefits arising from the New Covenant. There is a definite distinction between sharing with Israel and replacing Israel.

a. The Old Testament stresses that the New Covenant will be with Israel

The original recipients of promises concerning the New Covenant would have clearly felt it concerned Israel.

“...I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” [Jer. 31:31] (see also Heb. 8:8).

“...I will make an everlasting, covenant with them...” (i.e., Israel, see also v. 36) [Jer. 32:40].

“In those days and at that time,” declares the LORD, “the sons of Israel will come, both they and the sons of Judah as well; they will go along weeping as they go, and it will be the LORD their God they will seek. They will ask for the way to Zion, turning their faces in its direction; they will come that they may join themselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant that will not be forgotten” [Jer. 50:4-5].

“Nevertheless, I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you” [Ezek. 16:60].

Previous covenants were made with Israel not the church. “You” in Ezek. 16:60 must refer to Israel.

“And say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land” ’ “ [Ezek. 37:21].

“And a Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,” declares the LORD. And as for Me, this is My covenant with them,” says the LORD...” [Isa. 59:20-21].
Not By Bread Alone

[And thus all Israel] will be saved; just as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. And this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins” [Rom. 11:26-27].

While the Old Testament might allow for the Church sharing in blessings related to the New Covenant, the covenant primarily concerns Israel. If words mean anything and if promises mean anything, Israel, not the church, must be the recipients of complete New Covenant blessings. Many of the details surrounding the New Covenant are not and cannot be fulfilled in any literal sense in the present dispensation (e.g., all Israel saved, the Redeemer coming to Zion, no more war for Israel).

In addition, the fact that the New Covenant pertains to Israel is implied by its very name, for the Old Covenant was definitely a Jewish covenant (Rom. 2:14; 9:4; Eph. 2:12; Lev. 26:46; Deut. 4:8). If the New Covenant is not completely fulfilled by the church, then what is the relationship of the church to the New Covenant?

b. The New Testament on the New Covenant

Amillennialists claim that the church totally fulfills the New Covenant and that Israel has no future Kingdom. This cannot be true if Old Testament passages are interpreted at face value. Nevertheless, there are many important references to the New Covenant in the New Testament. It seems as though the New Covenant has been instituted but not completely fulfilled. The foundation for the New Covenant has been made in the Savior’s blood and the church enjoys benefits arising from it, even though total fulfillment of the New Covenant awaits a future ratification with Israel.

And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, “this cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood” [Luke 22:20].

In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, “this cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me” [1 Cor. 11:25].

Who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life [2 Cor. 3:6].

“…Behold, days are coming,” says the Lord, when I will effect a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah….For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and I will write them upon their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach anyone his fellow citizen, and everyone his brother, saying, ‘know the Lord,’ for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.” When He said, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear [Heb. 8:8,10-13].

And for this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance [Heb. 9:15].

And to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood,
which speaks better than the blood of Abel [Heb. 12:24].

Premillennialists include within their system room for the church sharing in blessings arising from the New Covenant but insist that Israel must also obtain all New Covenant provisions in a coming Kingdom. There are three main positions among premillennialists concerning the relationship of the church to the New Covenant.⁶²

(1) No Direct Relationship between Church and New Covenant

Darby’s view was that the New Covenant does not relate to the church in any direct sense. The only relationship is that the blood of the cross that makes possible the provisions of the New Covenant with Israel also makes possible the blessings that the church enjoys.

(2) Two New Covenants

Chafer and Walvoord followed the idea that the Bible speaks of two New Covenants. There is one for Israel and one for the Church. Only the context can determine which a Biblical author intends.

(3) Future Ratification with Israel

Scofield maintained that there is only one New Covenant. It is presently in force with the Church in a partial sense, but it will also be totally fulfilled with Israel. There must be a future ratification with the nation Israel in order to complete New Covenant promises.

(4) Evaluation

All of the above Bible teachers are very credible, and the issue is not worth intense argument. The main concern of each is to preserve New Covenant blessings for Israel.

If preference is to be given, view three has the most to commend it. While Israel and the church are distinct, it seems that a rejection of any overlapping of the two is overzealous. Also, it would be hard to prove that the Bible clearly teaches two New Covenants. All the disciples were Jewish. When Christ said, “This is the New Covenant in My blood,” we must presume a connection was made to the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31 unless there is strong evidence to the contrary. Paul says in 2 Cor. 3:6, “we are ministers of the New Covenant.” Unless there is specific language to identify another “New Covenant”, we should presume that Paul, a Jew, expects his readers to equate “New Covenant” with the promises of Jeremiah. Although the author of Hebrews does not directly state that the New Covenant is in force, he does argue that a second covenant is in force and then proceeds to teach about the New Covenant (see Hebrews 8). Perhaps he is just using the promise of a New Covenant to establish that the Old Covenant (the Law) was temporal. However, Hebrews 8 can be taken to imply that the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31 is in some sense now in force. Because of passages like Luke 22:20, 1 Cor. 11:25, and 2 Cor. 3:6, that implication is best granted as valid.

Although zeal to keep Israel and the church distinct is commendable, premillennialism need not reject an overlapping between the two. The New Covenant with Israel will be based on the blood of Christ. The view that the church participates in the New Covenant in Christ’s blood need not rule out a future and more complete ratification with Israel. To share with blessings for Israel is not the same as replacing Israel. There must yet be a complete enjoyment of the New Covenant by “the house of Israel and the house of Judah” (Jer. 31:31) in the millennial Kingdom.

D. Literal Interpretation and Premillennialism

There is strong support for premillennial theology in the Abrahamic, Davidic, and

New Covenants. Yet, these still do not exhaust evidence for the concept of a future Kingdom for Israel. Virtually all conservatives agree that a literal (normal) interpretation of the Old Testament will lead to premillennial theology. The reader should keep in mind that a literal interpretation of verses in the following sections also supports premillennialism. Passages which teach about Jerusalem being the world capital, or the absence of war, or complete justice in the courts, affirm a coming Kingdom of God on earth as much as the previous material on the covenants. Great emphasis should be placed upon how the original recipients would have understood such promises. To them “Israel” meant Israel, “Jerusalem” meant Jerusalem, “David” meant David and so forth. The reinterpretation of terms to cancel out a Kingdom for Israel is tantamount to making God untrue. How would a modern Christian react if 2,000 years from now someone said all the promises given to the church do not really apply to Christians because church does not really mean church?

God’s unconditional covenants with Israel coupled with a literal interpretation of the Old Testament make as clear and emphatic a case for premillennialism as human language permits. While conservative amillennialists deserve respect for fidelity to the Bible in other areas of theology, the stark fact is that they cling to theological systems rather than build a theology from the Bible itself. The Reformation brought great improvements in correct understanding of the Bible, and the Reformers deserve high praise. However, they had too much of a background in the darkness of medieval Catholicism and were under too much pressure to reform all areas of theology. They reformed soteriology but never did thoroughly develop eschatology. Basically, they followed Augustine and the Catholic idea that the Church is the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God on earth. Thus, major Protestant denominations have a heritage of state-churches. The Reformers did not reform all of the major sub-sections of theology. The early church was premillennial for its first three centuries. Thus, in reality premillennialists can claim both the Bible and church history for support. Amillennialism basically follows Reformation eschatology, whether it fits the Bible or not. It does not.

E. Amillennial Objections to Premillennialism

Amillennialists contradict each other as to why premillennialism cannot be true. They only agree that Israel has no future Kingdom on earth.

Conservative amillennialists are sound in other areas of theology, but they display a “have-your-cake-and-eat-it-too” mentality in their debate with premillennialists.

Amillennialists offer four or five main objections to premillennialism, but these contradict each other and cannot all be true at the same time. Some amillennialists claim that the promises to Abraham and David were fulfilled in the conquest of Joshua or in the glorious empire of Solomon’s time. This means the covenants were literal and unconditional but not eternal. Others assert that Christ’s place at the right hand of the Father in heaven fulfills the promise that a descendant of David would sit on David’s throne forever. This means the covenants were eternal and unconditional but not literal. Another amillennial argument is that these covenants with Israel were conditional. Therefore, they have been cancelled because Israel failed to live up to the conditions. This means that the covenants were literal and potentially eternal but were conditional. It is, however, common for amillennialists to go a step further and teach that the Church replaces Israel, i.e., the covenants to Israel are transferred to the Church. This means that the covenants were eternal but not literal and were conditional for Israel but are unconditional
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for the church. Is anyone else confused by these amillennial “supports”?63

1. Fulfillment in Joshua’s or Solomon’s time

One common amillennial argument is that God has already totally fulfilled His promises to Abraham and David. Thus, there need be no future place for an Israelite Kingdom. Fulfillment supposedly came in the days of either Joshua or Solomon.

“So the LORD gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it. And the LORD gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the LORD gave all their enemies into their hand. Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass” [Joshua 21:43-45].

Now Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt; they brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life [1 Kings 4:21].

[W]ho has kept with Thy servant David, my father, that which Thou hast promised him; indeed, Thou hast spoken with Thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with Thy hand, as it is this day [2 Chron. 6:15].

Gen. 15:18 gives the boundaries of the Promised Land. Regardless of whether the “river of Egypt” is the Wadi-el-Arish in the Sinai or the Nile itself, neither Joshua nor Solomon occupied the full Promised Land forever as the covenants so repeatedly promise. In fact, other Scriptures teach that the conquest under Joshua was by no means complete.

Now it came about after the death of Joshua that the sons of Israel inquired of the LORD saying, “Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them?” [Judg. 1:1].

But the sons of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem; so that the Jebusites have lived with the sons of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day [Judg. 1:21].

But Manasseh did not take possession of…[Judg. 1:27].

And it came about when Israel became strong, that they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but they did not drive them out completely [Judg. 1:28].

Neither did Ephriam drive out the Canaanites…[Judg. 1:29].

Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants…[Judg. 1:30].

Asher did not drive out the inhabitants…[Judg. 1:31].

Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants…[Judg. 1:33].

Then the Amorites forced the sons of Dan into the hill country, for they did not allow them to come down to the valley…[Judg. 1:34].

I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died….whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk in it as their fathers did, or not. So the LORD allowed those nations to remain, not driving them out quickly; and He did not give them into the hand of Joshua [Judg. 2:21-23].

It ought to be obvious that Israel did not fully possess the land in the days of Joshua and never eternally possessed the land whether in the days of Joshua or Solomon. Why are there so many promises about the covenants after the times of Joshua and Solomon? (Isa. 9:6ff., Luke 1:31-33, etc.) After direct and indirect references to main Old Testament characters, including many after Joshua, the author of Hebrews says:

And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect [Heb. 11:39-40].

Statements in Joshua 21 about the fulfillment of God’s promises need to be balanced by other statements about the incompleteness of the conquest and God’s statement that Israel would gradually conquer the land (Ex. 23:29-30; Deut. 7:22-24). There are options for an understanding of Josh. 21:43-45 that do not make it a complete fulfillment of the promises to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. There was under Joshua a comparative and incremental fulfillment to his point in time rather than a complete fulfillment of the promises to the patriarch. Joshua could claim God had given the land He promised within His unfolding plan for history up to the time of the conquest.

The conquest under Joshua did not completely fulfill promises to Abraham, but compared to the meager results that Abraham actually saw it could be called a fulfillment of the promises. Furthermore, it gave visible credibility that fulfillment of all promises would eventually come to pass. From the Israelite’s perspective, God was actively working in the direction of a complete fulfillment of all His promises. There was now no doubt that the process was moving forward on all fronts. Thus, in a sense Israel could say, “God has done what He promised.” It was not the case that all was actually accomplished but rather God had acted far enough towards completion that it was safe to assert His visible faithfulness in all respects. There could be no doubt of the direction of God’s work for Israel. Since completion was only a matter of time, the author could assert, “Not one of the promises failed, all came to pass.” Fulfillment of the promises was true comparatively (compared to what patriarchs actually saw of the promised fulfillment) and true relative to credibility (God had done so much that no one could doubt that the rest was as good as done). All God promised the patriarchs had been fulfilled when viewed incrementally up to the time of Joshua, but this was not all Israel would ever obtain.

God has promised salvation, resurrection, and heaven to believers. Has he failed or kept His promise? Would it not be true for a Christian to testify, “God has kept all His promises to me” even though some have not technically come to pass and await the future?

Likewise, Joshua asserts that God kept all His promises up to his generation even though not all that would ever be done to bless Israel had yet come to pass. To this day many promises to Israel still await a complete fulfillment.

2. Fulfillment by Christ’s Presence on the Throne in Heaven

All Bible-believers agree that Christ is now seated in glory at the right hand of God the Father in heaven (Acts 7:56; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 12:2). One branch of amillennialism/postmillennialism equates this with a fulfillment of the covenants with Israel.

The issue comes down to one of literal versus mystical interpretation. Those who advocate this position claim that the “throne of David” equals God’s throne in heaven and that the “house of David” is the household of faith. Literal interpretation leads to premillennialism. Conservative amillennialists interpret the Bible literally in other areas but approach eschatology with a mystical or “spiritual” interpretation.
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It is inconsistent to interpret by the literal method in all other areas but to reject this method in eschatology in order to force a conclusion that fits with amillennialism, i.e. traditional Reformed theology. One would think that if any material ought to be interpreted literally it would be promises, particularly promises concerning land. Title deeds to land are carefully worded to avoid misunderstandings. Mystical interpretations to agreements about land would end up producing fraud.

Consideration should be given to how the original recipients of the covenants understood the promises. Obviously, God led Abraham to believe that his descendants would obtain a land on earth (Gen. 13:14-15; 15:18). David understood his “house” to refer to his posterity (2 Sam. 7:18-19, 25, 29; with parallels in 1 Chronicles 17) and interpreted the promises as referring to a literal throne and a literal Kingdom (see also Messianic Psalms 2, 45, 48, 72, 89, 110, and 132). Neither David nor Solomon would have understood the throne of David to refer to God’s throne in heaven (likely a blasphemous thought) nor the house of David to refer to the household of faith. The rest of Biblical characters had the same understanding. To them the house of David referred to physical descendants. They believed that the throne of David was in Jerusalem, not heaven. (See also the following section that gives verses predicting Jerusalem as the world capital, and also previous sections on the provisions for the covenants).

“And as for you, if you will walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you and will keep My statutes and My ordinances, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, just as I promised to your father David, saying you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel” [1 Kings 9:4-5].

“Now therefore, O LORD, the God of Israel, keep with Thy servant David, my father, that which Thou hast promised him, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your sons take heed to their way, to walk in My law as you have walked before Me’” [2 Chron. 6:16].

“I will establish your seed forever, and build up your throne to all generations….So I will establish his descendants forever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his sons forsake My law, and do not walk in My judgments, if they violate My statutes, and do not keep My commandments, then I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. But I will not break off My loving kindness from him, nor deal falsely in My faithfulness. My covenant I will not violate, nor will I alter the utterance of My lips….His descendants shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me” [Psa. 89:4, 29-34, 36].

“[T]hen say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD, Behold, I am about to fill all the inhabitants of this land - the kings that sit for David on his throne, the priests, the prophets and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem - with drunkenness!’” [Jer. 13:13].

Then there will come in through the gates of this city kings and princes sitting on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this city will be inhabited forever [Jer. 17:25].

For if you men will indeed perform this thing, then kings will enter the gates of this house, sitting in David’s place on his throne, riding in chari-
ots and on horses, even the king himself and his servants and his people….Thus says the LORD, write this man down childless, a man who will not prosper in his days; For no man of his descendants will prosper sitting on the throne of David or ruling again in Judah [Jer. 22:4, 30].

“In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth. In those days Judah shall be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell in safety; and this is the name by which she shall be called: the LORD is our righteousness. For thus says the LORD, ‘David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel…..’” Thus says the LORD, “If you can break My covenant for the day, and My covenant for the night, so that day and night will not be at their appointed time, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levitical priests, My ministers…..” Thus says the LORD, “If My covenant for day and night stand not, and the fixed patterns of heaven and earth I have not established, then I would reject the descendants of Jacob and David My servant, not taking from his descendants rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them” [Jer. 33:15-17, 20-21, 25-26] (See also: 2 Sam. 23:5; Isa. 9:6; Luke 1:31-32).

It ought to be obvious that Biblical characters understood the house of David to refer to David’s physical descendants and the throne of David to refer to the throne in Jerusalem, not heaven. There are no directions in the Bible that tell its readers to substitute the “throne of David” with the throne of God in heaven. Acts 2:29-36 does not provide any clear example. “Raised up” in v. 32 refers to Christ’s resurrection from the dead which Peter witnessed (See Acts 5:30). Witnesses in the Book of Acts primarily witnessed the risen Lord (Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32; 3:15; 4:33; 5:30; 10:39-41; 13:31). There should be no equation of this definition of “raising” (from the dead) to the reference of “raising” up Solomon from childhood to reign and build the temple in 2 Sam. 7:12. Peter’s main point is Christ as the living Son of David qualifies to return and establish the throne of David in Jerusalem (Acts 3:20-21). Acts 2:34-35 finds parallels between David’s throne on earth and the Messiah’s throne in heaven (Psa. 110:1). Some might understand Christ’s present rule in heaven as being a partial fulfillment or foreshadowing of Old Testament prophecy that a Son of David would rule (similar to John the Baptist foreshadowing Elijah). However, Peter’s teaching may only mean that the Son of David eternally lives and presently has the authority and power to return and rule this earth. The Davidic throne in Jerusalem in the past and in the millennium may be viewed as an extension of heavenly rule. None of these semantic quibbles over details undermines the primary truth. A full and satisfactory definition of David’s eternal throne demands that Christ return and rule over a throne in Jerusalem. Although David is mentioned approximately 59 times in the New Testament, no verse teaches a replacement of his house with the church or his throne with God’s throne. If the throne of David equals Christ’s position at the right hand of the Father in heaven, then how did Solomon sit on “David’s throne”? If David’s throne equals God’s throne in heaven, then what need is there to establish it, for it has existed from eternity past?

Cults often use strange interpretations of prophetic Scripture to bolster their heretical systems. If one abandons literal interpreta-
tion, then prophecy can say whatever pleases an interpreter. Conservative amil-
ennialists do not use prophetic portions to endorse heresy, but where does “mystical” interpretation of prophesy stop? If Jerusalem does not mean Jerusalem, then why must the church mean the church when God promised to rapture it? If the house of David means the house of faith, then could one not born a Son of David be qualified as Messiah?

Portions of the covenants that have been fulfilled have been fulfilled literally. Thus, premillennialists are justified in anticipating literal fulfillment for all aspects of the covenants. Christ must yet come to rule on the throne of David in Jerusalem. He will come to bring a Kingdom on earth.

3. Cancelled Conditional Covenants

It is hard to believe that anyone could read all that the Bible says about the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants and conclude that they were conditional and/or temporal. Too many clear passages present them as unbreakable promises.

Perhaps some have a misunderstanding of what is specifically involved in an unconditional covenant. An unconditional covenant does not rule out the fact that individuals must meet certain conditions for personal participation in a covenant or enjoyment of covenant blessings. Premillennialists understand that Old Testament saints had to be believers in order to be brought into a full covenant relationship with God. Unbelievers will not enter the Kingdom of God (see John 3:3; Matt. 18:3). Just being born a descendant of Abraham is not enough for entrance into the Kingdom (Matt. 8:12). Furthermore, it is quite true that David’s descendants had to be faithful to enjoy more fully the blessing of sitting on the Davidic throne. God promised He would not take the crown away from David’s son, Solomon; but He warned that following descendants could indeed lose their position as rulers.

“And as for you, if you will walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you and will keep My statutes and My ordinances, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, just as I promised to your father David, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’ But if you or your sons shall indeed turn away from following Me, and shall not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you and shall go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them, and the house which I have consecrated for My name, I will cast out of My sight. So Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples” [1 Kings 9:4-7].

“Now therefore, O LORD, the God of Israel, keep with Thy servant David, my father, that which Thou hast promised him, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your sons take heed to their way, to walk in My law as you have walked before Me’ “ [2 Chron. 6:16].

But Thou hast cast off and rejected, Thou hast been full of wrath against Thine anointed. Thou hast spurned the covenant of Thy servant; Thou hast profaned his crown in the dust [Psa. 89:38-39].

The LORD has sworn to David, a truth from which he will not turn back; “Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne. If your sons will keep My covenant, and My testimony which I will teach them, Their sons also shall sit upon your throne forever” [Psa. 132:11-12].
“For if you men will indeed perform this thing, then kings will enter the gates of this house, sitting in David’s place on his throne, riding in chariots and on horses, even the king himself and his servants and his people. But if you will not obey these words, I swear by Myself, declares the LORD, that this house will become a desolation” [Jer. 22:4-5] (see also Jer. 17:24-25).

Premillennialism accepts the fact that individual participation in and enjoyment of the covenants does have conditions. The individual must have faith, and obedience brings even more complete covenant blessings. However, this does not mean that the covenants were conditional. The real issue is this: can the unbelief and sin of individuals (even the majority) cancel the promises made to the whole nation (including godly ones)? Will the unbelief of many Israelites mean that people like Abraham, David, Elisha, Daniel, and even John the Baptist will not obtain the blessings of the covenants? Premillennialists agree that individual sharing in the covenants is conditional, but they insist that the overall covenant to the nation is unbreakable. No amount or degree of disbelief can abrogate God’s promises to those who do believe. There is no question that a Son of David will establish an eternal throne over Israel, but in Old Testament times the right of each generation of David’s descendants to rule was not guaranteed. There is no question that Israel will enjoy a future Kingdom. The only conditional issue is which individual Israelites will share in it.

Sometimes amillennialists will try to use passages like Gen. 17:7-10, the passage instituting circumcision, to argue that the Abrahamic Covenant was conditional. However, they confuse the conditional nature of an individual sharing in the blessing of the covenant with the unconditional nature of the promise to the whole nation. Circumcision was only fully valuable as a sign of faith (Rom. 4:11) and identified an individual Hebrew as sharing in the Abrahamic blessing. However, the failure of many to believe would not cancel the blessings for those who did believe. Amillennial arguments concerning the conditional nature of the covenants really confuse personal participation in covenants, which is conditional, with the overall nature of the covenants, which is unconditional. The covenants are unconditional and eternal once the individual is under the covenant blessing. There is no question the covenants to Israel will be fulfilled. The only question is whether an individual Jew will share in them.

4. Blessings Transferred from Israel to the Church

Perhaps the most common amillennial objection to premillennialism is that covenant blessings have been transferred from Israel to the Church. Certain New Testament texts are used to show that the Church equals Israel. These texts will be examined one by one.

Premillennialists can be overzealous in their efforts to keep Israel and the Church so distinct as to deny all overlapping between these two main groupings of God’s people. Often it is asserted that Israel enjoys only earthly blessings and the Church enjoys only heavenly blessings. The author does not feel any threat in the admission that there are overlapping aspects between Israel and the Church. The Church will indeed share in many of Israel’s blessings in the coming Kingdom. Believers are “sons of Abraham.” Those with faith are the “true circumcision.” However, the Scripture comes short of directly equating the Church with Israel. Theologians might speak in loose terms of the Church being a true Israel, but such language should be qualified, and it is not strictly Biblical terminology. All of the following Scriptures can be better interpreted by keeping Israel and the Church distinct (although they do sometimes share in the same blessings).
Suppose for conjecture we consider that some verses do call the Church “Israel.” Would this prove amillennialism? No, for even if the Church shares in all aspects of the covenant blessing, this still would not be the same as Israel losing her promises. If I as a believer share in the future Kingdom, this still does not mean Israel will not. The New Testament still distinguishes between Israel and the Church (e.g., 1 Cor. 10:32), and it still predicts a future for Israel (e.g., Rom. 11:25ff.). Usually interpreters give emphasis to the meaning of a passage to its original recipients. Abraham and David expected a future for Israel. It will come to pass regardless of the degree of the Church’s participation in it.

Verses that follow do not directly call the church “Israel.” Even if they did, it would not be a sufficient basis for thinking that national Israel will have no future.

a. The Church as Israel

A literal translation of a key phrase in Rom. 9:6 says, “For not all they from Israel, these are Israel.” Amillennialists interpret this verse to mean, “Not all of true Israel are Israelites.” In other words, there is more to Israel than those who are ethnically Israelites, i.e., the Church, is also Israel. While such an interpretation fits amillennial desire to equate the Church with Israel and transfer all of Israel’s blessings to the Church, it is not the best interpretation of Rom. 9:6. Actually, one must first approach the text as an amillennialist to come away with this view.

Premillennialists understand that Rom. 9:6 refers to two kinds of Israelites within Abraham’s physical descendants. There are physical Israelites who are not spiritual Israelites, and there are physical Israelites who are also spiritual Israelites. The verse does not include any references to the Church at all. The NIV translation seems to follow the view that the distinctions of Rom. 9:6 concern only two types of Jews without reference to the church at all. “For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel!” (Rom. 9:6 NIV). In other words, being racially Jewish does not make one a true Jew unless a person also has faith.

There are several reasons for accepting the interpretation that does not equate the Church with Israel. The context concerns racial Israel (Rom. 9:1-5) and the word “from” (Greek ek, out of) refers to Christ’s descent from David in v. 5. Therefore, ek in v. 6 also ought to be understood as a reference to physical descent as the NIV translates. The phrase “not all from (ek) Israel” means “not all descended from Israel.” It does not refer to a “spiritual” Israel (i.e., the Church) as the amillennial view asserts.

A second consideration is that the following illustrations in Rom. 9:7-13 all concern the physical descendants of Abraham (Isaac, Ishmael by implication, Jacob and Esau). If explanatory material concerns only two categories of those physically descended from Abraham, then it stands to reason that the verse being explained, v.6, concerns two categories of those physically descended from Israel without any reference to the Church.

Thirdly, these illustrations in vv. 7-13 concern a large group of physical descendants that is distinguished from a smaller group of physical descendants who are also spiritual heirs. This pattern fits the premillennial understanding of Rom. 9:6. There is a larger group of physical descendants, but only a smaller section of them are true (spiritual) Israelites.

The amillennialist says that Rom. 9:6 means that the spiritual heirs (the Church as true Israel) extend far beyond physical descendants. Yet, the illustrations in the following

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64 Romans 11 teaches both that Israel has a future and that gentiles have been “grafted in” to share some of the covenant blessings with Israel.

65 This is also the pattern in Rom. 2:28-29.
context (vv. 7-13) concern only those physically descended from Abraham, and they do not argue that there is a larger spiritual group than the smaller physical group. The illustrations give the reverse pattern of a larger group of physical descendants of whom only smaller groups are spiritual heirs.

One must first be an amillennialist to come up with an amillennial interpretation of Rom. 9:6.

Gal. 6:16 is another text that amillennialists use to assert that the Church has replaced Israel.

And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God [Gal. 6:16].

Amillennialists would teach that the last phrase of Gal. 6:16 identifies the Church as the true “Israel of God.” They would prefer that the word “and” be translated “even” or “as many as (are) the Israel of God.” The NIV translation of Gal. 6:16 is more favorable to (but still does not prove) an amillennial view. “Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.” The normal translation of the Greek word kai is “and”. In Gal. 6:15-16 this would mean that Paul is referring to two groups, the New Creation (the Church), the first group, with the second group being part of the whole, comprised of saved Jews whom he designated as “the Israel of God.” Rather than identifying the whole Church as Israel, Gal. 6:16 is more likely giving a blessing to saved Jews who are a part of the Church. The primary meaning of a word (in this case “and”) should be adopted unless the context clearly demonstrates that a secondary meaning must be preferred. In addition, the context favors a blessing upon saved Jews who have understood grace. After criticizing Jewish legalizers for an entire book, it is reasonable that Paul gives praise to Jewish people who have been justified by faith alone, “Peace and mercy... upon the Israel of God.”

Suppose we do wish to adopt a more remote translation for kai. Still a secondary translation (“even” or “also”) need not be taken as an equation of the Church with Israel. To paraphrase, “God bless all who adhere to grace (including, also, even) believing Jews.” This would be Paul’s way of showing he was not critical of all Jews, only works-oriented legalistic Jews. Ryrie is correct in saying only a very narrow understanding of Gal. 6:16 leads to the amillennial position. Most options do not clearly identify the Church as Israel. 66

In no other undeniable case does Paul identify the Church as Israel. Gal. 6:16 is a weak spot for finding a precedent. The duplication of the preposition “upon” (epi) also favors the view that Paul has two groups (the whole Church and the Jewish portion of it) in mind rather than only one group designated by two names (the New Creation is the Israel of God). The identification of the Church as Israel would have to be on other stronger grounds in order to find it in Gal. 6:15-16. Only pure theological preference, not linguistics or context, make Gal. 6:15-16 an amillennial proof-text.

b. The Church as “Sons of Abraham”

Galatians 3:7 calls believers “sons of Abraham.”

Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham [Gal. 3:7].

The absence of the article seems important. Believers are not the sons of Abraham” but rather “sons of Abraham.” Paul stresses that believers have the quality of being Abraham’s sons because they are people of faith like Abraham, but he does not technically make a complete identification of believers with the physical descendants of Abraham,

Charles Ryrie, Basic Theology, p. 399.
Israel. Believers have the quality of Abraham’s sons, but Paul does not teach that they have replaced Israel or that all promises to Israel have been transferred to the Church. In his next statement (Gal. 3:8-9) Paul focuses on the point that believers share in the “all nations blessed” aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant. As “sons of Abraham” believing gentiles primarily enjoy the blessing of being justified by faith. The blessing of justification by faith was a major fulfillment of God’s promise to bless all families of the earth through Abraham (Gen. 12:3). This is the sense in which believers are blessed as “sons of Abraham.”

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “all the nations shall be blessed in you.” So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer [Gal. 3:8-9].

Gal. 3:15-16 can be used as a proof text that the Abrahamic Covenant was unconditional and unchanging. While the Church shares in the “all nations blessed” aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant (i.e., mainly spiritual blessings), Israel will yet obtain complete fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham, including eternal possession of the land (the full material blessings of the Abrahamic covenant).

Gal. 3:29 is similar to Gal. 3:7. Those who are a part of the Church (believers) have the quality of Abraham’s seed. Again the phrase, “seed of Abraham”, lacks the definite article. Believers are not “the seed of Abraham” as though we are all Israelites. 67

We rather have the qualities of Abraham’s seed by virtue of being like him in faith and by enjoying the promise of all nations being blessed through Abraham. Whatever participation the Church has in the Abrahamic Covenant comes about through its relationship to Abraham’s primary seed, i.e., the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is Abraham’s main “seed” (Gal. 3:16). While the Church does enjoy blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant (certainly spiritual blessings, i.e., justification by faith, and likely also some material blessings of being co-heirs with Christ in His Kingdom), it does so by virtue of its relationship with Christ, not because it has replaced Israel as the beneficiary of the covenants. The sons of Abraham, i.e., Israel, must still obtain the land, throne, and eternal Kingdom blessings of the covenants.

Romans makes a similar point to Galatians Chapter 3. There Paul teaches that Abraham is the father of all who believe.

[A]nd he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be reckoned to them, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised. For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the

67 The Bible uses the concept of Abraham’s descendants (seed, children, sons) in at least four different senses. First, there are physical offspring from Abraham (see Gen. 15:4; 17:6,16; John 8:37). Another sense in which the idea of Abraham’s children occurs is that of physical children who are also spiritual children (John 8:39; Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6; Rev. 2:9; 3:9). Thirdly, Christ is the primary seed of Abraham (Gal 3:16). Finally, all those with spiritual faith are the spiritual sons of Abraham (Matt. 3:9; Rom. 4:11-12, 16; Gal.3:7-9), and spiritual seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:29).
promise is nullified; for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there violation. For this reason it is by faith, that it might be in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (as it is written, “a father of many nations have I made you…”) [Rom. 4:11-17].

The argument of this important section in Romans is that justification is by faith. The close of v. 11 shows that imputed (reckoned) righteousness, i.e., justification, is the main blessing that comes to believers through a sharing in the faith of their spiritual father, Abraham. Just as in Galatians 3, the primary blessing for the Church that comes through Abraham is justification by faith. Through Abraham’s seed, Christ, God blessed all the families of the earth by providing salvation for those with faith.

Verse 13 says that God promised Abraham that he would be “heir of the world.” Verses 14 and 16 teach that those with faith share in this blessing. Does this mean that Israel’s earthly blessings have been transferred to the Church? At the most it means that the Church will share in the spiritual and material blessings of the Kingdom by virtue of its relationship with Christ (co-heirs with Him, Rom. 8:17). We need not read into this passage a cancellation of the promises to national Israel. The idea of the Church sharing in a coming world Kingdom does not mean Israel loses her promises.

Furthermore, the phrase “heir of the world” may not even refer to land. God did promise Canaan to Abraham but not specifically the whole world. Also, the context emphasizes spiritual blessings, not material. Maybe “world” means people, not land! Perhaps the sense in which Abraham became the heir of the world was that God gave him all the people of faith as his inheritance. Abraham lacked children for a long time, but God gave him the whole world of believers as an inheritance. Instead of no children, Abraham became the heir of a world full of spiritual children. These in turn were also the heirs of Abraham’s blessings (Gal. 3:29; Rom. 4:14 and 16) primarily the “all-nations blessing” (cf. Gen 12:3 with Gal. 3:8). This inheritance involves spiritual blessings coming through Christ, especially justification by faith. Romans 4 can be interpreted as teaching that the Church shares in only spiritual blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant. Even if one believes material blessings are also in view, this still need not destroy the concept of a future Kingdom for Israel. Yes, believers are sons of Abraham, but they are spiritual children whose main blessing under the Abrahamic covenant is justification by faith in Abraham’s seed, the Lord Jesus Christ. Any future sharing in the Kingdom comes from a relationship to the King, not from replacing Israel.

c. The Church as the True Circumcision

Several passages contrast fleshly circumcision with a true circumcision, i.e., the cutting away of spiritual filth from the heart. The idea of a spiritual circumcision did not begin with the Apostle Paul. It was also an Old Testament concept (see Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:25-26; Ezek. 44:7-9).

In Phil. 3:3 Paul says that believers have a true or better circumcision than do Jews who have only physical circumcision. Col. 2:11 also refers to a spiritual separation of the inevitable dominion of the flesh over a believer.

For we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh [Phil. 3:3].

And in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body
of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ [Col. 2:11].

To say that believers have undergone a true circumcision is not the same as saying they are Israelites or that the Church now replaces Israel in God’s program. All it means is that believers have undergone a circumcision of the heart which cuts away sin’s inevitable control. This true circumcision is better than the physical circumcision of racial Israel. Those who are Jewish need to have this spiritual circumcision in addition to fleshly circumcision. This is the point of Rom. 2:28-29:

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God [Rom. 2:28-29].

There is no special reason to think that Paul is identifying the Church as true Israel in Romans 2. In vv. 25-27 he contrasts a hypothetical gentile who (though uncircumcised in the flesh) keeps God’s commandments and is, therefore, spiritually circumcised; with a circumcised Jew who does not obey the Law and is, therefore, spiritually uncircumcised. This discussion is hypothetical, for in reality no one, Jew or gentile, actually keeps the Law. Nevertheless, Paul’s point is that physical circumcision is of inferior value to spiritual circumcision (the cutting away of filth from the heart). The former without the latter is of little value. Thus, Jews are just as spiritually needy as gentiles. Both need justification by faith.

Some amillennialists view Rom. 2:28-29 as a contrast between racial Jews (v. 28) and Christians as “true Jews” (v. 29). While a contrast of Jews with gentiles is indeed in the context, Paul has not yet brought in any discussion of the Church. There is no real reason to see the Church in Romans 2.

Verses 28-29 concern only national Israelites. Verse 28 refers to those who are racially Jewish but are not “Jewish” in the full sense of the term because they are unsaved and have not undergone circumcision of a more important kind. The true Jew in v. 29 is a physical Jew who also has a circumcised heart, i.e., he has been saved. These verses establish that being physically Jewish is not enough to please God or bring salvation. Jewish descent alone is insufficient without a heart that is right with God. Paul will explain in following chapters how gentiles may obtain salvation by faith and how Jews may become “true Jews” in the same way. While this passage does teach that gentiles may have a true circumcision (without yet specifically saying how), it does not equate saved gentiles with national Israel. It just says that it takes more for a Jew to be fully Jewish than just physical circumcision.

d. Transfer of the Kingdom to the Church

Amillennialists use Matt. 21:43ff. to assert that Israel will have no future Kingdom. It supposedly teaches that Israel has been set aside and the Church obtains its place of blessings.

“Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it....And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them” [Matt. 21:43, 45].

This text is capable of several interpretations that do not support amillennialism. Matt. 21:45 clearly teaches that the “you” of v. 43 were the Chief Priests and Pharisees. They were not going to obtain the Kingdom. Another “nation” would.

The Lord may simply be saying that the present nation of Israel would not obtain any Messianic Kingdom, but a future nation of Israel would. In other words, the Israel of His generation would not obtain the King-
dom. The Kingdom had to await another generation when Israel would be a different nation. None of the first century Jewish nation would enjoy an earthly Kingdom, but a future Israelite nation would.

It is also possible to view “nation” as a reference to the Church without drawing amillennial conclusions. Although the Church is not the millennial Kingdom, it is a form of God’s Kingdom on earth (see Rom. 14:17; Col. 1:13; and Matthew Chapter 13 where the time period between the first and Second Coming is called the Kingdom). Furthermore, the Bible calls believers a nation in Rom. 10:19 and 1 Pet. 2:9-10 (the 1 Peter reference also quotes Psalm 118, as does Matthew 21). Perhaps the Lord is saying that the kingdom would be taken from those who led Israel in the first century and a form of the kingdom would be given to the Church. This truth does not necessarily contradict the belief that Israel will in the future be returned to a primary place in God’s work and will yet obtain a political Kingdom of God on earth. In fact, such an interpretation to Matt. 21:43ff. makes it parallel to Romans 11. In Romans 11 Paul argues that gentiles (including gentiles within the Church) are in a place of blessing, but that same passage also teaches that Israel will yet return to God’s favor and blessing. The identification of the “nation” in Matt. 21:43, whether the future generation of Israel or the Church, is a secondary issue as to whether the removal of the kingdom from the leaders in Christ’s day would be temporary or permanent. The millennial issue cannot be settled by Matthew 21 alone, but other texts make it clear that any removal of Israel from a position of blessings must be temporary and not eternal.

5. An Evaluation of Amillennial Arguments

The main arguments that amillennialists use to object to premillennialism contradict each other. Since these arguments cannot all be true at the same time, they do not have any cumulative strength. Individually, they are weak. Even if one adopts the amillennial interpretation of a given passage, that passage still does not disprove that Israel has a future. Even if some Bible texts do call the Church a “true Israel,” this still would not prove that God has cancelled His covenants with national Israel, only that the Church has a share in them.

This may be a good point for the reader to go back and review the promises made to Israel discussed earlier in this chapter. Language could not state an unconditional and eternal promise more forcefully. Also, a review of the differences between Israel and the church might be helpful (see Chapter 11, The Doctrine of the Church, pp. 309ff.).

The New Testament still distinguishes between Israel and the Church (e.g., 1 Cor. 10:32). While this alone does not prove that Israel has a future Kingdom, it does mean that God distinguishes between Israel and the Church. This holds out the possibility of Israel having a future in God’s program. The eternal nature of Israel’s covenants coupled with the following texts makes that possibility a certainty. Long after Old Testament Israel had failed God and even after New Testament Israel had rejected her King, God still promises a glorious future for Israel (see also Rev. 1:6, 5:10, 20:4 and 6 for a future Kingdom on earth).

“And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end” [Luke 1:31-33].

And Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon
twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” [Matt. 19:28] (Note that this verse follows the prediction of a church in Matt. 16:18).

But when Peter saw this, he replied to the people, “Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered up, and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses....And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time [Acts 3:12-15, 17-21] (Even after the cross Peter still offers the Kingdom to the Jews).

I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin....For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them, When I take away their sins.” From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God’s choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable [Rom. 11:1,25-29].

And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel [Rev. 7:4].

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God….It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are those of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel [Rev. 21:10,12].

Premillennialism is unquestionably a Scriptural doctrine. We may now move from evidence proving the concept of a Kingdom on earth to the Bible’s teachings about the nature of that Kingdom. Obviously, passages that concern the nature of the Kingdom also prove there will be a Kingdom!

F. The Nature of the Millennium

God will bring about a future Kingdom on earth in order to keep His covenants with Israel. This Kingdom will demonstrate the blessings that can come through recognition of God’s authority by mankind.

1. The Duration of the Kingdom
Some verses give 1,000 years as the time period for God’s Kingdom on earth. There are six references to 1,000 years within Rev. 20:1-7. The term Millennium comes from a Latin phrase meaning “one-thousand years.” Although Revelation 20 gives a 1,000 year reign, most Scriptures speak of an eternal aspect to Messiah’s Kingdom on earth (see sections dealing with the eternal aspects of the various covenants, pp. 473ff., or 2 Sam. 7:13,28-29; 1 Chron. 17:12,14,23; Psa. 72:5,17; 89:3-4, 34-37; Isa. 9:6-7; 55:3; 56:5; 60:19-21; 61:8; Jer. 32:40; 33:14-17, 20-21; Ezek. 16:60; 43:7-9; Dan. 9:24; Hosea 2:19; Amos 9:15; and Luke 1:30-33).

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years [Rev. 20:6].

“And your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever” [2 Sam. 7:16].

“I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming. And He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed...."But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come....Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest one; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey him” [Dan. 7:13-14,18,27].

But Judah will be inhabited forever, and Jerusalem for all generations [Joel 3:20]. And the seventh angel sounded; and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever” [Rev. 11:15].

How is it possible for the Kingdom of God on earth to be 1,000 years in duration yet eternal at the same time? There need not be a contradiction. Such dramatic changes occur in Christ’s rule at the end of the one thousand years that in a sense the Kingdom can be said to be ended. Yet, Christ’s rule over the earth continues eternally. The Kingdom is actually eternal, but the end of 1,000 years brings in a new and different phase of that Kingdom. The reason the Kingdom can be viewed as both ending after 1,000 years and yet continuing eternally is that 1,000 years marks the earth’s transformation into sinless resubmission to God and a total merger into the rest of God’s universal Kingdom.

Christ will rule over the earth for 1,000 years with His capital at Jerusalem. While there is an overall righteousness and an overall blessing during this time, sin still exists, some people born during the Millennium will not trust in Christ, and there is still a measure, albeit greatly reduced, of the curse in effect. At the end of 1,000 years the old heavens and the old earth pass away. Either the present earth is renovated and restored to Edenic conditions, or God creates a completely new earth and transfers the earthly Kingdom to it. The throne of Christ as the Son of David continues forever, but at the end of the first 1,000 years the Kingdom changes greatly. Thus, in one
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sense the Kingdom ends after 1,000 years, but in another sense it is eternal.

At the end of the first 1,000 years the earthly Kingdom merges with the eternal Kingdom (1 Cor. 15:24-28). It might help to think of the earth as a rebellious province. Christ conquers it at His Second Coming and reoccupies it for 1,000 years. Then after Christ’s rule over the earth has been established and the world has demonstrated its allegiance to God, this formerly rebellious province is annexed to God’s universal Kingdom. The first 1,000 years marks the end of the “reconstruction” period. Thus, Christ’s rule never ends. Yet, the earth changes greatly after 1,000 years. Sin is completely and eternally removed. The earth ceases to be viewed as a separate kingdom with a separate identity. A similar relationship exists in corporate mergers or political annexations. The old business or region still exists, but it is so transformed by merger and by change that it could also be said to have ended. Did the Buick Corporation cease to exist when Billy Durant bought it in 1904 and joined it to General Motors in 1907? In one sense it did cease. In another sense it did not. Has Wales ceased to exist because of its absorption into the United Kingdom or Texas because of its annexation into the United States?

2. General Conditions in the Millennium

a. Better Health Conditions

While there is some death and thus some sickness in the Millennium, the effects of sin’s curse will be greatly diminished. Total elimination of sickness awaits the Eternal State (Rev. 21:4), but Isaiah teaches that death at age 100 will be considered very premature in the coming Kingdom (Isa. 65:20). Christ greatly reduced sickness at His first coming in social circles where He was accepted as King. While He did not heal everyone, it is safe to assume He would have brought much more freedom from sickness had He been accepted as King. When He finally does reign, lifespans will greatly increase, and misery due to sickness will greatly diminish. Some theologians believe that only “voluntary sickness” will exist in the Millennium, i.e., perhaps sickness comes only as a result of willful sin (See Jer. 31:30).

And on that day the deaf shall hear words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see [Isa. 29:18].

And no resident will say, I am sick…”[Isa. 33:24].

Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb will shout for joy [Isa. 35:5-6].

“No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his days; for the youth will die at the age of one hundred and the one who does not reach the age of one hundred shall be thought accursed” [Isa. 65:20].

“For I will restore you to health and I will heal you of your wounds, declares the LORD…” [Jer. 30:17] (This could be spiritual healing).

“I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken, and strengthen the sick…” [Ezek. 34:16].

“But for you who fear My name the sun of righteousness will rise with
healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall” [Mal. 4:2].

b. Increased Fertility

There will be both glorified and non-glorified people in the Kingdom. At the beginning, glorified saints (Old Testament saints, Church saints, and martyred tributational saints) will probably greatly outnumber the believing survivors of the Tribulation who still possess “normal” bodies. Over the 1,000-year period the number of glorified saints remains constant (Luke 20:35), but non-glorified people will multiply rapidly. Christ intends for the world to be filled after the destruction of the Tribulation. There will be little mortality, and given the better health conditions women may be fruitful for centuries with no danger of death in childbirth. The Millennium may start out with its glorified rulers outnumbering their subjects, but eventually glorified saints will be kept very busy administering a huge population.

“No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days…” [Isa. 65:20a].

“And I will multiply men on you, all the house of Israel, all of it; and the cities will be inhabited, and the waste places will be rebuilt. And I will multiply on you man and beast; and they will increase and be fruitful; and I will cause you to be inhabited as you were formerly and will treat you better than at the first. Thus you will know that I am the LORD” [Ezek. 36:10-11].

c. Labor and Productivity

The Millennium will not be a vacation period but a time when the earth is a “beehive” of activity. Christ will give an example of the blessings that result from obedience to His rule.

Then He will give you rain for the seed which you will sow in the ground, and bread from the yield of the ground, and it will be rich and plenteous; on that day your livestock will graze in a roomy pasture. Also the oxen and the donkeys which work the ground will eat salted fodder, which has been winnowed with shovel and fork. And on every lofty mountain and on every high hill there will be streams running with water on the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. And the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven days, on the day the LORD binds up the fracture of His people and heals the bruise He has inflicted [Isa. 30:23-26].
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For waters will break forth in the wilderness and streams in the Arabah. And the scorched land will become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; In the haunt of jackals, its resting place, grass becomes reeds and rushes [Isa. 35:6b-7].

“And I will make them and the places around My hill a blessing. And I will cause showers to come down in their season and they will be showers of blessing” [Ezek. 34:26].

So rejoice, O sons of Zion, and be glad in the LORD your God; For He has given you the early rain for your vindication. And He has poured down for you the rain, the early and the latter rain as before [Joel 2:23].

The combination of God’s grace and climatic changes will bring about unprecedented yields. The human race will forget famine and hunger.

Beat your breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine, for the land of my people in which thorns and briars shall come up; yea, for all the joyful houses, and for the jubilant city. Because the palace has been abandoned, the populated city forsaken. Hill and watch-tower have become caves forever, a delight for wild donkeys, a pasture for flocks; until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fertile field and the fertile field is considered as a forest [Isa. 32:12-15].

The wilderness and the desert will be glad, and the Arabah will rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it will blossom profusely...[Isa. 35:1-2a].

“And they shall come and shout for joy on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the bounty of the LORD - over the grain, and the new wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; and their life shall be like a watered garden, and they shall never languish again” [Jer. 31:12].

“But you, O mountains of Israel, you will put forth your branches and bear your fruit for My people Israel, for they will soon come. For behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be cultivated and sown. And I will multiply men on you, all the house of Israel, all of it; and the cities will be inhabited, and the waste places will be rebuilt. And I will multiply on you man and beast; and they will increase and be fruitful; and I will cause you to be inhabited as you were formerly and will treat you better than at the first. Thus you will know that I am the LORD” [Ezek. 36:8-11].

“Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness; and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, that you may not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations” [Ezek. 36:29-30].

Do not fear, O land, rejoice and be glad, for the LORD has done great things. Do not fear beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness have turned green, for the tree
Not By Bread Alone

has borne its fruit, the fig tree and the vine have yielded in full. So rejoice, O sons of Zion. And be glad in the LORD your God; for He has given you the early rain for your vindication. And He has poured down for you the rain, the early and the latter rain as before. And the threshing floors will be full of grain, and the vats will overflow with the new wine and oil. “Then I will make up to you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the creeping locust, the stripping locust, and the gnawing locust, My great army which I sent among you. And you shall have plenty to eat and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you; then My people will never be put to shame. Thus you will know, that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God and there is no other; and My people will never be put to shame” [Joel 2:21-27].

And it will come about in that day that the mountains will drip with sweet wine, and the hills will flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah will flow with water; and a spring will go out from the house of the LORD, to water the valley of Shittim [Joel 3:18].

“Behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when the plowman will overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; when the mountains will drip sweet wine, and all the hills will be dissolved. Also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel...” [Amos 9:13-14a].

“But now I will not treat the remnant of this people as in the former days, declares the LORD of hosts. For there will be peace for the seed; the vine will yield its fruit, the land will yield its produce, and the heavens will give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to inherit all these things” [Zech. 8:11-12].

For what comeliness and beauty will be theirs! Grain will make the young men flourish, and new wine the virgins [Zech. 9:17].

The Millennium will not be the same as heaven with a complete absence of the curse. It is not even a restored Eden as sin and death will exist. Enough children will refuse to trust in Christ to allow for a final rebellion at the end of the 1,000 years (See Rev. 20:7-10). Although the curse will be diminished, it is not completely removed. Man still will have to work to survive. Many pursuits that occupy man’s time and energy at present will continue on in the Millennium. Leon Wood surmises life in the Kingdom will be this way:

“Basic structures and institutions of society will probably continue. Life-styles and patterns, with individuals manifesting their distinct personalities, will remain. People will eat, sleep, earn a living, marry, have children and finally die. There will be cities, farms, schools, industries, and stores. The difference will consist in the presence of proper, enjoyable relationships among people and especially toward God.”

Rather than being heaven or Eden, the Millennium will show what the earth could have been if Christ had been accepted as King at His first coming. The Millennium will prove that a sinful and fallen race still has a potential for great blessings if it will but subject itself to Christ’s authority. Many

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verses give a picture of normal human work in the Kingdom such as planting and building (Deut 30:9; Isa. 62:8-9; 65:21-23; Jer. 31:5, 23-25). Many activities will be the same as now, but the resulting blessings from them will be much greater for many reasons. Satan will be bound. The curse will be diminished. Rain will increase. There will be a perfect system of education, stable families, little crime, no war, few lazy and unproductive citizens to drain society, no medical or legal costs, access to God’s wisdom, angelic presence, glorified rulers, etc. Although sin still exists and man must still work, there will be no lack of material blessings for a world that submits to Christ’s authority and follows His wisdom. Production will far exceed need.

The Word of God especially emphasizes that the distribution of wealth will be completely fair. The only losers will be those who refuse to worship Christ (see Zech. 14:16ff.).

*And each of them will sit under his vine and under his fig tree, with no one to make them afraid, for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken [Micah 4:4].*

The LORD has sworn by His right hand and by His strong arm, “I will never again give your grain as food for your enemies; nor will foreigners drink your new wine, for which you have labored. **But those who garner it will eat it,** and praise the LORD; and those who gather it will drink it in the courts of My sanctuary [Isa. 62:8-9].

“They shall not build, and another inhabit, they shall not plant, and another eat; for as the lifetime of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, and My chosen ones shall wear out the work of their hands. **They shall not labor in vain,** or bear children for calamity; for they are the offspring of those blessed by the LORD, and their descendants with them” [Isa. 65:22].

d. Partial Removal of the Curse

The partial removal of the curse during the Millennium has already been assumed in previous material. Here that idea is proven. Increase in lifespans, fertility, productivity, the reduction of sickness, and especially changes in animal behavior all indicate a lessening of sin’s harmful affects. Since death will still occur in the Millennium, it is not correct to think the millennial Kingdom will be a total eradication of sin or a total removal of its curse, but the Millennium will bring in a great reduction in sorrow caused by sin. There was no death before the fall. Thus, we must assume that originally no animals consumed meat and that they were all tame and friendly to man. Millennial conditions for animals revert to the original pre-fall status (see also Isa. 35:9).

And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the kid, and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy will lead them. Also the cow and the bear will graze together; their young will lie down together; and the lion will eat straw like the ox. And the nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper’s den. They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” [Isa. 11:6-9].

**“The wolf and the lamb shall graze together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and dust shall be the serpent’s food. They shall do no**
evil or harm in all My holy mountain, says the LORD” [Isa. 65:25]. 70

“And I will make a covenant of peace with them and **eliminate harmful beasts** from the land, so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods” [Ezek. 34:25].

“In that day I will also make a **covenant for them with the beasts of the field**, the birds of the sky, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and will make them lie down in safety [Hosea 2:18].

e. Glory

Christ will return in a glorious manner and bring glory to the world. The Millennium will be a time of unimaginable splendor with visible displays of God’s power, majesty, and wealth.

[Then the LORD will create over the whole area of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, even smoke, and the brightness of a flaming fire by night; for over all the **glory will be a canopy** [Isa. 4:5].

Then the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed, for the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and His **glory** will be before His elders [Isa. 24:23].

It will **blossom profusely** and rejoice with rejoicing and shout of joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They will see the **glory of the LORD**, the **majesty** of our God [Isa. 35:2].

f. Joy

The Kingdom period will be a time of happiness and joy.

Physical and emotional pain will be replaced by joy that comes from the personal presence of Christ the King.

“**The whole earth is at rest** and quiet; they break forth into **shouts of joy**” [Isa. 14:7].

He will swallow up death for all time, and the **Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces**, and He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken. And it will be said in that day, “**Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited** that He might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; **let us rejoice and be glad** in His salvation” [Isa. 25:8-9].

You will have songs as in the night when you keep the festival; and **gladness of heart** as when one marches to the sound of the flute, to
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go to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel [Isa. 30:29].

Sing to the LORD a new song, *sing His praise from the end of the earth!* You who go down to the sea, and all that is in it. You islands and those who dwell on them. Let the wilderness and its cities lift up their voices, the settlements where Kedar inhabits. Let the inhabitants of Sela sing aloud, let them shout for joy from the tops of the mountains. Let them give glory to the LORD, and declare His praise in the coastlands [Isa. 42:10-12].

“Whereas you have been forsaken and hated with no one passing through, I will make you an everlasting pride, a *joy* from generation to generation” [Isa. 60:15].

Instead of your shame you will have a double portion, And instead of humiliation they will shout for joy over their portion. Therefore they will possess a double portion in their land, *everlasting joy* will be theirs [Isa. 61:7].

“But be glad and *rejoice forever* in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing, and her people for gladness. I will also rejoice in Jerusalem, and be glad in My people; and there will no longer be heard *in her the voice of weeping* and the sound of crying” [Isa. 65:18-19].

“Be joyful with Jerusalem and *rejoice* for her, all you who love her; be *exceedingly glad* with her, all you who mourn over her, That you may nurse and be satisfied with her comforting breasts, that you may suck and be delighted with her bountiful bosom.” For thus says the LORD, “Behold, I extend the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall be nursed, you shall be carried on the hip and fondled on the knees. As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. Then you shall see this, and *your heart shall be glad,* and your bones shall flourish like the new grass; and the hand of the LORD shall be made known to His servants, but He shall be indignant toward His enemies” [Isa. 66:10-14].

“Thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, I will restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob and have compassion on his dwelling places; and the city shall be rebuilt on its ruin, and the palace shall stand on its rightful place. And from them shall proceed *thanksgiving and the voice of those who make merry*; and I will multiply them, and they shall not be diminished; I will also honor them, and they shall not be insignificant’ “ [Jer. 30:18-19].

“Then the virgin shall rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old, together, for I *will turn their mourning into joy,* and will comfort them, and *give them joy* for their sorrow. And I will fill the soul of the priests with abundance, and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness,” declares the LORD [Jer. 31:13-14].

**Shout for joy,** O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O Israel! **Rejoice and exult with all your heart,** O daughter of Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away His judgments against you, He has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you will fear disaster no more. In that day it will be said to Jerusalem: “Do not be afraid, O Zion; Do not let your hands
fall limp. The LORD your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with 

shouts of joy” [Zeph. 3:14-17].

g. Wealth

The wealth of the world will pour into Jerusalem and be given to Christ to whom it belongs. 71

“And nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes round about, and see; They all gather together, they come to you. Your sons will come from afar, and your daughters will be carried in the arms. Then you will see and be radiant, and your heart will thrill and rejoice; because the abundance of the sea will be turned to you, the wealth of the nations will come to you. A multitude of camels will cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba will come; they will bring gold and frankincense, and will bear good news of the praises of the LORD. All the flocks of Kedar will be gathered together to you, the rams of Nebaioth will minister to you; they will go up with acceptance on My altar, and I shall glorify My glorious house. Who are these who fly like a cloud, and like the doves to their lattices? Surely the coastlands will wait for Me; and the ships of Tarshish will come first, to bring your sons from afar, their silver and their gold with them, and for the name of the Lord your God, and for the Holy One of Israel be-

cause He has glorified you. And foreigners will build up your walls, and their kings will minister to you; for in My wrath I struck you, and in My favor I have had compassion on you. And your gates will be open continually; they will not be closed day or night, so that men may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession. For the nation and the kingdom which will not serve you will perish, and the nations will be utterly ruined. The glory of Lebanon will come to you, the juniper, the box tree, and the cypress together, to beautify the place of My sanctuary; and I shall make the place of My feet glorious. And the sons of those who afflicted you will come bowing to you, and all those who despised you will bow themselves at the soles of your feet; and they will call you the city of the LORD, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas you have been forsaken and hated with no one passing through, I will make you an everlasting pride, a joy from generation to generation. You will also suck the milk of nations, and will suck the breast of kings; then you will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. Instead of bronze I will bring gold, and instead of iron I will bring silver, and instead of wood, bronze, and instead of stones, iron. And I will make peace your administrators, and righteousness your overseers” [Isa. 60:3-17].

“And I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations; and I will fill this house with glory,” says the LORD of hosts [Haggai 2:7].

And Judah also will fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the sur-

71 It seems there will still be national distinctions in the Millennium (Isa. 19:21-23; Zech. 14:18). Rev. 21:24 and 22:2 also refer to “nations” as existing either in the Millennium or in the Eternal State.
rounding nations will be gathered, gold and silver and garments in great abundance [Zechariah 14:14].

3. Political Conditions In the Millennial Kingdom

The world has been governed by fallen men for thousands of years. While Christians can applaud efforts to reduce bloodshed, it is quite unrealistic to expect that man can eliminate war. War is generated by man’s selfishness (James 4:1-2). Without a change in man’s sin nature, there can be no peace (Isaiah 57:21). Christ Himself predicted an increase of wars in the end times (Matthew 24:6-7). Only after the “Prince of Peace” comes will there be world peace under a perfect government.

a. Perfect and Lasting Peace among the World’s Nations

In his days may the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace till the moon is no more [Psalm 72:7].

And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war [Isaiah 2:4].

…His name will be called…Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace…[Isaiah 9:6-7].

And the work of righteousness will be peace. Then my people will live in a peaceful habitation…Isaiah 32:17-18.

“And all your sons will be taught of the LORD; and the well-being [Hebrew Shalom, i.e., peace] of your sons will be great. In righteousness you will be established; You will be far from oppression, for you will not fear; and from terror, for it will not come near you” [Isaiah 54:13-14].

“Violence will not be heard again in your land, nor devastation or destruction within your borders…” [Isaiah 60:18].

For thus says the LORD, “Behold, I extend peace to her like a river…” [Isaiah 66:12].

“And they will live in it securely; and they will build houses, plant vineyards, and live securely…” [Ezekiel 28:26].

“And I will make a covenant of peace with them….they will be secure on their land…..And they will no longer be a prey to the nations…” [Ezekiel 34:25,27,28].

“…And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land…” [Hosea 2:18].

And He will judge between many peoples and render decisions for mighty, distant nations. They will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they train for war [Micah 4:3].

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem; and the bow of war will be cut off. And He will speak peace to the nations; and His dominion will be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth [Zechariah 9:9-10].

Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. So Jerusalem will be holy, and strangers will pass through it no more [Joel 3:17].

“I will plant them on their land, and they will not again be rooted out from their land which I have given them, says the LORD your God” [Amos 9:15].

But I will camp around My house because of an army, because of him who passes by and returns; and no oppressor will pass over them anymore, for now I have seen with My eyes [Zech. 9:8].

And people will live in it, and there will be no more curse, for Jerusalem will dwell in security [Zech. 14:11].

b. The Kingdom’s Judicial System

Christ will eliminate all perversion in the court system. The poor will be treated fairly, and those who oppress them unfairly will suffer punishment. Christ’s administration of justice in the courts will ensure accurate verdicts and fair sentences. The prophets promise that each man will enjoy the fruits of his own labor without being defrauded by the criminal or the lazy (see Isa. 62:9, 65:22; Micah 4:4).

While millennial courts will not tolerate discrimination based on race or economic status, there will be discrimination based on “religion”. Christ will chastise those who refuse to worship Him (see Zech. 14:16-19). There will be no “separation of church and state” in the Millennium for Christ has authority over both political and spiritual realms. Jerusalem will be the world’s political capital because it will be the world’s center for worship.

The very existence of a judicial system implies that people will still sin in the Millennium. Although Satan is bound, the sin nature will still produce a number who rebel against Christ and likely even some criminals. Christ will rule with a “rod of iron,” and His perfect government will include capital punishment. (See Isa. 11:4; Jer. 31:30; possibly also Isa. 65:20; 66:24). Just as the present world system lacks peace so it also lacks a consistent system of justice. Wickedness goes unpunished. There is favoritism and oppression. Christ the perfect Judge will put an end to all injustice and usher in the ideal judicial system. (See also Psa. 45:6-7; 72:2, 4; 98:9; Isa. 32:1; 54:14; 62:8-9; 65:22-23; Jer. 31:29-30).

Before the LORD, for He is coming; for He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in His faithfulness [Psa. 96:13].

...For the law will go forth from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples...” [Isa. 2:3b-4a].

There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his Kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness... [Isa. 9:7].

...And He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make a decision by what His ears hear; but with righteousness He will judge the poor,
and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; and He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, and faithfulness the belt about His waist [Isa. 11:3b-5].

Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness will abide in the fertile field [Isa. 32:16].

The LORD is exalted, for He dwells on high; He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness [Isa. 33:5].

“Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry out or raise His voice, nor make His voice heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break, and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not be disheartened or crushed, until He has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law” [Isa. 42:1-4].

“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, ‘The LORD our righteousness’ “ [Jer. 23:5-6].

“In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth” [Jer. 33:15].

...For from Zion will go forth the law. Even the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He will judge between many peoples and render decisions for mighty, distant nations... [Micah 4:2d-3].

c. Individual Welfare as a Priority

There is a difference between justice and goodness. Not only will Christ’s millennial government be just, it will also be compassionate. Political repression will be long forgotten as Christ will make His subject’s welfare and blessing a top priority. There will be a fair balance between justice and mercy, toughness and tenderness. Christ will be the only dictator who cares for the individual needs of His people.

Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, in His arm He will gather the lambs, and carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes [Isa. 40:11].

d. The Millennial Government as Dictatorial in Form and World-wide in Extent

Christians should delight at the prospect of Christ’s coming reign over the whole world. It will be a complete subjugation of the world both in terms of degree of control and geographical extent. Christ will rule with complete power and rule over the complete world.

“Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Thine inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, Thou shalt shatter them like earthenware” [Psa. 2:8-9].

All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will worship before Thee. For the kingdom is the LORD’S and He rules over the nations [Psa. 22:27-28].
May he also rule from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth [Psa. 72:8].

And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war [Isa. 2:4].

...For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. Then it will come about in that day that the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples; and His resting place will be glorious [Isa. 11:9b-10].

“And your gates will be open continually; they will not be enclosed day or night, so that men may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession. For the nation and the kingdom which will not serve you will perish, and the nations will be utterly ruined” [Isa. 60:11-12].

“Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth” [Dan. 2:35] (The great statue that is crushed refers to gentile kingdoms in the context. The smiting stone is the Messiah and His Kingdom).

“And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed....Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him” [Dan. 7:14,27].

And many nations will come and say, “Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD and to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us about His ways and that we may walk in His paths.” For from Zion will go forth the law, even the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He will judge between many peoples and render decisions for mighty, distant nations. Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they train for war [Micah 4:2-3].

“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity” [Micah 5:2].

“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” [Hab. 2:14].

“For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, that all of them may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him shoulder to shoulder” [Zeph. 3:9].

“Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘It will yet be that peoples will come, even
the inhabitants of many cities. And the inhabitants of one will go to another saying, “Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts, I will also go.” ‘So many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the LORD.’ Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew saying, “let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you” ’ [Zech. 8:20-23].

So many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew saying, “let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you” ’ [Zech. 8:20-23].

And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem; and the bow of war will be cut off. And He will speak peace to the nations; and His dominion will be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth [Zech. 9:10].

And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one [Zech. 14:9].

“And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father” [Rev. 2:26-27].

And the seventh angel sounded; and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever” [Rev. 11:15].

“These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful” [Rev. 17:14].

And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” [Rev. 19:15-16].

4. The Governors and the Governed in the Kingdom

a. Authorities in the Kingdom

(1) Obviously, the Messiah is the ultimate sovereign in the millennial Kingdom. Numerous verses have already established the fact of Christ’s rule (Psa. 2:6; Isa. 9:6-7; Dan. 7:14; Luke 1:31-33; Matt. 19:28; 25:31; 1 Cor. 15:24, etc.). Various names for Christ also express His authority as the millennial King (Branch, The Lord Our Righteousness, Jehovah, Rod of Jesse, Son of Man, King, Judge, Lawgiver, Messiah which means “anointed one”, King of kings and Lord of lords, Shepherd, The Light, Stone, Redeemer, Sun of Righteousness, Son of David). Isa. 33:22 is a good verse that summarizes Christ’s eventual rule.

For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; He will save us [Isa. 33:22].

The three descriptions “judge, lawgiver, and king” remind us of the three branches of American government (executive, legislative, judicial). The Constitution of the United States created a system of checks and balances to prevent dictatorial rule. In the Millennium the Lord Jesus Christ will exercise ultimate control over all three areas of government. He will make law. He will administer the law. He will judge. The coming Kingdom will be a perfect dictatorship. It will not technically be a monarchy but a theocracy.
(2) King David as a Millennial Ruler

Many verses teach that “David” will rule in the Kingdom (in addition to verses below see: Isa. 55:3-4; Jer. 33:15-17; Amos 9:11).

“But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them” [Jer. 30:9].

“Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken” [Ezek. 34:23-24].

“And My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances, and keep My statutes, and observe them. And they shall live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they and their sons, and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant shall be their prince forever” [Ezek. 37:24-25].

Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days [Hosea 3:5].

Some believe that “David” is a name for Christ Himself as the greater “Son of David.” Others think that these “David” passages refer to the historical David of the Old Testament who will be resurrected to serve as a vice-regent under Christ.

Admittedly, these passages seem to refer to the supreme ruler during the Kingdom, and this makes interpreters think of “David” as a name for Christ. Yet, resurrected Bible saints will have positions in the Kingdom of God (see Matt. 8:11; 19:28; 20:23). Presumably, resurrected King David will have an extremely high position in the millennial reign from the throne of David. The name David should be taken as a literal reference unless there is strong evidence to the contrary. The Bible strongly associates Christ with David but comes short of calling Him “David” (Branch unto David Jer. 23:5; Son of David at least 15 times; seed of David John 7:42, Rom. 1:3, 2 Tim. 2:8; root of David Rev. 5:5; root and offspring of David Rev. 22:16). There can be no objection to the reasonable conclusion that David of old will become a “prime minister” in Christ’s millennial government. Passages that seem to ascribe the highest rule to David may be speaking in terms of David as the highest authority over Israel (as opposed to a world sovereign) or of David as the highest millennial ruler from among those who had been part of the fallen race. Thus, while Jesus Christ will be the ultimate King, David will likely be a secondary king. The Scripture also teaches about tribal rulers.

(3) The Twelve Apostles

The twelve apostles will serve as judges for Israel’s twelve tribes. The lost tribes of Israel may indeed be lost concerning human knowledge, but they are definitely known to God.

And Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, You also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” [Matt. 19:28].

(4) Other Lesser Nobles and Judges over Israel

Several passages mention lesser millennial rulers in general terms. There will be princes, nobles, judges, and city officials. We do not know specific governmental structure, but the Bible gives enough information to conclude that there will be an
Elaborate system in place with many officials.

Behold, a king will reign righteous, and princes will rule justly [Isa. 32:1].

“This shall be his land for a possession in Israel; so My princes shall no longer oppress My people, but they shall give the rest of the land to the house of Israel according to their tribes” [Ezek. 45:8].

The deliverers will ascend Mount Zion to judge the mountain of Esau, and the kingdom will be the LORD’S [Obadiah v. 21].

“And he said to him, ‘Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, be in authority over ten cities’....And he said to him also, ‘And you are to be over five cities’ “ [Luke 19:17,19].

As Christ will be “King of kings” (establishing the existence of secondary kings) and will be a worldwide ruler, one can expect that the nations of the world will have officials under Christ. The Bible promises a role for glorified church saints in sharing in Christ’s rule (see 1 Cor. 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26-27; 5:10; 20:4, 6).

b. Those Governed in the Kingdom

(1) Israel Restored

The restoration of Israel’s people to the Promised Land is a major subject in Biblical prophecy (see Isa. 1:11ff.; 27:12; 43:5-7; Jer. 30:18, 31:8-9; 32:36-40; 33:11ff.; Ezek. 11:16ff.; 20:34,42; 28:25-26; 34:12ff.; 36:24ff.; all of Ezek. 37; Hosea 1:11; Joel 3:1; Amos 9:14-15; Obadiah v. 17; Micah 4:6-7; Zeph. 3:20; Zech. 8:8, 10:10). Complete fulfillment of these predictions did not take place in the return after the Babylonian exile. Often the promises of restoration mention eternal restoration and involve details of end-time events in the context.

Then it will happen on that day that the Lord will again recover the second time with His hand the remnant of His people who will remain from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And He will lift up a standard for the nations, and will assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth [Isa. 11:11-12].

“Behold, I will gather them out of all the lands to which I have driven them in My anger, in My wrath, and in great indignation; and I will bring them back to this place and make them dwell in safety. And they shall be My people, and I will be their God” [Jer. 32:37-38].

“As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day. And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land” [Ezek. 34:12-13].

“Also, I will restore the captivity of My people Israel, and they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them, they will also plant vineyards and drink their wine, and make gardens and eat their fruit. I will also plant them on their land, and they will not again be rooted out from their land which I have given them, says the LORD your God” [Amos 9:14-15].

(2) Israel Reunited
Not only will Jews return to the land, they will also return as one united nation. After Solomon’s death the country was split into the ten northern tribes called Israel and the two southern tribes called Judah. The prophets teach that when the Jews return to their land in the end times this division will be healed and long forgotten.

“In those days the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel, and they will come together from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers as an inheritance” [Jer. 3:18] (see Jer. 33:14).

“And you, son of man, take for yourself one stick and write on it, ‘For Judah and for the sons of Israel, his companions;’ then take another stick and write on it, ‘for Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his companions.’ Then join them for yourself one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand. And when the sons of your people speak to you saying, ‘Will you not declare to us what you mean by these?’...” And say to them, “Thus says the Lord GOD, behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations, and they will no longer be divided into two kingdoms” [Ezek. 37:16-18, 21-22].

Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, “Now I shall restore the fortunes of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I shall be jealous for My holy name” [Ezek. 39:25].

And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together, and they will appoint for themselves one leader... [Hosea 1:11].

(3) Israel Regenerated

Israel will be reunited and restored to her land. The major difference between the prophetic restoration of Israel in the end times and the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 is that the Bible speaks of a return to Israel by believing peoples. In the Kingdom Israel will be dedicated to her Messiah.

[And thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins” [Rom. 11:26-27].

“And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD’ for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” [Jer. 31:34].

[And I shall purge from you the rebels and those who transgress against Me; I shall bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they will not enter the land of Israel. Thus you will know that I am the LORD....For on My holy mountain, on the high mountain of Israel,” declares the Lord GOD, “there the whole house of Israel, all of them, will serve Me in the land; there I shall accept them, and there I shall seek your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your holy things” [Ezek. 20:38,40].

(4) Israel’s Prominence

During the Millennium Israel will be the most powerful and prominent nation in the
world. It will be the ultimate “superpower.” Many verses specifically teach that all other nations will be subordinate to Israel. 72

When the LORD will have compassion on Jacob, and again choose Israel, and settle them in their own land, then strangers will join them and attach themselves to the house of Jacob. And the peoples will take them along and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them as an inheritance in the land of the LORD as male servants and female servants; and they will take their captors captive, and will rule over their oppressors [Isa. 14:1-2].

Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I will lift up My hand to the nations, and set up My standard to the peoples; and they will bring your sons in their bosom, and your daughters will be carried on their shoulders. And kings will be your guardians, and their princesses your nurses. They will bow down to you with their faces to the earth, and lick the dust of your feet: and you will know that I am the LORD; those who hopefully wait for Me will not be put to shame” [Isa. 49:22-23].

“Surely the coastlands will wait for Me; and the ships of Tarshish will come first, to bring your sons from afar, their silver and their gold with them, for the name of the LORD your God, and for the Holy One of Israel because He has glorified you. And foreigners will build up your walls, and their kings will minister to you; for in My wrath I have struck you, and in My favor I have had compassion on you. And your gates will be open continually; they will not be closed day or night, so that men may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession. For the nation and the kingdom which will not serve you will perish, and the nations will be utterly ruined. The glory of Lebanon will come to you, the juniper, the box tree, and the cypress together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I shall make the place of my feet glorious. And the sons of those who afflicted you will come bowing to you, and all those who despised you will bow themselves at the soles of your feet; and they will call you the city of the LORD, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel” [Isa. 60:9-14] (see also vv. 15-17).

And strangers will stand and pasture your flocks, and foreigners will be your farmers and your vine-dressers. But you will be called the priests of the LORD; you will be spoken of as ministers of our God. You will eat the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast [Isa. 61:5-6].

And the nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; and you will be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD will designate. You will also be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. It will no longer be said to you, “Forsaken”, nor your land will it any longer be said, “Desolate”; but you will be called, “My delight is in her”, and your land, “Married”; for the LORD delights in you, and to Him your land will be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so your sons will marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so your God will rejoice over you [Isa. 62:2-5].

It will be a day when they will come to you from Assyria and the cities of Egypt, from Egypt even to the Euphrates, even from sea to sea and mountain to mountain [Micah 7:12].

“Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘In those days ten men from all the nations of every language will grasp the garment of a Jew saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you” ’ [Zech. 8:23].

Glorified saints will be rulers in the Kingdom. Among non-glorified peoples those who are Jewish will be served by gentle peoples. Israel’s prominence is largely due to the presence of God Himself in her midst.

(5) God’s Presence in Israel

The prophets predict that God Himself will dwell in Israel during the coming Kingdom. All of these passages give indirect confirmation of Christ’s deity. They also serve to explain Israel’s domination of the rest of the world during the Millennium. God Himself will dwell in Israel.

Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. So Jerusalem will be holy, and strangers will pass through it no more [Joel 3:17].

The deliverers will ascend Mount Zion to judge the mountain of Esau, and the kingdom will be the LORD’s [Obadiah v. 21].

And many nations will come and say, “Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD and to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach

us about His ways and that we may walk in His paths.” For from Zion will go forth the law, even the word of the LORD from Jerusalem, and He will judge between many peoples and render decisions for mighty, distant nations. Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they train for war….and the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion” [Micah 4:2-3, 7c] (see also Isa. 2:2-4).

Shout for joy, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away His judgments against you, He has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; You will fear disaster no more. In that day it will be said to Jerusalem: “Do not be afraid, O Zion: do not let your hands fall limp. The LORD your God is in your midst...”[Zeph. 3:14-17a].

“For, behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst, declares the LORD….And the LORD will possess Judah as His portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem” [Zech. 2:10, 12].

“Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘I am exceedingly jealous for Zion, yes, with great wrath I am jealous for her.’ “Thus says the LORD, ‘I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts will be called the Holy Mountain’ “ [Zech. 8:2-3].

73 Other verses that directly or indirectly establish the deity of the Messiah include: Psa. 2:7, 12; 45:6-7; 72:2-8, 17; 110:1; Isa. 7:14; 9:6; 40:3 and 10; Jer. 23:5-6; Dan. 7:13-14; Micah 5:2; Zech. 12:10; Mal. 3:1.
Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one [Zech. 14:3-4, 9].

(6) Jerusalem as the World Capital

Jerusalem will be a world power center both politically and spiritually. The entire world will be governed from Jerusalem.

Now it will come about that in the last days, the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, Come let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways, and that we may walk in His paths. For the law will go forth from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war [Isa. 2:1-4] (see also Micah 4:1-3).

On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen; all day and all night they will never keep silent. You who remind the LORD, take no rest for yourselves; and give Him no rest until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth [Isa. 62:6-7].

“At that time they shall call Jerusalem ‘The Throne of the LORD’, and all the nations will be gathered to it, to Jerusalem...” [Jer. 3:17].

“So many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the LORD” [Zech. 8:22].

Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths. And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be no rain on them [Zech. 14:16-17].

5. Spiritual Conditions in the Millennium

a. Satan is bound for the entire 1,000 years (see Rev. 20:1-3). While the sin nature still exists, Satan’s confinement in the abyss will definitely cause spiritual improvement in the Kingdom’s people.

b. The curse will be partially lifted (see previous section, General Conditions in the Millennium, subsection, “Partial Removal of the Curse”, pp. 508-509).

c. God the Son will reside on earth (see previous section, Political Conditions in the Millennium, subsection “God’s Presence in Israel”, p. 521-22).

d. All unsaved people will be excluded from the beginning of the Kingdom (see pp. 465-471, “The Judgment of Israel” and “The Judgment of the Nations” under the “Transi-

74 Again note references to saved in Egypt and Assyria during the Millennium (Isa. 19:21-25 and Zech. 14:18).
tion from Tribulation to Kingdom”). It is true that some who are born in the Millennium will not accept Christ as Savior. Nevertheless, the vast majority of people who live in the Kingdom will be saved in contrast to the present age where believers constitute only a small minority. The fact that an overwhelming majority of people will be believers contributes to the Millennium being the greatest time of spirituality in man’s history.

e. There will be a Great Outpouring of the Holy Spirit

It would be interesting to know more about the Holy Spirit’s work in the Millennium. His Kingdom ministry does not seem to be the same as it was under the Law administration or as it is now under the Church administration. Isaiah clearly predicted that the Holy Spirit would guide the Messiah in His kingly rule.

Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him...[Isa. 11:1-2a].

In addition to enabling the Messiah to govern wisely and righteously, God will pour out the Holy Spirit upon virtually all Kingdom saints.

Until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high...[Isa. 32:15].

“For I will pour out water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring, and My blessing on your descendants...” [Isa. 44:3].

“Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances” [Ezek. 36:26-27].

“And I will not hide My face from them any longer for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,” declares the LORD GOD [Ezek. 39:29].

Joel 2:28-29 is perhaps the most important text concerning the Holy Spirit’s role in the Kingdom. Peter quotes it on Pentecost (see Acts 2:16ff.). It is important to note that the apostolic experiences on Pentecost illustrate Joel 2:28-29, but they do not specifically and totally fulfill Joel’s predictions. There was no occurrence of cosmic signs, or blotting out of the sun, or judgment of the nations on Pentecost (see context of Joel 2:28-29 in Joel 2:30-3:2). Thus, Joel 2:28-29 does not make a prediction about the church administration but about Christ’s future Kingdom on earth (see also Joel 2:30-3:2 to get the time frame on this prediction).

“And it will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. And even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days” [Joel 2:28-29].

Although one cannot be certain because of the paucity of references, it is likely that the Holy Spirit’s millennial work will be similar to what would have happened at Christ’s first coming had He been accepted as King. The miracles of the gospels gave a foretaste of the coming age (see Heb. 2:4, 6:5). The Lord’s healing ministry was a partial fulfillment of what will be in the Kingdom (see Matt. 8:15ff.). There will be many prophets, many miracle workers, many healers in the Kingdom (in contrast to the present Rom. 8:22). We do not know whether there will be a Spirit-baptizing ministry into the body
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of Christ, but it is safe to think the Holy Spirit will indwell (see Ezek. 36:26 above) and regenerate (John 3:3,5). Imagine a world full of Joshuas, Gideons, Daniels, Eljahs and Elijahs exhibiting the power of the Holy Spirit (see Matt. 11:11).

f. Unified Worship in Jerusalem

Many of the same verses which teach that Jerusalem will be a world political capital also teach that it will be a worldwide center for worship (see Isa. 2:2-4; Micah 4:1ff.; Zeph. 3:9-10; Zech. 8:20-23, 14:16-21). Both of the passages from Zechariah teach that the world will celebrate the “Feast of Tabernacles” during the Millennium. Here is one of many indications that the spiritual system during the Kingdom will have many similarities to the dispensation of Law. Many practices from the Law of Moses will be reinstituted (see pp. 527-29 “The Millennial Temple/Millennial Worship”). The Millennium will definitely have a “Jewish flavor.”

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And it will come about that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called the city of righteousness, a faithful city.” Zion will be redeemed with justice, and her repentant ones with righteousness [Isa. 1:26-27].

And a highway will be there, a road-way, and it will be called the High-way of Holiness. The unclean will not travel on it, but it will be for him who walks that way, and fools will not wander on it. No lion will be there, nor will any vicious beast go up on it; these will not be found there. But the redeemed will walk there [Isa. 4:3-4].

Awake, awake, clothe yourself in your strength, O Zion; clothe yourself in your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city. For the uncircumcised and the unclean will no more come into you [Isa. 52:1].

“Violence will not be heard again in your land, nor devastation or destruction within your borders; but you will call your walls salvation, and your gates praise....Then all your people

And a highway will be there, a roadway, and it will be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean will not travel on it, but it will be for him who walks that way, and fools will not wander on it. No lion will be there, nor will any vicious beast go up on it; these will not be found there. But the redeemed will walk there [Isa. 35:8-9].

Nevertheless, the existence of sin and a small minority of unbelievers will be more than offset by an abundance of holiness, obedience, righteousness, and truth. The Kingdom will begin with all of its citizens having been saved. (See Matt. 13:41-43, 49-50; 25:34,41,46 and pp. 465-471 on “The Judgment of Israel” and “The Judgment of the Nations” under the “Transition from Tribulation to Kingdom”). These are either believing survivors of the Tribulation or resurrected and glorified believers. The majority of those born throughout the entire 1,000 years will trust and obey Christ. This effects all areas of civic life, e.g., economics, crime, education, etc.
will be righteous; they will possess the land forever…” [Isa. 60:18,21].

For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes the things sown in it to spring up, so the LORD GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations [Isa. 61:11].

“‘But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” [Jer. 31:33-34].

And I shall purge from you the rebels and those who transgress against Me; I shall bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they will not enter the land of Israel. Thus you will know that I am the LORD....”For on My holy mountain, on the high mountain of Israel,” declares the Lord GOD, “there the whole house of Israel, all of them will serve Me in the land; there I shall accept them, and there I shall seek your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your holy, things....And there you will remember your ways and all your deeds, with which you have defiled yourselves; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for all the evil things that you have done” [Ezek. 36:24-31].

“And they will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be my people, and I will be their God. And My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances, and keep my statutes, and observe them” [Ezek. 37:23-24].

And He said to me, “Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever. And the house of Israel will

bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. And you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God. Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness; and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, that you may not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations. Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations” [Ezek. 20:38, 40, 43].

“For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and
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not again defile My holy name, neither they nor their kings, by their harlotry and by the corpses of their kings when they die....As for you, son of man, describe the temple to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure the plan [Ezek. 43:7,10].

“In that day you will feel no shame because of all your deeds by which you have rebelled against Me; for then I will remove from your midst your proud, exulting ones. And you will never again be haughty on my holy mountain....The remnant of Israel will do no wrong and tell no lies; nor will a deceitful tongue be found in their mouths; for they shall feed and lie down with no one to make them tremble” [Zeph. 3:11,13].

“Thus says the LORD, ‘I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts will be called the Holy Mountain’ “ [Zech. 8:3].

“In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity....And I will bring the third part through the fire, refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them; I will say, ‘They are My people,’ and they will say, ‘The LORD is my God’ “ [Zech. 13:1,9].

In that day there will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, “HOLY TO THE LORD.” And the cooking pots in the LORD’s house will be like the bowls before the altar. And every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to the LORD of hosts; and all who sacrifice will come and take of them and boil in them. And there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts in that day [Zech. 14:20-21].

[A]nd thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “the deliverer will come from Zion, he will remove ungodliness from Jacob” [Rom. 11:26].

It is possible that only saved people will be allowed to enter the land of Israel (Isa. 52:1; 60:21; Ezek. 20:40) and that there will be evangelistic efforts to the gentiles which are mostly successful (Isa. 42:6, 60:3).

h. Full Knowledge and Instruction in the Word of God

With Christ in residence in Jerusalem and with the Holy Spirit poured out upon God’s people, there will be widespread knowledge of God’s truth. Christ taught that John the Baptist’s ministry would be insignificant compared to the Kingdom (Matt. 11:11). Satan will not be operative in his blinding work (Rev. 20:1-3), nor will Christ permit false prophets to deceive. Instead of social institutions suppressing the gospel, they will all promote it. Those who reject Christ at this time will be deeply foolish and deeply guilty (see also Isa. 2:2-4; Micah 4:1ff.).

For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea [Isa. 11:9b].

“And those who err in mind will know the truth, and those who criticize will accept instruction” [ Isa. 29:24].

And each will be like a refuge from the wind, and a shelter from the storm, like streams of water in a dry country, like the shade of a huge rock in a parched land. Then the eyes of those who see will not be blinded,
and the ears of those who hear will listen. And the mind of the hasty will discern the truth, and the tongue of the stammerers will hasten to speak clearly [Isa. 32:2-4].

“And all your sons will be taught of the LORD; and the well being of your sons will be great” [Isa. 54:13].

“Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart who will feed you on knowledge and understanding....At that time they shall call Jerusalem ‘the Throne of the LORD.’ And all the nations will be gathered to it, to Jerusalem, for the name of the LORD; nor shall they walk anymore after the stubbornness of their evil heart” [Jer. 3:15, 17].

“I shall also raise up shepherds over them and they will tend them; and they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing,” declares the LORD [Jer. 23:4].

“And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother saying, ‘Know the LORD, for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,’ declares the LORD, ‘for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more’ “ [Jer. 31:34] (see Heb. 8:8ff.).

“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” [Hab. 2:14].

i. The Millennial Temple/Millennial Worship

The Scriptures clearly teach that the temple in Jerusalem will be rebuilt (see Matt. 24:15ff. and parallels, 2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 11:1ff.). Apparently, this temple will be destroyed during the tribulational battles or judgments (perhaps at Armageddon, Zech. 14:2ff., but see also Rev. 11:2).

The millennial temple will possess architectural glory (Ezekiel 40-43), but of greater interest are the activities, objects, and participants associated with the millennial temple. Also, the glory of God which departed Solomon’s temple before the exile (Ezek. 10:18-19; 11:23) returns to the millennial temple (Ezek. 43:5-7).

“I will also take some of them for priests and for Levites, says the LORD” [Isa. 66:21].

“[A]nd the Levitical priests shall never lack a man before Me to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings, and to prepare sacrifices continually” [Jer. 33:18].

“For on My holy mountain, on the high mountain of Israel”, declares the LORD GOD, “there the whole house of Israel, all of them, will serve Me in the land; there I shall accept them, and there I shall seek your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your holy things. As a soothing aroma I shall accept you, when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered; and I shall prove Myself holy among you in the sight of the nations” [Ezek. 20:40-41].

Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths. And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be no rain on them. And if the family of Egypt does not go up or enter, then no rain will fall on them;
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it will be the plague with which the LORD smites the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths. This will be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths. And every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy the LORD of hosts; and all who sacrifice will come and take of them...[Zech. 14:16-19,21].

And in the porch of the gate were two tables on each side, on which to slaughter the burnt offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering [Ezek. 40:39].

Then he said to me, “The north chambers and the south chambers, which are opposite the separate area, they are the holy chambers where the priests who are near to the LORD shall eat the most holy things. There they shall lay the most holy things, the grain offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering; for the place is holy [Ezek. 42:13].

And He said to me, “Son of man, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘These are the statues for the altar on the day it is built, to offer burnt offerings on it and to sprinkle blood on it. And you shall give to the Levitical priests who are from the offspring of Zadok, who draw near to Me to minister to Me,’ declares the Lord GOD, ‘a young bull for a sin offering’ “ [Ezek. 43:18-19] (see also v. 13).

“In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, you shall have the Passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten. And on that day the prince shall provide for himself and all the people of the land a bull for a sin offering. And during the seven days of the feast he shall provide as a burnt offering to the LORD seven bulls and seven rams without blemish on every day of the seven days, and a male goat daily for a sin offering. And he shall provide as a grain offering an ephah with a bull, an ephah with a ram, and a hin of oil with an ephah. In the seventh month, on the fifteenth day of the month, at the feast, he shall provide like this, seven days for the sin offering, the burnt offering, the grain offering, and the oil” [Ezek. 45:21-25].

Thus says the Lord GOD, “The gate of the inner court facing east shall be shut the six working days; but it shall be opened on the Sabbath day, and opened on the day of the new moon” [Ezek. 46:1].

“And you shall provide a lamb a year old without blemish for a burnt offering to the LORD daily; morning by morning you shall provide it” [Ezek. 46:13].

“But if he gives a gift from his inheritance to one of his servants, it shall be his until the year of liberty...” [Ezek. 46:17].

These verses teach that many millennial worship practices will be restitutions of Mosaic practices (priests, sacrifices, Jewish festivals, etc.). There is no direct mention of the Ark of the Covenant, or a golden lampstand, or the table of shewbread, or the Day of Atonement or Pentecost. Thus, Kingdom worship may not completely revert to Levitical practices; but it will be closer to the Law than to the church.

The idea of animal sacrifices in the Millennium is repulsive to some. They believe that it is inconsistent with the finality of Christ’s sacrifice. The animal sacrifices of the Millennium will definitely not atone for sin. Christ’s sacrifice was indeed perfectly suffi-
cient. He rendered animal sacrifices obsolete. Animal sacrifices served as only a temporary covering for sin (Heb. 7:27; 9:12,26; 10:4,10,14,26).

However, premillennialists do not believe that millennial sacrifices are re instituted as a means of covering sin or that such sacrifices will contribute anything to salvation. In fact, the Kingdom is based in the New Covenant founded on Christ’s blood (see Jer. 31:31ff., cf. Luke 22:20). Although millennial sacrifices involve similar activities to the Old Testament sacrifices, it must be the case that they function as memorials to Christ’s sacrifice. Millennial animal sacrifices will probably play the same role as the communion ordinance does in the church dispensation. Communion is to “show the Lord’s death till He comes” (1 Cor. 11:26 KJV). Perhaps after the Lord’s return communion will be replaced by animal sacrifices as a more graphic memorial of the Lamb of God’s perfect sacrifice. Also, the food generated by sacrifices becomes part of a long banquet celebration.

6. Summary on the Kingdom

The Kingdom will show what Christ can do through a fallen race that will trust and obey Him. For the first time in history, social, political, educational, and judicial systems will be permeated with godliness. While unbelievers think that submission to Christ would make life miserable, the truth is that when the world finally submits to Christ it will know its highest advancement and blessings.

7. Final Satanic Rebellion

God binds Satan in the abyss throughout the 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth. However, Revelation 20 teaches that God allows Satan a short release during the transition from the Kingdom to the Eternal State. The devil will find enough disgruntled people to initiate a rebellion against Christ the King. Here is another measure of sin’s insanity. The devil and his allies have no hope of winning. Although they encircle Jerusalem, fire from heaven consumes them; and the devil finishes his “career” by an unwilling entrance into the eternal Lake of Fire. Perhaps God allows this final revolt to demonstrate Satan’s incurable evil and to illustrate the righteousness in giving eternal punishment for the devil and his human followers. The unsaved choose the devil and hell over an ideal world with Christ as King! They too are incorrigible and deserve condemnation.

[A]nd threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time….And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever [Rev. 20:3,7-10].

XIV. Eternity

A study on the Eternal State must be divided into eternal punishment and eternal life in

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75 In Rev. 20 “Gog and Magog” may refer to Russia as in Ezek. 38-39. Another option is to understand “God and Magog” figuratively as a battle cry (“Remember the Alamo”) or a cliche meaning a disastrous and final defeat (as in “Waterloo”).
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God’s presence, that is, hell and heaven. Before addressing detailed topical studies on hell and heaven, there are a few chronological matters concerning judgments unto damnation that must be treated.

A. The Judgment of angels

The Scripture definitely teaches that there will be an end time judgment for angels, specifically fallen angels.

Do you not know that we shall judge angels? [1 Cor. 6:3a].

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment [2 Pet. 2:4].

And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day [Jude 6].

Although the Bible does not give a specific time for the judgment of fallen angels, it is reasonable to believe that the punishment of fallen angels takes place along with (or at least by the time of) Satan’s confinement into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:10). Also, time is literally running out as “time” ends and eternity begins. One cannot place angelic judgment past the transition from Millennium to eternity. The Lake of Fire was not made for humans but for “the devil and his angels” (see Matt. 25:41). Revelation 20 seems to be the point in time when God is emptying Hades (see v. 14) and the abyss (at least the devil vacates the abyss) and confining all wickedness, human and angelic, to the eternal Lake of Fire. It is the most logical point at which to place the judgment of fallen angels. 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6 mention the judgment of confined angels, but presumably the demons who have been loose and active also face judgment and definitely undergo eternal punishment.

Paul teaches that church saints will have a role in judging angels. This probably refers to fallen angels. Unless 1 Cor. 6:3 is interpreted to include the elect angels, there is no Biblical teaching about a judgment for the holy angels.

B. The Great White Throne Judgment

The Great White Throne Judgment is a major event in the transition from the Millennium to the Eternal State. Rev. 20:11 may indicate a time after the destruction of the present heaven and earth but before the creation or renovation of the new heavens and earth. God the Father has given all judgment to God the Son (John 5:22; Acts 17:31). Therefore, it is safe to assume that Christ presides over this final judgment of the lost. The dead, great and small, will be resurrected to face judgment. God has recorded all of their deeds in numerous books. However, the main concern is whether a person’s name is or is not written in the Book of Life. Rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ is the ultimate basis for eternal condemnation (see John 3:18; 2 Thess. 1:8). Yet, there are several reasons for an interest in “deeds”. The idea of degrees of punishment is addressed on pp. 541-42. While rejection of Christ is the basis for entrance into the Lake of Fire, works will be a factor in the degree of punishment. Also, perhaps Christ will examine a person’s works to prove to the condemned that good works are insufficient for earning eternal life. Some will claim they have done great works in Christ’s name, but the records establish the fact that they were really workers of iniquity and do not deserve entrance into heaven (see Matt. 7:22-23).

There is no question that the absence of ones name from the Book of Life by rejection of Christ is the basis for punishment at the Great White Throne. Another sure fact is that the majority (if not all) of those judged at the Great White Throne are sentenced to the second death, eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire. Essentially then, the Great
White Throne is the judgment of the condemned. It is the resurrection unto condemnation mentioned in Dan. 12:2 and John 5:29.  

The Scripture does not say when the millennial saints are judged or glorified, nor does the Bible teach anything about any judgment or resurrection of those few who die during the Millennium. Perhaps they arise immediately, or perhaps they arise at the Great White Throne and a small minority at this judgment does have their names in the Book of Life.

Many of the souls of those judged at the Great White Throne come from Hades (v. 13). They had died and now appear raised for judgment.

Presumably, those unsaved who survived the Tribulation and had previously been judged and confined to the Lake of Fire need not reappear for judgment at the Great White Throne (see Matt. 25:41,46). Technically, they were never a part of the dead who had been confined in Sheol/Hades (See Rev. 20:12) because they went directly from physical life to the Lake of Fire without a normal physical death on earth.

C. Terms for Places of Punishment

Although speakers can be careless and use different terms interchangeably, the Bible differentiates several places of punishment. Any detailed study shows that these terms are not equivalent. They must be studied in order to give a thorough treatment of the topic of eternal punishment.

1. Hell

Hell is a general term that refers to any place of torment. It can be a useful word, but is not specific enough for a deep understanding.

2. Abyss

The Greek term abyss is often translated “pit” or “bottomless pit” in English. The abyss is the temporary place of imprisonment for some fallen angels (Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:1,2,11, 11:7, 17:8, 20:1-3). In Christ’s day demons, free to roam actively, begged to enter swine rather than having to go to the abyss (see Luke 8:31). Some fallen angels are now in the abyss. The particular fallen angels in 2 Pet. 2:4 and Jude 6 are confined in the abyss (Peter calls the abyss “tartarus”) until their final judgment and transfer to the Lake of Fire. The possibility that they participated in cohabitation with women has been discussed in Chapter 5, Demonology.  

Apparently, some of the fallen angels in the abyss will be released from the abyss to bring torment to the earth during the Tribulation (see Rev. 9:1).

While the Beast and False Prophet go directly to the Lake of Fire at the end of the Tribulation, Satan spends 1,000 years of confinement in the abyss (see Rev. 20:1-3). After a short release from the abyss (and a short rebellion), Satan will be cast into the Lake of Fire. While the abyss is the temporary place of punishment for fallen angels, the Lake of Fire (made for the Devil and his angels, Matt. 25:41) is the eternal residence for fallen angels. Thus, after the angelic judgment the abyss is emptied, and all its fiends undergo a permanent transfer to the Lake of Fire.

3. Sheol or Hades

See also Acts 24:15; Heb. 9:27; and Rev. 20:5-6.

Church saints raised at the Rapture and Old Testament/tribulational saints raised after the Tribulation do not appear at the Great White Throne judgment. They were raised and rewarded long before the end of the Millennium. Perhaps some millennial saints who had died are raised and rewarded at this time, but the Bible does not specifically teach when any millennial saints who die will be raised.

76 See also Acts 24:15; Heb. 9:27; and Rev. 20:5-6.

77 Church saints raised at the Rapture and Old Testament/tribulational saints raised after the Tribulation do not appear at the Great White Throne judgment. They were raised and rewarded long before the end of the Millennium. Perhaps some millennial saints who had died are raised and rewarded at this time, but the Bible does not specifically teach when any millennial saints who die will be raised.


79 Discussion as to whether there were two compartments of Sheol/Hades before the cross is not within the domain of future events, therefore, it is
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*Sheol* is a Hebrew word. Its Greek equivalent is *Hades*. Both terms refer to the place of departed human spirits. The souls of the unsaved go to Hades immediately upon death and remain there until the resurrection unto condemnation at the Great White Throne Judgment. Therefore, Hades is a temporary place of punishment for unsaved humans until their final resurrection, judgment, and transfer to the eternal Lake of Fire. It is to be contrasted with the abyss, which is a temporary place for fallen angels (not humans) and with the Lake of Fire (or Gehenna), which is an eternal place of punishment for both humans and angels after they have been judged. Specific characteristics of Hades will further highlight the contrast with other places of punishment.

a. Hades for Humans Only

The Bible does not teach that fallen angels ever enter Hades to await judgment. The temporary place of confinement for fallen angels who await final judgment is called the “abyss” or “tartarus.” Hades is the temporary place of punishment for *unsaved humans* who await final judgment.

b. Hades for Human Spirits

Obviously, the bodies of the unsaved return to the dust at death. Only their souls enter Hades. Thus, Hades is a place for departed and *non-resurrected human spirits*. After they are raised to stand judgment, they will have a resurrection body perfectly suited to eternal flames (see Dan. 12:2; John 5:29; Rev. 20:12). Humans in the Lake of Fire will possess body and soul (see Matt. 10:28. Hell here is *Gehenna*), but those in Hades awaiting judgment do not have a resurrection body (see footnote 81).

c. The Location of Sheol/Hades

The location for the eternal Lake of Fire is unknown. The “heavens and earth” have fled before the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11). This probably indicates the destruction of the present heavens and earth (see 2 Pet. 3:10-13). It follows that the Lake of Fire is not on this present earth. However, there are plenty of Scriptural phrases that indicate that Sheol/Hades is in the center of the present earth. This is another indication of the difference between Sheol/Hades as the temporary place of *human* punishment before the final judgment, and the Lake of Fire (or Gehenna) which is the eternal place of torment for *both fallen angels and unsaved humans*.

“They are high as the heavens, what can you do? Deeper than Sheol, what can you know?” [Job 11:8] (This verse contrasts heaven as up with Sheol which is down).

If I ascend to heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there [Psa. 139:8]. (Again, Sheol is the opposite of ascent. Rather than going up to Sheol one goes down).

...her (i.e., the foolish woman) guests are in the depths of Sheol [Prov. 9:18b].

The path of life leads upward for the wise, that he may keep away from Sheol below [Prov. 15:24].

Thus says the Lord God, “On the day when it went down to Sheol I caused lamentations; I closed the deep over it and held back its rivers.

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80 In addition to the verses in the text see also Isa. 14:9ff.
And its many waters were stopped up, and I made Lebanon mourn for it, and all the trees of the field wilted away on account of it. I made the nations quake at the sound of its fall when I made it go down to Sheol with those who go down to the pit; and all the well-watered trees of Eden, the choicest and best of Lebanon, were comforted in the earth beneath. They also went down with it to Sheol to those who were slain by the sword; and those who were its strength lived under its shade among the nations” [Ezek. 31:15-17].

“Son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and bring it down, her and the daughters of the powerful nations, to the nether world, with those who go down to the pit....The strong among the mighty ones shall speak of him and his helpers from the midst of Sheol, ‘They have gone down, they lie still, the uncircumcised slain by the sword....’ “Elam is there and all her multitude around her grave; all of them slain, fallen by the sword, who went down uncircumcised to the lower parts of the earth, who instilled their terror in the land of the living, and bore their disgrace with those who went down to the pit” [Ezek. 32:18,21,24].

“Though they dig into Sheol, from there shall My hand take them; and though they ascend to heaven, from there will I bring them down” [Amos 9:2].

“And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day” [Matt. 11:23].


It is correct to think of the souls of the unsaved as going down to Hades upon death. While the body returns to dust, the soul still very much exists. Certain sects teach the heresy of soul-sleep, but the Scriptures teach that the departed lost are very much conscious.

d. Consciousness in Hades

A following section will develop the truth that the saved continue in consciousness after death (pp. 546-48). This present material concerns the unsaved. The doctrine of "soul-sleep", which maintains that souls are unconscious after death, is totally without foundation and is inexcusable.

Regardless as to whether Lucifer in Isaiah is interpreted as a reference to Satan or to the King of Tyre (whom Satan supported), Isaiah 14 teaches that the lost are conscious in Sheol. They are aware and even communicate. Special attention should be paid to vv. 9, 10, and 16 where those in Sheol respond to Lucifer’s entrance.

“‘Sheol from beneath is excited over you to meet you when you come; it arouses for you the spirits of the dead, all the leaders of the earth; it raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones. They will all respond and say to you, even you have been made weak as we, you have become like us. Your pomp and the music of your harps have been brought down to Sheol; maggots are spread out as your bed beneath you, and worms are your covering. How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I

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will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ ‘Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit. Those who see you will gaze at you, they will ponder over you, saying, ‘is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world like a wilderness and overthrew its cities, who did not allow his prisoners to go home?’ ‘ [Isa. 14:9-17].

Ezekiel Chapters 31 and 32 contain many references to Sheol. These also indicate that the lost in Sheol are very much conscious. Ezekiel 32:21 speaks of the inhabitants of Sheol reacting to Egypt’s destruction. Verse 31 seems to be saying that Pharaoh will meet the leaders of the other destroyed kingdoms in Sheol.

“The strong among the mighty ones shall speak of him and his helpers from the midst of Sheol…” [Ezek. 32:18,21].

“Son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and bring it down, her and the daughters of the powerful nations, to the nether world, with those who go down to the pit....The strong among the mighty ones shall speak of him and his helpers from the midst of Sheol…” [Ezek. 32:18,21].

These Pharaoh will see, and he will be comforted for all his multitude slain by the sword, even Pharaoh and all his army,” declares the Lord God. “Though I instilled a terror of him in the land of the living, yet he will be made to lie down among the uncircumcised along with those slain by the sword, even Pharaoh and all his multitude,” declares the LORD God [Ezek. 32:31,32].

Christ’s teaching about the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31 gives the most convincing argument that the lost are conscious in Hades. The rich man could see in Hades. He could feel, he could taste, and he could think and respond.81

“Now there was a certain rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, gaily living in splendor every day. And a certain poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man’s table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. Now it came about that the poor man died and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.’ And he said, ‘Then I beg you, Father, that you send him to my father’s house for I have five brothers - that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’ But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ But he said, ‘No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes

81 It seems that even disembodied spirits have some kind of temporary body as Luke 16:19-31 tells of “eyes, fingers, and tongue”.

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to them from the dead, they will re-
pent!’ But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead’ “ [Luke 16:19-31].

e. Hades and Torment

The Bible unquestionably presents Hades as a place of conscious torment. **Persons who reject Christ** are already condemned even as they live (John 3:18). **They are literally one heartbeat away from conscious, eternal torment.** Although Hades is a temporary abode for the unsaved dead as they await judgment, a small time of release for judgment at the Great White Throne will be no comfort. The verdict and sentence are certain. Those in Hades will be resurrected unto certain condemnation and transferred to the eternal Lake of Fire (Gehenna). “Hell” is a broad enough term to cover both Hades (Sheol) and the Lake of Fire. Thus, it is true to assert that unbelievers enter Hell at death (see Luke 16:22-23). Hades is a place of misery and torment.

For a **fire** is kindled in My anger, and burns to the **lowest part of Sheol**… [Deut. 32:22a]

As sheep they are appointed for Sheol; Death shall be their shepherd; And the upright shall rule over them in the morning; And their form shall be for **Sheol to consume**, so that they have no habitation [Psa. 49:14].

The path of life leads upward for the wise, that he may **keep away from Sheol** below [Prov. 15:24] (Sheol is a place to be avoided!)

“And you Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You shall descend to **Hades**; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. Nevertheless I say to you that it shall be **more toler-
ere for the land of Sodom** in the day of judgment, than for you” [Matt. 11:23-24]. (Hades is worse than the fire and brimstone of Sodom.)

“And I say to you, it will be **more tolerable in that day for Sodom**, than for that city….And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven will you? You will be brought down to **Hades!”** [Luke 10:12,15].

“And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in **torment**….I am in **agony** in this **flame**….you are in **agony**….for I have five brothers - that he may warn them, lest they also come to this **place of torment”** [Luke 16:23-25, 28].

f. The Relationship of Hades to the Lake of Fire.

Hades (Sheol) is a temporary place where departed unsaved human spirits await the resurrection unto condemnation (John 5:29) to stand trial at the Great White Throne. Hades will give up its dead to face judgment and transferal to the eternal Lake of Fire. Presumably Hades, which is in the center of the earth, will then be destroyed with this old earth.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and **Hades gave up the dead** which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. And death and **Hades were thrown into the lake of fire.** This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire [Rev. 20:13-15].

There are ten references to Hades in the New Testament (Matt. 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23; Acts 2:27,31; Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14). **Anyone who does not approve of the concept of Hades will have to take**
issue with the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. He taught about such a place as much as anyone. Upon death unbelievers go to Hades and are in confinement until the final judgment awaiting sentence and transfer to the Lake of Fire. Both places are hell with conscious torment.

4. Gehenna or the Lake of Fire

Unlike Hades (Sheol), the place Gehenna, also called the Lake of Fire, is the place of eternal punishment for the unsaved (see Mark 9:43-48) and not a place of temporary confinement while awaiting judgment. Also, unlike Hades, the Lake of Fire is a place for the punishment of both unsaved humans and angels (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10,15). Those in the Lake of Fire will apparently have resurrection bodies that are perfectly suited to eternal torment without being consumed (see Matt. 10:28; Rev. 20:11-15, also Matt. 5:29-30; 18:9, which speak of bodies in Gehenna). While the unsaved enter Hades immediately upon death (Luke 16:22-27), they do not enter the Lake of Fire until after judgment (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:14-15). It appears that the Lake of Fire is empty at the present. Its first occupants will be the Beast and False Prophet, and soon thereafter the unsaved who have physically survived the tribulation period (see Matt. 25:41-46; Rev. 19:20). Throughout the Millennium both Hades and the Lake of Fire will contain some of the unsaved. Hades will contain those who have died in previous dispensations and who have not faced God for judgment. The Lake of Fire will contain those who did not die in the Tribulation and, therefore, will face judgment shortly after the Second Coming. After the Judgment of Israel (Ezekiel 20) and the Judgment of the Nations (Matthew 25), the unsaved survivors of the Tribulation will be directly cast into the Lake of Fire without ever having experienced Hades. As has been discussed above, eventually Hades will be emptied and all the unsaved (with fallen angels) will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:14).

a. Origin of the Term “Gehenna”

Gehenna is a Greek word that comes from the original Hebrew meaning “Valley of Hinnom.” Jeremiah condemned the human sacrifices that occurred in this valley during the reign of wicked kings Ahaz and Manasseh.

“And they have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the sons of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command and it did not come into My mind” [Jer. 7:31].

 “[A]nd have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, a thing which I never commanded or spoke of, nor did it ever enter My mind; therefore, behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when this place will no longer he called Topheth or the valley of Ben-hinnom, but rather the valley of Slaughter” [Jer. 19:5-6].

Good King Josiah defiled the valley so that never again would human sacrifices be offered there.

He also defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire for Molech [2 Kings 23:10].

In subsequent centuries Gai-Hinnom (the Valley of Hinnom) became the dumping grounds for Jerusalem. It was a place where the fires constantly burned dried sewage, trash, the corpses of dead animals, and executed criminals. Not only was it a trash heap whose fire never ended, it was a revolting place of maggots consuming rotting flesh.
By 200 B.C. some Rabbis taught that the Valley of Hinnom (Gai-Hinnom) would be a place of eternal punishment.

The Lord Jesus Christ never taught that the location for eternal punishment was a dump outside Jerusalem, but by using the term “Gehenna” the Lord taught that the place of eternal punishment had similarities to the place “Gehenna” just outside of Jerusalem. Both are places of unending flames. Both are places of unending decay where the constant fire never consumes all the putrid flesh. The literal place of Gehenna outside of Jerusalem was a good way to describe the future destiny of the lost. They will be in a place of unending fire, but the unending fire will still never consume the flesh or end the putrefaction.

Gehenna is a name for a place of unending fire (Mark 9:43-48). Therefore, it must be the equivalent of the “Lake of Fire” which burns forever and ever (Rev. 14:11, 20:10,14). The similar description demands that the terms “Gehenna” and “Lake of Fire” be regarded as synonyms.

b. Uses of the Term Gehenna

The New Testament uses the word “Gehenna” 12 times. All but once (James 3:6) it comes from the lips of Christ Himself (Matt. 5:22,29,30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15,33; Mark 9:43,45,47; Luke 12:5). It would be inconsistent to accept Christ’s teachings on salvation or on ethics as authoritative but deny His assertions about eternal punishment. Those who respect Jesus Christ will believe in the existence of an eternal Lake of Fire.

c. General Descriptions of the Lake of Fire

The following concepts describe the condition of the unsaved in the Lake of Fire.

Cursed

“Then He will also say to these on His left, ‘depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which he has prepared for the devil and his angels’ “ [Matt 25:41].

If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed. Maranatha [1 Cor. 16:22].

But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed [Gal. 1:8-9].

Judged and condemned

“He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned” [Mark 16:16].

“He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” [John 3:18].

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life” [John 5:24].

But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world [1 Cor. 11:32].

Objects of God’s vengeance

[Dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus [2 Thess.1:8].

“For we know Him who said, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay...” [Heb. 10:30].
Objects of God’s wrath

He therefore began saying to the multitudes who were going out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” [Luke 3:7].

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” [John 3:36].

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him [Rom. 5:9].

And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come [1 Thess. 1:10].

Destruction, perishing (see also Matt. 7:13; 18:14; John 10:28; Rom. 9:22; 2 Cor. 2:15; Phil. 1:28; 3:19; 2 Pet. 3:9).

“And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” [Matt. 10:28].

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” [John 3:16].

For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God [1 Cor. 1:18].

And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power [2 Thess. 1:9].

d. Specific Descriptions of the Lake of Fire

Separation from God (see also Matt. 25:30, “cast out”).

“And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness’ “ [Matt. 7:23].

And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power [2 Thess. 1:9].

Denial, shame (see 2 Tim. 2:12b)

“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground, will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt” Dan. 12:2].

“And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness’ “ [Matt 7:23] (see also Luke 13:25).

“But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven” [Matt. 10:33].

“For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels” [Mark 8:38].

Exclusion from heaven

“Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, ‘Lord, open up to us!’ then He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know where you are from’ “ [Luke 13:25].

...and nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying.

83 For further discussion of this verse relative to this denial see Chapter 9, pp. 152-156.
shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life [Rev. 21:27].

Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying [Rev. 22:15].

Unending “worms”

As the worms continually fed on the rotting flesh in Gehenna, the garbage dump outside Jerusalem, so there will be an unending condition of rottenness and pain in the Lake of Fire. The fire will never consume the flesh but it will produce rottenness (corruption) and pain in the bodies of the lost. One would probably not be too far off in imagining maggots causing both rottenness and pain by gnawing on a living body. It may be doubtful whether there are real worms in the Lake of Fire, but the ugliness, deep horrors, pain, and putrefaction produced by parasitical worms on living flesh is as close as language can come to describing hell.

“Then they shall go forth and look on the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched; and they shall be an abhorrence to all mankind” [Isa. 66:24].

“[W]here their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched” [Mark 9:48]

Darkness

“Hell” will not be a place of drinking, parties, and camaraderie. Perhaps only God knows how a place of fire can also be a place of “outer darkness.” Maybe those in the Lake of Fire are blind! Darkness speaks of terror, panic, and isolation. There will be great fear, great confusion, and great loneliness.

“[B]ut the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into the outer darkness, in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” [Matt. 8:12].

“Then the king said to the servants, ‘bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth’ “ [Matt. 22:13].

“And cast out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” [Matt. 25:30].

These are springs without water, and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved. [2 Pet. 2:17].

[W]ild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever [Jude 13].

Weeping, gnashing of teeth

There will be a definite consciousness in the Lake of Fire, but it will be anything but pleasant. The many references to teeth are interesting. The lost will be resurrected but with a body suited to eternal damnation. This kind of body will suffer but never be consumed.

“[A]nd will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth....and will cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” [Matt. 13:42,50].

“Then the king said to the servants, ‘bind him hand and foot, and cast...
him into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth’ [Matt. 22:13].

“And cast out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” [Matt. 25:30].

There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth there when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being cast out [Luke 13:28].

**Torment**

Just as the rich man found Hades to be a place of torment (Luke 16:22-28), so the Lake of Fire is a place of deep torment.

“And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest day and night...” [Rev. 14:11].

And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever [Rev. 20:10].

**Brimstone**

When it is burned, sulphur produces a terrible odor and noxious fumes. Perhaps those in hell will experience gagging, choking, and terrible smells that bring suffocation.

...and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb [Rev. 14:10].

...these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone [Rev. 19:20].

And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone...[Rev. 20:10].

“But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” [Rev. 21:8].

**Death, specifically the second death**

The Lake of Fire is death in the sense of eternal separation from God. The phrase “second death” refers to the fact that for unbelievers “hell” is a second death that takes place after physical death. There is nothing more fearful than death. The Lake of Fire is unending death.

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power...[Rev. 20:6].

And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire [Rev. 20:14].

“But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” [Rev. 21:8].

**Fire**

The most common description for the eternal place of punishment for the lost is fire. This is probably literal fire. At the very least fire is the closest object known to man that describes the pain of the punishment that awaits those who reject Christ as Savior. All the verses which use the word “Gehenna” speak of fire. Likewise, the following verses contain the phrase “Lake of Fire” (Rev. 19:20; 20:10,14,15; 21:8). Other descriptive phrases include “furnace of fire”

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84 See the beginning of this sub-section on “Gehenna or the Lake of Fire,” p. 537.

“[A]nd will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.... And will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” [Matt. 13:42,50].

...Where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched [Mark 9:48].

e. Degrees of Punishment

While all sin is reprehensible, the Scripture does teach that some sins are worse than others. In John 19:11 Christ told Pilate, “...he who delivered me up to you has the greater sin.” In other passages the Lord ranked commandments as to lesser or greater importance (see Matt. 5:19; 22:37-40). While the basis for entrance into eternal condemnation is rejection of Christ, it is possible that deeds play a role in determining the degree of punishment (with all of it being unimaginably bad). This may be one of the reasons for books containing deeds being examined at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:12).

Eternal hell will be great pain and misery for all, but several verses indicate there will be degrees of punishment. Those who rejected Christ in person, and those today who reject Him despite a great knowledge of the truth will be especially accountable. Imagine the guilt of those who rejected despite being eyewitnesses to Christ’s actions on earth. No doubt God will also inflict special judgment upon those who have martyred His children.

85 God might also use books that record works to prove to unbelievers their good works were not sufficient to earn salvation (Matt. 7:21-23).

“Truly, I say to you, ‘it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city’ “ [Matt. 10:15].

Then He began to reproach the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent. “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Nevertheless I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you....Nevertheless I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you” [Matt. 11:20-22,24].

“And that slave who knew his master’s will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, shall receive many lashes, but the one who did not know it and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more” [Luke 12:47-48].

[A]nd they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” [Rev. 6:10].

“Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back to her double according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her....Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her....And in her was found the
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**blood of prophets and of saints** and of all who have been slain on the earth” [Rev. 18:6,20,24].

f. The Location for the Lake of Fire

While Hades seems to be “below,” the location for the Lake of Fire is unknown. Rev. 20:11 may be teaching that the present heavens and earth are destroyed before the Great White Throne Judgment. The new heavens and earth do not appear until after the lost are cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11, 21:1-5). Therefore, the Lake of Fire does not seem to be in the center of this earth. Its location is a mystery.

g. Glimpse into Hell

Will the saints ever be able to see what goes on in hell? There will certainly be a barrier between heaven and hell for there will be no escape or transfer out of eternal punishment, but possibly saints will be able to see what horrors they have missed by the Lord’s grace (perhaps temporarily in the immediate aftermath of Armageddon).

“Then they shall go forth and look on the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched; and they shall be an abhorrence to all mankind [Isa. 66:24].

[He] also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb [Rev. 14:10].

It is best not to hold any dogmatism on this point. Isaiah may be only referring to viewing the corpses after Armageddon. We can be certain that if the saints do see a glimpse of hell their response will not be one of sorrow but of gratitude towards God for His great salvation.

5. The Duration of Punishment

Because the idea of unending punishment in the Lake of Fire is so horrible, people often reject it. Some who believe in the existence of such a place might skirt its unpleasant aspects by teaching that there can be a second chance for salvation after one has entered the flames. Others think unbelievers are totally annihilated, suffering for only a brief duration. Still others have developed the unscriptural notion of purgatory. This makes the Lake of Fire into a place of temporal punishment from which people can escape after a limited amount of suffering for sin.

It is quite fair to admit that the subject of eternal punishment is terrifying and repulsive. Nevertheless, it is very much Scriptural.

a. The Issue of Hell’s Eternality

Will people in the Lake of Fire obtain a second chance for salvation? Will they be annihilated, suffering only briefly? Do the Greek words translated into English as “eternal” and “everlasting” actually mean “unending”? If they do, then there is no means of a lost soul ever leaving hell or ever escaping pain through annihilation.

b. The Word Eon

One of the Greek words translated “eternal” or “everlasting” is *eon*. To many people the English word *eon* refers to a very long period of time but to a span that does have

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87 Those in hell are separated from God’s presence in the sense that they are unaware of His presence and will not experience any divine action on their behalf. From the human perspective, hell is away from God’s presence as in 2 Thess. 1:9 and a separation from God. From God’s perspective, the condemned will be eternally present before Him as in Rev. 14:10.
limits. Consider the sentence, “It was eons before the bus from St. Louis arrived.” *Eon* in this sentence refers to an especially long period but one that was limited. It does not mean eternal. Indeed, in at least 37 of 95 New Testament occurrences *eon* refers to a limited time span.

“[A]nd the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age [*eon*]; and the reapers are angels. Therefore just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age” [*eon*] [Matt. 13:39-40].

“Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age” [*eon*] [Matt. 24:3b].

And do not be conformed to this world [*eon*]... [Rom. 12:2].

Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages [*eons*] have come [1 Cor. 10:11].

In these verses the word “*eon*” refers to a long but limited period of time. Why then have conservative theologians interpreted the same word to mean “everlasting” when used in contexts about the punishment of the lost (e.g., Jude 13; Rev. 14:1; 19:3; 20:10)? The first step in resolving this issue involves evidence that “*eon*” can mean eternal time. Just as the word *may* mean “a long but limited age”, it is also capable of meaning enduring, eternal, everlasting” in some contexts and with some subjects. This is easy to prove.

c. The Word “Eon” Meaning Eternal

While in some contexts “*eon*” may refer to a limited time span, it also means “unending, eternal, everlasting” in other contexts. *Eon* definitely means eternal when used with:

**God**

Now to the King *eternal*...[*eon*] [1 Tim. 1:17].

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, yes and *forever* [unto the *eons* or ages] [Heb. 13:8].

**God’s Word**

“...The Word of the Lord abides forever...” [unto the *eons*] [1 Pet. 1:25].

**God’s Kingdom**

“[A]nd He will reign over the house of Jacob *forever*; [unto the *eons*] and His kingdom will have no end” [Luke 1:33].

“...For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, *forever* [unto the *eons*] Amen” [Matt. 6:13].

**The Believer’s Life**

“...if any man eats of this bread, he shall live *forever*...”[for the *eon*] [John 6:51].

“...if anyone keeps my word he shall never [literally, not for the *eon*] see death” [John 8:51] (see also v. 53).

“[A]nd everyone who lives and believes in Me shall *never* [not for the *eon*] die” [John 11:26] (see also John 10:28).

These are enough examples to show that the Greek word *eon* does have a capacity to mean “eternal or everlasting.” This opens the door very widely to the possibility that the word means everlasting in contexts concerning punishment. In fact, because of a special construction and because of other descriptive phrases, this word must mean

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88 See also Heb. 1:12 for Christ’s eternality. The author of Hebrews intends the same in Heb. 13:8.
89 See Matt. 24:35 for different phraseology showing the Word of God is eternal.
90 This portion of Matt. 6:13 may not be a part of the original text. However, it would still illustrate the definition of the word *eon*. 

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everlasting in contexts that concern punishment for the lost.

d. The Phrase “unto eons of eons”

Thus far we have concluded that the word translated age (eon) can mean eternal in certain contexts even when it is used only once. Furthermore, it is vital to realize that in 3 out of 4 verses cited as using eon in reference to punishment the apostle John uses a special construction. Rev. 14:11; 19:3; 20:10 all repeat some form of the word eon in a phrase that can be roughly translated “unto eons of eons.” A further study of the approximately 22 uses of this phrase leads to the conclusion that it always means everlasting. It is used of the length for God’s existence, rule, or glory in Rom. 16:27; Gal. 1:5; Eph. 3:21; Phil. 4:20; 1 Tim. 1:17; 2 Tim. 4:18; Heb. 13:21; 1 Pet. 4:11, 5:11; Rev. 1:6,18; 4:9,10; 5:13; 7:12; 10:6; 15:7 and of the duration of God’s Kingdom in Rev. 11:15. These total 18 times. The phrase is used of the duration for the believer’s life in Rev. 22:5. The three remaining times refer to the length of punishment (Rev. 14:11; 19:3; 20:10). The word “eon” by itself can mean eternal. The phrase “unto eons of eons” always means eternal, even when speaking of the duration of hell. Here are some clear examples of this definition:

Now to God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen [Phil. 4:20].

I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore...[Rev. 1:17-18].

...and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever [Rev. 4:9].

“And they [God’s servants] shall reign forever and ever [Rev. 22:5].

e. Conclusion on Eon

It is true that the particular Greek word translated “eon” can mean a long, but limited time in certain contexts (and does so at least 37 out of 95 times). Nevertheless, that word can also mean “eternal” because it is used of the length for God’s existence, His Word, His rule, and the duration of a believer’s life. Even more important is the fact that the phrase “unto the eons of eons” always means eternity because it refers to God in 18 out of 22 usages. Three of the remaining references concern punishment. The only objective conclusion from the Biblical data is that unbelievers will suffer eternal punishment.

“And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name” [Rev. 14:11].

The word eon was discussed first because it provides the only possible angle for objections by those who deny the eternality of hell. The extensive discussion given to a refutation of this false notion should not cause the reader to think that the doctrine of eternal punishment rests on the meaning of this one word. In reality, there are at least two supports for the doctrine of eternal punishment that are even more persuasive.

f. Descriptions which Establish Eternal Punishment

The concept of unending time can be expressed without using a specific word for “everlasting.” The idea of “unquenchable fire” (Matt. 3:12 and Mark 9:43,48) coupled with an “undying worm” (Mark 9:48) speaks of everlasting fire without cessation of existence.

“And if your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire....and if your...
eye causes you to stumble, cast it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into hell, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched’’ [Mark 9:43, 47-48] 91

g. A Second Greek Word Meaning Eternal

In addition to the word “eon” discussed above, there is a second Greek word that teaches even more conclusively the doctrine of everlasting punishment (eionios or aionios). In the 64 uses when it is used without reference to punishment, it always means eternal. There are 42 associations with the length of a believer’s life. (Three times this term speaks of eternity past, three times of future glory, twice of the length of God’s life, twice of the length of the Holy Spirit’s life, once of Christians’ eternal inheritance, once of eternal salvation, once of eternal redemption, once of the eternal covenant, once of the duration of heaven, once of the eternal gospel, once of the immortal nature or endurance of the glorified body, once of an eternal commandment, and four miscellaneous references.) One does not have the option of changing the meaning for the six remaining usages that speak of the duration of punishment. They unquestionably teach that the Lake of Fire will be eternal. Punishment in hell will be as long as God’s life. Torment will be as everlasting as is the life given to believers.

“And if your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the eternal fire” [Matt. 18:8].

“Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels’….And these shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” [Matt. 25:41,46] (the duration of life for the saved and the duration of punishment for the unsaved is the same).

And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power [2 Thess. 1:9].

Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire [Jude 7].

[O]f instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment [Heb. 6:2].

Bible doctrine is not determined by its popularity or comfort level. Man does not have the freedom to accept or reject a Biblical teaching based on his own fallen sense of justice or depraved sense of reason. It seems “reasonable” to many that salvation comes through works, but the Bible teaches otherwise. To some it seems “reasonable” that a Christian can lose salvation, but the Scriptures teach eternal security. The Scripture is our authority for doctrine and ethics. Regardless of whether eternal punishment seems reasonable to a given individual, unending punishment for those who reject Christ is a Biblical fact. Rejection of God’s Son is a far more serious sin than many people realize. God will in no way tolerate those who regard His Son as a worthless waste of time. Let the reader be warned. Trust in Christ as Savior or face God’s wrath.

91 Note again descriptions of the body in hell.
D. The Future of the Saved

The “intermediate state” concerns the time after death but before resurrection and judgment. Although the intermediate state is not an end time event, it is obviously something that lies in an individual’s future should death occur before the Rapture. Therefore, it is often classified under Eschatology. Furthermore, eternity for believers involves the heavenly city upon a new earth. Both subjects belong in the category “the future of the saved.”

1. The Intermediate State of the Saved
   a. Present with Christ

At death a believer’s soul goes to be with Christ. Christ dwells in heaven (Acts 7:56; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 12:2). Sometimes it is important to note what the Bible does not teach. It does not teach about the existence of any place between Hades and Paradise. At death unbelievers enter Hades, and believers enter Christ’s presence. There is no third place such as purgatory where a soul may undergo a time of reform/punishment and then attain heaven.

   And He said to him, “Truly I say to you, today, you shall be with Me in Paradise” [Luke 23:43].

   And they went on stoning Stephen as he called upon the Lord and said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” [Acts 7:59].

   [W]e are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord [2 Cor. 5:8].

   But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ...[Phil. 1:23].

b. Departed Saints are Alive and Conscious

Several verses teach that believers never die. Of course, Christians die physically, but it is impossible for a Christian either to die spiritually or to cease to exist. The Bible defines death as the separation of the soul from the body (James 2:26). It is not the end of existence for a soul but rather a change in residence for the soul.

   “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead but of the living” [Matt. 22:32].

The Lord’s point is that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob still existed in Moses’ day even though they had died centuries before Moses’ time.

   “And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame’ “.....And he said, “Then I beg you, Father, that you send him [Lazarus] to my father’s house” [Luke 16:24,27].

Lazarus certainly was conscious after death.

   “Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death” [John 8:51].

   “[A]nd everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” [John 11:26].

And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness [Rom. 8:10].

The body may die, but a Christian’s spirit can never cease to exist.

   And when He broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had main-
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tained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, should be completed also [Rev. 6:9-11].

The tribulational saints who die are very much conscious after death.

The Bible does not say whether departed saints can observe events on earth. Angels do observe the church (Eph. 3:10). Heb. 12:1 might indicate some heroes of the faith observe us some of the time. Presumably, departed saints are not totally ignorant of life on earth, but we simply do not know any details. No doubt the departed saints gather news from believers who have recently died. God would not allow Lazarus to come back to earth with any communication for the rich man’s brothers (Luke 16:26-31). Scripturally, the area of communication with the dead falls under the topic of necromancy. Seances do not result in actual communication with the dead. (Note the witch’s total surprise at actually hearing Samuel, 1 Sam. 28:12). In reality demonic spirits mimic the dead person’s voice to ensnare the gullible. Christians need to entrust their departed loved ones to God’s care and strictly avoid Satanic games. We can be satisfied that departed believers are consciously enjoying Christ’s presence and would not want to return to this evil world.

c. Conditions in the Intermediate State of the Saved

The Bible gives few specifics about the nature of the intermediate state of the saved. We do not know all the facts, but we do know important facts. Departed Christians are with Christ. They are in a better place. They experience unspeakable wonders and are in a place that can be called Paradise.

Obviously, Christian bodies return to dust at death to await the resurrection. Yet, souls in the intermediate state seem to have some sort of “temporary spirit-body.” Lazarus had a “finger” that could have brought water (Luke 16:24). The souls of tribulational saints are clothed in “white robes” (Rev. 6:11).

But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better [Phil. 1:23].

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago - whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows - such a man was caught up to the third heaven. And I know how such a man - whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows - was caught up into Paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak [2 Cor. 12:2-4].

2. Heaven

a. The Destruction of the Present Universe

After the Millennium, but probably before the Great White Throne Judgment, God will destroy this present earth and with it the entire universe as we know it (see also Luke 16:17).

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My Words shall not pass away” [Matt. 24:35].

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away” [Luke 21:33].

And, “Thou, Lord, in the beginning didst lay the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Thy hands; they will perish, but
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Thou remainest; and they all will become old as a garment, and as a mantle Thou wilt roll them up; as a garment they will also be changed. But Thou art the same, and Thy years will not come to an end” [Heb. 1:10-12].

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up [2 Pet. 3:10].

And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever [1 John 2:17].

And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them [Rev. 20:11].

b. New Heavens and Earth

The Bible predicts new heavens and a new earth. We know very little about them. Rev. 21:1 teaches that there will be no sea on this new earth. Some Bible teachers believe that God will create a completely new planet. An earth without a sea would indeed be a drastic change. Others view the new earth as a renovation of the old earth rather than an entirely new planet. God will burn and purge this earth and then will reform it into a “new earth.” It is not possible to be dogmatic, but the idea of a renovation has the advantage of explaining how Abraham’s offspring can possess the land of Israel forever.

“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind” [Isa. 65:17].

“For just as the new heavens and the new earth which I make will endure before Me,” declares the LORD [Isa. 66:22].

But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells [2 Pet. 3:13].

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea [Rev. 21:1].

c. The Heavenly City, New Jerusalem

There is more complete revelation about New Jerusalem than on any other subject pertaining to the Eternal State (see Rev. 21:2-22:5). Most theologians agree that Rev. 21:1-8 concerns a heavenly city as it exists in the Eternal State. Yet, another view takes Rev. 21:9 as a retrogression that pictures the heavenly city as it functions in the Millennium. Before studying a description of the heavenly city, we must study the time setting of the account in Rev. 21:2ff. Sections (1) and (2) below give the strongest arguments possible for each position with other possibilities following.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away”. And
He who sits on the throne said, “Be-
hold, I am making all things new.”
And He said, “Write, for these words
are faithful and true.” And He said to
me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and
the Omega, the beginning and the
end. I will give to the one who thirsts
from the spring of the water of life
without cost. He who overcomes
shall inherit these things, and I will
be his God and he will be My son.
But for the cowardly and unbelieving
and abominable and murders and
immoral persons and sorcerers and
idolaters and all liars, their part will
be in the lake that burns with fire and
brimstone, which is the second
death” [Rev. 21:1-8].

(1) New Jerusalem as a Millennial City

New Jerusalem exists right now (see John
14:1-6; Gal. 4:26; Heb. 11:16; 12:22ff.).
Therefore, one cannot automatically rule out
that it will play a role in the Millennium.
Although the New Jerusalem described in
Rev. 21:1-8 is the eternal city, perhaps it
descends upon the earth during the Millen-
nium. Some believe that certain indications
in Rev. 21:9ff. point to a millennial setting.

Rev. 21:24-26 speaks of kings and nations.
Reasoning that there can be no king in
heaven but God alone and that the existence
of governmental structures implies the exist-
ence of evil, some think that Rev. 21:9ff.
cannot refer to heaven but to the Millennium
as the Kingdom of God on earth.

And the nations shall walk by its
light, and the kings of the earth shall
bring their glory into it….and they
shall bring the glory and the honor of
the nations into it...[Rev. 21:24,26].

Another supposed indication for a millennial
setting comes in the phrase “the leaves of
the trees were for the healing of the na-
tions” (see Rev. 22:2). Since there will be
no need for “healing” in the Eternal State,
some believe the city in Rev. 21:9ff. should
be placed in a millennial setting.

(2) The New Jerusalem in the Eternal State

It is possible to view Rev. 21:2ff. as re-
stricted to the Eternal State. The Garden of
Eden contained neither sin nor sickness, but
it still had a tree of life to maintain health.
The presence of the tree of life need not
prove that John describes the heavenly city
as being on earth during the Millennium. It
is just as likely that the tree of life preserves
the life of those in eternal heaven.

Likewise, the term “nations” simply means
ethnic groups. It need not refer to full gov-
ernmental structure designed to curtail wick-
edness. There will be ethnic groups in etern-
ity. Apparently, some will have higher
positions than others in heaven and may be
called “kings”.

There are many descriptions in Revelation
21-22 that rule out a millennial context for
New Jerusalem. Virtually everyone takes
Rev. 21:1-8 as referring to the city in the
Eternal State. Therefore, one must demand
the strongest and clearest of evidence to
make Rev. 21:9ff. a retrogression to the Mil-
lemnium.

Rev. 21:1 speaks of a new earth in which
there is no sea (see Rev. 20:11). Yet, several
verses teach that in the Millennium Christ
will rule from “sea to sea” (see Psa. 72:8;
Zech. 9:10). Rev. 21:4 describes a city in
which there is no pain, no sorrow, and no
death. Although lifespans increase during
the Kingdom age, death still exists (see Isa.
11:4; 65:20; Jer. 31:29-30). It is no wonder
that all take Rev. 21:1-8 to refer to the heav-
enly city in the Eternal State. As the text
proceeds, there is little reason to change.

The descriptions in Rev. 21:2 and 10 are
similar and show that v. 9 has not regressed
to a millennial setting. The dimensions of
New Jerusalem make it difficult to place it
in the Millennium. The city is approximately
1,906,300 square miles (see Rev. 21:16).
This single city is between seven and eight times the size of Texas. It is very difficult to picture it as descending upon the present Jerusalem.

Rev. 21:22 says that there will be no temple in the New Jerusalem. Yet, the Millennium will clearly have a temple (see Ezekiel chapters 40-48).

While the heavenly city has no sun or moon (Rev. 21:23), those in the millennial Kingdom will praise Christ from the rising to the setting of the sun (see Mal. 1:11). No unbeliever may enter the heavenly city (see Rev. 21:27), but some born in the millennial period will not accept Christ (Rev. 20:7-9). While we might be able to view a city that is off limits to unbelieving millennial citizens, it is better to place all of Revelation 21 in the Eternal State.

(3) Conclusion

If one must choose between the Millennium and the Eternal State as the time setting for John’s description of the New Jerusalem, then the evidence favors the Eternal State. Many of the descriptions in Revelation 21 must be the Eternal State. All statements are compatible with an eternal setting including the presence of the nations and the tree of life that brings “healing.” A third view sees the heavenly city as playing a role in both the Millennium and the Eternal State. It is grounded in logic and speculation as opposed to exegesis of Revelation 21-22, but it should be included.

(4) The Satellite View

If one feels that a tree for healing and the existence of kings/nations demands that New Jerusalem be given a millennial setting, one might want to consider the satellite view. However, the main reason for this view is that it allows the church to remain in its “heavenly mansions” during the Millennium.

The Lord promised to prepare a place for believers (John 14:2-3). Since the New Jerusalem is the church’s dwelling place for eternity (see Rev. 21:9; 22:5), it has to be the place Christ prepares for the church. After the Rapture, Christ takes the church to her heavenly city. Will church saints be forced to vacate their eternal home to go back to earth for 1,000 years? Will believers leave heaven to live on the earth again? While this may not be impossible, such a transferal would seem to be a diminished blessing. The satellite view of the city cannot be proven, but it would allow for the church to have permanent residence in its eternal home.

Adherents believe that the city of Revelation 21-22 is indeed the eternal city. While Revelation 21-22 describes its descent onto the new earth and not the millennial city, it is possible that the heavenly city will also play a role in the Millennium. The “satellite” theory envisions that the heavenly city will descend toward (but not upon) the earth at the beginning of the Kingdom. It will hover as a satellite (2/3 the size of the moon) in earth’s orbit to serve as the residence for glorified saints. Thus, Christians will not need to abandon their heavenly abode to live on earth. They can simply commute to their assigned tasks on earth by the speed of thought.

By this view the nations of the Millennium can literally walk in the light of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:24,26) and obtain healing from its tree of life (Rev. 22:2) Then the city will be raised for the destruction of the present earth and afterward descend to settle on the new earth (a descent described in Rev. 21:1-8).

The satellite view of New Jerusalem is just a theory with no direct and clear Biblical support. However, it explains how the church saints can enjoy their heavenly abode and still serve in the millennial Kingdom. It allows the “healing” of Rev. 22:2 to be taken in a therapeutic (the exact Greek word in Rev. 22:2) and not just preventative sense.
Regardless of the role (or lack thereof) for the New Jerusalem in the Millennium, it is the eternal city. The rest of this study focuses on New Jerusalem as a description of what Christians call “heaven.”

(5) Other Texts on the Heavenly City

We need to appreciate the fact that Revelation 21-22 describes the relocation but not the creation of the eternal city. This glorious city already exists. Many other verses teach of the city’s existence.

“In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” [John 14:2-3].

But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother [Gal. 4:26].

[F]or he [Abraham] was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God....But as it is, they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them [Heb. 11:10,16].

(6) Descriptions of New Jerusalem

Misinterpretation of Rev. 21:9b has caused some to view Revelation 21 as a figure that describes the church’s glory.

“...Come here, I shall show you the bride the wife of the Lamb” [Rev. 21:9b].

Language could hardly make a more clear presentation of a literal city. John gives precise dimensions (v. 16). He discusses the walls, gates, foundations, streets, etc. (see v. 11ff.). To see this literal city is to see the Church’s future through the place of the Church’s eternal residence and eternal glory. A view of the heavenly city is a view of the Church, specifically its final destiny. Rev. 21:9b is not incompatible with taking Revelation 21 as a literal city. In essence the angel tells John, “Come, I will show you the Church’s eternal future.” His method of revealing the Church’s destiny involves giving John a glimpse of the Church’s eternal abode. By seeing this real city John learns of the Church’s future because New Jerusalem will be the everlasting residence for the Church.

(a) Size

Rev. 21:16 gives the “city limit” boundaries to the New Jerusalem.

The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long [Rev. 21:16 (NIV)].

The Greek phrase is “12,000 stadia.” A major Bible encyclopedia gives the length for a stadia as 607 1/2 feet. Thus, the city is approximately 1,380 miles long, wide, and high. It is possible to view the city as either a cube or a pyramid. Does the extension of the city upward imply levels in its dwelling places?

(b) Composition

The walls of New Jerusalem are composed of jasper that seems to be diamond-like in appearance (see v. 11, crystal clear). These walls are 144 cubits (i.e., approx. 216 feet) high (or thick) (see Rev. 21:17-18). The “city was pure gold like clear glass” (Rev. 21:18). This probably means the buildings

93 See also Heb.13:14 and Rev. 3:12.
95 If a cube, this is about 2,628,000,000 cubic miles!
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in the city are composed of a material that is like golden crystal (including believers’ dwelling places). It is golden-toned but transparent. Verse 21 teaches that the city’s street also has the same material (“And the street of the city was pure gold like transparent glass”). The singular reference to street may be a singular with a plural meaning. Likely, there is more than one street in this large city.

John devotes much attention to the city’s gates and foundations. New Jerusalem has 12 gates within its walls (v. 12). There is an angel guarding each gate (v. 12), and they are equally divided at 3 gates for the east, 3 for the north, 3 for the south and 3 for the west (v. 13). In v. 21 we learn that each gate is a single pearl! It is significant that the twelve tribes of Israel are written on the gates (v. 12). The heavenly city may be the eternal residence of the church (v. 9), but Israel is also welcome there. Israel’s tribes are not lost to God. Heb. 11:10 and 16 teach that God has prepared this city for Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham just as much as Christ prepared it for the church (John 14:2-3). These gates are always open (v. 25). Open gates speak of constant traffic and constant involvement in God’s work. This city is not a vacation spot but a beehive of activity for God’s servants (see Rev. 22:3).

There are 12 foundation stones below the jasper wall (see Rev. 21:14). This could mean 12 massive stones (with perhaps one under each gate as John returns to the subject of the pearly gates almost in conjunction with the material on the foundation stones, vv. 19-21). Yet, it is better to think of 12 layers of foundation stones extending all around the city wall (see v. 19). Each layer contains the name of an apostle. The apostles were the foundation for the church (Eph. 2:20). Their association with the heavenly city’s foundations shows that the city is the eternal abode of the church. It is the church’s eternal glory. Technically, the Book of The Revelation does not say that the 12 foundational layers are made of solid gemstones. Verse 19 says that these foundation stones were adorned (Greek kosmeo, cf. cosmetic) with 12 kinds of precious stones. We are safe in imagining liberal use of these beautiful stones. Complete evidence for possible identifications for each stone cannot be given here, but the following list gives reasonable conclusions as to their colors (see Rev. 21:19-20).96

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Probable Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jasper</td>
<td>Clear – Diamond color see v. 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sapphire</td>
<td>Blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chalcedony</td>
<td>Sky Blue with stripes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerald</td>
<td>Bright Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sardonyx</td>
<td>Red and White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sardius</td>
<td>Red or “honey color”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chrysolite</td>
<td>Clear Golden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beryl</td>
<td>Sea Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topaz</td>
<td>Clear yellowish-green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chrysoprase</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacinth</td>
<td>Violet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amethyst</td>
<td>Purple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(c) New Jerusalem’s Appearance

New Jerusalem is no doubt more stunning than words can describe. Rev. 21:2 employs the most beautiful imagery on earth, a bride on her wedding day. Yet, Rev. 21:11 actually goes further “having the glory of God.”

This city radiates God’s own glory (v. 23). Imagine a pyramid or cube nearly 1,400 miles on each side. Its overall appearance is “as a stone of crystal clear jasper” (v. 11). It

96 This chart was developed from research from many sources including Mulholland, John, Advanced Eschatology, unpublished lecture notes, Capital Bible Seminary, 1982.
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dazzles as a diamond with 1,400-mile dimensions as it reflects God’s own glory. No wonder Paul could not describe Paradise in 2 Cor. 12:4!

While the city’s overall splendor is as a huge clear crystal, there must also be some measure of a golden tint because of its buildings and street of golden crystal (v. 18b. and v. 21). Finally, the combination of light from God’s glory and the countless varied gemstones in its foundation must mean that to some extent it magnifies and radiates the full spectrum of colors. Perhaps the city gives off a clear glow from a distance but gives more rich and complex colors when viewed at a close range. There are no words to adequately describe it. The city is better than imagination allows, but we must insist that the Lamb of God surpasses all attractions.

Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen [Eph. 3:20-21].

d. The River and the Tree of Life

And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever [Rev. 22:1-5].

The river of the water of life flows from God’s throne and from the Lamb. While there is a real river of crystal clear water, this phrase also teaches the lesson that eternal life springs forth from Christ. God’s invitation to drink in Rev. 22:17 is in reality an invitation to salvation, but presumably the inhabitants of New Jerusalem will drink of the river of life. It probably maintains and/or enhances life in some unrevealed way.

Bible students are familiar with the tree of life from Gen. 2:9 and 3:22-24. The Scriptures close with a return to the beginning. In this heavenly city Paradise lost is more than regained.

Rev. 22:2 gives a description that is hard to imagine. A broad golden (Rev. 21:21) thoroughfare extends from God’s throne. Instead of a median, the river of life that also extends from God’s throne bisects this wide street. John says, “and on either side of the river was the tree of life.” How can a tree extend on both sides of a river?

Some view the river as relatively narrow or the tree as astronomical in size. They view the tree of life as on an island in the middle of the river with roots and limbs that are wide enough to extend across the river in both directions. Another alternative is to view the tree of life as a banyan tree with multiple trunks (through this seems perhaps somewhat bizarre). A third option that appeals to the writer’s sense of beauty takes “tree of life” as a phrase denoting a kind of tree rather than a single tree. In the sentence “The river banks are lined with maple,” maple meaning a kind of tree. Perhaps a great river bisects the golden street that comes from God’s throne. Both sides of this crystal street are lined with rows of beautiful “tree of life” trees. Whatever the exact appearance, we can be sure heaven will surpass
any national forest or park for the beauty of its river and tree(s).

Previous studies on the resurrection body discussed its ability to consume food. The inhabitants of New Jerusalem enjoy the tree of life. Rev. 22:19 speaks of having a “part from the tree of life.” Rev. 22:2 mentions fruit on the tree of life. Rev. 2:7 promises the privilege of feasting on it to those who overcome. John had written in 1 John 5:4 that those with faith are the overcomers.

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God” [Rev. 2:7].

The tree of life produces 12 kinds of fruit and does so on a monthly cycle (Rev. 22:2). Those in heaven enjoy both variety and freshness. It may be a sort of fruit-of-the-month with a different fruit each month, or there may be 12 kinds of fruit on the same tree with a new crop each month. A third possibility occurs if “tree of life” refers to a kind of tree and not just a single tree. Perhaps the “tree of life” orchard yields 12 various fruits among its many trees. One tree produces one kind of fruit each month. Another tree produces another fruit. Regardless of the details, we can be certain the food in heaven will be glorious. (The existence of monthly cycles in “eternity” is also interesting.)

John does not say how the leaves function for the healing of the nations. Is it the shade from the leaves? Tea from the leaves? Do people eat the leaves with the fruit? We do not know.

There can be no sickness in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:4; 22:3, no curse). What need is there for “healing” (the Greek word form from which English derives therapeutic)? Those who prefer the satellite view of the heavenly city think that the tree of life actually heals sick people from the millennial Kingdom down on earth. Whatever role the tree of life plays in the Millennium, it also seems to maintain health or extend life eternally for those in heaven. At the very least fruit and leaves from the tree of life somehow enrich the quality of life in heaven.

(7) Conditions in New Jerusalem

(a) No Curse/No Suffering

There will be no trace of sin or its harmful affects in the eternal city. Thus, there can be no sickness, pain, or death. While there might be some shame at the Judgment Seat of Christ over failures on earth, there can be no tears in New Jerusalem. All sufferings associated with the present earth will be long forgotten in eternity.

“[A]nd He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away” [Rev. 21:4].

And there shall no longer by any curse...[Rev. 22:3].

(b) Enjoyment and Possession of All Things

The Bible promises that Christians are co-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17) who is the heir of all things (Heb. 1:2). Through Christ, believers are the ultimate possessors of all things (1 Cor. 3:22; 1 Tim. 6:17). This inheritance in heaven is reserved (Eph. 1:11; 1 Pet. 1:3-4) for believers.

[I]n order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus [Eph. 2:7].

He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son [Rev. 21:7] (note that 1 John 5:4 teaches that “overcomers” are those with faith).

(c) No Marriage
Marriage is an earthly relationship while we live. We will love each other even more in heaven. There will be only one family in heaven.

“For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven” [Matt. 22:30].

“[B]ut those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; for neither can they die anymore, for they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection” [Luke 20:35-36].

(d) Service

God had ordained work for man even before the fall (Gen. 2:15). Of course, work in heaven will not involve any of the unpleasant aspects of the curse (Rev. 22:3). The fact that the eternal city’s gates never close speaks of continual work. Believers will serve Christ in tasks that are now unspecified.

...its gates shall never be closed [Rev. 21:25b].

And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve him [Rev. 22:3].

(e) Direct Worship

Heaven has no temple. It does not need one as we will be able to worship directly. There will be a “face to face” involvement with God.

And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple [Rev. 21:22].

[A]nd they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads [Rev. 22:4].

In Revelation Chapters 4 and 5 those in heaven worship before God’s throne. It is likely Ezekiel’s descriptions of the cherubim with wheels beneath are the Bible’s description of God’s throne (Ezekiel 1 and 10). The cherubim form four wheels upon which rides the chariot of God. Above the cherubim is a crystal (like ice) expanse (Ezek. 1:22). Does Ezek. 1:26 mean God’s throne looks blue (lapis lazuli)? Ezek. 1:28 and Rev. 4:3 also mention the colors of the rainbow surrounding the throne.

(f) No Sun or Moon

The light of God’s glory will be more than adequate for illumination. The absence of darkness suggests that the resurrection body will never need rest.

And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb [Rev. 21:23].

...there shall be no night there... [Rev. 21:25].

And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them... [Rev. 22:5].

(g) Eternal Reign

Saints will enjoy an eternal reign with Christ. If we will be rulers, who will be our subjects? Believers will be higher than angels (implied Heb. 2:9-16; 1 Cor. 6:3). Are there other creatures of which we are presently ignorant?

...they shall reign forever and ever [Rev. 22:5].

(8) Inhabitants in New Jerusalem

(a) Unsaved Excluded

Contrary to liberal theology, not everyone will enter heaven. God will exclude those not written in the Lamb’s book of life. The
key word in Rev. 21:8 is “unbelieving.” Unbelievers may not enter New Jerusalem. The vices listed in Rev. 21:8 describe the habitual characteristics displayed by unbelievers. It is not that an isolated sin such as an act of lying can exclude one from heaven, rather those whose lifestyle can be described as being murderers, liars, etc. show that they are unbelievers (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5 are similar). These texts do not say that an act of sin condemns but that a full life of certain sins gives evidence of unbelief. Only those written in the Book of Life may enter heaven.

“But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” [Rev. 21:8].

And nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life [Rev. 21:27].

Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying [Rev. 22:15].

(b) God Himself

The greatest blessing in heaven will be God Himself. He will live among His children. Believers will see Christ and partial manifestations of the other Persons of the Trinity.97 (See Matt. 5:8, 1 Cor. 13:12)

And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them” [Rev. 21:3].

“He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son” [Rev. 21:7].

And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb [Rev. 22:1].

...the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it [Rev. 22:3].

And they shall see His face... [Rev. 22:4].

(c) Angels

God has stationed angels at New Jerusalem’s gates (Rev. 21:12). Although Heb. 12:22-23 concerns heaven’s present inhabitants, it no doubt reflects its eternal inhabitants. Heb. 12:22 mentions “myriads of angels.”

(d) The Saved of All Dispensations

John emphasizes the fact that the heavenly city is for those who have salvation in Christ (Rev. 21:27b; 22:17 and 19). The cumulative evidence indicates that believers of all dispensations will enjoy the heavenly city.

Believing Israel

Israel’s tribal names appear on the pearly gates (Rev. 21:12). The patriarchs looked for a heavenly city (Heb. 11:10), and God will not disappoint them (Heb. 11:16). Israel will be most welcome in New Jerusalem.

It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are those of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel [Rev. 21:12].

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97 God may be seen “fully” (1 Cor. 13:12) as compared to the present level, but God’s invisible nature means He can never be totally visible (see p. 23).
For he was looking for the city which has foundations whose architect and builder is God....But as it is, they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them [Heb. 11:10,16].

Other Saints

John’s account of the heavenly city mentions blessings for the earth’s “nations” (Rev. 21:24, 26). All saved peoples can enjoy heaven even if they are not a part of believing Israel or the church. Actually, Hebrews 11:16 includes such pre-Law believers as Abel, Enoch, and Noah. Believers from the dispensations prior to the Law, as well as, tribulational saints and millennial saints, all will enjoy heaven. Heb. 12:23 is very inclusive, “the spirits of just men made perfect.”

And the nations shall walk by its light, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it [Rev. 21:24].

Church Saints

Christ has promised to prepare dwelling places for believers (John 14:2-3). Peter glories in our “inheritance reserved in heaven” (1 Pet. 1:4). The heavenly city belongs to the church in a special sense. The apostles who are the church’s foundation (Eph. 2:20) have their names on heaven’s foundations (Rev. 21:14) The Church’s future is so intertwined with the eternal city that a view of that city is the same as a view of the Church’s eternal condition.

“…Come here, I shall show you the bride the wife of the Lamb.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God [Rev. 21:9b].

(e) Summary

Although Hebrews 12 lists the present inhabitants of the eternal city, it surely also lists those who will enjoy it for eternity. Regardless of how it is interpreted, Heb. 12:22-24 gives an inclusive enrollment in heaven for all believers. The means of entrance is, by “Jesus the mediator” and by His “sprinkled blood.” Those with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His shed blood as an atonement for sin will be welcome in heaven.

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel [Heb. 12:22-24].