

THE END **TIMES**

WILL THERE BE A RAPTURE? TRIBULATION? ANTICHRIST?
ARMAGEDDON? MILLENNIUM?



DAVE MILLER

THE END **TIMES**



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DEDICATION

To Deb—
whose positive influence on
my life has been inestimable,
profound, and eternal.

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Introduction

The End Times

The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines “bedazzled”: “To dazzle so completely as to make blind.”¹ A significant portion of Christendom has been bedazzled by the sensationalism of Dispensational Premillennialism. Events in the Middle East continually evoke a steady stream of fundamentalist outcries that the end of time is near, the Rapture is about to occur, the Antichrist, Armageddon, and the Tribulation are all imminent. Does the Bible really teach these doctrines? Does the Bible really speak about Iraq, Russia, China, the modern state of Israel, and the Middle East?

The claim that “the end is near” is certainly not new. Indeed, such claims have been incessant since Jesus left the Earth. Periodically, a religious figure will capture national attention, announcing the impending return of Jesus, even to the point of setting a date, only to fade into the anonymity from which he arose when his claim falls flat—having achieved his “15 minutes of fame.”² The sensationalism sells well and tweaks the curiosity of large numbers of people. Incredibly, this pattern has been repeating itself literally **for centuries**. Hal Lindsey achieved nationwide attention over 50 years ago with his national best-seller *The Late Great Planet Earth*.³ With the approach of Y2K, outcries of doom, global disruption, and Armageddon were widespread. More

recently, a prominent repackaging of the dispensational brand of premillennialism is the popular 12 volume *Left Behind* book series first published from 1995 to 2007 by Tyndale House.⁴ The book series spawned three movies starring Kirk Cameron between 2000 and 2005, and a 2014 remake starring Nicolas Gage.⁵

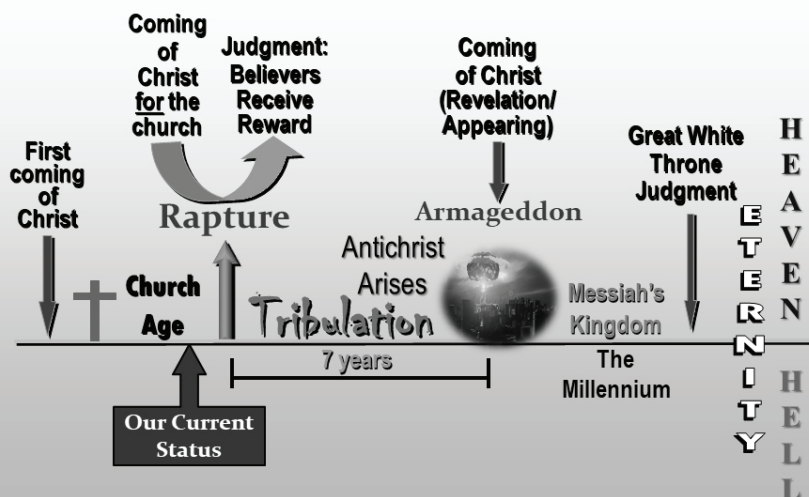
Unlike postmillennialism (the view that Jesus will return **after** the world is Christianized following a long period of peace and righteousness), and amillennialism (the view that the Bible predicts no worldwide period of peace and righteousness, with good and evil continuing until the end), premillennialism is the view that Jesus will return **before** a 1,000 year period of peace and righteousness and reign in person as king on Earth. The dispensational brand of premillennialism is a system of Bible interpretation that was advocated in the early 19th century through the writings of John Darby,⁶ which were popularized in the early 20th century in the *Scofield Reference Bible*.⁷ According to this view, history is divided into seven dispensations with the “church age” preceding the arrival of the kingdom. Briefly, the basic planks of dispensationalism are as follows:

1. At some point in the near future, Jesus will secretly “Rapture” the saved, both living and deceased, from the Earth, taking them to heaven to receive their reward.
 2. A seven-year period of intense “Tribulation” will then ensue on Earth.
-

3. During the seven-year period of "Tribulation," the "Antichrist" will appear.
4. Worldwide turmoil will escalate, culminating in the battle of "Armageddon."
5. Jesus will return with His saints in order to end "Armageddon" and usher in His 1,000-year reign (the "Millennium") on a literal throne in Jerusalem, at the end of which, eternity will commence with some going to heaven and the rest to hell.

The subsequent pages offer an evaluation of each of these five premillennial planks.⁸

Dispensational Timeline



REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What does a significant portion of Christendom claim is near?
 2. Name a book or movie that advocates the impending return of Jesus.
 3. Define “postmillennialism.”
 4. Define “amillennialism.”
 5. Define “premillennialism.”
 6. What study Bible popularized the dispensational brand of premillennialism?
 7. Identify the 5 planks of dispensational premillennialism.
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THE END TIMES



Chapter 1

Will There Be a Rapture?

The word “rapture” comes from the Latin word “*rapere*” which means “to seize, snatch out, take away.” Dispensationalists apply this word to the idea that Christ will come suddenly and secretly in the air to snatch away from the Earth the living saints and the resurrected bodies of those saints who have died. This “Rapture” is supposed to occur just prior to the seven-year “Tribulation” period.

Proponents allege that families will be shocked by the strange disappearance of a mother, father, or child. Driverless cars will collide in the streets (cf. bumper sticker: “In case of rapture, this vehicle will be unmanned”). A man and wife will be in bed; she hears a noise and turns her head to find him gone. Planes will crash with no pilots found. The “Rapture” is represented as an invisible coming of the Lord for His saints leaving visible results of chaos and confusion among the remaining unbelievers.

In reality, the word “rapture” is not found in the Bible, though it is claimed to be the Latin equivalent of *harpadzo* translated “caught up” in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Lindsey admitted, “It is not found in the Bible,”⁹ and noted that the word “translation” is just as suitable. Yet the word “translation” **does** occur in the English New Testament. Paul referred to the fact that God “delivered

us out of the power of darkness, and **translated** us into the kingdom of the Son of his love" (Colossians 1:13, ASV). So when an unbeliever obeys the Gospel, receives forgiveness of sins, and is added to the Church of Christ, he is taken out of the world and transferred to Christ's kingdom. This use of the term conflicts with the idea that it refers to Christians being "raptured" from the physical Earth to meet Jesus in the air.

New Testament Terms for Christ's Return

The Scriptures actually use three terms to refer to the return of Christ. Even a cursory look at the three terms in their respective contexts clarifies their meaning. First, *parousia* is translated "coming, presence, or advent." Second, *epiphaneia* is translated "appearing, manifestation, or brightness." Third, *apokalupsis* is translated "revelation." Dispensationalism claims that "coming" (*parousia*) refers to the "Rapture" which occurs seven years before the "Appearing" (*epiphaneia*) or "Revelation" (*apokalupsis*). Accordingly, at the "Rapture," Jesus will come **for** the church only, while at the "Revelation," Jesus will return **with** the church and put an end to the "Tribulation" and "Armageddon."

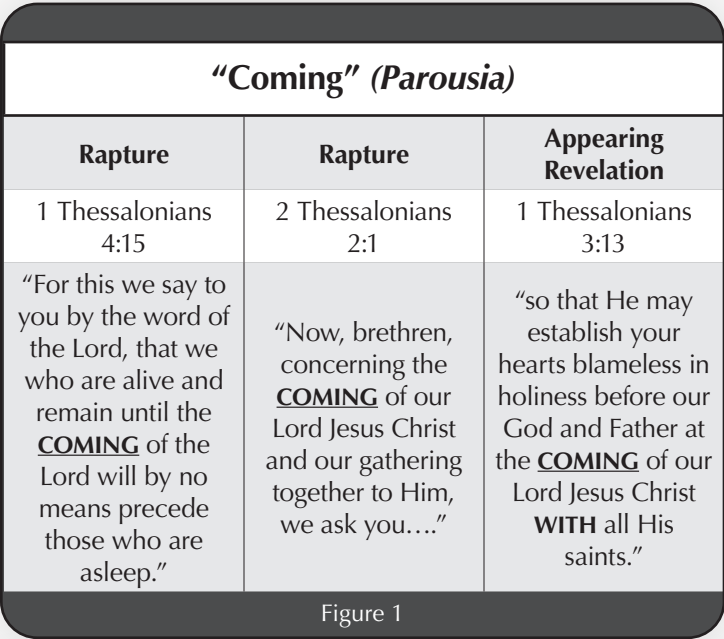
1 Thessalonians 4:17

The primary passage used to support the idea of the "Rapture" is 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17. But this passage was not given to deal with the return of Christ, but to clarify the status of Christians **before** the return of Christ. Its purpose was twofold. First, it was designed to

reassure Christians that their deceased loved ones would be able to share in the Lord's return, and second, it informed Christians that those who are still living when Christ returns will have no precedence or advantage over those who have already died. This dual function of the text constitutes a very different emphasis from that imposed upon it by dispensationalists.

The dispensational distinctions made between the three terms referring to Christ's return are simply untenable,¹⁰ i.e., they conflict with biblical usage. For example, dispensationalists assert that the "coming" (*parousia*) in 1 Thessalonians 4:15 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1 refers to the "Rapture." Yet the **same word** is used in 1 Thessalonians 3:13 to speak of Jesus coming "**with**" His saints and therefore coincides with the dispensational concept of the "Appearing" or "Revelation" seven years **after** the "Rapture." Examine these verses together in Figure 1 on p. 10.

Further, dispensationalists apply 2 Thessalonians 2:8 to the "Antichrist" and therefore must understand the "coming" of this verse as a reference to the "Appearing" (*epiphaneia*). Yet the verse uses the expression "the brightness (*epiphaneia*) of His coming (*parousia*)."¹¹ Thus the term "coming" (*parousia*) is used in the New Testament to refer to **both** dispensational concepts of the "Rapture" and the "Appearing," and the two expressions are even combined in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 to refer to **one and the same event**. See Figure 2 on p. 10.



What’s more, the term “Revelation” (*apokalupsis*) in 1 Corinthians 1:7 is descriptive of what the dispensationalists call the “Rapture” since Christians await it. But in 2 Thessalonians 1:7, the **same** word clearly refers to the “Appearing” (*epiphaneia*). See Figure 3.

“Revelation” (<i>Apokalupsis</i>)	
Rapture	Appearing
1 Corinthians 1:7	2 Thessalonians 1:7
“...so that you come short in no gift, eagerly WAITING for the REVELATION of our Lord Jesus Christ.”	“...and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is REVEALED from heaven with His mighty angels.”

Figure 3

The term “appearing” (*epiphaneia*) is used in 1 Timothy 6:14 as the event that terminates Christian activity on Earth and thus fits the “Rapture” concept. But in 2 Timothy 4:1, the reference to judgment fits the “Appearing.” Seven verses later, Paul stated: “Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His **appearing**” (2 Timothy 4:8). Observe that dispensationalists would have Paul translated into heaven at the “Rapture” seven years **before** he receives his crown of righteousness—which he says he will receive at Jesus’

“appearing” (*epiphaneia*). See Figure 4. These three verses contradict the dispensational framework.

“Appearing” (<i>Epiphaneia</i>)		
Rapture	Appearing	Rapture/Appearing
1 Timothy 6:14	2 Timothy 4:1	2 Timothy 4:8
“...that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless UNTIL our Lord Jesus Christ’s APPEARING. ”	“I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will JUDGE the living and the dead at His APPEARING and His kingdom.”	“Finally, there is laid up for me the CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS , which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His APPEARING. ”

Figure 4

Additionally, if Christians are to be removed seven years before the “Appearing/Revelation,” then no passage should admonish them to live their lives expecting to remain on Earth **until** the “Appearing/Revelation.” However, many passages do just that. For example, Titus 2:13 reads: “looking for the blessed **hope** and glorious **appearing** (*epiphaneia*) of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” Observe that Paul refers to the “blessed hope” and the “appearing” as one and the same event, i.e., Christ’s coming. Boettner explains:

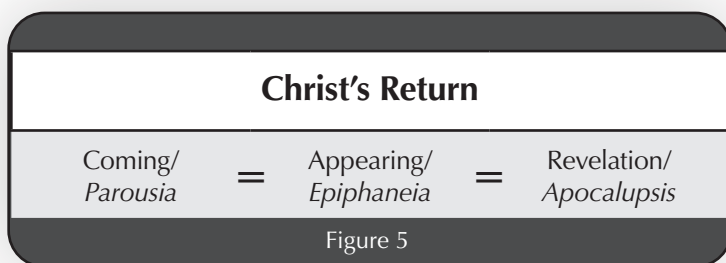
In the original Greek the two substantives hope and appearing are closely united with the common article. They are not two separate events, as if it

read, “looking for the blessed hope and the appearing,” but simply, “looking for the blessed hope and appearing.” The one explains the other. “The blessed hope” of Christians is “the glorious appearing” of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.¹¹

Two additional examples are seen in Peter’s allusions to Christ’s coming. He admonished his readers to “rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the **revelation** (*apokalupsei*) of Jesus Christ” and to “rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is **revealed** (*apokalupsei*), you may also be glad with exceeding joy” (1 Peter 1:13; 4:13). These verses teach that the grace that the Christian is to set his hope on is to be received at the **revelation** of Christ, at which time the Christian may rejoice. But, according to dispensationalism, the Christian will rejoice seven years earlier at the “Rapture.”

Summary

In view of these observations, it is evident that the three words relating to Christ’s return are used in the New Testament **synonymously and interchangeably**. The New Testament simply makes no distinction between the coming of the Lord **for** His saints (“Rapture”) and the coming of the Lord **with** His saints (“Appearing” or “Revelation”). See Figure 5 on p. 14. The dispensational dichotomy is not supported by the language of the New Testament.



The “End” & “Last Day”

Yet another flaw in the dispensational notion of a Rapture is seen in its conflict with the word “end” (*sunteleia*) which means “completion, consummation, close, the full end.”¹² Used six times in the New Testament,¹³ it refers to the end of the world (i.e., the last of life on Earth). Noted Presbyterian commentator Albert Barnes explains that the term as used in Hebrews 9:26 refers to “the last dispensation or economy; that under which the affairs of the world will be wound up.”¹⁴ The term parallels the expression “last days” which likewise refers to “the closing period of the world.”¹⁵ Lutheran commentator R.C.H. Lenski describes the word as “‘the completion’ when all things shall reach their goal and end.”¹⁶ So when Jesus promised to be with the disseminators of the Gospel message to the very “end” (Matthew 28:20), such a promise implies that the church will remain on the Earth, preaching the Gospel, until the Judgment Day. But if the church is raptured away seven years **before** the end, she cannot fulfill what Christ commanded her to do. In Matthew 13:39-49, no removal of the saints occurs before the “full end.” The righteous and the

wicked grow **together** until the very end. The separation of the two comes at **the end** (not seven years **before** the end). The dispensationalist claims that the righteous will be taken out from among the wicked. But the Bible says **just the opposite**: the wicked will be taken out from among the righteous (Matthew 13:40-42).

The same concept may be seen in the New Testament use of “the last day” (singular). The doctrine of the “Rapture” asserts that believers will be raised seven years before the “Revelation” and 1,007 years before the end of the “Millennium.” But Jesus Himself stated four times that believers will be raised “at the last day” (John 6:39,40,44,54). How can there be additional days after the **last** day? Dispensationalism contradicts Jesus’ own statements that He will raise believers at the **last** day, implying that believers cannot be raised **before** the last day.

“Secretive”?

A final observation on the “Rapture” is its alleged secretive nature. The Second Coming of Christ is nowhere depicted as secret. In fact, just the opposite is true. Christ’s coming will be accompanied by “blazing fire” (2 Thessalonians 1:7), the sound of a trumpet (1 Corinthians 15:52), a “shout,” the “voice of the archangel,” and the “trump of God” (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Indeed, “every eye will see Him” (Revelation 1:7). Clearly, all persons will witness this incredible occasion. In fact, the very passage upon which the doctrine of the “Rapture” is founded (i.e., 1 Thessalonians 4:16), far from

describing a quiet and secretive event, is as Boettner notes, “about the noisiest verse in the Bible!”¹⁷

Summary

The dispensational notion of a so-called “Rapture” will not stand up to biblical scrutiny. Verses must be selectively chosen to create the false impression of a “secret” coming of Christ. Yet an unbiased reading of New Testament verses that use the words that refer to Christ’s return dispels the alleged dispensational distinctions. The terms are used interchangeably to refer to the same event. They refer to the very end of life on Earth which will occur literally at the “last day” when Jesus will return to terminate earthly existence and usher in eternity.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the meaning of the word rendered “Rapture”?
 2. To what do dispensationalists apply the word?
 3. **When** is the “Rapture” supposed to occur?
 4. Though the word “Rapture” does not occur in the Bible, what suitable alternative word **is** found? Give a verse and explain its usage.
 5. What 3 terms are used in the New Testament to refer to the return of Christ? Give their English equivalents.
 6. How does dispensationalism apply the terms?
 7. Contrast the dispensational ideas of the “Rapture” and “Revelation” regarding Christ’s coming.
 8. What primary passage is used to support the idea of the “Rapture”?
 9. Explain the twofold purpose of 1 Thessalonians 4:17.
 10. Explain the conflict created by the dispensationalist’s use of 1 Thessalonians 4:15, 2 Thessalonians 2:1, and 1 Thessalonians 3:13 (as illustrated in Figure 1).
 11. Explain the conflict created by the dispensationalist’s use of 2 Thessalonians 2:8 (as illustrated in Figure 2).
 12. Explain the conflict created by the dispensationalist’s use of 1 Corinthians 1:7 and 2 Thessalonians 1:7 (as illustrated in Figure 3).
 13. Explain the conflict created by the dispensationalist’s use of 1 Timothy 6:14, 2 Timothy 4:1, and 2 Timothy 4:8 (as illustrated in Figure 4).
 14. Cite 1 verse that shows the Christian receiving his reward at the “Revelation” rather than the “Rapture.”
-

15. What is evident about the New Testament's use of the three words relating to Christ's return?
 16. What word is used in the New Testament that conflicts with the dispensational notion of a "Rapture"? How is it defined? How many times is it used in the New Testament?
 17. What is implied by Jesus' promise to be with the disseminators of the Gospel message to the very end?
 18. According to Matthew 13, what do the righteous and the wicked do?
 19. While the dispensationalist claims that the righteous will be taken out from among the wicked, what does the Bible say? Cite the chapter.
 20. While the doctrine of the "Rapture" says that believers will be raised seven years before the "Revelation" and 1,007 years before the end of the "Millennium," what did Jesus say about believers? Cite the verses.
 21. Give 2 indications that the Second Coming of Christ will not be secretive. Cite the verse.
-

THE END TIMES



Chapter 2

Will There Be a Tribulation?

Dispensationalists also believe that when Christ comes secretly and snatches away the saved at the “Rapture,” He will take them directly to heaven where they will experience judgment and receive their reward. They say Revelation chapters four and five describe this heavenly scene. During this period, a seven-year Tribulation will rage on Earth, as described in Revelation chapters 4-19, that will culminate in the battle of Armageddon. Various passages are sprinkled here and there in this elaborate theory of the end times. But Matthew chapter 24 is perhaps the most prominent passage that is offered in an effort to prove an alleged “Tribulation.” Hence, an exegesis of this central proof-text is necessitated. The reader is urged to open a Bible and compare the text with what follows.

Matthew 24

In Matthew 23, Jesus pronounced multiple woes upon the Jewish authorities of His day. In verse 38, He declared that the Jews’ house would be left to them “desolate.” He then left the immediate confines of the Temple complex, but paused at a distance with His disciples to continue the same line of thought. He directed their attention to the Temple and said: “There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be

torn down” (Matthew 24:2). Such a declaration would have been shocking, if not horrifying, to these “dyed-in-the-wool” Jews that took great pride in the Temple. They, no doubt, assumed that the Temple—where God’s presence dwelt¹⁸—would last forever. Privately, the disciples asked Jesus two questions: (1) “When will these things (that is, the Temple disruption) be?” and (2) “What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3). Jesus proceeded to answer these questions in such a way as to distinguish between the destruction of the Temple on the one hand, and the end of the world on the other. He showed that they are **completely separate events**.

Signs Heralding the Destruction of Jerusalem

Jesus began His response by delineating numerous **signs** that would take place prior to the toppling of the Temple. First, many would come claiming to be the Christ (vs. 5). As a matter of fact, near the time of Jerusalem’s fall in A.D. 70, many false messiahs arose, claiming to be the Christ. Writing in the first century A.D., Jewish priest, Pharisee, and historian, Flavius Josephus, reported that such messiahs became more numerous before the siege of the city.¹⁹ Shortly after the establishment of Christianity in A.D. 30 (Acts 2), Gamaliel, early first century Pharisee and leading authority in the Jewish Sanhedrin, also alluded to such figures during the same time period (Acts 5:34-37). Likewise, the apostle Paul, writing in the mid-50s A.D., warned of false “apostles of Christ” then circulating (2 Corinthians 11:13).

Second, Jesus said that “wars and rumors of wars” would circulate, “but the end is not yet” (vs. 6). Numerous wars were engaged in by the Romans against various smaller nations as Rome continued her drive toward worldwide domination. At the same time, Rome had to cope constantly with revolt and rebellion among her conquered peoples. Josephus verified this fact.²⁰ The “end” to which Jesus referred in this verse applied to the end of the Temple—not the end of the world.

Third, Jesus predicted that famine, pestilence, and earthquakes would occur (vs. 7). It is documented historical fact that during the years leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem, famines and earthquakes occurred. There was a massive famine during the reign of Claudius Caesar before the destruction of Jerusalem (Acts 11:28; cir. A.D. 47).²¹ An unusual number of great earthquakes occurred during the reign of Nero in A.D. 60-70, destroying many cities of Asia Minor.²² The occurrence of these signs between the time of Jesus’ word (A.D. 30) and the destruction (A.D. 70) would be interpreted by those who heard Him articulate them as the direct fulfillment of Jesus’ statements. But if Jesus’ words apply to a yet future event, His words make no sense for there have been earthquakes and famines all over the world for the last 2,000 years, and the occurrence of them today is no sign at all.

The fact is that earthquakes could not have been intended by God to be a sign of the end of the world. Some 500,000 earthquakes are detectable in the world each year with only 100,000 of those being “felt.”²³

Many go undetected because they hit remote areas or have very small magnitudes. Nor are the number of earthquakes increasing: “The ComCat earthquake catalog contains an increasing number of earthquakes in recent years—not because there are more earthquakes, but because there are more seismic instruments and they are able to record more earthquakes.”²⁴ Since earthquakes have been fairly constant for the last 2,000 years, and occur on a daily basis, they would be completely useless in attempting to recognize the end of the world. However, if Jesus intended them to be **immediate** signs, contemporaneous with the first century, they would have served a useful purpose. From A.D. 30 to 70, each time an earthquake occurred, the disciples would have been instantly reminded of Jesus’ prediction and its impending fulfillment.

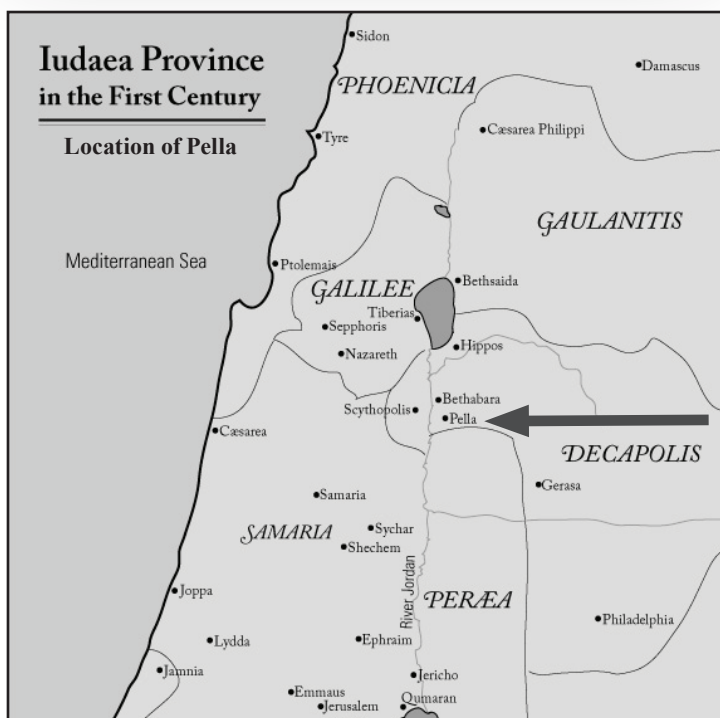
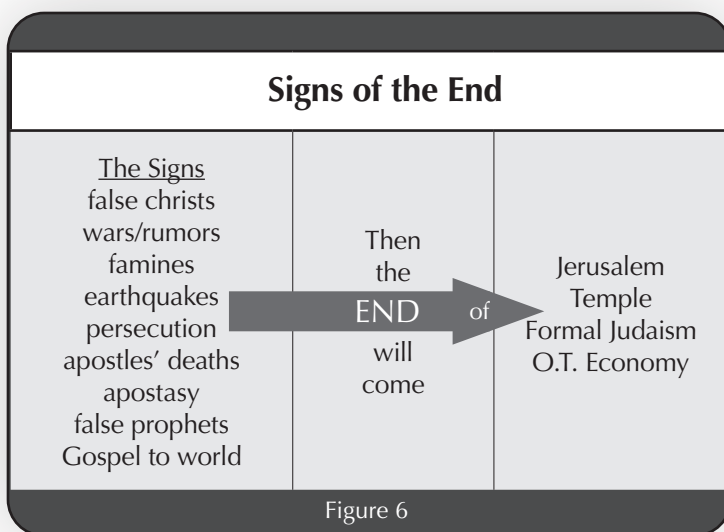
Fourth, Jesus further stated that the apostles would be hated, persecuted, and even killed (vs. 9). As it turned out, Peter, Paul, James (Acts 12:2), and James the Less were all put to death before the destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus said that false prophets would arise, many Christians would falter, and evil would abound (vss. 10-13). As the pressure of persecution increased during the early decades of Christianity, so the faith of many decreased. Apostasy became prevalent. It is during such turmoil that false teachers make their mark by capitalizing on spiritual confusion, doubt, and weakness (cf. Matthew 7:15; Acts 20:29-30; 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Peter 2:1-2).

Fifth, Jesus said that the Gospel would be preached in all the world (vs. 14). It is also historical fact that the

Gospel was preached to all the world prior to the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem. Paul wrote to Christians in Rome (A.D. 58) and said their faith was spoken of “throughout the whole world” (Romans 1:8). When Paul wrote to the church of Christ at Colossae (A.D. 62), the Gospel was “bearing fruit and increasing” (Colossians 1:6) in the entire world, which can only happen if the seed is first sown “in all the world.” In fact, Paul flatly stated that the Gospel had been preached “to every creature which is under heaven,” or “in all creation under heaven” (Colossians 1:23, KJV/NASB). The point is clear: The Gospel was preached to the world prior to A.D. 70 as Jesus predicted.

The Fulfillment of the Signs Brought the End

Once all these signs (i.e., false Christs, wars/rumors of wars, famines/earthquakes, persecution, death of the apostles, the apostasy of many, the rise of false prophets, and worldwide proclamation of the Gospel) came to pass, Jesus said the “end” would come (vs. 14). That is, the end of Jerusalem, the end of the Temple, the end of formal Judaism, and the end of the Old Testament economy would occur. See Figure 6 on p. 26. Jesus said this end would come about with the presence of the “abomination of desolation” in the holy place (vs. 15). He applied Daniel 9:27 to the presence of the Roman army and its ruthless military commander Titus at the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (cf. Luke 21:20).²⁵



Consequently, Jesus urged the faithful in Judea to “flee into the mountains” (vs. 16). History records a remarkable factor concerning the fall of Jerusalem. With the approach of A.D. 70, Jewish Christians took the invasion of the Roman armies as the appointed sign which Christ had given. Upon seeing the Roman military machine in full march, Jewish Christians dropped everything and made their escape to Pella, a village east of the Jordan in Perea about 15 miles south of the Sea of Galilee.²⁶ Thus, while God was bringing due wrath upon unbelieving Jews, He made provision for those Jews who had become Christians to escape. **Observe:** If this passage refers to the Rapture—and the saved were about to be removed to heaven—it would have been superfluous for Jesus to tell them to flee the city.

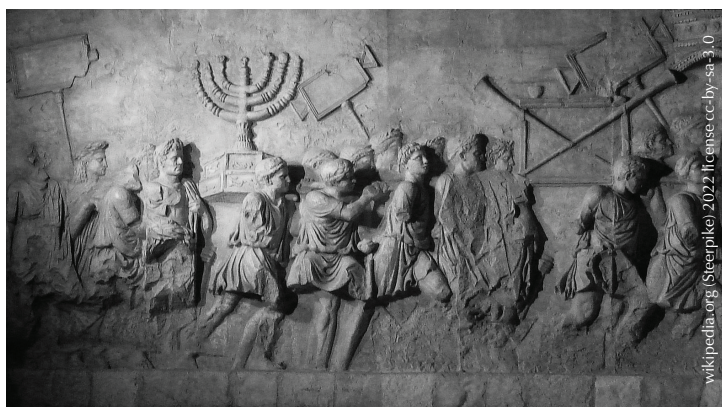
Jesus pronounced woe on those who, in facing the hardships that would occur, would have the added difficulties associated with pregnancy, and protecting and nursing children—especially if it occurred in winter or on the Sabbath (vss.



Titus Caesar Vespasianus (A.D. 39-81)

19-20). Bearing and caring for children is a difficult task in and of itself. But such functions become incredibly difficult when one is “on the run.” Likewise, escape from the onslaught of a merciless military force would be complicated by the conditions that accompany the wintertime. The cold and hunger would constitute hardship on children and adults alike. The allusion to the Sabbath refers to the fact that Jewish authorities would still be enforcing observance of the Sabbath with closed city gates (Nehemiah 13:19). Thus, these two verses deal with hindrances to flight from the Roman besiegement of Jerusalem.

Jesus further stated that “great tribulation” would be associated with these events, comparably worse than at any time and resulting in the loss of many lives (vss. 21-22). We who live subsequent to A.D. 70 have difficulty fathoming the magnitude of the tribulation expe-



The victory was commemorated in Rome with the Arch of Titus, which depicts the valuables seized from the Temple, including the Temple menorah.



Destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by Francesco Hayez

rienced during the destruction of Jerusalem. At that time, hundreds of thousands of Jews were crowded together from all over the world to observe Passover. The mass misery that resulted from the Roman siege—which lasted five months—was extensive.²⁷ Interestingly, Josephus, an eyewitness, alluded to the atrocity in words reminiscent of Jesus' own words: "neither did any other city suffer such miseries...from the beginning of the world."²⁸ The phrase "nor ever shall be" shows that Jesus had in mind a time near His own day with much time to come **after** the event. If He was alluding to some period near the end of time (as per dispensationalism), He would not have added such words since there would be no future time left for such an occurrence. God could have easily permitted every single Jew to be wiped from the face of the Earth. But for the sake of His church



The Siege and Destruction of Jerusalem by David Roberts

(which included converted Jews), the period of tribulation was shortened (vs. 22).

Next, Jesus warned that during the period leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem, false Christs and false prophets would come forward and display magical tricks to deceive people into thinking they were authentic representatives of God (vss. 23-26). When people face severe and intense disruption to their lives, they tend to become easy prey for conmen and charlatans who seek to exploit the hardships and vulnerabilities of others. Jesus warned of this phenomenon as the time for Jerusalem's destruction grew nearer. When any individuals, even in our own day, seek to seduce people into believing that the Lord's final coming is imminent, Jesus says, "Don't believe it!" (cf. vs. 26). Why? Because when Jesus comes at the end of time, **everyone** will know it. The Second Coming will be as visible and as evident as a blinding flash of lightening that covers the entire sky (vs. 27).

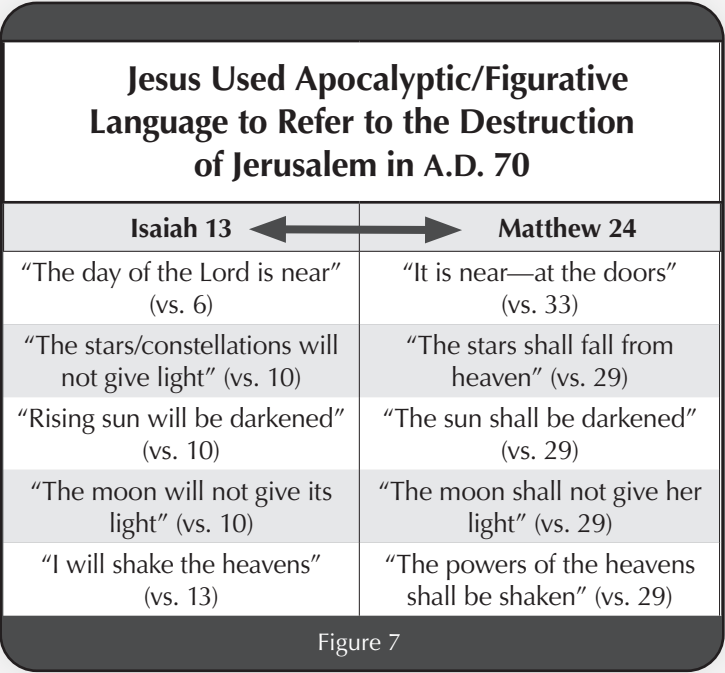
In contrast with the **ultimate** return of Jesus, the coming of Jesus in judgment on Jerusalem would be discernible on very different grounds: "For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles²⁹ will be gathered together" (vs. 28). Typically classified as a type of vulture due to its carrion feeder traits, the eagle was the symbol of Roman power. It was carried by the different units of the Roman army wherever Roman authority was being exerted.³⁰ The contemporaries were readily familiar with this fact. Thus, in A.D. 70, the Roman vultures swarmed over Jerusalem and devoured the carcass of apostate Judaism.³¹

Jesus then resorted to the use of several highly figurative phrases which are based upon Old Testament apocalyptic language: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken" (vs. 29). The phrase "after the tribulation of those days" means after the horrible events that occurred during the siege of the city, which history records began on August 10, A.D. 70 and lasted some two months. In that short period, 1.1 million died in unspeakable anguish, and 97,000 were taken as slaves.³² After the tribulation of the siege, the final destruction occurred.

The English reader and the Western mind have difficulty conceptualizing such extravagant expressions. The temptation is to take the words literally. But Jesus merely did what many of the Old Testament prophets did when they announced the destruction of cities and countries in symbolic, apocalyptic imagery. All one need do is

read Isaiah 13 to see that Jesus was incorporating terminology reminiscent of the description of the destruction of Babylon recorded in Isaiah 13 where the language referred to the military onslaught of the Medes in the sixth century B.C. that brought about the downfall of the Babylonian empire. See Figure 7.

Similarly, Isaiah depicted the destruction of Edom in terminology that spoke of the cosmos being dissolved and the sky rolling up like a scroll (34:4). Ezekiel portrayed the fate of Egypt in terms of the darkening of the stars, Moon, and Sun (32:7). There is no question that such language is highly figurative, hyperbolic, and designed to instill an **impression of great calamity**, to



create an **effect** in the mind of the hearer—but not intended to be taken literally. If God can discuss the overthrow of Babylon, Egypt, and Edom in such flamboyant, dramatic terminology, surely, He can do the same when discussing the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70—without us jumping to the conclusion that He was referring to the end of time.

At this point would “appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven” (vs. 30). In other words, looking again at vs. 29, the **darkening** of the Jewish Temple, the **shaking up** of the Jewish commonwealth, and the **fall** of Jewish authority through the instrumentality of imperial Rome was **the sign or signal that Christ had come in judgment on Israel**. He was the One responsible for the misery that would enshroud the Jewish nation. Jesus had done exactly what He had told Caiaphas he could expect to witness personally: “the Son of man is coming in the clouds of heaven” (Matthew 26:64). Jews knew that such language was completely normal when describing God’s execution of wrath **in history**. When God punished Egypt in the long ago, He “rode on a swift cloud...into Egypt” (Isaiah 19:1)—a graphically appropriate way to envision God’s vengeance, in time, in history.³³

Next, angels would go forth with a great trumpet sound and gather the elect (vs. 31). Historians report that once Jewish opposition to Christianity (reflected throughout the book of Acts and in Paul’s epistles³⁴) was removed in A.D. 70, the **true nation** of God (i.e., the

Church of Christ—the “holy nation” [1 Peter 2:9]—the Christian elect) began to experience unparalleled effectiveness. The sound of the Gospel trumpet was heard more clearly than ever before. The word for “angel” (*angelos*) is the normal Greek word for “messenger.”³⁵ It is used in the New Testament to refer both to angelic visitors from heaven (Matthew 4:6,11; 28:2; Mark 1:12; Luke 16:22; Galatians 3:19) as well as **human** messengers (Matthew 11:10; Luke 7:24,27; 9:52; James 2:25). In this passage it refers to the emissaries of the Gospel who, by means of the preached Word, gathered individuals into the elect fold from all over the world.³⁶ Such phraseology is reminiscent of the year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25) in which every 50th year, the believing community sounded a ram’s horn all through the land and proclaimed the year as a year of release or liberation.

Jesus next uttered a brief parable about a fig tree (vs. 32-33). Tender branches and new leaves on a fig tree function as **signs**—signals that summer is near. Likewise, the signs that Jesus delineated pinpointed the time when Jerusalem was to be destroyed. Once faithful disciples began to observe the unfolding of these signs, they would realize that the city was on the verge of being besieged by the Roman armies. They could then “look for their redemption” (Luke 21:28), i.e., act upon their providentially prearranged escape plan and receive deliverance from the Romans and potential future persecutions of Jewish authority. The repetition of the second person plural pronoun is further proof that Jesus

was referring to **His own generation**, not a generation that was centuries in the future: “So **you** also, when **you** see...” (vs. 33).

Jesus ended His response to the first question asked by His disciples with the words: “This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled” (vs. 34). The generation to whom He was addressing Himself would still be living when “all these things” would occur. Thus every single sign that Jesus pinpointed would occur during **that** generation. Some, however, in an attempt to apply Jesus’ words to the premillennial framework and the end of time, suggest that the Greek word for “generation” (*genea*) may also be translated “race,” in which case Jesus was simply saying that the Jewish race would not pass out of existence before all these things happened to them. But if this allegation be correct, then Jesus is put in the position of telling the Jews what would happen to their race, and then saying that their race would not pass away until everything that was going to happen to their race happened—an absurdly redundant notion. Why would God declare a group’s fate, and then assure the group that they would still be around to suffer that fate? Obviously, God would never have told them the specifics of their fate if they were not going to be present to experience those specifics. The fact of the matter is that the word “generation” is used 13 times³⁷ in the Gospel of Matthew and always designates those who are living at a particular point in time—comparable to modern American expressions like “baby boomers” and “Gen X.” In fact, in Matthew 23:36-39, where

the context is the same as Matthew 24, Jesus spoke of the contemporary population of Jerusalem as the “generation” that He had in mind—the one that He sought to “gather” under His wings and whose house would be “left desolate.” See Figure 8 on the next page.

Transition: No Signs Heralding the Second Coming

Verse 35 functions as a transition verse, placing closure on Jesus’ answer to the disciples’ **first** question. Beginning in verse 36, Jesus turned His attention to dealing with the disciples’ **second** question. He emphatically distinguished between the destruction of Jerusalem, which He had been discussing, and the end of the world or Second Coming. Even if the disciples had not asked about “the end of the world,” it would have been appropriate for Jesus to have dealt with the matter since He would not want the two to be confused. So He alluded to “**that** day,” i.e., the day heaven and earth will pass away (vs. 35), the world will end, and Christ would come again (vs. 3). Jesus went out of His way to stress **the total absence of signs** signaling the end of the world and the Second Coming. He declared that His final coming would be comparable to the Deluge of Noah’s day (vs. 37), in that it will be **totally unexpected**. Right up to the very day that Noah and his family entered the ark, life was going on **as usual**. No signs! Jesus said farmers will be in the field **as usual** (vs. 40); women will be involved in their activities **as usual** (vs. 41). Jesus even likened the unexpected nature of His final coming to the exploits of a thief (vs. 43). Both Paul (1 Thessalonians

13 Occurrences of “Generation” (*genea*) in Matthew

Verses	Passages	Meaning
1:17(4)	“So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations , from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations , and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations .”	All 4 occurrences refer to the populations that were contemporaneous with each descendant from Abraham to Christ named in verses 1-16.
11:16	“But to what shall I liken this generation ? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions.”	The context shows that Jesus was referring to those who were contemporaries with Himself and John the Baptizer, including the then populations of the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, & Capernaum.
12:39,41,42,45	“An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here.... So shall it also be with this wicked generation .”	Each occurrence refers to the contemporaries of Jesus who would know of Jesus being in the tomb and whose resistance manifested toward Jesus was to be contrasted with the receptivity manifested by the population of Nineveh in Jonah’s day and the Queen of Sheba who visited Solomon.
16:4	“A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.”	Remarks addressed to the Pharisees & Sadducees who were alive when Jesus’ death/resurrection occurred.
17:17	“Then Jesus answered and said, ‘O faithless and perverse generation , how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me.’”	Jesus directed these words specifically to His disciples due to their failure to expel a demon.
23:36	“Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation .”	Contextually, Jesus was referring to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
24:34	“Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.”	Same context as 23:36

Figure 8

5:2) and Peter (2 Peter 3:10) repeat this analogy. As the coming of a thief in the night is preceded by absolutely no signs, so the final coming of Jesus will be **preceded by absolutely no signals**.

Thus, verses 36-51, as well as the entirety of chapter 25, refer to the end of time and the Second Coming. Jesus' first point was that, whereas those who give proper heed to the signs can pinpoint the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, no one can pinpoint the day of Christ's return. Why? **Absolutely no signs** will occur to alert people to the Second Coming. Verses 37-39 clearly show that life on this Earth will be going on as it always has with "business as usual." The time of Jesus' ultimate return is unpredictable and will be totally unexpected, unaccompanied by signs to warn of its approach.

Summary

It is not uncommon to hear people discussing the end of time and delineating the "signs" that they say are proof that Christ's return is imminent.³⁸ When "wars and rumors of wars," "earthquakes," and various political/military events that one observes in the news occur, they are quick to connect those occurrences with their conviction that Christ is about to return. They claim to be representing the Bible in their calculations and forecasts—even though, to date, every attempt to pinpoint the date of Christ's return has failed miserably.

The only hope of the entire world is to render obedience to the written revelation of the Bible (Matthew 24:46). Noah preached, apparently for many years, in hopes of alerting the world's population to the coming judgment upon them. They refused to listen and amend their ways. Likewise, the only "tip-off " available today is the Gospel of Jesus Christ that instructs every accountable individual what to do to be right with God. When one brings one's life into compliance with those directives, "signs" by which to anticipate the return of Christ are completely superfluous. As Jesus emphasized: "Watch therefore, for **you do not know** what hour your Lord is coming" (Matthew 24:42).

In fact, the signs³⁹ preceding the destruction of Jerusalem were pinpointed for **Christian** Jews rather than for unbelieving Jews. The signs served the purpose of alerting Christians to enact the means of safety and escape from physical threat posed by the Romans. The signs did **not** serve the purpose of achieving **spiritual salvation**. Signs from God were never intended to serve such a purpose.⁴⁰ Even so, today, no signs are needed to (1) provide instructions to Christians so they can avoid **physical** harm from persecutors, (2) nor are they needed to provide **spiritual** salvation for non-Christians—which can only be attained via obedience to the message of the Gospel (Romans 1:16). To repeat: the signs given by Jesus in Matthew 24 enabled Christians to avoid death at the hands of the Romans. No signs have been given by Jesus by which Christians today can evade future physical danger.

When studied carefully in context and in light of history, verses in Matthew 24 that dispensationalists claim refer to the end times are seen to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70.⁴¹ Without a doubt, there will be tribulation in the world. Christians are, in fact, assured of such, even as Paul explained to the Christians in the cities of Galatia: “We must through **many tribulations** enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22; cf. 2 Timothy 3:12; John 16:33). Christians always have and always will endure tribulation. But there will be no future period of tribulation from which saints will be exempt as the dispensationalists describe. The world may well experience World War III. Horrible atrocities may well be unleashed upon humanity. But such future events will in no way result as the fulfillment of biblical teaching. The Bible simply does not teach that there will be a future seven year “Tribulation” on Earth that will culminate in a battle of Armageddon.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do dispensationalists believe will happen to the saved when they are snatched away by Jesus? Cite their proof text.
 2. What do dispensationalists say will take place on Earth while the saved are in heaven? Cite the proof text.
 3. What did Jesus say to the disciples that must have been shocking to them when He directed their attention to the Temple? Cite the verse.
 4. What 2 questions did Jesus ask the disciples? Cite the verse.
 5. What did Jesus show by His answers to these questions?
 6. Select 1 of the signs given by Jesus that would herald the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and explain how it was fulfilled prior to A.D. 70.
 7. To what does the word “end” refer in Matthew 24:6?
 8. How would the occurrence of famine, pestilence, and earthquakes between A.D. 30 and A.D. 70 been interpreted by those who had heard Jesus allude to them?
 9. Why would earthquakes be completely useless in recognizing the end of the world?
 10. If Jesus intended earthquakes to be immediate signs in the **first** century, what useful purpose would they have served from A.D. 30 to A.D. 70?
 11. What did Jesus mean by His use of the word “end” in verse 14?
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12. To what did Jesus apply the expression “abomination of desolation”? Cite the Old Testament verse He quoted as well as a New Testament verse.
 13. What did Jesus urge the faithful in Judea to do when the Romans approached?
 14. What remarkable factor does history record concerning the fall of Jerusalem?
 15. What follows if this passage refers to the “Rapture” and the saved were about to be removed to heaven?
 16. Name 1 of the 3 hindrances to flight from the Roman besiegement of Jerusalem in vss. 19-20.
 17. What does Jesus’ words “nor ever shall be” show?
 18. Why did Jesus say not to believe those who claim Jesus’ return is imminent?
 19. What did the eagle symbolize?
 20. To what “tribulation” did Jesus refer?
 21. How many died in the siege of Jerusalem?
 22. What Old Testament chapter uses imagery that is reminiscent of Jesus’ description of the destruction of Jerusalem? To what does that Old Testament chapter refer?
 23. What is such apocalyptic language designed to do and how is it **not** intended to be taken?
 24. What were the events of verse 29 intended to convey?
 25. What did Jesus mean when He said they would see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven?
 26. To whom had Jesus already made this statement? Cite the verse.
-

27. What was such completely normal language intended to describe?
 28. What country in the Old Testament was the recipient of similar terminology? Cite the verse.
 29. What is the normal meaning of the Greek word for “angel”?
 30. To whom did Jesus refer in His use of “angels”? How did they gather the elect?
 31. What event in the Law of Moses is this phraseology reminiscent of? Cite the chapter.
 32. How do fig tree branches and leaves function in Jesus’ discourse?
 33. To what did Jesus’ signs point?
 34. In what way were the faithful disciples to “look for their redemption”? Cite the verse.
 35. Who did Jesus say would still be living when “all these things” would occur?
 36. What do some claim is the meaning of Jesus’ use of the word “generation.” How would they apply it?
 37. What redundancy characterizes this viewpoint?
 38. How many times is the word “generation” used in Matthew, and what does it **always** designate?
 39. How does verse 35 function?
 40. What does Jesus do in verse 36?
 41. To what does “that day” refer in verse 36?
 42. What did Jesus go out of His way to stress regarding the end of the world and His Second Coming?
 43. In what way will Jesus’ final coming be comparable to the Flood of Noah’s day?
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44. To what did Jesus liken the unexpected nature of His final coming?
 45. What 2 New Testament writers repeat this analogy? Cite the verses.
 46. What will precede Jesus' final coming?
 47. What portion of Matthew refers to the end of time and the Second Coming?
 48. What could those who gave proper heed to the signs pinpoint?
 49. How may the time of Jesus' **ultimate** return be characterized?
 50. To date, what has been the result of every attempt to pinpoint the date of Christ's return?
 51. Though Noah preached for many years about the judgment that was coming upon the world's population, what was their response?
 52. What is the only "tip-off" available today to prepare people for Christ's coming?
 53. If a person brings his life into compliance with the Gospel, what becomes completely superfluous?
 54. For whom, specifically, did Jesus pinpoint the signs preceding the destruction of Jerusalem?
 55. For what purpose were the signs Jesus gave **not** intended?
 56. Identify 2 conditions for which no signs are needed today.
 57. When studied carefully in context and in light of history, to what do the verses refer in Matthew 24 that dispensationalists claim refer to the end times?
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THE END TIMES



Chapter 3

Will There Be an Antichrist?

Moving to the next prominent doctrine of dispensationalism, we consider the alleged appearance during the “Tribulation” of the “Antichrist.” The term “antichrist” occurs **only five times** in Scripture, **only** in the writing of John, and **only** in two of his five books. Here are the verses: 1 John 2:18,22; 4:3; 2 John 7. The implications are significant. Dispensationalists do not go to 1 and 2 John when they discuss the Antichrist. They go to Revelation, 2 Thessalonians, or Daniel. They go to passages that do not even use the word “antichrist.”

This fact is hardly surprising since, in stark contrast to current claims, John applied the term “antichrist”⁴² to **more than one** individual, and to individuals who were living **then**—in the first century. Read the verses for yourself to see that the claim of a future Antichrist is unwarranted:

Little children, **it is the last hour**; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, **by which we know that it is the last hour**. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?

He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son (1 John 2:18-22).

Observe that the NKJV both inserts the article before and capitalizes “antichrist” in verse 18, leaving the English reader with the strong suggestion that a distinction is to be made between multiple antichrists and an alleged singular Antichrist that stands out from all the rest. The Greek lacks the article, and capitalization occurs at the translator’s own discretion since the Greek lacks punctuation.⁴³ Verse 18 states that numerous antichrists had arisen in John’s day, and he therefore concluded that “it is the last hour,” i.e., the final period of religious history which, as noted earlier, commonly referred to as “the last days” (Isaiah 2:2; Acts 2:17; Hebrews 1:2). How can a future “Antichrist” appear **after** “the last hour”? What’s more, John declares that **anyone** who denies the Father and the Son is antichrist. He then describes the behavior of the antichrists as “not of God”:

Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and **is now already in the world** (1 John 4:2-3).

“Antichrist” was simply **all those** who denied Christ had come in the flesh (1 John 2:22).⁴⁴ John, therefore, labeled any such deluded soul as “**the** deceiver” and “**the** antichrist” (2 John 7). Notice the use of the article. John was saying that people living in his own day who denied the

incarnation of Jesus were to be regarded as the antichrist. Not just **an** antichrist—but **the** antichrist. Commenting on 1 John 4:3, Macknight astutely observed:

From this, as well as from chap. ii.18, it appears that Antichrist is **not any particular person**, nor any particular succession of persons in the church, but **a general name for all false teachers** in every age, who disseminate doctrines contrary to those taught by the apostles; especially if these doctrines have a tendency to derogate from Christ's character and actions as the Saviour of the world.⁴⁵

The idea that the term “antichrist” is to be applied to some “future fuehrer”⁴⁶ who will draw the world into a global holocaust is out of harmony with John's inspired use of the term.

Daniel 9

The first passage which some say predicts an “Antichrist” is the famous “70 Weeks” prophecy found in Daniel 9:24-27—

Vs. 24—Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.

Vs. 25—Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.

Vs. 26—And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.

Vs. 27—Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.

Observe carefully the content of this marvelous prophecy.

Verse 24

During the prophetic period that Daniel identified in terms of 70 symbolic weeks, transgression, sin, and iniquity would be “finished,” “ended,” and “reconciliation provided for.” Paul declared that we “rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received **the reconciliation**” (Romans 5:11; also 2 Corinthians 5:18-19). This terminology clearly refers to **Christ’s sacrifice upon the cross**: “now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Hebrews 9:26). He **finished** His atoning task to make an end of sins (John 17:4; 19:30). The effect of Christ’s atoning work was that “everlasting righteousness” was ushered in. As Paul stated: “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the **righteousness** of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21; cf. Jeremiah 23:5-6; Philippians 3:9).

Because of what Jesus did, individuals may now stand before God completely righteous through obedient faith (Romans 1:5; 16:26).

Likewise, “vision” and “prophecy” would be “sealed up.” This refers to the inevitable termination of Old Testament prophecy and its fulfillment in Christ’s appearance in human history: “Yes, and all the prophets from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days” (Acts 3:24; Hebrews 1:1-2). Finally, the phrase in Daniel 9:24 that speaks of the “anointing” of the “most holy” refers to the public ministry and subsequent official crowning of Jesus as He took His place upon His throne to rule in His kingdom. Isaiah said: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has **anointed Me** to preach good tidings to the poor” (61:1)—which Jesus read aloud in His hometown synagogue and applied to Himself (Luke 4:18-21). On the day of Pentecost, Peter said: “Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God” (Acts 2:33). Notice that Daniel summarized the entire 70-week period by including all of these factors in the 70 weeks.

Verse 25

Next, Daniel broke the 70-week period into three segments: 7 weeks, 62 weeks, and 1 week. This verse pertains to the first two sections of the 70th week period. During these two periods, that is, during 69 of the 70 prophetic weeks, a decree would go forth calling for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the reconstruction of the Temple that had been destroyed by the Babylonians (cf.

Nehemiah 2:7-8; Ezra 1:1-3). Daniel made clear that these 69 weeks of the prophetic period, during which the Temple would be rebuilt and national Israel reestablished, would take one up to the appearance of the Messiah.

Verse 26

This verse speaks of the **final** week of the 70-week prophetic period, for he said “**after** the 62 weeks” (which already followed the initial 7 weeks). “After” puts one into the final or 70th week of Daniel’s remarks. Two significant events were to occur during this final week. First, the Messiah would be “cut off.” This expression unmistakably refers to Jesus’ death upon the cross: “He was cut off from the land of the living” (Isaiah 53:8). Second, a “prince” and his people would come and destroy the city and the sanctuary—an obvious allusion to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple edifice in A.D. 70 by Titus and his Roman army.

Verse 27

This verse alludes to the activation of the new covenant between the Messiah and “many,” that is, between Christ and those who are responsive to the demands of the new covenant. As the Hebrews writer said: “Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (8:8; cf. Acts 3:25). The New Testament teaches that the cutting off of the Messiah—the crucifixion—was **the act** that confirmed the covenant (Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 9:15-29) and brought an

immediate end to the validity of the Old Testament practices of sacrifice and oblation (Colossians 2:14; Luke 23:45; Hebrews 10:18-20). Next Daniel alluded to the ruthless invasion of Jerusalem in the phrase “abomination of desolation” (interpreted by dispensationalists to be the “Antichrist”). Jesus quoted this very phrase in Matthew 24:15 and Luke 21:20 and applied it to the Roman desecration and destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in A.D. 70. (See the allusion in the discussion of Matthew 24 on p. 25).

Thus, the fundamental purpose of Daniel’s 70-weeks prophecy was to show God’s final and complete decree concerning the Israelite commonwealth. All of the events described in the prophecy were literally fulfilled nearly 2,000 years ago. As far as God is concerned, the logical end of the Old Testament and Judaism has occurred. Now He deals only with the **spiritual** children of Abraham, whether Jew or Gentile (Romans 4:11-12,16; 9:8)—the church of Christ which is the **actual** “Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16).

Revelation 13

A second passage that is used to support the notion of an “Antichrist” is Revelation 13:1-10. The reader is urged to open the Bible to this chapter and consider the following analysis. Taking into account the context of the book of Revelation as well as a proper interpretation of its apocalyptic imagery lead to the understanding that the seven-headed sea beast⁴⁷ was a symbol for the **then** monstrous emperor of Rome who was

responsible for unleashing horrible atrocities upon Christians of Asia Minor in the latter years of the first century A.D.⁴⁸ He is identified by the symbolic, sinister numeral “666.”⁴⁹ The two-horned land beast (Revelation 13:11-18), who enforced worship of the sea beast, refers to the official governmental organizations known as the Roman Concilia—“the imperial priesthood of the provinces”⁵⁰—that was responsible for supporting, regulating, and enforcing all details relative to emperor worship.⁵¹ This evil legal entity was authorized to instigate economic sanctions against those who refused to appropriate the “mark” of the beast, “mark” being a symbol for the tokens of proof of citizen submission to Caesar worship (vs. 17). With this understanding of Revelation 13, it is unscriptural and unbiblical to identify the sea beast in Revelation 13 with some revived, future Roman dictator known as the “Antichrist” who is yet to make an appearance in world history.

2 Thessalonians 2

A third passage used to foster belief in an “Antichrist” is 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12—

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above

all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 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 the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Whatever interpretation is placed upon this passage, its use to refer to a future personage is doomed to failure since Paul explicitly stated that he was referring to a person who would be the product of the circumstances of **his own day**, i.e., “already at work” (vs. 7). How could Paul have had in mind a future dictator that still has not arisen, though 2,000 years have transpired? One need go no further to know that 2 Thessalonians 2 does not refer to a future Antichrist. Consider the following analysis of this passage.

Verses 3-4

History is replete with a variety of interpretations of this passage, the most prominent one likely being the view that the papacy is under consideration.⁵² Another possibility, expounded here, is that the “falling away” (vs. 3), or apostasy, referred to the Jewish rejection of the “new and living way” of approach to God (Hebrews 10:20). The Jews were the single most adamant opponents of Christ and the infant church (John 8:37-44; Acts 7:51-53; 13:45-50; Romans 10:20-21; 11:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16). This rebellion, or falling away, would not reach its “full” (Matthew 23:32) climax until the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the resulting dispersal of the Jewish people. Paul had already alluded to this Jewish apostasy in 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16. The pouring out of God’s wrath was the logical consequence of the first-century Israelite failure to make the transition to Christianity.

According to this viewpoint, the “man of sin” or “son of perdition” (vs. 3) would have referred to the personification of Roman imperialism and would have been equated with “the abomination of desolation” that Jesus, quoting Daniel 9, alluded to in Matthew 24:15 and Luke 21:20. Verse 4 would refer to the Roman general who introduced his idolatrous insignia into the Holy of Holies in A.D. 70.⁵³

Verses 6-7

That which was “withholding” (vs. 6), or restraining, this man of sin, at the time Paul was writing 2 Thessalo-

nians in approximately A.D. 53, would have been the presence of the Jewish state. The ingenious design of God was that Christianity would appear to the hostile Roman government to be nothing more than another sect of the Jews. Thus from A.D. 30-70, Christianity was **temporarily shielded** from the fury of the persecuting forces of Rome while it developed and spread, giving the Jews ample opportunity to be exposed to the Gospel and incorporated into the elect remnant—the Church of Christ (cf. Romans 11:26). During these four decades, the persecution of Christians was instigated almost exclusively by Jews. Consequently, God graciously gave the Jews 40 years to get their thinking straight, allowing them to be exposed to the Gospel “first” (Romans 1:16), and come to grips with the fact that “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Romans 10:4). The nation of Israel was thereby rendered culpable and completely without excuse in its rejection of Christianity. Simultaneously (and ironically), apostate Judaism served as a **restraining force** by preventing Christianity from being perceived by the Romans as a separate—and therefore illegal—religion (*religio illicita*). Once the Jewish apostasy was complete, and God’s wrath was poured out upon Jerusalem, Christianity came to be seen as a religion distinct from Judaism.

Verses 8-10

Now, increasingly, Christians found themselves brought into conflict with the persecution from “the

wicked” or “lawless one.” In fact, after A.D. 70 (when the withholding effect of Judaism was removed), Roman opposition to Christianity gradually grew greater, culminating in the fierce and formidable persecution imposed by Caesar Domitian in the final decade of the first century.

Once the shield of Judaism was removed (vs. 7), and Christianity increasingly found itself subject to the indignities of governmental disfavor, the Lord would “consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming” (vs. 8) the one responsible. This terminology is not an allusion to Christ’s Second Coming. Rather, this verse refers to Christ’s **coming in judgment on the Roman power**. Such a use of the word “coming” to describe the display of God’s wrath upon people **in history** is not unusual. As noted earlier, Isaiah announced God’s judgment on Egypt in these words: “Behold, the LORD rides on a swift cloud, and **will come** into Egypt; The idols of Egypt will totter at His presence, and the heart of Egypt will melt in its midst” (Isaiah 19:1). Micah announced God’s judgment on Jerusalem and Samaria: “For behold, the LORD is **coming** out of His place; He **will come** down and tread on the high places of the earth” (1:3). Paul alluded to the government’s use of counterfeit miracles (vs. 9), and thus deceit (vs. 10). His allusion is reminiscent of Jesus’ allusion to the Concilia’s employment of tricks and illusions to deceive people into worshipping the emperor (Revelation 13:13-15)—which occurred during the last decade of the first century A.D.⁵⁴

Summary

To summarize, when studied in context, these passages render the notion of an “Antichrist” along with the entire dispensational scheme without scriptural support. Those in bygone days who applied these passages to Nero, Napoleon, Mussolini, Hitler, Saddam Hussein, etc. have been proven wrong. Yet the pattern continues unabated among those who have not learned from the sad mistakes of the past.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How many times does the word “antichrist” occur in the Bible, and in whose books?
 2. What New and Old Testament books are used to defend the notion of an “Antichrist”?
 3. To whom did John apply the term “antichrist” and **when** did he indicate the “antichrist” would live?
 4. What 2 grammatical features do some English translations insert that are lacking in the Greek text of 1 John 2:18?
 5. What do these insertions encourage the English reader to conclude?
 6. Who does John declare to be “antichrist”?
 7. What did John label all those who denied Christ had come in the flesh?
 8. What prophecy in Daniel do some say predicts an “Antichrist”? Cite the passage.
 9. To what event do Daniel’s allusions to “transgression,” “sins,” and “iniquity” refer? Cite a verse.
 10. To what do Daniel’s allusions to “vision” and “prophecy” being “sealed up” refer? Cite a verse.
 11. To what does Daniel’s allusion to the “anointing” of the “most holy” refer? Cite a verse.
 12. How did Daniel summarize the entire 70-week period?
 13. Into what three segments did Daniel break the 70-week period?
 14. To what segments does verse 25 refer?
 15. What would happen during those 69 weeks?
-

16. To what event would those 69 weeks take one?
 17. Verse 26 refers to what portion of the 70-week prophecy?
 18. What 2 significant events would occur during this final week? To what do the events refer?
 19. What covenant is referred to in verse 27 of Daniel's prophecy? Cite a supporting verse.
 20. What was **the act** that confirmed the covenant?
 21. What was brought to an end by this act? Cite a verse.
 22. What is the meaning of "abomination of desolation"?
 23. What was the fundamental purpose of Daniel's 70-weeks prophecy, and when were the events fulfilled?
 24. What does the sea beast of Revelation 13 symbolize? **What** did he do, and **when** did he do it?
 25. By what number is the sea beast symbolized? What is the significance of the number?
 26. What does the land beast symbolize and what was his purpose?
 27. What follows from this understanding of Revelation 13?
 28. Why is the interpretation—that 2 Thessalonians 2 refers to a future person—doomed to failure? What phrase did Paul use to spotlight this fact?
 29. According to the interpretation expounded in this book, what is the "falling away"?
 30. Who were the single most adamant opponents of Christ and the early church? Cite 2 verses.
 31. When would the "falling away" reach its full climax?
-

32. Cite the passage where Paul had already alluded to this apostasy.
 33. What was the logical consequence of the first-century Israelite failure to make the transition to Christianity?
 34. According to this view, to whom does the “man of sin/perdition” refer?
 35. What expression did Jesus and Daniel use to refer to this person?
 36. Specifically, in history, who was he?
 37. What was “withholding” or restraining this man of sin?
 38. How did the Roman government view Christianity?
 39. What did this misconception enable Christianity to be?
 40. In the meantime, what 2 things were achieved?
 41. Who was the primary source of persecution against Christians from A.D. 30-70?
 42. How was God’s grace manifested toward the Jews from A.D. 30-70? Cite a supporting verse.
 43. Once this period passed and Jewish apostasy was complete, what did God do?
 44. Consequently, how did Christianity come to be seen by the Romans?
 45. After A.D. 70, what happened to Roman opposition to Christianity?
 46. How would the Lord “consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming”? Cite 1 Old Testament verse where “coming” is similarly used.
-

47. What is reminiscent about Paul's allusion to the government's use of counterfeit miracles and deceit? Cite the passage.

THE END TIMES



Chapter 4

Will There Be an Armageddon?

The next feature of the dispensational scheme insists that world history will culminate in a cataclysmic global holocaust known as “Armageddon” (followed by the “Millennium,” a 1000-year reign of Christ on Earth). They say that current events in the Middle East and elsewhere are arranging themselves in such a fashion that the Second Coming of Christ is imminent. Again, this claim has been made repeatedly for many, many years—with no fulfillment forthcoming.

The term “Armageddon” occurs only once in the New Testament: “And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon” (Revelation 16:16). In keeping with the literary genre of the book (i.e., apocalypse/ἀποκάλυψις, rendered “revelation” in vs. 1), the term is unquestionably used with figurative connotations. The Holy Spirit capitalized on the meaning which this location possessed for those who would have been familiar with the Old Testament (as Asia Minor Christians would have been). In Hebrew, the term “Har-mageddon” means “mountain (or hill) of Megiddo.” Was there a hill of Megiddo? Yes. In fact, Jews were only too familiar with this prominent battlefield and vicinity. Many bloody encounters stained the soil of this region. It was here that Deborah and Barak defeated Sisera (Judges 5:19). Gideon was victorious over the Midianites in this area (Judges 7). These positive accomplishments

were etched into the Israelite consciousness. But there were other, more vivid, images evoked by Megiddo, for it also served as a place where national tragedy had occurred. Ahaziah died there after being pierced by Jehu's arrow (2 Kings 9:27). And it was there that good King Josiah perished tragically at the hands of Pharaoh Necho—causing great national mourning (2 Kings 23:29; cf. 2 Chronicles 35:22-25; Zechariah 12:11).

With this long and checkered historical background, Megiddo came to occupy a place in the minds of believers similar to places which immediately bring to the American mind definite and strong impressions: the Alamo, Gettysburg, Pearl Harbor, Iwo Jima, 9-11 and the Twin Towers, etc. In keeping with the nature of apocalyptic imagery, this significance was then utilized by the Holy Spirit to convey to struggling, persecuted Christians of Asia Minor near the end of the first century the sure outcome of the conflict then being waged between the forces of evil (Satan and imperial Rome) and the forces of righteousness (God, Christ, and faithful saints who were enduring). These Christians were certainly in no need of assurance that some future global holocaust would occur which Christ would bring to an end 2,000+ years removed from their suffering. These Christians were in dire need of assurance that Christ would come to **their** aid soon. They needed encouragement to hang on, and to remain steadfast in the face of inhuman mistreatment. The symbol of Armageddon provided that assurance. Christians were given the solace that the outcome of the battle would

soon be realized. The enemies of God and His people would be punished and go down in defeat, while suffering saints would **soon** be comforted. Thus “Armageddon” is purely symbolic and in no way relates to dispensational dreams of a future world war centered in or emanating from northern Palestine.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How many times does the word “Armageddon” occur in the New Testament. Cite the verse.
 2. In keeping with the literary genre of the book of Revelation, how is the term “Armageddon” unquestionably used?
 3. Cite 1 Old Testament verse where Megiddo is mentioned.
 4. Name 1 location that conjures comparable strong impressions in the American mind.
 5. By using this location, what did the Holy Spirit intend to convey to first-century persecuted Christians of Asia Minor?
 6. Of what were those first century Christians **not** in need?
 7. What solace and assurance were these first century Christians given by the symbol of Armageddon?
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THE END TIMES



Chapter 5

Will There Be a Millennium?

Dispensationalism also insists that when Jesus returns (for a **third** time!) to terminate “Armageddon,” He will then usher in the “Millennium”—an alleged thousand-year reign of Christ on Earth in which He will establish a literal, physical kingdom and rule from Jerusalem. The premiere passage used to assert this view is Revelation 20:1-6. Seven contextual indicators militate against a literal 1,000 years in these verses.

Seven Contextual Factors

1. “Must Happen Very Soon”

First, the events of the book of Revelation were to “shortly take place”—an expression that occurs near the beginning as well as near the end of the book (1:1; 22:6). The phrase (*en tachei*) occurs eight times in the New Testament. *Tachei* is from *tachos* which has two basic meanings according to the currently most recognized Greek lexicon.⁵⁵

1. A very brief period of time, with focus on speed of an activity or event, *speed, quickness, swiftness, haste*.... —quickly, at once, without delay (Acts 10:33D; 12:7; 17:15D; 22:18).

2. pert. to a relatively brief time subsequent to another point of time, ἐν τάχει as adverbial unit *soon, in a short*

time Luke 18:8; Rom. 16:20; 1 Tim. 3:14; Rev. 1:1; 22:6;
shortly Acts 25:4.

Danker assigns the second meaning to Revelation 1:1 and 22:6, i.e., “soon, in a short time.” But observe that both meanings share in common the fact that they envision **a brief period of time**. The first meaning differs from the second—not in the brief length of the time frame involved—but in the fact that the first meaning focuses more on the speed or rapidity of the event itself. Danker admits in his remarks concerning a derivative of *tachos*, i.e., *tachus*, that, concerning the first meaning, “it is not always possible to make a clear distinction between this meaning and the one in 2).”⁵⁶ Regardless, a long period of time is not included in **either** meaning. Specifically in Revelation, Moffatt gives the meaning as “soon” and noted: “The keynote of the Apocalypse is the cheering assurance that upon God’s part there is no reluctance **or delay**; His people have **not long to wait now**.”⁵⁷ A.T. Robertson observed: “[U]ndoubtedly the hopes of the early Christians looked for a **speedy return** of the Lord Jesus.”⁵⁸ Likewise Alford, noting the meaning of “shortly” as “*before long*,” admitted:

The context, the repetition below, ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς ἐγγύς, [“for the time is near”—DM] and the parallel ch. xxii.6, followed ib. [in the same place, i.e., chapter 22:7—DM] by ἰδοὺ ἔρχομαι ταχύ [“behold I am coming quickly”—DM], fix this meaning here, as distinguished from the other of “*swiftly*,” which indeed would be hardly intelligible with the historic aorist γενέσθαι [“to take place”—DM].⁵⁹

In addition to Revelation 1:5 and 22:6, every other occurrence of the phrase in the New Testament confirms that a **brief** length of time is intended with the designated action occurring **in the near future**—and not merely the **rapidity or swiftness** with which the designated action occurs as some have suggested.

- Regarding those disciples who cry out to God night and day for His intervention, Jesus assured: “He will avenge them **speedily** (*en tachei*)” (Luke 18:8). What comfort would be afforded if Jesus intended to convey the idea that relief may be long delayed—even for hundreds of years—but when it finally did come, it would come in **a quick manner**? Such a comforting promise of relief is meaningless and superfluous to the anguished recipient of the promise if it does not usher forth in a timely vindication.
 - When Peter was asleep in prison, bound with two chains between two soldiers, an angel awakened him by striking him on the side and then instructed him to “arise **quickly** (*en tachei*)!” (Acts 12:7). Would Peter have understood the angel to mean that he could continue resting or sleeping for as long as he chose, just as long as when he finally did choose to get up, he came up off the prison floor with **a rapid movement**?
 - On the occasion when Paul was being beaten by an angry mob in Jerusalem, and the garrison commander rescued him, Paul received permission to address the crowd. After recounting his conversion, he explained how he returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the Temple when Jesus spoke to him:
-

“Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance and saw Him saying to me, ‘Make haste and get out of Jerusalem **quickly** (*en tachei*), for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me’” (Acts 22:18). Would Paul have understood Jesus to mean that he could take his time departing Jerusalem—even years—but that when he finally departed Jerusalem he should do so in a **fast manner**—perhaps by running rather than walking, or riding on a fast horse?

- When Festus insisted that Paul be detained in Caesarea rather than be transferred to Jerusalem, since “he himself was going there **shortly** (*en tachei*)” (Acts 25:4), would anyone have understood Festus to mean that he intended to delay his visit to Caesarea **by years**?
 - When Paul wrote to Roman Christians, informing them that “the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet **shortly** (*en tachei*)” (16:20), did he mean “in the near future”? Or did he mean that God’s action on their behalf may not come for centuries or millennia, but nevertheless wanted them to be assured that when God finally did act, He would do so in a **swift manner**?
 - Paul even used the phrase in contradistinction with being “delayed”: “These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you **shortly** (*en tachei*); but if I am **delayed**, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pil-
-

lar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:14-15).⁶⁰ Paul used the word "delayed" in contradistinction to "shortly." Shortly, therefore, means "without delay," i.e., immediately, right away, in a short time.

A summary of the lexical data may be seen in Figure 9 on pp. 74-75.

Observe that the two meanings are so closely connected that the nuance of "quick, rapid, swift, speedy, in haste" cannot easily be separated from the more central meaning of "in the near future, without delay, at once, soon, in a short time, right away, imminent." The two concepts essentially fuse together in actual usage. The notions of "rapidity" and "soon" blend as inseparable. Their difference is not in the length of time that transpires. **Both** involve **a very brief extent of time** and occur **soon**. They differ in that one is distinguished by a **manner** of marked rapidity and swiftness. After all, if you are going to go somewhere "quickly," that is, soon and right away, then you will also likely go swiftly. The use of the expression *en tachei* in the New Testament does not envision an interval of hundreds or thousands of years—as maintained by premillennialists.

The bulk of English translations have correctly captured the drift of the expression. Examine Figure 10 on p. 76 and see the English Translation Abbreviations chart on p. 167. No unbiased person reading these translations would get the idea that the things that were to be done would not be done for centuries or millennia. Whatever time lag would transpire between the writing of the Rev-

ἐν τάχει (τάχος) (Revelation 1:1)—		
✓ = POSSIBLE X = NOT POSSIBLE	VERSE	“D” = Codex Bezae
<u>Acts 10:33D</u> “So I sent to you immediately , and you have done well to come.”		
<u>Acts 12:7</u> “Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, ‘Arise quickly !’”		
<u>Acts 17:15D</u> “So those who conducted Paul brought him to Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed , they departed.”		
<u>Acts 22:18</u> “...and saw Him saying to me, ‘Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly , for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.’”		
<u>Luke 18:8</u> “And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily .”		
<u>Romans 16:20</u> “And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly .”		
<u>1 Timothy 3:14</u> “These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly .”		
<u>Revelation 1:1</u> “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place.”		
<u>Revelation 22:6</u> “And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place.”		
<u>Acts 25:4</u> “Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself was going there shortly .”		

Figure 9

Possible Lengths of Time to Fulfillment						
LITTLE or NO TIME/ IMMEDIATE	DAYS	WEEKS	MONTHS	A FEW YEARS	100s of YEARS	1,000s of YEARS
✓	X	X	X	X	X	X
✓	X	X	X	X	X	X
✓	✓	✓	?	?	X	X
✓	?	X	X	X	X	X
✓	✓	✓	?	?	X	X
✓	✓	✓	?	X	X	X
✓	✓	✓	?	X	X	X
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X
✓	✓	✓	?	X	X	X

Figure 9

English Translation Renderings of Revelation 1:1	
KJV/ASV	"to shew...things which must shortly come to pass. "
NASB	"to shew...things which must shortly take place. "
NASB/ MOUNCE	"to show...the things which must soon take place. "
RSV/NRSV/ NIV/ESV	"to show...what must soon take place. "
ISV/NABRE	"to show...the things that must happen soon. "
NCV	"to show...what must soon happen. "
CJB	"show...what must happen very soon. "
Phillips	"show...what must very soon take place. "
1599 GNV	"to show...things which must shortly be done. "
YLT	"to shew...what things it behoveth to come to pass quickly. "
OJB	"to show the things which are destined to take place, and speedily. "

Figure 10

elation and its promised relief to the recipients would be understood to be brief.

The Holy Spirit's selection of the phrase *en tachei* was deliberate and necessary given the circumstances that oppressed, persecuted Christians were enduring in Asia Minor. They were being exterminated! They felt the Cause of Christ was being trampled underfoot (cf. 11:8). They were feeling the full force of the government's concerted, well-organized campaign to enforce the State

religion and mandate submissive participation by all rivals. They needed reassurance that relief would **soon** arrive. As Moffatt rightly observed regarding the phrase *en tachei*: “This is the hinge and staple of the book. When the advent of Jesus is hailed as a relief, it is no consolation to say that the relief will come suddenly; sudden or not, **it must come soon** (x.7), if it is to be of any service.”⁶¹

2. “The Time Is Near”

A second contextual indicator within Revelation itself is the dual occurrence of the phrase: “for the time is near” (1:3; 22:10). The word for “near” (*eggus*) refers to “being close in point of time,” “close at hand,” “things imminent and soon to come to pass.”⁶² Such a reference would necessarily pertain to the **first** century—not the **twenty-first**. Two or three thousand years would be too late for the desperate Christians of Asia Minor.⁶³ Those who get caught up in “millennium mania” seem oblivious to the fact that the book was written to an original, immediate audience. Revelation was, in fact, written to the seven churches of Christ situated in Asia Minor (1:4). All seven are even named (1:11).⁶⁴ If the book was written to **them**, and if it was **their** spiritual condition that was the concern of the book, millenarians are incorrect in their contention that the book is devoted primarily, if not exclusively, to predictions of the end times. Though the Old Testament prophets predicted distant, future events on occasion, their primary message was relevant to their immediate audience. Dispen-

sationalists have trouble finding in Revelation a relevant message for a first-century audience.

3. “Tribulation” and “Kingdom” Already Present

Third, what are we to make of John’s remark to those first-century Christians? “I, John, both your brother and companion in **the tribulation** and **kingdom** and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ” (1:9). The apostle John recognized their need and identified himself as their “companion” in the terrible “tribulation” they were **then** enduring (1:9). Not only was this tribulation going on at **that** time, but John further referred to himself and his readers as being **in the kingdom** at **that** time (1:9). Thus, Christ’s kingdom was **already** set up, in existence on Earth, and in full operating mode. Indeed, both John the baptizer and Jesus preached forthrightly the same sermon, i.e., that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” (Matthew 3:2; 4:17).⁶⁵ Hence, it was imminent while they were on Earth—and materialized in Acts 2 shortly after their deaths.

The word rendered “tribulation” in John’s remark is the same word that is used three times by Jesus in His anticipation of the imminent A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew 24:

- “Then they will deliver you up to **tribulation** and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake” (vs. 9).
-

- “For then there will be great **tribulation**, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be” (vs. 21).
- “Immediately after the **tribulation** of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken” (vs. 29).

It is used five times in the Revelation. The other four occurrences are:

- Referring to the Church of Christ in Smyrna, Jesus said: “I know your works, **tribulation**, and poverty” (2:9), and He warned them: “Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have **tribulation** ten days” (2:10).
- In His remarks to the church at Thyatira, Jesus threatened the woman Jezebel: “Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great **tribulation**, unless they repent of their deeds” (2:22).
- Referring to those arrayed in white robes, one of the elders explained: “These are the ones who come out of the great **tribulation**, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (7:14).

The word refers to “trouble that inflicts distress” including “oppression, affliction, tribulation.”⁶⁶ If the book of Revelation refers to events that will allegedly transpire during a speculated future Tribulation, why did John insist—2,000 years ago—that he was a current, contem-

poraneous companion **in the tribulation** (1:9) together with the first-century recipients of the book of Revelation?

4. “Do Not Seal the Book!”

Fourth, there is the statement of the angel to John: “Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book” (Revelation 22:10). What did the angel mean? What he meant becomes apparent when one reflects upon the fact that Daniel was told to do **the exact opposite** of what John was told to do. After receiving a remarkable series of detailed prophecies (also couched in apocalyptic imagery), Daniel was told to “**shut up** the words, and **seal** the book until the time of the end” (Daniel 12:4). Furthermore, he was instructed: “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are **closed up and sealed** till the time of the end” (vs. 9). The reason Daniel was told to seal the book was because the fulfillment of the prophecies that had been revealed to him was hundreds of years into the future—far from his own day. The predictions, therefore, would be of no immediate value to the initial recipients of the book. The book could be closed and placed on the shelf until those who would be living at the time of their fulfillment could appreciate the relevance of its predictions. In stark contrast, John was ordered: “**Do not seal** the words of the prophecy of this book” (22:10). Why? The text answers: “for the time is at hand”! These words can hold no other meaning than that the bulk of Revelation was fulfilled in close proximity to the time it was written—2,000 years ago.

5. “Quickly”

Fifth, this conclusion is further buttressed by Jesus’ triple declaration in the Revelation of the time frame of His coming to the aid of the persecuted people of God. Thrice He announces His imminent intention:

- “Behold, I am coming **quickly**!” (Revelation 22:7).
- “And behold, I am coming **quickly**, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work” (Revelation 22:12).
- “He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming **quickly**.’ Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20).

In the context of the book, such references do not refer to the Second Coming at the end of time. Rather, in keeping with Old Testament apocalyptic language (as noted earlier), they refer to the coming of God in judgment on nations in time/history. The word rendered “quickly” in all three of these verses is from a derivative of *tachos* discussed earlier. This derivative (ταχύ), which has essentially the same two meanings as *tachos*, is defined in its usage in these three verses as “*without delay, quickly, at once*.”⁶⁷ If one is concerned about remaining sensitive to context, it becomes virtually overwhelming to realize that the Holy Spirit seemed to go out of His way to insulate the meaning and application of the message of the Revelation from the misapplication which characterizes the premillennialist. In the conclusion of the book, He stipulates the time frame of the bulk of the contents of the book by delineating **four**

time-indicators: (1) “shortly take place” (vs. 6), (2) “quickly” (vs. 7), (3) “the time is at hand” (vs. 10), and (4) He repeats “quickly” two more times (vss. 12,20).

6. “Must Happen Soon”

Sixth, consider the use of the impersonal verb “must”: “things which **must** shortly take place” (1:1). Baptist Greek grammarian Ray Summers explained:

The verb translated “it is necessary” or “must” indicates that a moral necessity is involved; the nature of the case is such that the things revealed here **must** come to pass shortly.... The things revealed here must happen shortly, or the cause will be lost.... They were in need of assurance of help in the immediate present—not in some millennium of the distant and uncertain future.⁶⁸

Indeed, the downtrodden, persecuted Christians of Asia Minor needed assistance **right away**. The dispensational framework would rob those first-century saints of the very comfort and reassurance they so desperately needed, deserved—and received.

7. “Signified”

Seventh, note the use of the term “signified”: “And He sent and **signified** it by His angel to His servant John” (1:1).⁶⁹ This term (*seimaino*), as is evident from the English translation, means “to show by signs.”⁷⁰ Hence, A.T. Robertson observed that “*semaino*...suits admirably the symbolic character of the book.”⁷¹ The term, along with the Greek word translated “revelation” (*apocalupsis*), introduces the nature of this book. The book of Revela-

tion reveals or unveils God's message **through** signs or symbols. Placing a **literal** interpretation on the numbers, animals, objects, colors, and locations of Revelation—as dispensationalists routinely try to do—does violence to the true intent of the book. The Revelation declares itself to be a book of signs, filled with figurative language and exaggeration, and not intended to be taken literally. In fact, as Swete observed, Revelation “shares with other apocalyptic writings a partiality for **symbolical imagery** and **the symbolical use of numbers**,” “the frequent recurrence of numbers which appear to carry with them a certain **symbolical** meaning.”⁷² A genuine recognition of this self-declared feature of the book excludes a **literal** interpretation of the number 1,000.

Immediate Context

In addition to these preliminary contextual details, chapter 20 contains specific features that assist the interpreter in pinpointing the meaning of the symbol of a “thousand-year reign.” It is surely noteworthy that in the entire Bible, the only allusion to a so-called thousand-year reign is Revelation 20:4,6—a fact that is conceded even by dispensationalists.⁷³ Yet an entire belief system has been built upon such scanty evidence. An examination of the setting and context yields surprising results. For example, a simple reading of the immediate context reveals that the theme of Revelation 20 is not “the thousand-year reign of Christ.” Rather, it is “victory over Satan.” Each of the symbols presents concepts that, when put together, relieve the fears of oppressed Chris-

tians regarding their harassed predicament. The key, abyss, and chain (vs. 1) are apocalyptic symbols for the effective limitation or containment of Satan in his ability to deceive the nations in the specific matter of emperor worship enforced by the government.⁷⁴ The symbol of 1,000 years (vss. 2-7) is a high multiple of ten, representing ultimate **completeness**.⁷⁵ John's readers thus could know that the devil was to be completely restrained from deceiving the nations into worshipping the emperor. The 1,000 years symbolized the extended triumph of God's kingdom on Earth over the devil who was then operating through the persecuting powers of Rome. A thousand symbolic years of victory would lessen suffering in the minds of persecuted Christians, giving them renewed hope and courage.

"Loosing for a little season" (vs. 3) likely represented the revival of persecution under later emperors like Aurelius, Diocletian, and Julian the Apostate. "Thrones" (vs. 4) represented the victorious power of the oppressed. The persecuted saints were pictured on thrones judging because of the victory of their cause. "Souls" (vs. 4)—not resurrected bodies, but disembodied souls—represent those who were martyrs of the Domitianic⁷⁶ persecution. Their refusal to "receive the mark" meant they refused to worship Caesar or to manifest those marks that would identify them as officially sanctioned adherents of the false state religion of emperor worship. The "first resurrection" (vs. 5) referred to the triumphant resurrection of the cause for which the Christians of 20:4 had lived and died. Gog and Magog were symbolic of

the enemies of God and Christ—imagery drawn from Ezekiel 38 and 39. The “beloved city” (vs. 9) is **spiritual** Israel, the church (John 4:20-21; Galatians 6:16). Figure 11 provides a summary of the meaning of these symbols.

The Symbols of Revelation 20:1-7	
Key/abyss/chain	Satan contained
1,000 years	Complete restraint
Loosing	Persecution revives
Thrones	Saints victorious
Souls	Martyrs
Mark of the beast	Refusal of worship
First resurrection	Cause resurrected
God/Magog	Enemies of God
City	Christ’s Church

Figure 11

Some allowance may be granted in the interpretation of these highly figurative symbols without doing damage to other Bible doctrines or reflecting adversely upon the Gospel system and the broader will of Deity. However, the 1,000 years must not be perceived as a yet-future period. There is simply no biblical support for doing so. The figure represents an important concept for those to whom it was first directed. It has meaning for people living today only in that context. There will be no 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ on Earth.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What phrase (in the NKJV) is used near the beginning and near the end of Revelation that clarifies the time frame of the book? Cite both verses.
 2. What are the 2 basic meanings of the underlying Greek words *en tachei* (as given in italics by Danker)?
 3. What do both meanings share in common?
 4. What does an examination of every other occurrence of the phrase in the New Testament confirm? Cite 2 verses where the phrase is used outside of Revelation.
 5. In actual usage, what do the two meanings/concepts essentially do?
 6. What does the New Testament's use of the expression *en tachei* **not** envision?
 7. What would the original recipients of Revelation have understood regarding whatever time lag would transpire between the writing of Revelation and its promised relief?
 8. Why was the Holy Spirit's selection of the phrase *en tachei* deliberate and necessary?
 9. What reassurance did these Christians need?
 10. What is the meaning of the word translated "near" in Revelation? Cite the 2 verses.
 11. To what do those who are caught up in dispensationalism seem oblivious?
 12. To whom was the book of Revelation written? Cite the verses.
 13. What do dispensationalists have trouble finding in Revelation?
-

14. What 2 things did John claim were already in existence and that he, himself, was in? Cite the verse.
 15. What did both John the baptizer and Jesus preach regarding the kingdom? Cite the verses.
 16. What did the angel instruct John not to do with the book of Revelation? Cite the verse.
 17. In stark contrast with what John was told, what was Daniel told to do? Cite the verse.
 18. Why was Daniel told to seal the book?
 19. Why was John told **not** to seal the Revelation?
 20. What word did Jesus use 3 times in the last chapter of Revelation that further clarifies the time frame of the book? How is the word defined?
 21. What did the Holy Spirit seem to go out of His way to do?
 22. In the conclusion of Revelation, what 4 time-indicators does the Holy Spirit stipulate?
 23. Regarding the meaning of “must” in Revelation 1:1, what does grammarian Summers say the word indicates is the nature of the case?
 24. Of what would the dispensational framework rob the first-century saints?
 25. What does the word “signified” mean? Cite the verse.
 26. How does the book of Revelation reveal or unveil God’s message?
 27. What violence to the book of Revelation does the dispensational viewpoint do?
 28. What does the book of Revelation declare itself to be?
-

29. Where in all the Bible is the only allusion to a thousand-year reign?
 30. Contrast the actual theme of Revelation 20 with the dispensational focus of the passage.
 31. What, specifically, was Satan to be restrained from doing?
 32. Explain the symbolism of 1,000 years.
 33. What would a thousand symbolic years of victory do for persecuted Christians?
 34. Who did the disembodied souls represent?
 35. What did refusal to “receive the mark” symbolize?
 36. What does the “beloved city” symbolize?
-

THE END TIMES



Chapter 6

Is the Kingdom Yet to Be Established?

Dispensationalists further claim that the kingdom is yet future, and that **Jesus is not reigning now**, but will commence His reign in His kingdom when He returns in the future to establish that kingdom in Jerusalem and reign for a thousand years. However, several passages cannot be harmonized with such a view.

The Kingdom Exists Now

First, the Bible teaches that the kingdom exists **now** and has existed since A.D. 30. While Jesus was on Earth, He went to Galilee, “preaching the gospel of **the kingdom** of God, and saying, ‘The time is **fulfilled**, and the kingdom of God is **at hand**. Repent, and believe in the gospel’” (Mark 1:14-15). [Recall the previous discussion of “near” on p. 77.] He also stated that “there are **some standing here** who will not taste death till they **see the kingdom** of God present with power” (Mark 9:1).⁷⁷ To insist that the kingdom is yet to be established is to fail to recognize that the Bible plainly declares that the kingdom **already** exists on Earth. Many Old Testament predictions testify to this fact. Consider a few:

Isaiah 2

In the eighth century B.C., the marvelous Messianic prophet Isaiah prophesied to the Judeans living in Palestine concerning the coming of Christ and the Christian

Era. His inspired utterances included this earthshaking announcement:

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of **the LORD's house** shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to **the house of the God** of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. O house of Jacob, come and let us walk in the light of the LORD (Isaiah 2:2-5).

Isaiah predicts four salient features of the redemptive scheme pertaining to the church: (1) the **Lord's house** would be established; (2) it would be composed of people from all nations; (3) the law/word of the Lord would go forth from Jerusalem; and (4) all of this would occur in "the latter days." This incredible prediction commenced to be fulfilled on the day of Pentecost reported by Luke in Acts 2.

In his quotation of Joel 2:28, Peter flagged the fact that what was transpiring on that day was previously predicted by the prophet Joel, to whom Peter attributes the temporal identification of the momentous occasion as "the last days" (vs. 17).⁷⁸ It becomes clear as well that on

that occasion the apostles were bringing to fruition Jesus’ predictions when He said, “I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18) and “Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power” (Mark 9:1). While some translations⁷⁹ use the phrase “to the church” in Acts 2:47, the underlying Greek text involves a textual variant. Nevertheless, the alternate reading uses an equivalent technical phrase that refers to the group of Christians who constitute the body, the church.⁸⁰ Paul’s first letter to Timothy further clarifies and sinches what entity was established on this occasion when he alludes to **“the house of God, which is the church of the living God”** (1 Timothy 3:15). Examine Figure 12.

“House of God” = “Kingdom” = “Church”	
Isaiah 2:2-3	LORD’S HOUSE /House of God established
Mark 1:14-15	KINGDOM of God is at hand
Mark 9:1	KINGDOM to come while apostles alive
Acts 2:47	added to the CHURCH
1 Timothy 3:15	HOUSE OF GOD which is the CHURCH

Figure 12

Hence, Isaiah’s allusion to the establishment of the house of God refers specifically to the commencement of the church’s existence on Earth beginning in Acts 2. But, as just noted, Mark 1:14-15 and Mark 9:1 make clear

that it was the kingdom of God that was about to be established on Earth. One is, again, driven to the conclusion that the church and kingdom are one and the same institution and came into visible existence on the day of Pentecost.⁸¹

Isaiah 9

Another plain Old Testament anticipation of this same kingdom is seen in Isaiah's prediction of the First Coming of Christ:

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, Upon the throne of David and **over His kingdom**, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice **from that time forward, even forever**. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Observe that the "Child" is an unmistakable allusion to Jesus arriving on the planet. The prophecy envisions Him establishing His kingdom, and reigning on the throne of that kingdom "from that time forward." The New Testament makes abundantly clear the fact that at His ascension, Jesus assumed the throne⁸² and commenced to reign over His kingdom beginning in Acts 2. Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost verified this very fact in his use of kingdom terminology:

- "He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne" (vs. 30)
-

- “Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God” (vs. 33)
- “Sit at My right hand” (vs. 34)

It is self-evident that Jesus assumed the throne upon His ascension and has been reigning over His kingdom ever since.

Daniel 2

Consider also the dream that the pagan Babylonian monarch Nebuchadnezzar experienced, the meaning of which was subsequently revealed by God to Daniel. The dream delineated four successive world kingdoms: the Babylonians, the Persians (in league with the Medes), the Greeks, and finally culminating with the Romans. Daniel declared (regarding the fourth kingdom): “And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a **kingdom** which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Daniel 2:44). This **kingdom** was none other than the **church** of Christ that Jesus established in Acts 2.

Daniel 7

Yet another prediction from the Old Testament is seen in the report of Daniel’s vision. Look closely at a portion of the account of this vision:

I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him

near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and **a kingdom**, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His **kingdom** the one which shall not be destroyed (Daniel 7:13-14).

Reminiscent of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter two of Daniel, observe that Daniel's own vision depicted Jesus passing through the clouds—not to return to the Earth—but to approach the Ancient of Days where He is given a kingdom that will not be destroyed (cf. Hebrews 12:28). As noted earlier, this vision is an unmistakable allusion to what occurred at the ascension of Christ described in Acts 1:9-11 and by Peter in Acts 2:30-33.

In addition to Old Testament anticipations of the kingdom in existence on Earth, the New Testament indicates her⁸³ presence as well.

Matthew 6:33

Much of Jesus' earthly teaching was intended to be **preparatory** kingdom instruction. For example, Jesus explained how Christians are to handle interpersonal infractions that, if not resolved by the parties involved, were to be taken "to the church" (Matthew 18:15-17). In His great "Sermon on the Mount," Jesus admonished His disciples not to worry about acquiring life's necessities since God is well aware of our needs. In contrast to such a worrisome, self-preoccupied lifestyle, He then articulated this critical principle: "But seek first **the kingdom of God** and His righteousness, and all these things

shall be added to you.” To what “kingdom” was Jesus referring? He had just provided a model prayer for them to consider in their own prayer life—which included an anticipation of the kingdom which was imminent. The rest of the instruction Jesus gave on that occasion pertains to life in the kingdom, i.e., how to live the Christian life as members of Christ’s Church. To “seek first the kingdom” means to seek first the Lord’s Church—the very institution that God intended from eternity to serve as the receptacle of the saved from its inception (Acts 2) to the end of time on Earth. The rest of the directives that Jesus intended to provide direction for Christians as members of His Church are detailed throughout the rest of the New Testament. The New Testament epistles describe proper conduct in the kingdom which is the Church.

Matthew 19:28

Immediately on the heels of Jesus’ encounter with the rich young ruler who, due to his unwillingness to part with possessions, “went away sorrowful,” Jesus instructed His disciples about the significance of the incident:

Then Jesus said to His disciples, “Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the **kingdom of heaven**. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the **kingdom of God**.” When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?” But Jesus looked at them and said to them, “With men this is impossible, but with God all

things are possible.” Then Peter answered and said to Him, “See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?” So Jesus said to them, “Assuredly I say to you, that **in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.** And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first” (Matthew 19:23-30).

To what was Jesus referring when He used the term “regeneration”? And when would He “sit on the throne of His glory,” and when would the apostles “sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel”? The word rendered in some English translations “regeneration”⁸⁴ is also rendered variously “renewal,”⁸⁵ “age to come,”⁸⁶ “new world,”⁸⁷ and even “new birth.”⁸⁸ The underlying Greek word means “renewal” and “rebirth,”⁸⁹ “a new birth; regeneration, renovation.”⁹⁰ It is used in Titus 3:5 in the phrase “the washing of **regeneration**” to refer to the new birth at baptism.⁹¹ So what did Jesus mean?

Jesus was not referring to a future millennial kingdom on Earth as per the dispensational premillennialists. Rather, He was referring to the Christian Era that would terminate Judaism as a viable approach to God and bring into reality the kingdom/church that Jesus predicted He would establish (Matthew 16:18-19). He

accomplished this spectacular feat on the day of Pentecost via His apostles who were specifically assigned the task of launching the Church and spreading the Gospel worldwide (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-48). Unlike the rich young ruler, the apostles had left all to follow Jesus (Matthew 4:19-20). The process of regenerating humans via the Gospel commenced on Pentecost in Acts 2 and will continue until Jesus returns. Throughout this process, He is seated on His throne in heaven (Acts 2:33-35; 1 Corinthians 15:24-25)—the same judgment seat before which all human beings will one day stand on the Day of Judgment (Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

But if the “regeneration” is transpiring now, in what way are the apostles seated on thrones judging Israel—which is stated by Jesus to be **contemporaneous** with Him being seated on His throne? The apostolic role was intended by God to be the means by which Jesus could establish and nurture His church,⁹² as Paul explained to the Corinthians: “God...has committed to us [apostles] the word of reconciliation. Now then, we [apostles] are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us” (2 Corinthians 5:19-20). When the Church of Christ was launched on Earth in A.D. 30, Luke informs us that those first converts on Pentecost “continued steadfastly in the **apostles’** doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). But the doctrine did not originate with the apostles—any more than the Law of Moses came from the mind of Moses. Both came from God. The “apostles’ doctrine”

was, in fact, Christ's doctrine. Hence, the apostles were in a comparable position as Moses, i.e., the designated emissaries through whom Jesus enacted the "new covenant" (Luke 22:20; Hebrews 9:15).

Therefore, Jesus' allusion to the apostles sitting on thrones and judging was a vivid, figurative way to refer to the vital role played by the apostles in launching the kingdom, announcing Spirit-inspired decisions (Acts 6:2-6; 15:22; cf. John 13-17 where Jesus issued directives specifically intended for the apostolic role). They acted as judges in the early Church—so much so that the Church—"the household of God"—is said to have "been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:20). Their preaching and teaching served as a prominent vehicle through which they judged their fellowman—both in and out of the Church (Matthew 16:19; 1 Corinthians 2:4; 14:37; 2 Thessalonians 3:14). Even now, the apostles continue to judge via the inspired writings they left to the world (2 Peter 3:15-16). Indeed, when Jesus noted that His judging is done through the words that He uttered (John 12:47-48), He verified the principle that His inspired spokesmen would do the same.

But in what way would the apostles judge "the twelve tribes of Israel"? The fact is that the New Testament plainly teaches that under the Christian Era, "he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the

Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God" (Romans 2:28-29). The Church of Christ is emphatically declared to be "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16). Hence, Jesus was speaking metaphorically. The kingdom over which He is now reigning, and the tribes that the apostles are now judging, is that Church.

Luke 7:27-28

Both Isaiah and Malachi predicted the coming of John the baptizer whose stated purpose was to prepare the way for Christ (Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1). Here is Luke's comment on this prediction:

This is he of whom it is written: "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You." For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in **the kingdom of God** is greater than he (Luke 7:27-28).

Luke was not saying that John would be viewed as not being as great as those who would be living when Jesus established a so-called millennial reign on Earth 2,000 years in the future. He was foreshadowing that the kingdom was on the verge of being established and that, as great as John was in his role of calling Judeans' attention to the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), he did not live to see or enter the kingdom established within three years on Pentecost (Acts 2). What's more, in fulfilling His divinely assigned role, John's preaching included this core concept and central declaration: "Repent, for the **kingdom of heaven**

is at hand!" (Matthew 3:2)—the same sermon preached by Christ (Matthew 4:17). Neither were referring to heaven itself; nor were they referring to an alleged millennial kingdom on Earth. Both were speaking of the imminent establishment of the Church of Christ.

John 3:5

As a matter of fact, while Jesus was on Earth, He frequently spoke of the kingdom as if she was already in existence, since she was, indeed, imminent and He was imparting instructions that would come into effect soon after His departure from the Earth. One example of this *modus operandi* was His conversation with the Pharisee Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. Coming to Jesus at night, Nicodemus forthrightly stated: "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him" (John 3:2). No doubt prompted by Nicodemus' commendable logical prowess, Jesus "cut to the chase" and declared, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the **kingdom** of God" (vs. 3).

The new birth was mandatory for entrance into the church, as frequently reiterated throughout the New Testament.⁹³ On this occasion, Jesus anticipated the essentiality of water immersion to the Christian Faith by authoritatively declaring the only entranceway into the kingdom: "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). "Water" clearly refers to H₂O.

See, for example, in the same context: “John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much **water** there” (vs. 23). And consider also Phillip’s (who “preached the good news of the **kingdom**”—Acts 8:12) involvement in the eunuch’s conversion, which is characterized by a close connection to **water**: “Now as they went down the road, they came to some **water**. And the eunuch said, ‘See, here is **water**. What hinders me from being baptized?’” (Acts 8:36). Two verses later, “both Philip and the eunuch went down into the **water**, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the **water**...” (Acts 8:38-39). And, further, when Peter clarified for those in attendance that the Gentiles had a right to be incorporated into the kingdom just like the Jews, he announced: “Can anyone forbid **water**, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord” (Acts 10:47-48). Compare these allusions to the necessity of entering the kingdom with Paul’s declaration to the Corinthians: “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (I Corinthians 12:13). The “body” to which Paul referred was none other than the **Church** (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18). We conclude, then, that precisely the same procedure that Jesus insisted was prerequisite to entering “the kingdom of God” was the very same procedure that is necessary to enter the Church of Christ. Hence, the Church on Earth is the kingdom. Figure 13 on p. 104 illustrates this truth.⁹⁴

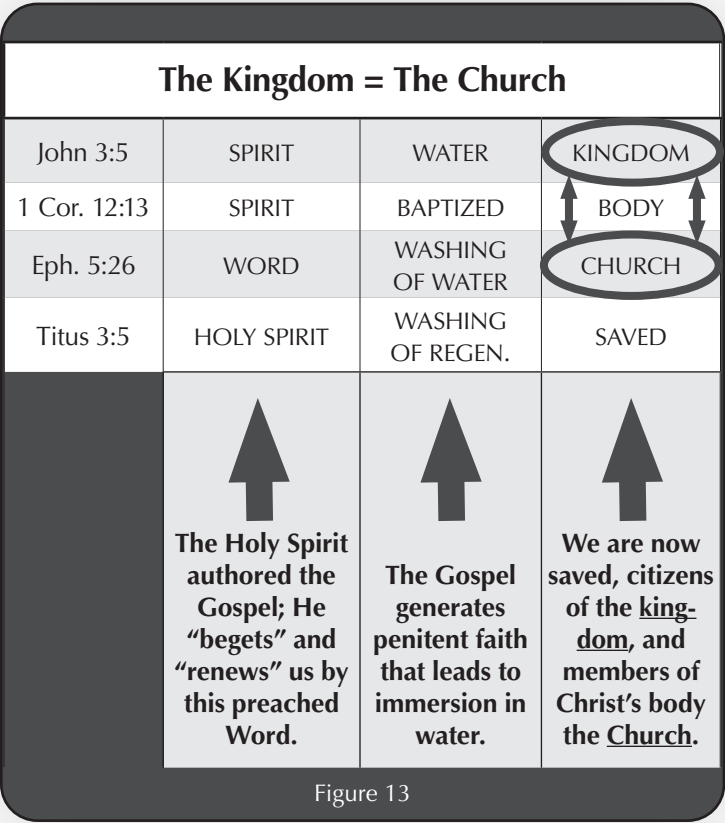


Figure 13

Colossians 1:13

In his letter to the members of the church of Christ at Colossae, Paul described their blessed status as New Testament Christians, itemizing features of Christianity that he did not cease to pray for in their behalf. Notice the listing:

...that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may have a walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him,

being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. **He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love**, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:9-14).

After listing the blessings bestowed upon the Christian, Paul plainly declared that the Colossians had been removed from the lost condition of being under the influence of spiritual darkness and transferred into the kingdom of Christ. Why would Paul inform the Colossian Christians that they had been conveyed into the kingdom of Christ—if the kingdom of Christ was yet to be established two millennia into the future? The Colossians were not incorporated into two separate and distinct institutions; rather, the “kingdom” and the “church” were one and the same. Obviously, sometime between Jesus’ prayer for the kingdom to come (Matthew 6:10) and the Colossians’ transferal into that kingdom, the kingdom had to have been established—which it was in Acts 2.

Hebrews 12:28

In keeping with the overall theme of Christ and the new covenant being “better” than the old covenant, the author of Hebrews contrasted the Israelites’ ominous encounter at Mt. Sinai with the Christian’s encounter with the kingdom of Christ on Earth:

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and **church** of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel (Hebrews 12:22-24).

Observe the series of parallel expressions in Figure 14:

Hebrews 12:22-24,28	
THE CHURCH ON EARTH	FEATURES OF NT RELIGION
Mount Zion	Angels
City of the living God	God the Judge
Heavenly Jerusalem	Spirits of just men
Church of the firstborn	Jesus the Mediator
Kingdom	Blood of Sprinkling

Figure 14

The left column lines up the parallel expressions in verses 22-24 that refer to the Church of Christ presently on Earth. The right column accentuates various features of New Testament religion that pertain to the practice of Christianity—also **presently** on Earth. Observe how verse 28 summarizes the writer’s object of consideration: “Therefore let us be grateful for **receiving a kingdom** that cannot be shaken,⁹⁵ and thus let us offer to God

acceptable worship, with reverence and awe" (RSV). The "kingdom" that Christians had received was nothing other than the Church which Jesus built on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

Revelation 1:6 & 5:10

Incredibly, in the very book which premillennialists claim is yet to be fulfilled, John, no doubt writing in the A.D. 90s, declared in no uncertain terms that the kingdom had **already been established** and that he and his contemporaries were citizens in that kingdom. Referring to what Jesus has done for Christians, John records that He made Christians to be "**a kingdom**, priests to his God and Father..." (1:6, ESV). The 24 elders and four living creatures agreed, extolling Jesus in song with the words: "you have made them **a kingdom** and priests to our God" (5:10, ESV).⁹⁶ Paul used the same word regarding the transference of the Colossians into Christ's kingdom in Colossians 1:13 noted previously. He also informed the Thessalonian Christians they should "walk worthy of God who calls you into His own **kingdom** and glory" (1 Thessalonians 2:12; cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:5). When the New Testament epistles speak of the kingdom being yet future, they are referring to **heaven**—the final and ultimate eternal kingdom (e.g., 2 Timothy 4:18; 2 Peter 1:11). Only in this latter sense of "heaven" can the "kingdom" be understood as yet future—and not a future millennial kingdom on Earth. Indeed, if Jesus is King **now**, and if He is reigning now—over whom is He

reigning? Who are His subjects—if not Christians who have been inducted into His kingdom?

Revelation 11:15

The book of Revelation provides yet additional clarification. In what might easily be considered the thematic verse of the book—which essentially divides the book in half—we are informed that when the seventh angel sounded his trumpet “there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!’” (Revelation 11:15). Some English translations place in italics the second occurrence of the words “the kingdoms.” The first occurrence of “kingdoms” is a textual variant and should have been rendered singular rather than plural.⁹⁷ The italicized words “the kingdoms,” though a translator insertion, are nevertheless inserted by the vast majority of English translations and, with rare exception, rendered in the singular “kingdom.”

What is the meaning of this verse? In what way may the kingdom of this world “become” the kingdom of our Lord and Christ? To answer these questions, one must first recognize the premiere position that God intended the Church of Christ to occupy. Even as the death of Christ was of critical importance to the fulfillment of God’s scheme of redemption, so the Church of Christ was intended to be the body of Christ. Second, one must realize the international implications of God’s plan. Though the world is divided into separate countries,

nationalities, ethnicities, languages, and cultures, God intended for His kingdom to transcend these trivial distinctions, melding the differences into a single kingdom on Earth in preparation for its transition into heaven.

Consider the following verses that clarify the meaning of Revelation 11:15. First, recall the dream that Daniel interpreted for the Babylonian monarch Nebuchadnezzar. Referring to the period of Roman domination, Daniel related:

And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a **kingdom** which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall **break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms**, and it shall stand forever. Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it **broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold**—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure (Daniel 2:44-45).

God was communicating the fact that the Church of Christ, which would be established during the days of the Roman kings, would not simply be another human kingdom. Rather, it would be a spiritual kingdom that would incorporate people from all countries, nations, cultures, ethnicities, and languages. Hence, this kingdom would transcend and surpass all **human** kingdoms—making them of no ultimate significance or relevance. The populations of all the kingdoms of this world are headed to an eternity of endless suffering separated from

God. Only those people who transcend those kingdoms (in a spiritual sense) to secure citizenship in the kingdom of Christ by obeying the Gospel of Christ will be ushered into eternity to be with God. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the stone that was "cut out of the mountain without hands" (indicating a **divine** action) is an allusion to the Church that would render all human kingdoms irrelevant by removing from them those who would seek God and be transferred by Him "into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Colossians 1:13). Revelation 11:15 is essentially an affirmation of the fulfillment of Daniel 2:44.

Recall that these monumental happenings are precisely what were referred to in Daniel's own dream which included a reference to Jesus ascending into heaven into the presence of God:

Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that **all peoples, nations, and languages** should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed (Daniel 7:14).

Notice that Christ's kingdom would incorporate "all peoples, nations, and languages." The kingdom of Christ renders all human kingdoms superfluous—so far as achieving the will of God is concerned and enabling one to enter into heaven. It is no wonder that the four living creatures and 24 elders fell down before the Lamb and sang a new song which included these words: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood

out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Revelation 5:9). Isaiah had announced 800 years earlier this fact: “And **all nations** shall flow to it” (2:2; cf. Acts 2:5). It is also not surprising that God emphasized to Abraham concerning the coming of Christ: “In your seed **all the nations of the earth** shall be blessed” (Genesis 22:18; cf. Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 26:4). So, God intended from eternity to send Jesus to the planet to (1) atone for sin and (2) establish His kingdom/church on Earth to spread His Gospel message throughout the world, thereby extracting from **all nations** those few who are responsive to His offer of salvation.

Summary

Summarizing, recall the sounding of the seventh trumpet and those loud voices that declared “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.” What was their intended import? They were simply reaffirming the fact that God was even then achieving His eternal purpose that His kingdom on Earth—the Church established by His Son—would permeate, infiltrate, and extract from all the human kingdoms of the Earth those who were receptive to Christ’s invitation, calling them forth by the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14), incorporating them into His kingdom, the Church of Christ.

Revelation 12:10

One final passage from the Revelation demonstrates further harmony with these observations. Revelation 12

depicts in apocalyptic imagery a seven-headed, blood-red dragon. He hovers before a woman who is in labor and about to give birth. The dragon's intention is to devour the woman's child as soon as He is born. Sometimes apocalyptic literature alerts the reader to the meaning of some of its symbols (e.g., 1:20; 4:5; 5:6,8; 17:9,15,18; 19:8). In this case, we are flatly informed that the dragon represents Satan (vs. 9). The woman undoubtedly represents Old Testament Israel who is depicted as God's wife (Hosea 2; Micah 4), but more specifically as the "very small remnant" of the faithful—of which Isaiah spoke (Isaiah 1:9)—among the nation of Israel that brought forth Christ. These righteous souls included such individuals as Joseph (Genesis 50:24-25), Ruth and Boaz (Ruth 1:16-17; 2:11-12), John the baptizer's parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth (Luke 1:5-6), Simeon (Luke 2:25ff.), Anna (Luke 2:36), as well as Joseph and Mary (Matthew 1:18-19). The male child who the woman bore is clearly Jesus, a conclusion corroborated by the contextual allusion in verse 5 to the Messianic Psalm which predicted Jesus would rule with an iron scepter (Psalm 2:9; also Revelation 19:15). Being "caught up to God and to His throne" is a clear reference to Jesus' ascension and the immediate positioning of Himself on His throne to rule and reign over His kingdom, the Church (see Endnote 82). Observe in Figure 15 how all these details harmonize perfectly with the rest of Scripture.

What is represented by the portrait of Satan seeking to devour the woman's child? Having been successful

The Meaning of Revelation 12:1-6	
Woman/ OT Israel	Hosea 2; Micah 4:7; cf. Mal. 2:15
Male Child	Isaiah 7:14; Matt. 1:21,23
Rod of Iron	Psalms 2; Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:6
Caught up to Heaven	Daniel 7:13; Acts 1:9; Eph. 4:8
Kingdom Throne	Luke 1:32-33; Acts 2:30,33; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:8; 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22

Figure 15

in his subversion of Adam and Eve to bring sin into the world, his ultimate goal was to thwart God’s salvific intentions. Things looked hopeless when Jesus came into the world. Satan immediately launched his attack in an effort to destroy Christ—just as Genesis 3:15 anticipated. As a baby, an attempt was made to kill Him (Matthew 2:16). When He inaugurated His public ministry, an attempt was made by Satan to subvert Him at His temptation (Matthew 4:6). And, finally, it appeared as if Satan had succeeded when Christ was nailed to the cross and placed in the tomb. But just when things looked bleak and hopeless, He was raised from the dead and ushered to the very throne of God (Acts 1:9)—explained in detail in Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:22-36). There He **now rules over His kingdom** with an iron scepter (i.e., with a firm, authoritative reign).

Thus far, the meaning and application of the imagery of the chapter is fairly easy to decipher. But beginning in verse 7, we have a more cryptic use of apocalyptic language:

And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him (Revelation 12:7-9).

Two possibilities present themselves. Either a literal, physical battle occurred in heaven between Satan and his angels on the one hand and the archangel Michael and his angels on the other, or the figurative imagery is intended to create an effect that presses the intended point. The first possibility does not fit the overall nature of apocalyptic imagery. Besides, no physical war with physical weaponry would be fought by spiritual beings—let alone in heaven. God is infinite in all His attributes while Satan is not. God need not engage in any sort of physical conflict to assert or establish His supremacy. God's stated intention throughout Scripture is to save humans without interfering with their freedom of choice, i.e., save all those who **desire** to be saved. Satan's only ability is to tempt and lure humans away from the truth (Matthew 4:1; 1 Peter 5:8). But he has no power to do anything that God has not given him permission to do (Job 1:12; 2:6).

The text itself provides the necessary clues to arrive at the intended meaning. Verses 7-9 are simply a recapitulation of the first six verses, thus providing two distinct perspectives of the **same conflict**—one from the perspective of how Satan has operated on Earth (vss. 1-6) and the other from a hyperbolic depiction of how his operations looked from a cosmic, heavenly perspective (vss. 7-9). Though both are characterized by apocalyptic language, their meanings are discernible both from the text's own clarification clues as well as from the general outlines of redemptive history. The second portrait is not a description of a literal, pre-historic heavenly war as Milton's *Paradise Lost* portrays. Rather, in keeping with the very nature of the book, it represents a picture of the devil's efforts to destroy Christ, His ministry, and His people. This portrait, in fact, depicts for us **the effect** of Jesus' birth, ministry, atonement, and ascension (already set forth in verses 1-6) upon the spiritual realm. The image of Satan being "cast out" (NKJV) or "thrown down" (ESV, NASB, RSV) is simply apocalyptic symbolism for defeat and failure. Satan failed to prevent God from providing redemption for humanity.

How can we be sure that such is the intended meaning of these verses? Because verse 10 states explicitly what occurred as **a direct result** of this war in heaven:

Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down" (Revelation 12:10).

Observe what the loud voice originating from heaven stated was the outcome of Satan's failure to thwart God's redemptive scheme: "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come." First, "salvation" is a clear reference to what was achieved at the cross. Second, spiritual (not physical) "strength," i.e., "power" (*dunamis*) came at the same time by enabling people to neutralize Satan's power over them via sin. Third, "the kingdom" came at the ascension and subsequent presentation of the Gospel message of salvation on Pentecost 10 days later in Acts 2. Fourth, Christ's "power," i.e., "authority" (*exousia*), also came when He ascended on high (Ephesians 4:8), assumed the throne, and proceeded to exercise authority (Matthew 28:18). These four colossal, spiritual achievements are delineated in Figure 16 on the next page.

Good summary verses of these features of salvation and the constituent elements of the chapter include the following—

- And being found in appearance as a man [**the male child**], He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross [**salvation**]. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name [**authority**], that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:8-11).
-

The Meaning of Revelation 12:10		
Salvation	The cross brought atone- ment to the world of humanity.	Luke 2:28-32; 3:6 Acts 4:12; Eph. 1:13; Tit. 2:11; Heb. 5:9
Strength/ Power	Christ's sacrifice provided the spiritual power humans need to overcome Satan's hold and be reconciled to God.	Romans 5:6; Col. 1:11,20; Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 5:12
Kingdom	The church is the body of Christ to which the redeemed are added by Christ.	1 Cor. 12:12-13; Eph. 3:21; Col. 1:13; 2 Peter 1:11
Christ's Authority	Christ now wields authority over His kingdom.	Matthew 28:18; John 5:27; 17:2

Figure 16

- ...that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power (*dunameos*) [**strength to forgive**] toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power (*ischuos*) which He worked in Christ [**the cross**] when He raised Him from the dead [**resurrection**] and seated Him [**ascension**] at His right hand in the heavenly places [**kingdom**], far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named [**authority**], not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and

gave Him to be head over all things to the church [**kingdom**], which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all (Ephesians 1:18-23).

- ...looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith [**strength**], who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross [**salvation**], despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God [**kingdom**] (Hebrews 12:2).

The depiction of war in heaven with Satan being defeated is simply an apocalyptic, figurative way to convey the idea that God worked out His redemptive will through 4,000 years of human history to achieve atonement for all people who choose to accept that means of forgiveness. Once Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, Genesis 3:15 indicates that “When sin became a reality, God headed toward calvary.”⁹⁸ Indeed, when Jesus died on the cross, through His death He was able to “destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14). In other words, He made it possible for all who have succumbed to sin to receive forgiveness, rendering Satan’s power to inflict spiritual death reversible and thus ultimately impotent. Recalling verse 12, having failed in his efforts to prevent Christ from achieving His mission on Earth, all Satan can do now is try to subvert as many people on Earth as he possibly can. Nevertheless, we can “overcome.”⁹⁹

But observe that even as Jesus’ defeat of Satan brought salvation, spiritual strength, and the exercise of His universal authority, **the kingdom also came** at the same time these other critical features of God’s redemptive

plan materialized. These four happenings are not **future** events. They have all been accomplished. The Spirit’s use of the terms “now” (*arti*) and “have come” (*egeneto*)—which occur together in the Greek text, i.e., “now have come”—reinforce the fact that these events are present realities in the world. Like Revelation 11:15,¹⁰⁰ Revelation 12:10 affirms the arrival of the kingdom of Christ on Earth in the **first** century. That kingdom is none other than the Church of Christ, as the juxtapositioning of John 3:5 and Ephesians 5:26 demonstrates (Figure 17).

The Church = the Kingdom			
John 3:5	“unless one is born of water	and the Spirit	he cannot enter the KINGDOM of God.”
Eph. 5:26	“washing of water”	by the word	sanctified/cleansed CHURCH

Figure 17

These wondrous facets that emanated from the divine mind are marvelous, stunning, and unfathomable—which is precisely what Paul exclaimed in the Holy Spirit’s great treatise on justification: “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!” (Romans 11:33). Revelation 12:10 is yet additional proof that the kingdom of God is **already** present

on Earth which is the Church of Christ over which Jesus **now** reigns. Any future millennial kingdom on Earth would be superfluous. Examine Figure 18 which summarizes several kingdom/church prophecies.

Kingdom/Church Prophecies	
Last Days	Isaiah 2:2; Joel 2:28; Micah 4:1
House of God	Isaiah 2:2; Micah 4:1,2; 1 Tim. 3:15
Kingdom	Isaiah 9:7
Zion Jerusalem	Isaiah 2:3; Micah 4:2,7; Joel 2:32
All Nations/ Peoples	Isaiah 2:2; Daniel 7:14; Micah 4:2
Remnant	Micah 4:7; Joel 2:32
Longevity Forever, Everlasting	Daniel 7:14,18,27 Micah 4:5,7; Rev. 11:15
Indestructibility Never Destroyed	Daniel 2:44; 7:14 Hebrews 12:28

Figure 18

“Kingdom” = “Israel” = “Church”

Second, the words “kingdom,” “Israel,” and “church” frequently all refer to the same group of people, i.e., the saved, Christians, the Church of Christ, **spiritual** Israel. Jesus predicted that He would build His “church” and give to Peter the keys of the “kingdom” (Matthew 16:18-19). Jesus did not build one institution and give to Peter

the keys to a different institution that would be established on Earth 2,000+ years after Peter’s death. See Figure 19.

“Church” = “Kingdom” (Matthew 16:18-19)			
Verse 18	“My church”		
Verse 19	“the kingdom of heaven”	Apostles given keys	They bind & loose on Earth

Figure 19

Observe that Jesus was referring to what was imminent—the construction of His Church shortly after His departure. For the next six decades or so, the apostles did precisely what He declared they would do: they announced the arrival of Christ’s kingdom on Earth, inaugurated the conditions of the New Covenant, and went about setting into place the superstructure of Christ’s Church. Even as the epistle to the Colossians is about the supremacy of Christ, i.e., the Christ of the Church, so Ephesians is centered on the Church of the Christ. No wonder Paul declared that the **Church** is, in fact, “the **Israel** of God” (Galatians 6:16), and that “he is **not a Jew** who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but **he is a Jew** who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but

from God” (Romans 2:28-29). Only Christians are “Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29). **Spiritual Israel is the Church of Christ which is the kingdom.**¹⁰¹

Jesus Is Reigning Now

Third, Jesus is **reigning now** in heaven and has been since A.D. 30. Peter referred to this reign when he explained that Jesus “has gone into heaven and is **at the right hand of God**, angels and authorities and powers having been **made subject to Him**” (1 Peter 3:22). Recall once again that Daniel predicted this fact over four centuries prior to fulfillment:

One like the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and **a kingdom**, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and **His kingdom** the one which shall not be destroyed (7:13-14).

This prophecy was fulfilled at the ascension of Christ: “while they watched, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9). Jesus returned to heaven where He was given rule over His kingdom.

Fifty days after Jesus’ crucifixion and 10 days after His ascension, Peter made this fact clear in his remarks on Pentecost:

God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would **raise up the Christ to sit on his throne**, he, foreseeing this, spoke of the resurrection of the Christ.... This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore, being **exalted to the right hand of God**... (Acts 2:30-33).

So **Jesus was reigning at that moment over His kingdom**. Paul expressed the same truth: “He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet” (Ephesians 1:20-22). Hence, when Jesus returns a second time, it will not be to reign on Earth. Rather, “[t]hen comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must **reign** till He has put all enemies under His feet” (1 Corinthians 15:24-25). To repeat: the Bible repeatedly affirms that **Jesus is reigning and ruling now** over His kingdom.

Jesus Completed His Work

Fourth, Jesus **completed** His work on Earth and, consequently, has no reason to return to the Earth, itself, to do any additional work. He explained to the disciples: “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to **finish** His work” (John 4:34). Shortly before His departure from the Earth, He prayed to the Father: “I

have glorified You on the earth. **I have finished the work** which You gave Me to do” (John 17:4). He reiterated this fact on the cross when He declared: “It is finished” (John 19:30).

Dispensationalists say that Jesus came with the intention to be King, and to set up an earthly kingdom, but that the Jews unexpectedly rejected Him. But this claim is in direct conflict with the facts. On one occasion, after feeding thousands of people with five loaves of bread and two fish—a feat that would constitute a tremendous advantage should war with Rome be forthcoming—John noted that “when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and **take Him by force to make Him king**, He departed again to a mountain by Himself alone” (6:15). If Jesus intended to establish a physical kingdom on Earth, that occasion would have been the perfect time to do so—with the support of the masses.

So why did Jesus refuse to be made a king on Earth on a physical throne? He gave the reason to Pilate: “**My kingdom is not of this world**. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here” (John 18:36). The dispensational claim that Jesus is coming back to be a king on Earth on a physical throne is the very thing first-century Jews tried to get Him to do—but which He refused to do—and which He denied before Pilate. Did Jesus lie to Pilate?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Though dispensationalism teaches the kingdom on Earth is yet future, what does the Bible teach?
 2. Who did Jesus say would see the kingdom prior to their death?
 3. What 4 expressions from 5 passages are used synonymously—as depicted in Figure 12?
 4. By comparing these Scriptures, to what conclusion is one driven?
 5. What “child” is referred to in Isaiah 9:6?
 6. What does the prophecy envision Him doing?
 7. When did Jesus assume His throne? Cite a verse.
 8. Identify 1 of the statements made by Peter on Pentecost where he used kingdom terminology to refer to Jesus’ status at that time. Include the verse.
 9. What pagan monarch dreamed that God would set up a kingdom?
 10. **When** would the kingdom be established?
 11. What is that kingdom?
 12. Whom did Jesus approach when He passed through the clouds?
 13. What was He given?
 14. When did these two events occur?
 15. What was much of Jesus’ earthly teaching intended to be?
 16. What “kingdom” did Jesus refer to in both His “model” prayer and in His admonition to “seek first the kingdom”?
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17. What do the New Testament epistles describe?
 18. To what does the word “regeneration” refer in Titus 3:5?
 19. To what does the word “regeneration” refer in Matthew 19:28?
 20. Through what medium is the process of regenerating humans achieved?
 21. Where is Jesus throughout this process? Cite a verse.
 22. What is occurring contemporaneous with Jesus being seated on His throne?
 23. What did Jesus intend the apostolic role to be? Cite a passage.
 24. What was the origin of the apostles’ doctrine?
 25. In what position did the apostles serve?
 26. What is the meaning of Jesus’ allusion to the apostles sitting on thrones and judging?
 27. Due to this prominent, integral role of the apostles as judges in the early Church, how did Paul describe the “household of God”? Cite the verse.
 28. Through what prominent medium did the apostles judge their fellowman?
 29. How do the apostles **continue** to judge?
 30. In what verse did Jesus note how **His** judging is done?
 31. To whom did Jesus refer when He referred to “the twelve tribes of Israel”? Cite a verse.
 32. When Jesus said that “he who is least in the kingdom is greater than John the baptizer,” what was He foreshadowing?
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33. As great as John the baptizer was in his inspired role, what did he **not** live to see or enter?
 34. When John the baptizer declared that the kingdom was at hand, to what 2 things was he **not** referring?
 35. To what was he referring?
 36. Cite 2 reasons why Jesus frequently spoke of the kingdom as if it was already in existence.
 37. What did Jesus declare to be the only entranceway into the kingdom?
 38. Into what did Paul tell the Corinthians baptism places a person? Cite the verse.
 39. According to Paul's instructions to the Ephesians and Colossians, to what is the "body" equivalent? Cite 1 passage.
 40. What must we conclude about the procedure that places a person in the **kingdom** and the procedure that places one into the **church**?
 41. What must we conclude about the Church of Christ and the kingdom of Christ?
 42. Into what institution did Paul declare the Colossians had been transferred? Cite the verse.
 43. Into what were the Colossians **not** incorporated?
 44. What does that fact say about the "kingdom" and the "church"?
 45. What had to have happened between Jesus' prayer for the kingdom to come and the Colossians' transference into that kingdom?
 46. What 5 expressions are used by the Hebrews writer to refer to the Church of Christ presently on Earth as depicted in Figure 14?
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47. What was/is the kingdom that Christians received? Cite the verse.
 48. When did John likely write the Revelation?
 49. What did John twice state that Jesus had “made” the Christians to whom he was writing? Cite the verses.
 50. When the New Testament epistles speak of the kingdom being future, to what are they referring? Cite a verse.
 51. If Jesus is king **now**, over whom is He reigning?
 52. In order to make sense of the declaration of the loud heavenly voices, what 2 things must be recognized?
 53. What 5 trivial distinctions was the kingdom intended to transcend?
 54. What fact did God communicate via Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and when would it occur?
 55. Who would be incorporated?
 56. How do people secure citizenship in the kingdom of Christ?
 57. Revelation 11:15 is essentially an affirmation of the fulfillment of what verse?
 58. Who did Daniel’s own dream say would be incorporated into Christ’s kingdom? Cite the verse.
 59. Who did the four living creatures and 24 elders indicate in their song had been redeemed? Cite the verse.
 60. What 2 things did God intend from eternity by sending Jesus to Earth?
 61. What did the voices of Revelation 11:15 reaffirm?
 62. Who does the seven-headed dragon symbolize?
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63. Who does the woman represent?
 64. Who does the male child represent, and what Messianic psalm is referenced?
 65. What does the child being caught up to God and to His throne symbolize?
 66. To what does Satan's effort to devour the child refer? Give 1 example that illustrates his efforts and cite a verse.
 67. What Old Testament verse predicted Satan's attack?
 68. What 2 possible interpretations present themselves for Revelation 12:7-9?
 69. Why does the first possibility **not** fit?
 70. What would not be fought by spiritual beings?
 71. How are Satan and God to be contrasted in terms of their beings?
 72. What does God **not** need to do to assert or establish His supremacy?
 73. What is Satan's only ability?
 74. What does Satan have **no** power to do? Cite a verse.
 75. How do verses 7-9 function?
 76. In keeping with the very nature of the book, what do verses 7-9 represent?
 77. What, specifically, does this portrait depict?
 78. What apocalyptic symbolism is intended by the image of Satan being "cast out"?
 79. What did Satan fail to prevent God from doing?
 80. How can we be sure of the intended meaning of these verses?
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81. What four colossal, spiritual achievements are delineated in verse 10?
 82. The depiction of war in heaven with Satan being defeated is simply an apocalyptic way to convey what idea?
 83. In what way did Jesus “destroy” Satan via His death on the cross? Cite the verse.
 84. According to verse 12, having failed in his efforts to prevent Christ from achieving His mission on Earth, what is all that Satan can now do?
 85. What does Revelation 12:10 affirm?
 86. In what verse did Paul exclaim the wonder and marvel of the outworking of God’s scheme of redemption?
 87. What additional proof is provided by Revelation 12:10?
 88. What 3 New Testament words frequently refer to the same group of people?
 89. What two words did Jesus use interchangeably when He promised to give keys to Peter?
 90. What 3 things did the apostles do that Jesus declared they would do?
 91. Who is the **only** “seed” of Abraham today? Cite a verse.
 92. When, where, and for how long has Jesus been reigning?
 93. According to Peter, where is Jesus now and who is subject to Him? Cite the verse.
 94. What was Jesus given when He returned to heaven?
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95. On the day of Pentecost, where was Jesus according to Peter? Cite the verse.
 96. What does the Bible repeatedly affirm concerning His kingdom?
 97. What does Jesus have no reason to do and why?
 98. What did Jesus declare to the Father He had finished? Cite the verse.
 99. What did the Jews attempt to do after Jesus fed thousands of them miraculously? Cite the verse.
 100. If Jesus intended to establish a physical kingdom on Earth, when would have been an opportune occasion to do so?
 101. What did Jesus declare to Pilate that proves He never intended to establish a physical kingdom/throne on Earth? Cite the verse.
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Chapter 7

But What About the Promises to Israel?

Many these days insist that God made clear promises in Scripture to physical Israel that are yet to be fulfilled and which absolutely must be fulfilled, and that physical Israel plays a prominent and continuing role in God's scheme of things. Charismatic TV preachers regularly press upon their audiences the need to back and support the modern state of Israel. This contention has had a profound impact upon U.S. foreign policy and in the way people around the world—especially in the Middle East—perceive America. While it may well be expedient for the U.S. to maintain close political, military, and economic ties to Israel, it is surely a shock to find that the Bible enjoins **no such favored status today**. All people stand on level ground at the foot of the cross of Christ. God is no respecter of persons and makes no distinctions between people on the basis of **ethnicity or nationality** (Acts 10:34-35; Romans 2:11,28-29; Galatians 3:28). The promises that were made to physical Israel in the Old Testament were **fulfilled long ago**.

Land Promise Already Fulfilled and Conditional

For example, God announced to Abraham that He would give to his descendants (the Israelites) the land of Canaan (Genesis 12:1; 15:7). This promise was fulfilled when Israel took possession of Palestine in the

15th century B.C. (Joshua 2:45-21:43; 2 Chronicles 9:26). What so many people today fail to recognize is that Israelite retainment of the land was **conditional**—contingent upon their continued obedience. For example, God declared through Moses:

Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, **which I am casting out before you**. For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and **the land vomits out its inhabitants**. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations, either any of your own nation or any stranger who dwells among you (for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who were before you, and thus the land is defiled), **lest the land vomit you out also** when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you (Leviticus 18:24-28).

Likewise, near the end of his life, Joshua issued a similar warning to the leaders of the nation:

Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth. And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that **not one thing has failed** of all the good things which the LORD your God spoke concerning you. **All have come to pass** for you; not one word of them has failed. Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all the good things have come upon you which the LORD your God promised you, so the LORD will bring upon you all harmful things, until **He has destroyed you from this good land** which the LORD your God has given you. When you have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, and have gone

and served other gods, and bowed down to them, then the anger of the LORD will burn against you, and **you shall perish quickly from the good land which He has given you** (Joshua 23:14-16).

And God said to Solomon: “If you or your sons at all turn from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, then **I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them**” (1 Kings 9:6-7). But sadly, they forfeited retention of the land due to their incessant disobedience and continual rejection of God’s guidance. The complete and final cut-off of physical Israel took place in A.D. 70—as Jesus mournfully announced: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate” (Matthew 23:37-38).

National Promise Already Fulfilled

Further, the reestablishment of national Israel, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple (i.e., the national promises of Deuteronomy 30 and Zechariah 12-14) were **literally** fulfilled in the returning remnant after the Babylonian captivity beginning in 536 B.C. Nehemiah reminded God of this promise:

Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, “If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to Me, and

keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.” Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand (Nehemiah 1:8-10; see also Isaiah 10:22; Jeremiah 23:3; Ezra 3:1-11).

The establishment of the modern state of Israel in May of 1948 cannot supplant this already achieved fulfillment and has nothing to do with the original promises made to Abraham and his descendants.

Spiritual Fulfillment

Many of the Old Testament prophecies that predicted the return of the Jews after captivity were laced with predictions of the coming Christ to the Earth to bring ultimate redemption. Hence, the national promises were **spiritually** fulfilled in the Church of Christ wherein both Jews and Gentiles are one in Christ. For example, premillennialists are fond of calling attention to the concluding prophetic remarks of Amos:

“On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name,” says the Lord who does this thing (Amos 9:11-12).

They insist that the fulfillment of this prophecy is yet future. They say the Temple, which was destroyed in

A.D. 70 by the Romans (Matthew 23:37-24:35), will be rebuilt on the Temple platform in Jerusalem (a site currently occupied by the third most holy shrine of Islam—the Dome of the Rock). They say that Jesus will return, set up His millennial kingdom, and reign on a literal throne for a thousand years, incorporating the Gentiles, in addition to the nation of Israel, into His kingdom. On the face of it, this prophecy certainly possesses terminology that fits the millenarian spin placed upon it.

However, two Bible passages correct this mistaken interpretation, and forever settle the question as to the proper application of Amos' prophecy. The first is the great Messianic prophecy uttered by the prophet Nathan to King David regarding David's future lineage and royal dynasty:

When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, 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 his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever (2 Samuel 7:12-16).

Nathan declared that God would establish and sustain the Davidic dynasty. Even though he also noted that a fixed form of the Tabernacle (the one God refused to

allow David to build—2 Samuel 7:1-7) would be built by David's son (i.e., Solomon), God, Himself, would build David a house, i.e., a dynasty, a kingly lineage. It is this **lineage** to which Nathan referred—not a physical temple building.

The second passage that clarifies Amos' prophecy is the account of the Jerusalem "conference" (Acts 15). Following Peter's report regarding Gentile inclusion in the kingdom, James offered the following confirmatory comment:

Men and brethren, listen to me: Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written (Acts 15:13-15).

In other words, on that most auspicious occasion, James was noting two significant facts that had come to pass precisely as predicted by Amos:

1. After the downfall of the Jewish kingdom, the Davidic dynasty had been reinstated in the person of Christ—the "Son of David" (Matthew 22:42)—Who, at His ascension, had been enthroned in heaven¹⁰² and proceeded to establish the Church of Christ composed entirely of Jews, thereby "rebuilding the tabernacle of David that had fallen down."
 2. With the conversion of the first Gentiles in Acts 10, as reported on this occasion by Peter, the "residue of men," or the non-Jewish segment of humanity, was now "seeking the Lord."¹⁰³
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These two remarkable spiritual achievements were integral to God's eternal intention (cf. Isaiah 62:1-2).

In light of James' inspired application of it to the integrated church of the first century, the Amos prophecy, like all others in the Old Testament that dispensationalists wish to apply to the future, find their ultimate and final climax in the momentous advent of the Christian religion on the planet—2,000 years ago. The premillennial treatment of prophecy, in the final analysis, demeans and trivializes the significance of the Gospel, the Church of Christ, and the Christian religion as the final revelation from God to mankind. The kingdom is not future; it is here now. All accountable persons would do well to conform themselves to the preconditions that enable Jesus to add them to His kingdom.¹⁰⁴

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do many today insist about God's promises to physical Israel?
 2. Apart from the political, military, and economic reasons to maintain ties to Israel, what is surely shocking about the Bible's perspective?
 3. What does the Bible indicate regarding the promises that were made to physical Israel in the Old Testament?
 4. When was God's **land** promise to Abraham's descendants fulfilled? Cite a passage.
 5. What do many people today fail to recognize regarding Israel's retainment of the land? Cite 1 passage.
 6. When did the complete and final cutoff of physical Israel take place? Cite the passage that records Jesus' mournful announcement.
 7. When were the **national** promises—reestablishment of national Israel and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple—literally fulfilled?
 8. According to the Bible, what does the 1948 establishment of the modern state of Israel have to do with the original promises made to Abraham?
 9. With what were many of the Old Testament prophecies laced that predicted the return of the Jews after captivity?
 10. How were the **national** promises to Israel fulfilled?
 11. What do premillennialists say is the time frame for the fulfillment of the prophecy of Amos 9:11-12?
 12. To what do they apply Amos' prediction that "the tabernacle of David" will be raised up?
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13. What do premillennialists say Jesus will do when He returns and sets up His millennial kingdom to reign on His throne for a thousand years?
 14. What 2 Bible passages correct this mistaken interpretation?
 15. To what did Nathan's prophecy spoken to David refer in his reference to the establishment of a kingdom and the building of a house?
 16. What twofold application of the Amos prophecy did the apostle James give?
 17. What is the significance of these two spiritual achievements?
 18. In what do the Old Testament prophecies, that dispensationalists wish to apply to the future, find their ultimate and final climax?
 19. In the final analysis, what 3 things does the premillennial treatment of prophecy trivialize and demean?
 20. Since the kingdom is here now, what should all accountable persons do?
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Chapter 8

Conclusion

A careful and consistent appraisal of Bible teaching leads one to conclude that all promises made to physical Israel have either been fulfilled or forfeited through disobedience. All who wish to be acceptable to God must submit to Jesus Christ **now** (John 3:5; 8:24).¹⁰⁵ From a prophetic standpoint, Christians need not fear any of the political, economic, or military developments of today or tomorrow. God has given us simple instructions on how to become a Christian, how to live the Christian life, and the need to urge others to do the same. God deals with all human beings today on the same basis and on the same grounds—obedience to Christ’s will. “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). The sensationalism and hysteria associated with the ongoing attempt to apply long since fulfilled Bible prophecy to the current events of today is alluring. But it can easily divert people’s attention away from their daily responsibility to live obediently and faithfully **now**.

The Bible View

The Bible portrait of the end times is much simpler and succinct (see Figure 20 on p. 144). Here are the central features of the end times as depicted in the New Testament:

A Summary of Bible Teaching on the End Times	
Matthew 24:36 2 Thessalonians 1:8	At some point in the future, Jesus will return in flaming fire.
1 Corinthians 15:52 1 Thessalonians 4:16	The trumpet and voice of the archangel will sound.
Acts 1:11 1 Thessalonians 4:17	Jesus will hover among the clouds without setting foot on Earth.
John 5:28-29	All deceased humans, both good and evil, will be resurrected.
1 Thessalonians 4:17	The righteous will rise to meet Jesus in the air.
Matthew 25:32 Romans 14:10 2 Corinthians 5:10	All people will be gathered before God in Judgment.
Matthew 25:46 John 5:29	Everyone will then be consigned to only one of two eternal abodes— Heaven or Hell.

Figure 20

- At some point in the future—known only to Deity (Matthew 24:36), and with no signs by which we can determine its imminence—Jesus will return in flaming fire (2 Thessalonians 1:8).
- The trumpet and the voice of the archangel will sound (1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16).
- Jesus will hover among the clouds with His mighty angels without ever setting foot on the Earth (Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:17).

- All who are in the graves will be resurrected (Luke 14:14; John 5:28-29) and changed (1 Corinthians 15:52-53).
- The righteous will rise to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17).
- All people who have ever lived, both good and evil, will be gathered together in judgment before God (Matthew 25:31-46; Romans 14:10; Revelation 20:11-13; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Ecclesiastes 12:14).
- Everyone will then be consigned to only one of two eternal abodes: the wicked will be placed in hell,¹⁰⁶ while the righteous will be welcomed into heaven (Romans 2:5-10).

What Does It Matter?

But why oppose dispensationalism? What does it matter if a person thinks that Jesus will secretly rapture away the saints from the Earth, leaving everyone else behind? How is it of any importance if a person thinks that a period of severe tribulation is on the horizon and an Antichrist will arise and foment political disturbances that will culminate in a worldwide Armageddon? What does it hurt if a person wants to believe that Jesus will return to Earth and set up a literal kingdom and reign for a thousand years from Jerusalem? Here are three responses to these questions to consider:

First, the dispensational framework and, specifically, its handling of Scripture, creates contradictions and confusion, hampering a broader comprehension of Scripture

and God's redemptive scheme. When non-Christians encounter views promoted under the guise of accurate Bible teaching, yet they examine the Bible and discover conflicting information, the credibility of the Bible is placed under suspicion—further fomenting the false notion that “you can prove anything by the Bible.” Pre-millennialism is at odds with the overall thrust of Bible history and God's plan for humanity.

Second, sensationalism naturally distracts people, drawing their attention away from the serious responsibilities of Christian living. No wonder various groups in history who have accepted the dispensational framework have quit their jobs, donned white robes, and ascended mountains to wait for the Lord's return, thereby removing themselves from the critical, mandatory task of interacting with society by spreading the Gospel.¹⁰⁷ Instead of taking Jesus' admonition seriously—“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only”—and focusing on living the Christian life, adding the “graces” (2 Peter 1:5ff.) and concentrating on evangelism, they simply “mark time” in eager anticipation that Jesus is about to come, thereby allowing the living of the Christian life to pass them by.

Third, and most importantly, dispensationalism undermines the supreme importance of the Church of Christ and her critical role in the propagation of Christianity and the conversion of people throughout the world. Dispensationalism naturally relegates the Church to an afterthought, a temporary substitute or parenthesis in God's

prophetic program.¹⁰⁸ It is even alleged that the Church was not directly revealed in prophecy in the Old Testament—which is flatly untrue.¹⁰⁹ For example, the “Lord’s house” predicted by both Isaiah (2:1-5) and Micah (4:1-5) is precisely the same house alluded to by Paul in his remarks to Timothy: “the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). As noted earlier, while there are a few exceptions, the expressions “Lord’s house,” “the house of God,” “the church,” and “the kingdom” all refer to the same entity in the New Testament—the Church of Christ that He declared He would establish (Matthew 16:18) and for which He said He died, purchasing that Church “with His own blood” (Acts 20:28). Be reminded, also as noted earlier, that Jesus used the words “church” and “kingdom” synonymously in Matthew 16:18-19. Dispensationalism demotes the Church of Christ to a degraded status and fails to attribute to the Church the central role that God intended her to fill prior to the Second Coming. One must comprehend this premiere position in order for the Church to fulfill her intended function. Dispensationalism inherently hampers severely this critical comprehension.

So much of Christendom in general, and theologians and commentators in particular, have failed to grasp the deeply momentous role of the Church in the grand scheme of things, precipitating widespread confusion regarding the fact that the Church and kingdom are one and the same. It was always God’s plan to bring the Church into existence to serve the primary purpose of

promulgating the Gospel of Christ. The premillennial misconception redirects interest and attention to anticipation of a physical kingdom on Earth and, in the process, disparages the present, inherent marvel of the Church. Indeed, dispensationalism (like denominationism) disrespects and dishonors the blood-bought body of Christ which was pre-planned and intended from all eternity to play a central role in the religion of Christ. As Paul explained: “to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known **by the church** to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the **eternal purpose** which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Ephesians 3:10-11). So integral did God intend the Church to be in His divine formulations that He uses the metaphor of Christ as the Head and the Church as the body (Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:18-19; 5:23; Colossians 1:18; 2:19). Like denominationism,¹¹⁰ dispensationalism essentially severs the body from the Head—relegating the body to a secondary, inferior status. Any such tampering with the eschatological formulations of Deity is harmful to the overall impact and influence that God intended in the spread of His Gospel and the promulgation of His spiritual kingdom.

Remember that from all eternity, Deity purposed and planned to accomplish two eternally significant events: (1) the death of Christ on the cross (Isaiah 53) and (2) the establishment of His Church (Isaiah 2:1-4; Micah 4:1-4). It is not possible to overstate the significance of these monumental achievements. The creation of the Church of Christ on Earth—as the kingdom of Christ—and the

atonement of Christ for sin are biblically coeval and coextensive in their eternal import (Ephesians 3:10-11). In fact, to demonstrate the intricate, integral, inextricable interconnection between Christ and the Church, realize that, incredibly, the blood of Christ—the very blood that was shed on the cross—actually “purchased the church” (Acts 20:28). What’s more, “Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body”—“which is the church” (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:24; 1:18). The Church is the bride of Christ (John 3:29; Revelation 19:7; 21:2,9). Colossians had been transferred from the world into the kingdom (1:13).

Summary

These three observations suggest that premillennialism inflicts damage on the cause of Christ, hampering lost souls from arriving at the truth (John 8:32). When one is willing to remove from his mind all preconceived and complex theological concoctions, and simply let the Bible paint its own picture of the end of time and the Second Coming of Christ, the dispensational viewpoint is seen to be convoluted, concocted, and unfounded. Indeed, there will be no “Rapture.” There will be no “Antichrist.” There will be no “Great Tribulation.” There will be no “Armageddon” or “Millennium” on Earth.¹¹¹ “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, **to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus** to all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (Ephesians 3:20-21).¹¹²

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What does a careful and consistent appraisal of Bible teaching force one to conclude?
 2. In what way does God deal with all human beings today?
 3. What can the sensationalism and hysteria associated with premillennialism easily do?
 4. Review the Bible portrait of the end times by noting its central features.
 5. What can the dispensational framework create?
 6. With what is premillennialism at odds?
 7. Most importantly, what does dispensationalism undermine?
 8. To what does dispensationalism naturally relegate the Church?
 9. What 4 expressions refer to the same entity in the New Testament?
 10. To what does dispensationalism demote the Church and what does it fail to do?
 11. What was it always God's plan to do?
 12. To what does the premillennial misconception redirect interest and attention? What, in the process, is the result?
 13. So integral did God intend the Church to be in His divine formulations that He uses what metaphor? Cite a verse.
 14. Like denominationalism, what does dispensationalism essentially do?
-

15. What 2 significant events did God purpose and plan to accomplish from all eternity?
 16. What do the kingdom of Christ and the atonement of Christ share in common? Cite a passage.
 17. Identify one of the 4 features that demonstrate the intricate interconnection between Christ and the Church. Cite a supporting verse.
 18. When one is willing to remove from his mind all pre-conceived and complex theological concoctions, and simply let the Bible paint its own picture of the end of time and the Second Coming of Christ, how is the dispensational viewpoint seen?
 19. According to Paul's doxology to the Colossians, in what receptacle is God to be glorified? Cite the verse.
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Endnotes

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¹ *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (2000), (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin), fourth edition, p. 159.

² See Edgar Whisenant and Greg Brewer (1989), *The Final Shout Rapture 1989 Report* (Nashville, TN: World Bible Society).

³ Hal Lindsey (1970), *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan).

⁴ *Left Behind* (2008), Tyndale House Publishers, <http://www.leftbehind.com/>.

⁵ “Left Behind: The End Begins” (2014), Left Behind Movie, Stoney Lake Entertainment All, <http://www.leftbehindmovie.com/>.

⁶ George Stokes (1885), “John Nelson Darby,” *The Contemporary Review*, 48:537-552, October. A global survey of Protestant evangelical leaders revealed 65% identify with premillennial theology, with 61% saying they believe in the Rapture of believers prior to the Tribulation. See Evangelical Leaders Survey (2011), “Premillennialism Reigns in Evangelical Theology,” National Association of Evangelicals, <https://www.nae.org/premillennialism-reigns-in-evangelical-theology/>; “Evangelical Beliefs and Practices” (2011), Pew Research Center, June 22, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2011/06/22/global-survey-beliefs/>.

⁷ Arno Gaebelein (1943), *The History of the Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Our Hope Publications); R. Todd Mangum and Mark Sweetnam (2009), *The Scofield Bible: Its History and Impact on the Evangelical Church* (Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster Publishing).

⁸ This graphic is a modified version of a PowerPoint slide originally created by Tyler Young.

⁹ p. 126.

¹⁰ See Loraine Boettner (1957), *The Millennium* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed), pp. 163-165.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 166, italics in orig.

¹² Fredrick Danker (2000), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, IL:

University of Chicago), third edition, p. 974; Joseph Thayer (1901), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1977 reprint), p. 606; W. Robertson Nicoll (no date), *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 1:202; James Moulton and George Milligan (1982 reprint), *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), p. 613.

¹³ Matthew 13:39,40,49; 24:3; 28:20; Hebrews 9:26—W.F. Moulton, A.S. Geden, and H.K. Moulton (1978), *A Concordance to the Greek Testament* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), fifth edition, p. 925.

¹⁴ Albert Barnes (1971), *Notes on the New Testament: Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 215.

¹⁵ Albert Barnes (2005), *Notes on the New Testament: Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 31. See Isaiah 2:2, Micah 4:1, Acts 2:17, Hebrews 1:2, 2 Peter 3:3. Also “last time” in 1 Peter 1:5 and Jude 18. The expression encompasses the Christian Era from Pentecost to the 2nd Coming.

¹⁶ R.C.H. Lenski (2001), *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers), p. 538.

¹⁷ p. 171.

¹⁸ 1 Samuel 4:4; 2 Samuel 6:2; 2 Kings 19:15; 1 Chronicles 13:6; Isaiah 37:16.

¹⁹ Flavius Josephus (1974 reprint), *Antiquities of the Jews*, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), XX.V.1; XX.VIII.6; Flavius Josephus (1974 reprint), *The Wars of the Jews*, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), II.XIII.4.

²⁰ E.g., *Antiquities*..., XX.

²¹ See F.F. Bruce (1962), “Christianity Under Claudius,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 44:309-326, March, 4:309.

²² Cornelius Tacitus (1805), *Annals* in *The Works of Cornelius Tacitus*, trans. Arthur Murphy (London: John Stockdale), XII.43/58; XIV.27; XV.22.

²³ “Cool Earthquake Facts” (2022), USGS, <https://www.usgs.gov/programs/earthquake-hazards/cool-earthquake-facts#:~:text=It%20is%20estimated%20that%20there,100%20of%20them%20cause%20damage>.

²⁴ “Why Are We Having So Many Earthquakes?” (no date), USGS, <https://www.usgs.gov/faqs/why-are-we-having-so-many-earthquakes-has-naturally-occurring-earthquake-activity-been>.

²⁵ Steve Mason (2016), *A History of the Jewish War, AD 66-74*

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

²⁶ Boettner, p. 201; Craig Keener (1993), *The IVP Bible Background Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press), p. 113; Marvin Wilson (1989), *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), p. 76; Eusebius Pamphilus (2005), *Church History*, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 3.5.3, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf201.toc.html>; Si Sheppard (2013), *The Jewish Revolt AD 66-74* (Long Island City, NY: Osprey Publishing), pp. 10-14; Mordechai Gichon (1981), "Cestius Gallus' Campaign in Judaea," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 113:56; Epiphanius, *De pond. et Mens*, 15. Also J. Scott (1998), "Did Jerusalem Christians Flee to Pella?" *Archaeology Conference* (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College), https://web.archive.org/web/20180620224108/http://www.preteristarchive.com/Bibliography/1998_scott_flee-pella.html. "It is remarkable, that by the special providence of God, after the Romans under Cestius Gallus made their first advance towards Jerusalem, they suddenly withdrew again, in a most unexpected, and indeed impolitic, manner; at which Josephus testifies his surprise, since the city might then have been easily taken. By this means they gave as it were a signal to the Christians to retire; which, in regard to this admonition, they did, some to Pella, and others to mount Libanus, and thereby preserved their lives"—Philip Doddridge (1807), *The Family Expositor* (Hartford: Lincoln & Gleason), 1:280.

²⁷ George Wilkins (1816), *The History of the Destruction of Jerusalem* (Nottingham: G. Stretton), pp. 113,165.

²⁸ *The Wars...*, V.10.5.

²⁹ A number of more recent English translations use the term "vultures" for the underlying Greek word ἀετοί. Those that render the term "eagles" include the ASV, BRG, DARBY, DRA, JUB, KJV, MEV, NKJV, NRSVUE, RSV, WYC, and YLT. A number of Greek lexicons define the term as "eagle," including Henry Liddell & Robert Scott (1940), *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1:27; Thayer, p. 18; G. Abbott-Smith (1922), *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), p. 10; Samuel Bagster (no date), *The Analytical Greek Lexicon* (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons), p. 7; Danker, p. 22; et al.

³⁰ John Lightfoot (no date), *A Commentary of the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*, Philologos.org, 24:28, http://philologos.org/_eb-jl/default.htm; cf. William Arndt and F.W. Gingrich (1957), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), p. 19—"eagle symbol of

swiftness.”

³¹ Cf. Foy E. Wallace (1960), *God’s Prophetic Word* (Oklahoma City, OK: Foy E. Wallace, Jr., Publications), p. 252. This book is an excellent resource for studying Matthew 24 (pp. 246ff.).

³² Josephus, *The Wars...*, VI.9.3. See also Kyle Butt (2021), “The Fall of Jerusalem,” *Reason & Revelation*, 41[4]:38-41,44-47.

³³ The use of the term “tribes” refers to the Jewish families that mourned the fall of national Judaism—Jewish tribes scattered throughout the world.

³⁴ E.g., Acts 13:45, 2 Corinthians 3:14, Galatians 2:4,12, Philippians 3:2, 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16.

³⁵ Danker, p. 8.

³⁶ This use is likely the Holy Spirit’s intended meaning in Revelation 1:20 and the seven occurrences in the two subsequent chapters (2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14), i.e., preachers.

³⁷ Matthew 1:17(4 times); 11:16; 12:39,41,42,45; 16:4; 17:17; 23:36; 24:34.

³⁸ See Dave Miller (2002), “There Will Be No Signs!” Apologetics Press, <https://apologeticspress.org/there-will-be-no-signs-937/>.

³⁹ The Greek term *seimeion* (σημεῖον) has essentially two meanings in Scripture: (1) it can refer to a miraculous, supernatural occurrence or (2) it can refer to a non-miraculous indicator of something (Danker, p. 920). In Matthew 24, Jesus used the word to refer to **non**-miraculous, natural occurrences that would coincidentally occur in such a time frame that they could serve as contemporaneous alerts to the disciples to anticipate the Roman siege of Jerusalem. Other occurrences of the word in a **non**-miraculous sense may be seen in Matthew 26:48, Luke 2:12, Romans 4:11, and 2 Thessalonians 3:17. The wars, rumors of wars, famines, and earthquakes were **not** miraculous occurrences—but simply ordinary events on Earth.

⁴⁰ Miraculous signs throughout Bible history served the singular purpose of confirming/authenticating the oral message presented by God’s bona fide emissaries. For a discussion of the purpose of miracles, see Dave Miller (2003), “Modern-Day Miracles, Tongue-Speaking, and Holy Spirit Baptism: A Refutation—EXTENDED VERSION,” <https://apologeticspress.org/modern-day-miracles-tongue-speaking-and-holy-spirit-baptism-a-refutation-extended-version-1399/>; Dave Miller (2020), *Modern-Day Miracles? Do Miracles, Tongue-Speaking, & Holy Spirit Baptism Occur Today?* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press).

⁴¹ One hymn which has attained considerable popularity over the years is R.E. Winsett's "Jesus Is Coming Soon." If there was any doubt about the song's premillennial intentions, the lyrics of verse two clearly betray the author's eschatological misconceptions. The phrases "love of so many cold," "evils abound," and "when these signs come to pass" are undeniable paraphrases of Matthew 24:12 and Luke 21:28,31. While the lyricist applies these conditions to the end of time and Christ's Second Coming, as we have seen, Jesus applied them to the destruction of Jerusalem which occurred in A.D. 70. See Dave Miller (2021), "Jesus Is Coming Soon?" Apologetics Press, <https://apologeticspress.org/jesus-is-coming-soon-1701/>.

⁴² The term "antichrist" in the original language includes these meanings: "counter-christ," "against Christ," "a rival Christ," "an opponent of Christ," "a substitute for Christ," "the claim to be Christ," "equivalent to Christ," "adversary of the Messiah": Walter Grundmann (1974), "The Christ Statements of the New Testament," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 9:571-572; Moulton & Milligan (1982 reprint), p. 49; Danker, p. 91.

⁴³ English translations that omit the article and do not capitalize "antichrist" include ASV, BRG, CSB, DARBY, ESV, KJV, LEB, NASB, NRSV, RSV, WYC. See the key to these abbreviations on p. 167.

⁴⁴ Observe that the word "spirit" in 1 John 4:1 refers simply to human beings—as in the case of the "false prophets" alluded to in the same verse. In context, the false prophets denied that Jesus came in the flesh. Such a denial made a person anti-Christ. The second occurrence of "spirit" in 4:3 is supplied by the translators and so italicized in many translations. Vincent notes that John's use of "this" refers, not to "spirit" but to the "non-confession," i.e., failing to confess that Christ had come in the flesh. "Coming" in 4:3 and 2:18 is a "prophetic present, equivalent to *is about to come*." Hence, the presence of individuals in John's day who denied Christ were, in fact, the anticipated Antichrist. See Marvin Vincent (1946), *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 2:337, 355, italics in orig.

⁴⁵ James Macknight (no date), *A New Literal Translation from the Original Greek of all the Apostolocal Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), reprint, p. 666.

⁴⁶ Lindsey, p. 87.

⁴⁷ In apocalyptic literature, the word for "beast," which refers to a wild, savage creature, symbolizes a political ruler or his government. Cf. Daniel 7:2-8.

⁴⁸ Ray Summers (1951), *Worthy Is the Lamb* (Nashville, TN: Broadman), pp. 173-178.

⁴⁹ Like all numbers in the Revelation, the number “6” is used figuratively—not literally. The number 6 in apocalyptic language connotes that which is sinister, ominous, evil, doomed, and defeated, but also incomplete/imperfect. Falling just short of the perfect number “7,” the number “6” is comparable to our #13. Hospitals and hotels routinely omit the 13th floor and Room #13. Friday the 13th takes the number to a special, dreaded significance. Hence, “666” is comparable to 13-13-13. “666 is a straining after the holy number 7, and falling short of it in every particular, marking the beast therefore and his subjects as deceivers”—Charles Briggs (1895), *The Messiah of the Apostles* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons), p. 324.

⁵⁰ R.H. Charles (1920), *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons), 1:357.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 178-179; Henry Swete (1911), *Commentary on Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1977 reprint), pp. xcix-ciii, 168ff.; E.G. Hardy (1894), *Christianity & the Roman Government* (London: Longmans, Green, & Co.), p. 93ff.; E.G. Hardy (1890), “The Provincial Concilia from Augustus to Diocletian,” *English Historical Review*, 5[4]:221-254. See also Ittai Gradel (2002), *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 159-161; Kenneth Scott (1975), *The Imperial Cult Under the Flavians* (New York: Arno Press).

⁵² See Gary Workman (1988), *Studies in 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Philemon* (Denton, TX: Valid Publications), pp. 428-434; John Eadie (1877), *Commentary on the Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979 reprint), pp. 340ff.

⁵³ Cf. Swete, p. xci.

⁵⁴ Summers, p. 178; Swete, pp. 170-172.

⁵⁵ Danker, pp. 992-993, italics in orig. See also Arndt and Gingrich, p. 814; Robert Mounce (2006), *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), p. 1288; Moulton and Milligan (1982 reprint), p. 627; Nigel Turner (1963), *Syntax in A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, ed. James Moulton (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), 3:252; E.W. Hengstenberg (1851), *The Revelation of St. John*, trans. Patrick Fairbairn (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), 1:47-49.

⁵⁶ Danker, p. 993.

⁵⁷ James Moffatt (no date), *The Revelation of St. John the Divine in The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, ed. Nicoll, W. Rob-

ertson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 5:335, emp. added.

⁵⁸ A.T. Robertson (1960), *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman), 6:283, emp. added.

⁵⁹ Henry Alford (1875), *Alford's Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980 reprint), 4:545, italics in orig.

⁶⁰ Cf. Newport White (no date), *The First and Second Epistles to Timothy in The Expositor's Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 4:117.

⁶¹ 5:335, emp. added.

⁶² Danker, p. 271; Thayer, p. 164; Wesley Perschbacher (1990), *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), p. 112; cf. Arndt and Gingrich, p. 213.

⁶³ See Summers, p. 99.

⁶⁴ The seven were literal churches without excluding others since the number "7" no doubt implies all churches experiencing the same circumstance of governmental persecution throughout the Empire.

⁶⁵ The word used by both John and Jesus rendered "at hand" (*eggidzo*) is a verb that means "to draw near in a temporal sense, draw near, come near, approach," "to be at hand, impend" (Danker, p. 270; Perschbacher, p. 112). Jesus clearly envisioned the kingdom coming into material existence in the 1st century—not the 21st century.

⁶⁶ Danker, p. 457.

⁶⁷ Danker, p. 993.

⁶⁸ Ibid., emp. in orig.

⁶⁹ English translations that render the Greek as "signified" include the ASV, BRG, DARBY, DLNT, DRA, HCSB, JUB, KJV, MEV, NKJV, WYC, et al. See the key to these abbreviations on p. 167.

⁷⁰ Mounce, p. 1268; Moulton and Milligan (1982 reprint), p. 572; M.R. Vincent (1890), *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1946 reprint), 2:564; Summers, p. 99; Perschbacher, p. 369; Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 6:284.

⁷¹ *Word Pictures*, 6:284. Also Marvin Vincent (1946), *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 2:408—"The word is appropriate to the symbolic character of the revelation."

⁷² pp. cxxxix, cxxxv.

⁷³ E.g., George Ladd (1972), *A Commentary on the Revelation*

of *John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), p. 267; Robert Mounce (1977), *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), pp. 356-357.

⁷⁴ See Swete, pp. xxxi, civ-cv.

⁷⁵ See Summers, p. 23.

⁷⁶ Caesar Domitian, who reigned from A.D. 81-96, was depicted by Roman historians as a fierce persecutor of Christians who gave himself the blasphemous title of *Dominus et Deus* ("Lord and God"):

"Domitian was also the first emperor to wage a proper campaign against Christ; and the Church answered the attack under the leadership of Christ's last apostle, John of the Apocalypse. Nero had Paul and Peter destroyed, but he looked upon them as seditious Jews. Domitian was the first emperor to understand that behind the Christian 'movement' there stood an enigmatic figure who threatened the glory of the emperors. He was the first to declare war on this figure, and the first also to lose the war—a foretaste of things to come"—Ethelbert Stauffer (1955), *Christ and the Caesars* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press), p. 150.

See also accounts by Roman historians and church writers: C. Suetonius Tranquillus (1796), *The Lives of the First Twelve Caesars* (London: G.G. & J. Robinson), p. 603; Dio (1906), *Dio's Rome*, trans. Herbert Foster (Troy, NY: Pafraets Book Co.), p. 160; Eusebius Pamphilus (1850), *Ecclesiastical History* (New York: Stanford & Swords), pp. 101ff. Also William Ramsay (1893), *The Church in the Roman Empire* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons), pp. 259ff. and Kenneth Scott (1975), *The Imperial Cult Under the Flavians* (New York: Arno Press), pp. 102-112.

⁷⁷ As it turned out, only Judas was not present at the establishment of the kingdom in Acts 2.

⁷⁸ The "last days" in New Testament parlance is a reference to the entire period that began on Pentecost A.D. 30 and extends to the end of time on Earth. "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son" (Hebrews 1:1-2). God worked out His redemptive plans through 4,000 years of human history, bringing them to the culminating events of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection followed immediately by the establishment of His kingdom. All that remains to be achieved is for God to bring history and the world to its end at which time all human beings will face God at the Judgment and be consigned to one of two eternal abodes. Read Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; 12:48; Romans 2:5-10,16; 14:9-11; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Revelation 20:11-

15; Ecclesiastes 12:14.

⁷⁹ Including the BRG, KJV, MEV, NKJV, RGT, and WE. Those that render the phrase “to their number” include the ESV, ISV, MOUNCE, NASB, NIV, RSV, and NRSV. See the key to these abbreviations on p. 167.

⁸⁰ For clarification, see Bruce Metzger (1971), *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York: United Bible Societies), pp. 304-305.

⁸¹ For more discussion of the four points addressed by Isaiah, see Dave Miller (2022), *The Name “Christian” & Bible Inspiration* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press), pp. 37-40.

⁸² Acts 1:9; 5:31; Matthew 16:19; Acts 2:33; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22.

⁸³ The church is referred to in the New Testament with feminine pronouns. E.g., Matthew 16:18 (αὐτῆς); Ephesians 5:25 (αὐτῆς); Ephesians 5:26 (αὐτῇ).

⁸⁴ ASV, BRG, DARBY, DLNT, DRA, JUB, KJV, MEV, NASB, NKJV, WEB, WYC, YLT. See the English Translation Abbreviations listing on p. 167.

⁸⁵ CSB, NCB, NIV, NRSV. See the English Translation Abbreviations listing on p. 167.

⁸⁶ EXB, NCV. See the English Translation Abbreviations listing on p. 167.

⁸⁷ ERV, ESV, RSV, WE. See the English Translation Abbreviations listing on p. 167.

⁸⁸ NMB, RGT. See the English Translation Abbreviations listing on p. 167.

⁸⁹ Danker, p. 752

⁹⁰ Perschbacher, p. 303.

⁹¹ For a discussion of Titus 3:5, see Dave Miller (2019), *Baptism & the Greek Made Simple* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press), pp. 83ff.

⁹² Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8,25; 9:15; 1 Corinthians 4:9; Ephesians 2:20; 3:5; 2 Peter 3:2; et al. Cf. Dave Miller (1999), “Are There Modern Day Apostles?” in *The Apostles: Their Life, Work, and Influence*, ed. Greg Elliot (Mechanicsville, VA: Cold Harbor Road church of Christ), pp. 185-199.

⁹³ E.g., Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21; et al.

⁹⁴ For more on the critical role of water baptism in gaining en-

trance into the kingdom of Christ, see Miller, *Baptism*....

⁹⁵ The word rendered “shaken” means “not being subject to movement”—like the ship in which Paul was a prisoner that ran aground in a storm. The text says, “The bow stuck and remained **immovable**” (Acts 27:41). Hence, its meaning in reference to the kingdom of Christ means “not subject to alteration of essential nature or being, *unshakable, enduring*,” “firm, stable”—Danker, p. 141; Perschbacher, p. 55.

⁹⁶ A few English translations render the underlying word in 1:6 and 5:10 as “kings” rather than “kingdom.” This rendering is unwarranted. The usual word for “king” is *basileus* (e.g., Matthew 2:1,3; Luke 1:5; John 19:3; Acts 25:26; 2 Corinthians 11:32; Hebrews 7:1ff.; et al.). The underlying term in Revelation 1:6 and 5:10 is *basileian*, the usual word for “kingdom,” “dominion,” “realm of reign.” See, for example, Luke 1:33; 22:29 (“I bestow upon you a kingdom”); 23:42; Hebrews 1:8—which is a quotation of Psalm 45:6, both referring to Christ’s kingdom; Hebrews 11:33; et al. Surely, to depict Christians as kings would divert attention away from the “King of kings” Who is Jesus, the ultimate King (1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 17:14; 19:16). Revelation 1:6 and 5:10 are likely intended to reflect Exodus 19:6 where we are informed that, having exited Egypt, the Israelites set up camp in the desert at the base of Mt. Sinai and God instructed Moses to inform the nation: “[Y]ou shall be to Me **a kingdom of priests** and a holy nation.” Cf. 1 Peter 2:9. Revelation 1:6 and 5:10 refer to Christians **collectively** as a “kingdom,” i.e., they are the realm over which King Jesus reigns as a group. Certainly, His reign and influence extend to the individual hearts of Christians, but the Bible teaches that He also functions as King over His kingdom which consists of those who have been added to that kingdom when they met the entrance requirements. They, therefore, became citizens of Christ’s kingdom when they obeyed the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:8; Romans 6:17). The “church of Christ,” “kingdom of Christ,” “kingdom of God,” and “kingdom of heaven” are generally parallel expressions that refer to those who have been “called out” (*ek-klesia*/church) of the world (Satan’s kingdom—Matthew 12:26; Luke 11:18; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Ephesians 2:2; Revelation 2:13) and transferred into Christ’s kingdom (Colossians 1:13). They are, therefore, citizens of that kingdom. They have bowed in submission to the King and constitute the collective domain of His rule. For verification of these linguistic observations, see Gottlob Schrenk (1965), ἱερεὺς, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 3:264; Karl Schmidt (1964), βασιλεία in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard

Kittel (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 1:579; Arndt & Gingrich, pp. 134-135 ("he made us a kingdom"), and the slight variation in Danker, pp. 168-170; also Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 6:287; Perschbacher, p. 68—"a kingdom, realm, the region or country governed by a king"; F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and Robert Funk (1961), *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), p. 90.

⁹⁷ R.C.H. Lenski (1963), *The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg), p. 354.

⁹⁸ Frank Chesser (2010), *Voyage of Faith* (Huntsville, AL: Publishing Designs), p. 13.

⁹⁹ The word "overcome" is a key term in the Revelation, used 17 times: 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21 (2 times); 5:5; 6:2 (2 times); 11:7; 12:11; 13:7; 15:2; 17:14; 21:7. It refers to the idea of overcoming Satan, sin, and persecution to remain faithful to Christ.

¹⁰⁰ Where *egeneto* is also used. Bengel points out that the particle *arti* used in 12:10 "teaches most evidently, that this twelfth chapter, from its very beginning, refers to the trumpet of the seventh angel; for the voice which was heard immediately under the sound of that trumpet, ch. xi.15, respecting the kingdom, is here repeated with a remarkable increase of meaning by the figure, Epitasis"—John Bengel (1858), *Gnomon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), 5:262.

¹⁰¹ While the expression "kingdom of heaven" can refer to heaven (e.g., Matthew 25:34; 2 Timothy 4:18), many times it is used synonymously with "kingdom of God" (Mark 9:1; Luke 7:28; 9:27; 22:16,18; John 3:3,5), "kingdom of Christ and God" (Ephesians 5:5), and "kingdom of the Son of His love" (Colossians 1:13)—all referring to the Church on Earth. Whether they are on Earth or eventually in heaven, the saved still constitute the kingdom. When Jesus hands the kingdom over to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24), the same entity—the Church/kingdom on Earth—will simply be relocated to her divinely-intended final destiny, i.e., heaven itself, while remaining the kingdom the entire time. Cf. 2 Timothy 4:1.

¹⁰² See the verses cited in Endnote 82.

¹⁰³ Also study Ezekiel 37:15-24 and see Jesus' application to Himself in the first century (John 10:11,16).

¹⁰⁴ Acts 2:38,47; 8:12-13,36-38; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:30-34; 18:8; 19:5; 22:16.

¹⁰⁵ Compare the use of "now" in Romans to refer to the Christian age which began at Pentecost: 3:26; 5:9,11; 8:1,18; 11:5;

13:11; 16:26.

¹⁰⁶ For a discussion of the Bible's depiction of hell, see Dave Miller (2002), "Who Believes in Hell Anymore?" Apologetics Press, <https://apologeticspress.org/who-believes-in-hell-anymore-1204/>. See also Dave Miller (2002), "One Second After Death," <http://apologeticspress.org/one-second-after-death-1188/>.

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, George Knight (1993), *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press); Charles Taze Russell (1889), *The Time is At Hand* in Studies in the Scriptures (Allegheny, PA: Tower Publishing), 2:98-99; George Chryssides (2010), "How Prophecy Succeeds: The Jehovah's Witnesses and Prophetic Expectations," *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*, 1[1]:27-48; Mathew Schmalz (1994), "When Festinger Fails: Prophecy and the Watchtower," *Religion*, 24[4]:293-308, October; Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society (1969), *The Approaching Peace of a Thousand Years*, pp. 25-26.

¹⁰⁸ H.A. Ironside (1946), *The Mysteries of God* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers), p. 54; W.E. Blackstone (1908), *Jesus is Coming* (New York: Fleming H. Revell), pp. 87ff.; William Hendrickson (1945), *And So All Israel Shall Be Saved* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 7.

¹⁰⁹ For more on the eternality of the church and its central role in God's grand scheme of redemption, see Ed Wharton (1982), *Christ and the Church* (West Monroe, LA: Howard Publishing); James Bales (1957), *The Kingdom: Prophesied and Established* (Austin, TX: Firm Foundation Publishing); F.W. Mattox (1961), *The Eternal Kingdom* (Delight, AR: Gospel Light Publishing); Dave Miller (2007), *What the Bible Says About the Church of Christ* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press), <https://apologeticspress.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/wtbsatcoc.pdf>.

¹¹⁰ Dave Miller (2002), "Is Denominationalism Scriptural?" <https://apologeticspress.org/is-denominationalism-scriptural-1199/>.

¹¹¹ Additional works consulted in the preparation of this section include J.D. Bales (1972), *Prophecy and Premillennialism* (Searcy, AR: James Bales); William Barclay (1960), *The Revelation of John* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster); Homer Hailey (1979), *Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker); E.R. Harper (no date), *Prophecy Foretold Prophecy Fulfilled* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate); Wayne Jackson (no date), *Premillennialism: A System of Infidelity* (Stockton, CA: Christian Courier); Rex Turner (1979), *The Premillennialists' Abuse of the Prophecies of Daniel* (Memphis, TN: Getwell church of Christ); Wendell

Winkler, ed. (1978), *"Premillennialism, True or False?"* The First Annual Fort Worth Lectures (Fort Worth, TX: Winkler Publications).

¹¹² "It is God's will that glory to himself shall be in the church and in Christ Jesus; and men who do not consent to this are not in harmony with God's will. There are not two places in which to glorify God. 'In the church' and 'in Christ Jesus' designate the same theater of operations. Those 'in Christ' are also in the church; and those not 'in the church' are not 'in Christ'" —Burton Coffman (1977), *Commentary on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians* (Austin, TX: Firm Foundation), p. 194; "The church, being the creation of God's love in Christ and the receptacle of his communicative fullness, is the instrumentality formed for his praise" —David Lipscomb (1960), *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate), 4:68.

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ENGLISH TRANSLATION ABBREVIATIONS

ASV—American Standard Version
BRG—Blue Red and Gold Letter Bible
CSB—Christian Standard Bible
ESV—English Standard Version
CJB—Complete Jewish Bible
CSB—Christian Standard Bible
DARBY—Darby Translation
DLNT—Disciples’ Literal New Testament
DRA—Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition
ERV—Easy-to-Read Version
ESV—English Standard Version
EXB—Expanded Bible
GNV—1599 Geneva Bible
HCSB—Holman Christian Standard Bible
ISV—International Standard Version
JUB—Jubilee Bible 2000
KJV—King James Version
LEB—Lexham English Bible
MEV—Modern English Version
MOUNCE—The Mounce Reverse Interlinear New Testament
NABRE—New American Bible (Revised Edition)
NASB—New American Standard Bible
NRSVUE—New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition
NCB—New Catholic Bible
NCV—New Century Version
NIV—New International Version
NKJV—New King James Version
NMB—New Matthew Bible
NRSV—New Revised Standard Version
OJB—Orthodox Jewish Bible
PHILLIPS—J.B. Phillips New Testament
RGT—Revised Geneva Translation
RSV—Revised Standard Version
WE—Worldwide English (New Testament)
WEB—World English Bible
WYC—Wycliffe Bible
YLT—Young’s Literal Translation

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INTRODUCTION

1. The end of time (p. 1)
2. *Late Great Planet Earth*; Left Behind (pp. 2-3)
3. The view that Jesus will return **after** the world is Christianized following a long period of peace and righteousness (p. 2)
4. The view that the Bible predicts no worldwide period of peace and righteousness, with good and evil continuing until the end (p. 2)
5. The view that Jesus will return **before** a 1,000-year period of peace and righteousness and reign as king on Earth (p. 2)
6. Scofield Reference Bible (p. 2)
7. Rapture, Tribulation, Antichrist, Armageddon, Millennium (pp. 2-3)

CHAPTER 1 WILL THERE BE A RAPTURE?

1. "To seize, snatch out, take away" (p. 7)
2. The idea that Christ will come suddenly and secretly in the air to snatch away from the Earth the living saints and the resurrected bodies of those saints who have died (p. 7)
3. Just prior to the seven-year "Tribulation" period (p. 7)
4. "Translation"; Colossians 1:13; When an unbeliever obeys the Gospel, receives forgiveness of sins, and is added to the Church of Christ, he is taken out of the world and transferred to Christ's kingdom. (pp. 7-8)

New Testament Terms for Christ's Return

5. *parousia*—"coming, presence, advent"; *epiphaneia*—"appearing, manifestation, brightness"; *apokalupsis*—"revelation" (p. 8)
 6. "Coming" (*parousia*) refers to the "Rapture" which occurs seven years before the "Appearing" (*epiphaneia*) or "Revelation" (*apokalupsis*). (p. 8)
 7. At the "Rapture" Jesus will come **for** the Church only, while at the "Revelation" Jesus will return **with** the Church. (p. 8)
 8. 1 Thessalonians 4:17 (p. 8)
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1 Thessalonians 4:17

9. (1) It was designed to reassure Christians that their deceased loved ones would be able to share in the Lord's return and (2) it informed Christians that those who are still living when Christ returns will have no precedence or advantage over those who have already died. (pp. 8-9)
10. They say "coming" (*parousia*) in 1 Thessalonians 4:15 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1 refers to the "Rapture." Yet the **same word** is used in 1 Thessalonians 3:13 to speak of Jesus coming "**with**" His saints and therefore coincides with the dispensational concept of the "Appearing"/"Revelation" seven years **after** the "Rapture." (p. 9)
11. They apply 2 Thessalonians 2:8 to the "Antichrist" and so must understand the "coming" of this verse as a reference to the "Appearing" (*epiphaneia*). Yet the verse uses the expression "the brightness (*epiphaneia*) of His coming (*parousia*)"—referring to the **same** event. (p. 9)
12. "Revelation" (*apokalupsis*) in 1 Corinthians 1:7 is descriptive of what the dispensationalists call the "Rapture" since Christians await it. But in 2 Thessalonians 1:7, the **same** word clearly refers to the "Appearing" (*epiphaneia*). (p. 11)
13. The term "appearing" (*epiphaneia*) is used in 1 Timothy 6:14 as the event that terminates Christian activity on Earth and thus fits the "Rapture" concept. But in 2 Timothy 4:1, the reference to judgment fits the "Appearing." Observe that dispensationalists would have Paul translated into heaven at the "Rapture" seven years **before** he receives his crown of righteousness—which he says in 2 Timothy 4:8 he will receive at Jesus' "appearing" (*epiphaneia*). (pp. 11-12)
14. Titus 2:13; 1 Peter 1:13; 4:13 (pp. 12-13)

Summary

15. They are used synonymously and interchangeably. (p. 13)

The "End" & "Last Day"

16. "End"; "completion, consummation, close, the full end"; six times (p. 14)
17. That the Church will remain on Earth preaching the Gospel until the day of Judgment (p. 14)
18. Grow together until the very end (p. 15)

19. That the wicked will be taken out from among the righteous; Matthew 13 (p. 15)
20. That believers will be raised "at the last day"; John 6:39,40,44,54 (p. 15)

"Secretive"?

21. "blazing fire" (2 Thessalonians 1:7); "trumpet" (1 Corinthians 15:52); "shout," "voice of the archangel" (1 Thessalonians 4:16); "every eye will see Him" (Revelation 1:7) (p. 15)

CHAPTER 2

WILL THERE BE A TRIBULATION?

1. He will take them directly to heaven where they will experience judgment and receive their reward; Revelation 4 and 5 (p. 21)
2. A seven-year "Tribulation" will rage on Earth; Revelation 4-19 (p. 21)

Matthew 24

3. "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be torn down." Matthew 24:2 (pp. 21-22)
4. (1) "When will these things (that is, the Temple disruption) be? and (2) "What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" Matthew 24:3 (p. 22)
5. That they are completely separate events (p. 22)

Signs Heralding the Destruction of Jerusalem

6. (1) False messiahs/christs: Josephus reported many; Gamaliel alluded to some (Acts 5:34-37); Paul warned of false apostles of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:13). (2) Wars/rumors of wars: Roman wars and rebellion by conquered countries; Josephus verified the same. (3) Famine, pestilence, earthquakes: Acts 11:28; several in Nero's reign. (4) Apostles persecuted/killed: Peter, James (Acts 12:2) and James the Less killed; apostasy became prevalent. (5) Gospel

preached to whole world: Romans 1:8, Colossians 1:6,23.
(pp. 22-25).

7. The end of the Temple (p. 23)
8. As the direct fulfillment of His statements (p. 23)
9. They have been fairly constant for the last 2,000 years (p. 24).
10. Each time an earthquake occurred, the disciples would have been instantly reminded of Jesus' prediction and its impending fulfillment (p. 24).

The Fulfillment of the Signs Brought the End

11. The end of Jerusalem, the Temple, formal Judaism, and the Old Testament economy (p. 25)
12. The Roman army; Daniel 9:27; Luke 21:20 (p. 25)
13. Flee to the mountains. (p. 27)
14. Jewish Christians took the invasion of the Roman armies as the appointed sign which Jesus had given and escaped to Pella. (p. 27)
15. It would have been superfluous for Jesus to tell them to flee the city. (p. 27)
16. (1) pregnancy/nursing children; (2) winter; (3) Sabbath (p. 27)
17. That He had in mind a time near His own day (p. 29)
18. Because when Jesus comes at the end everyone will know it (p. 30)
19. Roman power (p. 31)
20. The horrible events that occurred during the siege of Jerusalem (p. 31)
21. 1.1 million (p. 31)
22. Isaiah 13; The military onslaught of the Medes in the 6th century B.C. against the Babylonians (p. 32)
23. Instill an impression of great calamity; literally (pp. 32-33)
24. That Christ had come in judgment on Israel (p. 33)
25. He was the One responsible for the misery that would enshroud the nation. (p. 33)
26. Caiaphas; Matthew 26:64 (p. 33)
27. God's execution of wrath in history (p. 33)
28. Egypt; Isaiah 19:1 (p. 33)
29. "Messenger" (p. 34)
30. Emissaries of the Gospel; by means of the preached Word (p. 34)
31. The year of Jubilee; Leviticus 25 (p. 34)
32. As signs that summer is near (p. 34)
33. The time when Jerusalem was to be destroyed (p. 34)

34. Act upon their providentially prearranged escape plan and receive deliverance from the Romans and potential future persecutions of Jewish authority; Luke 21:28 (p. 34)
35. The generation to whom He was addressing Himself (p. 35)
36. "Race"; The Jewish race would not pass out of existence before all these things happened to them. (p. 35)
37. Jesus is put in the position of telling the Jews what would happen to their race, and then saying that their race would not pass away until everything that was going to happen to their race happened. (p. 35)
38. 13; those who are living at a particular point in time (p. 35)

Transition: No Signs Heralding the Second Coming

39. As a transition verse, placing closure on Jesus' answer to the disciples' **first** question (p. 36)
40. Turns His attention to dealing with the disciples' **second** question (p. 36)
41. The day heaven and earth will pass away, the world will end, and Christ will come again (p. 36)
42. The total absence of signs (p. 36)
43. It will be totally unexpected. (p. 36)
44. The exploits of a thief (p. 36)
45. Paul & Peter; 1 Thessalonians 5:2 and 2 Peter 3:10 (pp. 36,38)
46. Absolutely no signs (p. 38)
47. Matthew 24:36-51 and the entirety of chapter 25 (p. 38)
48. The time of the destruction of Jerusalem (p. 38)
49. Unpredictable and totally unexpected, unaccompanied by signs to warn of its approach (p. 38)

Summary

50. They have failed miserably. (p. 38)
51. They refused to listen and amend their ways. (p. 39)
52. The Gospel of Jesus Christ that instructs every accountable individual what to do to be right with God (p. 39)
53. "Signs" by which to anticipate the return of Christ (p. 39)
54. Christian Jews (p. 39)
55. For achieving spiritual salvation (p. 39)
56. (1) to provide instructions to Christians so they can avoid **physical** harm from persecutors and (2) to provide **spiritual** salvation for non-Christians—which can only be attained via obedience to the message of the Gospel (p. 39)
57. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70 (p. 40)

CHAPTER 3

WILL THERE BE AN ANTICHRIST?

1. 5 times; John's (p. 47)
2. Revelation, 2 Thessalonians, and Daniel (p. 47)
3. More than one individual; he was **then** living (p. 47)
4. The article before and capitalization of "antichrist" (p. 48)
5. That a distinction is to be made between multiple antichrists and an alleged singular "Antichrist" that stands out from all the rest (p. 48)
6. Anyone who denies the Father and the Son (p. 48)
7. The deceiver and the antichrist (p. 48)

Daniel 9

8. The "70 weeks" prophecy; Daniel 9:24-27 (p. 49)

Verse 24

9. Christ's sacrifice on the cross; Romans 5:11; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Hebrews 9:26; John 17:4; 19:30 (p. 50)
10. The termination of Old Testament prophecy and its fulfillment in Christ's appearance in human history; Acts 3:24; Hebrews 1:1-2 (p. 51)
11. The public ministry and subsequent official crowning of Jesus as He took His place upon His throne to rule in His kingdom; Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18-21; Acts 2:33 (p. 51)
12. By including all of these factors in the 70 weeks (p. 51)

Verse 25

13. 7 weeks, 62 weeks, and 1 week (p. 51)
 14. The first two sections, that is, during 69 of the 70 weeks (p. 51)
 15. A decree would go forth calling for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the reconstruction of the Temple that had been destroyed by the Babylonians (p. 51)
 16. The appearance of the Messiah (p. 52)
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Verse 26

17. The final or 70th week (p. 52)
18. (1) The Messiah would be “cut off.” (2) A “prince” and his people would come and destroy the city and the sanctuary. The first refers to Jesus’ death upon the cross; the second refers to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple edifice in A.D. 70. (p. 52)

Verse 27

19. The new covenant; Hebrews 8:8; Acts 3:25 (p. 52)
20. The crucifixion; Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 9:15-29 (p. 52)
21. The validity of Old Testament sacrifices; Colossians 2:14; Luke 23:45; Hebrews 10:18-20 (p. 53)
22. The ruthless invasion of Jerusalem (p. 53)
23. To show God’s final and complete decree concerning the Israelite commonwealth—nearly 2,000 years ago (p. 53)

Revelation 13

24. The **then** monstrous emperor of Rome; He was responsible for unleashing horrible atrocities upon Christians of Asia Minor, in the latter years of the first century A.D. (pp. 53-54)
25. 666; that which is sinister, ominous, evil, doomed, and defeated (p. 54 and Endnote 49)
26. The official governmental organizations known as the Roman Concilia that enforced emperor worship (p. 54)
27. It is unscriptural and unbiblical to identify the sea beast in Revelation 13 with some revived, future Roman dictator known as the “Antichrist” who is yet to make an appearance in world history. (p. 54)

2 Thessalonians 2

28. Paul explicitly stated that he was referring to a person who would be the product of the circumstances of **his own day**; “already at work” (p. 55)

Verses 3-4

29. The Jewish rejection of Christianity (p. 56)

30. The Jews; John 8:37-44; Acts 7:51-53; 13:45-50; Romans 10:20-21; 11:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16 (p. 56)
31. The destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (p. 56)
32. 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16 (p. 56)
33. The pouring out of God's wrath (p. 56)
34. The personification of Roman imperialism (p. 56)
35. "Abomination of desolation" (p. 56)
36. The Roman general who introduced his idolatrous insignia into the Holy of Holies in A.D. 70 (p. 56)

Verses 6-7

37. The presence of the Jewish state (p. 57)
38. As another sect of the Jews (p. 57)
39. Temporarily shielded from the fury of the persecuting forces of Rome (p. 57)
40. (1) Christianity developed and spread and (2) gave the Jews ample opportunity to receive the Gospel and be incorporated into the Church. (p. 57)
41. The Jews (p. 57)
42. He gave them time to be exposed to the Gospel; Romans 1:16 (p. 57)
43. He poured out His wrath on Jerusalem. (p. 57)
44. As a religion distinct from Judaism (p. 57)

Verses 8-10

45. It gradually grew greater. (p. 58)
46. He would come in judgment on the Roman power; Isaiah 19:1; Micah 1:3 (p. 58)
47. The Concilia's use of tricks and illusions to deceive people into worshipping the emperor; Revelation 13:13-15 (p. 58)

CHAPTER 4 WILL THERE BE AN ARMAGEDDON?

1. One time; Revelation 16:16 (p. 65)
 2. With figurative connotations (p. 65)
 3. Judges 5:19; 7; 2 Kings 9:27; 23:29; 2 Chronicles 35:22 (pp. 65-66)
 4. Alamo, Gettysburg, Pearl Harbor, Imo Jima, Twin Towers (p. 66)
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5. The sure outcome of the conflict then being waged between the forces of evil and the forces of righteousness (p. 66)
6. Indication that some future global holocaust would occur which Christ would bring to an end 2,000+ years removed from their suffering (p. 66)
7. The enemies of God and His people would be punished and go down in defeat, while suffering saints would soon be comforted. (p. 67)

CHAPTER 5

WILL THERE BE AN MILLENNIUM?

Seven Contextual Factors

1. Must Happen Very Soon

1. "Shortly take place"; 1:1; 22:6 (p. 69)
2. (1) speed, quickness, swiftness, haste; (2) soon, in a short time (pp. 69-70)
3. They envision a brief period of time. (p. 70)
4. A brief length of time is intended with the designated action occurring in the near future; Luke 18:8; Acts 12:7; 22:18; 25:4; Romans 16:20; 1 Timothy 3:14 (pp. 71-73)
5. Fuse together (p. 73)
6. An interval of hundreds or thousands of years (p. 73)
7. It would have been understood to be brief. (p. 76)
8. The oppressed, persecuted Christians were being exterminated and they felt the cause of Christ was being trampled underfoot. (p. 76)
9. That relief would soon arrive (p. 77)

2. The Time Is Near

10. "being close in point of time," "close at hand," "things imminent and soon to come to pass"; 1:3; 22:10 (p. 77)
 11. That the book was written to an original, immediate audience (p. 77)
 12. The seven churches of Christ in Asia Minor; 1:4,11 (p. 77)
 13. A relevant message for a first-century audience (pp. 77-78)
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3. Tribulation and Kingdom Already Present

- 14. Tribulation and the kingdom; Revelation 1:9 (p. 78)
- 15. It was “at hand”; Matthew 3:2; 4:17 (p. 78)

4. Do Not Seal the Book!

- 16. Not to seal it; Revelation 22:10 (p. 80)
- 17. Shut up the words and seal the book; Daniel 12:4 (p. 80)
- 18. Because the fulfillment of the prophecies that had been revealed to him was hundreds of years into the future—far from his own day (p. 80)
- 19. The time of fulfillment was at hand. (p. 80)

5. Quickly

- 20. “Quickly”; “without delay, quickly, at once” (p. 81)
- 21. To insulate the meaning and application of the message of the Revelation from the misapplication which characterizes the premillennialist (p. 81)
- 22. (1) “shortly take place” (vs. 6), (2) “quickly” (vs. 7), (3) “the time is at hand” (vs. 10), and (4) He repeats “quickly” two more times (vss. 12,20) (pp. 81-82)

6. Must Happen Soon

- 23. That the things revealed must come to pass shortly (p. 82)
- 24. The very comfort and reassurance they so desperately needed, deserved—and received (p. 82)

7. Signified

- 25. “To show by signs”; Revelation 1:1 (p. 82)
- 26. Through signs or symbols (p. 83)
- 27. It places a literal interpretation on the numbers, animals, objects, colors, and locations. (p. 83)
- 28. A book of signs, filled with figurative language and exaggeration, and not intended to be taken literally (p. 83)

Immediate Context

- 29. Revelation 20:4,6 (p. 83)
 - 30. Victory over Satan vs. the thousand-year reign of Christ (p. 83)
 - 31. Deceiving the nations into worshipping the emperor (p. 84)
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32. A high multiple of 10, representing ultimate **completeness** = Satan would be completely restrained from deceiving the nations into worshipping the emperor. (p. 84)
33. Lesson their suffering, giving them renewed hope and courage (p. 84)
34. The martyrs of the Domitianic persecution (p. 84)
35. They refused to worship Caesar or to manifest those marks that would identify them as having done so. (p. 84)
36. The Church of Christ (p. 85)

CHAPTER 6

IS THE KINGDOM YET TO BE ESTABLISHED?

The Kingdom Exists Now

1. That the kingdom exists now and has existed since A.D. 30 (p. 91)
2. Some of the disciples who were present with Him. (p. 91)

Isaiah 2

3. "Lord's house," "kingdom," "church," "house of God" (p. 93)
4. That the Church and kingdom are one and the same institution and came into visible existence on the day of Pentecost (p. 94)

Isaiah 9

5. Jesus (p. 94)
6. Establishing His kingdom and reigning on the throne of that kingdom (p. 94)
7. At His ascension (p. 94 and see verses in Endnote 82)
8. "He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne" (vs. 30); "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God" (vs. 33); "Sit at My right hand" (vs. 34) (pp. 94-95)

Daniel 2

9. Nebuchadnezzar (p. 95)
 10. In the days of the Roman kings (p. 95)
 11. The Church of Christ (p. 95)
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Daniel 7

12. The Ancient of Days (p. 96)
13. A kingdom (p. 96)
14. At Jesus' ascension (p. 96)

Matthew 6:33

15. Preparatory kingdom instruction (p. 96)
16. The Lord's Church (p. 97)
17. Proper conduct in the kingdom which is the Church (p. 97)

Matthew 19:28

18. Baptism (p. 98)
19. The Christian Era (p. 98)
20. The Gospel (p. 99)
21. He is seated on His throne in heaven; Acts 2:33-35; 1 Corinthians 15:24-25 (p. 99)
22. The apostles are seated on thrones judging Israel. (p. 99)
23. The means by which Jesus could establish and nurture His Church; 2 Corinthians 5:19-20 (p. 99)
24. God (p. 99)
25. As the designated emissaries through whom Jesus enacted the "new covenant" (p. 100)
26. A vivid, figurative way to refer to the vital role played by the apostles in launching the kingdom and announcing spirit-inspired decisions (p. 100)
27. It was "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone"; Ephesians 2:20 (p. 100)
28. Through their preaching and teaching (p. 100)
29. Via their inspired writings (p. 100)
30. John 12:47-48 (p. 100)
31. The Church—the Israel of God; Galatians 6:16 (p. 101)

Luke 7:27-28

32. That the kingdom was on the verge of being established (p. 101)
 33. The kingdom (p. 101)
 34. Heaven or an alleged millennial kingdom on Earth (p. 102)
 35. The imminent establishment of the Church of Christ (p. 102)
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John 3:5

- 36. (1) It was imminent and (2) He was imparting instructions that would come into effect soon after His departure from the Earth. (p. 102)
- 37. Water immersion (p. 102)
- 38. The body; 1 Corinthians 12:13 (p. 103)
- 39. The Church; Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18 (p. 103)
- 40. They are the same procedure. (p. 103)
- 41. They are one and the same. (p. 103)

Colossians 1:13

- 42. The kingdom of Christ; Colossians 1:13 (p. 105)
- 43. Two separate and distinct institutions (p. 105)
- 44. They are one and the same. (p. 105)
- 45. The kingdom had to have been established. (p. 105)

Hebrews 12:28

- 46. Mt. Zion, city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem, church of the firstborn, kingdom (p. 106)
- 47. The Church which Jesus built on Pentecost; Hebrews 12:28 (pp. 106-107)

Revelation 1:6 & 5:10

- 48. The A.D. 90s (p. 107)
- 49. A kingdom; Revelation 1:6; 5:10 (p. 107)
- 50. Heaven; 2 Timothy 4:18, 2 Peter 1:11 (p. 107)
- 51. Christians who have been inducted into His kingdom (p. 108)

Revelation 11:5

- 52. (1) The premiere position that God intended the Church of Christ to occupy and (2) the international implications of God's plan (p. 108)
 - 53. Countries, nationalities, ethnicities, languages, and cultures (pp. 108-109)
 - 54. The Church of Christ would be established during the days of the Roman kings. (p. 109)
 - 55. People from all countries, nations, cultures, ethnicities, and languages (p. 109)
 - 56. By obeying the Gospel (p. 110)
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- 57. Daniel 2:44 (p. 110)
- 58. All peoples, nations, and languages; Daniel 7:14 (p. 110)
- 59. People out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation; Revelation 5:9 (pp. 110-111)
- 60. (1) to atone for sin and (2) to establish His kingdom on Earth to spread the Gospel (p. 111)

Summary

- 61. The fact that God was even then achieving His eternal purpose that His kingdom on Earth—the Church—would permeate, infiltrate, and extract from all the human kingdoms of the Earth those who were receptive to Christ’s invitation (p. 111)

Revelation 12:10

- 62. Satan (p. 112)
 - 63. Old Testament Israel (p. 112)
 - 64. Jesus; Psalm 2 (p. 112)
 - 65. Jesus’ ascension and the immediate positioning of Himself on His throne to rule and reign over His kingdom, the Church (p. 112)
 - 66. His goal to thwart God’s salvific intentions; (1) the attempt to kill Jesus as a baby (Matthew 2:16); (2) the attempt to subvert Jesus at the temptation (Matthew 4:6); when Jesus was nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14-15) (p. 113)
 - 67. Genesis 3:15 (p. 113)
 - 68. (1) A literal, physical battle occurred in heaven between Satan and Michael, or (2) the figurative imagery is intended to create an effect that presses the intended point. (p. 114)
 - 69. The overall nature of apocalyptic imagery (p. 114)
 - 70. A physical war with physical weaponry (p. 114)
 - 71. God is infinite in all His attributes while Satan is not. (p. 114)
 - 72. Engage in any sort of physical conflict (p. 114)
 - 73. To tempt and lure humans away from the truth (p. 114)
 - 74. Anything that God has not given him permission to do; Job 1:12; 2:6 (p. 114)
 - 75. A recapitulation of the first six verses (p. 115)
 - 76. A picture of the devil’s efforts to destroy Christ, His ministry, and His people (p. 115)
 - 77. The **effect** of Jesus’ birth, ministry, atonement, and ascension (p. 115)
 - 78. Defeat and failure (p. 115)
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79. From providing redemption for humanity (p. 115)
80. Because verse 10 states explicitly what occurred as **a direct result** of this war in heaven (p. 115)
81. (1) salvation, (2) strength, (3) the kingdom, and (4) Christ's power (p. 116) See also Figure 16 on p. 117.
82. That God worked out His redemptive will through 4,000 years of human history to achieve atonement for all people who desire to access that means of forgiveness (p. 118)
83. He made it possible for all who have succumbed to sin to receive forgiveness, rendering Satan's power to inflict spiritual death reversible and thus ultimately impotent. (p. 118)
84. Try to subvert as many people on Earth as he possibly can (p. 118)
85. The arrival of the kingdom of Christ on Earth in the **first** century (p. 119)
86. Romans 11:33 (p. 119)
87. That the kingdom of God is **already** present on Earth which is the Church of Christ over which Jesus **now** reigns (pp. 119-120)

Kingdom = Israel = Church

88. "kingdom," "Israel," and "church" (p. 120)
89. "church" and "kingdom" (pp. 120-121)
90. (1) They announced the arrival of Christ's kingdom on Earth, (2) inaugurated the conditions of the New Covenant, and (3) went about setting into place the superstructure of Christ's Church. (p. 121)
91. Only Christians; Galatians 3:29 (p. 122)

Jesus Is Reigning Now

92. Now; in heaven; since A.D. 30 (p. 122)
93. Heaven; angels, authorities, and powers; 1 Peter 3:22 (p. 122)
94. Rule over His kingdom (p. 122)
95. Exalted to the right hand of God; Acts 2:33 (p. 123)
96. That He is reigning and ruling now over His kingdom (p. 123)

Jesus Completed His Work

97. Return to the Earth; He has completed His work on Earth. (p. 123)
98. The work which God had given Him to do; John 17:4 (p. 124)
99. Take Him by force to make Him king; John 6:15 (p. 124)

100. When they tried to make Him king (p. 124)
101. “My kingdom is not of this world”; John 18:36 (p. 124)

CHAPTER 7

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE PROMISES TO ISRAEL?

1. That they are yet to be fulfilled. (p. 133)
2. It enjoins no such favored status. (p. 133)
3. They were fulfilled long ago. (p. 133)

Land Promise Already Fulfilled & Conditional

4. When Israel took possession of Palestine in the 15th century B.C.; Joshua 21:43-45; 2 Chronicles 9:26 (pp. 133-134)
5. God’s promise was **conditional**—contingent on their continued obedience; Leviticus 18:24-28; Joshua 23:14-16; 1 Kings 9:6-7 (pp. 134-135)
6. A.D. 70; Matthew 23:37-38 (p. 135)

National Promise Already Fulfilled

7. In the returning remnant after the Babylonian captivity (p. 135)
8. Nothing (p. 136)

Spiritual Fulfillment

9. Predictions of the coming Christ to the Earth to bring ultimate redemption (p. 136)
 10. They were **spiritually** fulfilled in the Church of Christ wherein both Jews and Gentiles are one in Christ. (p. 136)
 11. That it is yet future (p. 136)
 12. The Temple will be rebuilt on the Temple platform in Jerusalem (pp. 136-137)
 13. He will incorporate the Gentiles, in addition to the nation of Israel, into His kingdom (p. 137)
 14. 2 Samuel 7:12-16 and Acts 15:13-15 (pp. 137-138)
 15. A kingly lineage—not a physical temple building (p. 138)
 16. (1) Jesus rebuilt the tabernacle of David when He established His Church in Acts 2 composed entirely of Jews; (2) The
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- “rest/remnant of mankind” were incorporated into Christ’s kingdom when the first Gentiles were converted in Acts 10. (p. 138)
17. They were/are integral to God’s eternal intention. (p. 139)
 18. In the momentous advent of the Christian religion on the planet—2,000 years ago (p. 139)
 19. The significance of (1) the Gospel, (2) the Church of Christ, and (3) the Christian religion as the final revelation from God to mankind (p. 139)
 20. Conform themselves to the preconditions that enable Jesus to add them to His kingdom (p. 139)

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION

1. That all promises made to physical Israel have either been fulfilled or forfeited through disobedience (p. 143)
2. On the same basis and on the same grounds—obedience to Christ’s will (p. 143)
3. Divert people’s attention away from their daily responsibility to live obediently and faithfully now (p. 143)

The Bible View

4. See Figure 20 on p. 144.

What Does It Matter?

5. Contradictions and confusion, hampering a broader comprehension of Scripture and God’s redemptive scheme (pp. 145-146)
 6. The overall thrust of Bible history and God’s plan for humanity (p. 146)
 7. The supreme importance of the Church of Christ and her critical role in the propagation of Christianity and the conversion of people throughout the world (p. 146)
 8. An afterthought, a temporary substitute or parenthesis in God’s prophetic program (pp. 146-147)
 9. “Lord’s house,” “the house of God,” “the church,” and “the kingdom” (p. 147)
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10. A degraded status and fails to attribute to the church the central role that God intended her to fill prior to the Second Coming (p. 147)
11. To bring the church into existence to serve the primary purpose of promulgating the Gospel of Christ (pp. 147-148)
12. To anticipation of a physical kingdom on Earth; it disparages the present, inherent marvel of the Church (p. 148)
13. The metaphor of Christ as the Head and the Church as the body; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:18-19; 5:23; Colossians 1:18; 2:19 (p. 148)
14. Severs the body from the Head—relegating the body to a secondary, inferior status (p. 148)
15. (1) The death of Christ on the cross and (2) the establishment of His Church (p. 148)
16. They are biblically coeval and coextensive in their eternal import; Ephesians 3:10-11 (pp. 148-149)
17. (1) The blood of Christ purchased the church (Acts 20:28); (2) Christ is the head of the church; (3) His body is the church (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:24; 1:18); (4) the church is His bride (John 3:29; Revelation 19:7; 21:2,9). (p. 149)

Summary

18. It is seen to be convoluted, concocted, and unfounded. (p. 149)
19. In the church; Ephesians 3:21 (p. 149)