

The Mystery of the Millennium

Weighing the Evidence

Craig R. Cordle

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Published by Craig R. Cordle

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Introduction

I have been a Christian for over forty years and have been blessed to learn and grow in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Over that time, I have been involved in the teaching ministry in the churches I have attended. The subject of end time Bible prophecy has always fascinated me and it has been one of the main areas of my expertise in Bible studies I have taught.

For the past several years, I have been going through a metamorphosis in my understanding of the events surrounding the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. This broadening in my thinking came about when I became more open minded to other viewpoints concerning end time Bible prophecy. These viewpoints are held by respectable Bible scholars who are striving to interpret the scriptures accurately, without favoring any viewpoint. I realized that I had allowed my long-held beliefs to influence how I understood these prophetic passages. When I took another look and disciplined myself to allow the text to form my understanding and not what I have been taught, I began to see a different view of the end time events. This led me to write my previous book, "The Rapture Timing Mystery Weighing the Evidence." As I have continued to re-examine various aspects of Bible prophecy, I came to the topic of the millennium. This is a period many believe will occur after the second coming when Christ will rule on earth for a literal thousand years. I felt the leading of the Lord to share the information I have concerning the subject of the millennium. When you take another look at the scriptures through a different lens (interpretation method), you begin to see things in a new light. It can be a humbling and enlightening experience as you grow in the knowledge of the Word of God.

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I am writing this book to compare the two leading views on the millennium as described in Revelation chapter 20 to determine which view is best supported by weighing the biblical evidence. We will be reviewing the premillennial and amillennial positions regarding the millennium by attempting to answer five questions. Your answers to these questions should greatly impact what view you hold. Many Bible scholars answer these questions differently. We need to respect every person's opinion when they base it on scripture. This book will not attempt to interpret the entire book of Revelation, or analyze all the scriptures that can be considered, but focus on five points that are pivotal in determining what the biblical evidence reveals to be true. This book is intended to trigger your awareness of the different views concerning the millennium and to inspire you to further study.

Your beliefs on this subject does not affect your salvation, but it is important to be firmly grounded in your understanding of end time Bible prophecy. People are very interested in the return of Christ and I believe we need to be equipped to answer peoples' questions to the best of our ability.

The way in which you interpret Revelation chapter 20 will have a great impact on how you view the events preceding the second coming of Jesus Christ. That is why I believe it is important to consider this topic as it relates to Bible eschatology. The term "eschatology" means the doctrine, or teaching of last things. It is the study of what the Bible says is going to happen in the end times. Many churches do not teach it for the fear of offending some, but the book of Revelation promises blessing for those who read it. It says, "Blessed *is* he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time *is* near" (Revelation 1:3).

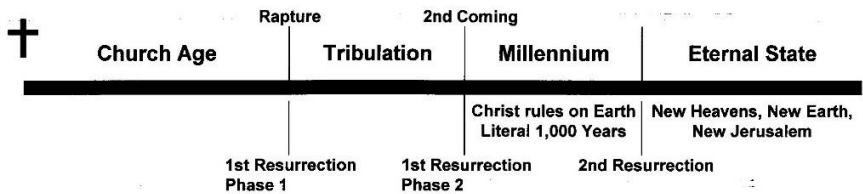
Chapter 1 - Millennium Interpretation Methods

Before we get into a review of beliefs concerning the millennium, we need to define the different views held by Bible scholars. I have included a simple timeline of each of the views to aid in this overview. They say a picture is worth a thousand words and it illustrates the differences between the views.

There are three main views concerning the subject of the millennium. They are premillennialism, amillennialism, and post millennialism. There are two forms of premillennialism; dispensational premillennialism and historical premillennialism. I know these are big terms, but this is how these views are identified. Once you get familiar with these terms, it will make the study of this topic much easier.

I am going to give the timeline for the view and then give a brief explanation of their position concerning the subject of the millennium and related prophetic events.

Dispensational Premillennialism



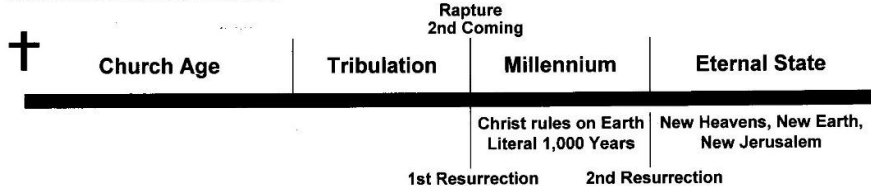
The first millennial interpretation method is “*dispensational premillennialism*.” This is the prevailing view in the church today. This view sees God structuring His relationship with mankind through

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seven stages of revelation (Innocence, Conscience, Human Government, Promise, Law, Grace, and Kingdom/Millennium Age), or dispensations. A dispensation is a period of time in which God deals with His people in a particular way. It takes a literal approach to interpreting prophecies of the end time. When reading apocalyptic books such as Daniel and Revelation, they apply the text literally except for the obvious metaphors that are meant to be understood figuratively. Some examples would be a Lamb appearing as if it had been slain having seven horns and seven eyes (Revelation 5:6), a beast coming out of the sea having seven heads and ten horns (Revelation 13:1) or a woman sitting on a scarlet beast having seven heads and ten horns (Revelation 17:3).

Dispensation premillennialism believes God turned to the gentile church after the Jews rejected Jesus Christ as their Messiah. However, God will again turn back to the Jews who will accept Jesus as their Messiah (Zechariah 12:10) and all Israel will be saved (Romans 11:25-29). Seven years of tribulation, which is the 70th week of Daniel’s prophecy of the seventy weeks, will occur prior to the second coming of Christ. There will be a pretribulation rapture before the tribulation begins in which God’s wrath is poured out during the seven years. At the conclusion of the tribulation Christ returns to literally reign on earth for a thousand years. There are two physical resurrections of the dead, of the just and unjust, separated by a thousand years of time. After the thousand-year millennium, God creates the new heaven and new earth with the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven to the earth where the Lord God and the Lamb will live with God’s people forever.

Historical Premillennialism



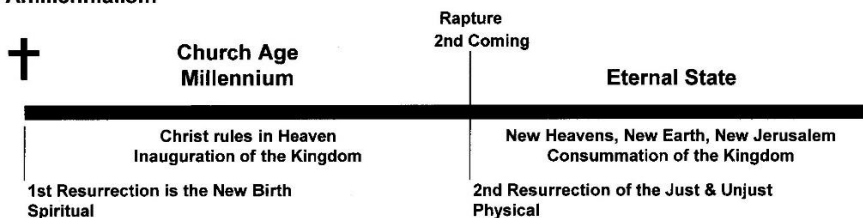
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Another variation of premillennialism is “*historical premillennialism*.” This view is similar to dispensational premillennialism, but without the emphasis on the dispensations of time. Many see God structuring His relationship with man through covenants. The two main covenants being a “covenant of works” and a “covenant of grace.” The main difference with the other premillennial view being their belief in a post tribulation rapture. They also believe in a literal thousand millennial reign of Christ on the earth. This is the view held by many of the early church fathers until Augustine.

Premillennialism sees Revelation chapters 19-20 as revealing a sequence of events. You have Christ’s second coming, a resurrection of the tribulation martyrs who reign with Christ for a thousand years, the binding of Satan for the thousand years who is then released for one final battle, and then the great white throne judgment. A literal approach is taken when interpreting these passages. In these two chapters, the scripture is walking us through the events as they occur in sequence, or order.

It needs to be pointed out that there could be some overlap between the dispensational and historical premillennialism views.

Amillennialism



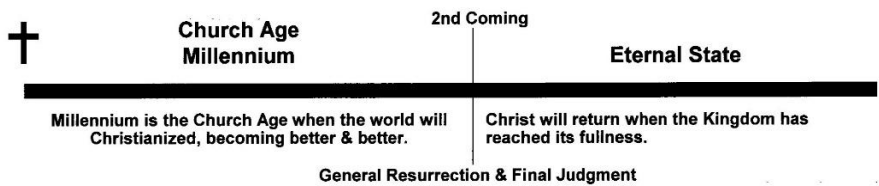
The next view is called “amillennialism.” The name can be misleading, which means no millennium. A better term could be “realized millennium” because they believe that the millennium is taking place now in heaven, beginning with the resurrection of Christ. Jesus is reigning now in heaven with the believers who have died and

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are in the intermediate state (having only a spiritual body until they receive their glorified body at the resurrection). Augustine and the early church reformers (Calvin, Luther, Catholics, and many protestants) were a-millennialist. Amillennialism takes a symbolic interpretation approach of apocalyptic literature. Many premillennialists accuse a-millennialists of over-spiritualizing parts of the Bible.

A-millennialism makes the point that Revelation 20 is the only reference in the Bible to a millennial reign. Revelation chapters 19-20 are not a sequence of events, but are an example of recapitulation where the Bible retells the events from different perspectives. The binding and casting out of Satan occurred during Jesus’s ministry (Matthew 12:29; John 12:31). This does not mean that Satan is totally stopped from his work to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10), but was restricted or restrained from deceiving the nations (Revelation 20:2-3) so that the gospel could be preached to the whole world.

Post Millennialism



The final view to identify is “*post millennialism*.” This view holds that Christ will return after a golden age where the whole world is Christianized. The millennium is not a literal thousand years and began at Christ resurrection or shortly thereafter. Due to the preaching of the gospel, the world gets better. Many Puritans held to this view, but it is not a popular view today. The problem with post millennialism is the New Testament actually says things will get worse before Christ returns (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Their optimistic view of the future is just not supported by scripture and what we are seeing in the world today. Since it is a minority view, I will not be

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commenting on it in this book, but center on the premillennial and amillennial positions.

I have provided some high-level descriptions of the different millennial interpretation methods. As we continue through this book, I will give some more details concerning each view. As I stated, the premillennial view is the most popular view in the church today. The burden of proof of presenting their view of the millennium is with the amillennial position. Therefore, I will be giving more information for the amillennial view because many people are unfamiliar with it. That does not mean I am endorsing it as the correct position on the millennium, but more needs to be said to establish what they believe.

A summary of the different millennium interpretation methods has been presented. There are also various interpretation methods for the book of Revelation. We need to identify these also because they will impact how one views the millennium.

The *historicist* interpretation method sees that all the events in the book of Revelation are fulfilled over the course of history. As history unfolds, historicist interpreters assign various events of history to the visions and symbols of Revelation. The problem with this method is it redefines the symbols for every new period of history. It is the least popular of the views today.

Next, the *preterist* interpretation method maintains that the events recorded in the book of Revelation were fulfilled in the first century. They claim that the book of Revelation was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. There is considerable scholarly agreement that the book of Revelation was written between A.D. 95-96. There are partial preterists who state that some of the events of Revelation are still future. Because of the disagreement over the date of the writing of the book of Revelation, this view does not carry much support.

The *idealist* interpretation method is aligned with the amillennial position, meaning they believe there is no literal 1000 years

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in which Christ rules on Earth. It views Revelation as apocalyptic literature that must be interpreted symbolically. They believe that the scenes of Revelation depict principles of spiritual war, not specific events. These principles operate throughout the church age and follow a repeated pattern of fulfillment. A closer look at the symbolic interpretation of Revelation will be analyzed as we examine aspects of the amillennial position.

Finally, in the *futurist* view, the events recorded in Revelation 4-22 are speaking of future events. This view is closely associated with premillennialism. Some of the earliest church fathers followed the futurist view of the book (Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Victorinus of Patau). They believe that the events in chapter 4-19 occur during the seven-year tribulation period. This currently is the most popular Revelation interpretation method.

A combination of these Revelation interpretation views is probably the closest to the truth. These various interpretation methods for the millennium and the book of Revelation must be understood as we go further into the study of Bible prophecy.

Chapter 2 - Background Information

When studying prophetic passages in the Bible, we need to determine how to interpret the scriptures. There are guidelines we can follow in how to interpret biblical writings. Bible hermeneutics is the study of the principles and methods of interpreting the text of the Bible. There are three crucial laws of biblical interpretation. The first is scripture should be interpreted literally by its plain reading unless a passage is intended to be symbolic. Secondly, a passage must be interpreted historically, grammatically, and contextually. When the text was written needs to be taken into consideration and especially, the context in which it was written. What does the scriptures around the main verses being reviewed say? This prevents a verse from being interpreted out of its setting. Finally, scripture is the best interpreter of scripture. We should view unclear/symbolic passages in the light of those that are clear. When it comes to prophetic passages, how does New Testament writers quote sections from the Old Testament.

When weighing biblical evidence in interpreting scripture concerning the millennium, what biblical hermeneutic should be used? The text can be interpreted literally since that is the first principle to use when studying scripture. However, one needs to consider the genre. Genre is a category of artistic, musical, or literary composition characterized by a particular style, form, or content. In the Bible, there are different styles of writing. The major genres of scripture (with some examples in parenthesis) are as follows; *narrative* (Exodus & Acts), *poetry* (Psalms), *wisdom* (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes), *prophecy* (the 4 major and 12 minor prophets), *gospels*

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(Matthew, Mark, Luke, John), *epistles* (Romans, 1-2 Peter, 1-3, John), and *apocalypse* (Revelation, parts of Daniel). Each of these genres have characteristics that are unique and distinguish that writing style. I will not go into an explanation of each of these genres, but what to focus on prophecy and apocalypse.

The prophecy genre conveys God's Word to His covenant people, warning them and sustaining them through pronounced spiritual and national danger. Prophecy includes foretelling of future events, but it also includes God rebuking sin, warning against calamity if people fail to repent, and convicting them of wrongdoing. "*Apocalypse*" is a Greek word meaning to uncover or reveal. Apocalyptic literature is a literary report of an amazing, often fearful, violent vision that reveals truths about past, present, and/or future times in highly symbolic and poetical terms. It is written in this way to awaken our conscience to the horror of what is going on. The message is given by an angel (or something similar) that is beyond our realm, like heaven or hell. Apocalyptic exhortations are aimed at chastening and reforming their hearers with promises of rewards and punishment in the coming "end times." These texts need to be interpreted symbolically due to the imagery used. One needs to trace the symbol through the biblical record to understand its meaning.

When it comes to gaining an understanding of the millennium as mentioned in the book of Revelation, we must recognize that Revelation's genre is apocalyptic literature, written in highly symbolic language. One must make some *hermeneutical decisions* in how to interpret the book. Is Revelation fundamentally symbolic with some literal, or is it fundamentally literal with some symbolic things in it? A person's view of the millennium centers on how they interpret Revelation 20:1-10. Those who hold a premillennial position will interpret Revelation mainly from a literal interpretation hermeneutic. Those who hold an amillennial position will follow a more symbolic interpretation hermeneutic. The lens used, literal or symbolic, as an interpretation method is what causes the differences

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between the two positions. To honestly study the topic of the millennium, we need to maintain our hermeneutic to critically analyze what the Bible is saying, so we can weigh the evidence of scripture as to what view carries the most weight.

When you use a different lens in interpreting scripture, such as apocalyptic literature, you may see things in a totally different light. It will require using a different set of criteria, or interpretative grid, in connecting prophecies to their prophetic fulfillment. It will bring about a paradigm shift in your thinking as you seek to interpret the prophetic passages. You need to battle the inclination to interpret prophetic books literally by following sound Bible hermeneutics for apocalyptic literature in interpreting passages symbolically. This can be challenging because it may go against everything you have been taught and believed concerning Bible end time prophecy. If you are hearing these things for the first time, it can be confusing, but you need to allow it time to make sense to you. Looking through a different lens can be very illuminating in your knowledge of scripture. As students of scripture, we need to give it a chance.

As we go deeper into the study of eschatological topics in the Bible, we must ask ourselves, did the system (any particular doctrine/teaching/view) get taught to us first and that influenced our reading of the text of scripture? If so, this is interpreting the biblical text so that it agrees with how you have been taught. When we study scripture, especially the difficult passages, our objective should be to search for truth, not to seek to endorse what I already believe. It can be difficult to lay aside our biases. Many times, we wrestle with scriptures that challenge us in the things that we think we know. We battle with the inclination to interpret scripture a particular way, rather than allowing the scripture to dictate what is being said. This is part of the process of lining up our beliefs to match what scriptures says.

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Allow me to present two different terms that relate to interpreting scriptures from the Bible. They are “*eisegesis*” and “*exegesis*.” They define different ways in which people interpret passages from the Bible. Exegesis (to draw out) is the legitimate interpretation which reads out of the text what the original author meant to convey. It is based on careful objective analysis of the text. Eisegesis (to lead into), on the other hand, reads into the text what the interpreter wishes to find or thinks he finds there. It expresses the reader's own subjective ideas, not the meaning which is in the text. It is a misreading of the text and often leads to misinterpretation. An honest student of the Bible will be an exegete, allowing the text to speak for itself. The Bible says, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). Our goal in studying the Bible is to rightly divide the Word by interpreting it without reading our own beliefs into the text.

In studying the Bible, we need to critically analyze passages in order to come to a sound interpretation of what is being said. Critical analysis can be defined as an appraisal based on careful analytical evaluation; the analysis of available facts, evidence, observations, and arguments to form a judgement. To think critically, you must be aware of your own biases and assumptions when encountering information, and apply consistent standards when evaluating sources. It is an unbiased analysis not favoring a particular view. Sometimes it can be difficult to maintain this mindset when studying the scriptures, but it is essential for us to do so in order to come to a valid conclusion on the meaning of a passage. We need to train ourselves to think critically and allow ourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit.

What does the church today believe concerning the millennium? LifeWay Research conducted a 2020 survey of 1,000 pastors, sponsored by Chosen People Ministries, from evangelical and historically black denominations called, “Pastor views on the

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return of Jesus Christ, biblical prophecy, and end times.” The following question was asked concerning the millennium.

“Which one of the following statements best fits your views on the millennium described in Revelation 20? This chapter says that Christ shall reign ‘a thousand years.’ Would you say this means...”

Provided answer options:

1. The millennium is a symbolic way of describing the period between Christ’s ascension and second coming where Christ is reigning spiritually (often called amillennialism).
2. The millennium is not a literal 1,000 years, but an era in which the world will gradually grow more Christian and just ending with Christ’s second coming (often called postmillennialism).
3. The millennium will be a future literal 1,000-year period during which Jesus reigns on earth following Christ’s second coming (often called premillennialism).

The survey responses were as follows:

Amillennialism	21%
Postmillennialism	9%
Premillennialism	60%
None of these	5%
Not sure	5%

Based on the survey, premillennialism was the prevailing view by a considerable margin, followed by the amillennial position. The majority opinion does not ensure it is the correct interpretation. It is possible that this survey’s results reveal how America has been strongly influenced by the dispensational premillennial position. This view originated in Britain by John Nelson Darby in 1830 and came to

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the United States after the civil war. Dispensationalism was adopted, modified, and made popular in the United States by the Scofield Reference Bible, first published in 1909. It endorsed a pretribulation rapture and literal thousand-year millennium. This Bible has influenced millions over the years and may be a reason for the popularity of premillennialism in America. The survey, if conducted in other parts of the world may not come up with a result heavily favoring premillennialism.

In the same LifeWay Research survey, another one of the questions asked was regarding how the book of Revelation should be interpreted. A summary description of these interpretation methods was given in chapter 1. The results from the respondents were as follows:

Idealist	8% (amillennial position)
Preterists	5%
Historicist	3%
Futurist	28% (premillennial position)
Mixture of methods	51%
None of these	2%
Not sure	3%

It was interesting that a little over half of the respondents believed that a mixture of the methods should be used when interpreting the book of Revelation. We need to remember that the majority opinion does not prove it is correct. It just means that it is the consensus, or general agreement of those taking part in the survey. If the survey is representative of the beliefs of the church today, then it can be an accurate measurement of where the church stands on these teachings. As we can see from these survey questions, there is a wide range of beliefs concerning Bible eschatology.

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As we weigh the evidence to determine whether premillennialism or amillennialism is best supported by scripture, we need to be impartial in our review. Set aside what you thought you knew and allow the scripture to form your view.

Chapter 3 - Five Pivotal Questions

I believe there are five pivotal questions we must ask ourselves that will determine our position concerning the millennium or thousand-year kingdom age. I use the term “pivotal” because it means of crucial importance, decisive, and essential to our understanding of this subject.

The five questions that we are seeking to answer are the following:

1. How do you interpret Revelation 20:1-10? (Literally or symbolically)
2. When will death be no more? (Fulfillment of 1 Corinthians 15:54)
3. How many physical resurrections can there be based on 1 Corinthians 15?
4. Who is the “he” who will put a stop to sacrifice and offering in Daniel 9:27? (Is it Christ or antichrist)
5. Is the book of Revelation chronological or recapitulative (retelling/parallelism)?

Your answers to these questions are framed by the *lens of interpretation* you use. A person may just blindly accept what they have been taught about the millennium. Whether premillennialist or a-millennialist, we all battle the tendency to force the meaning of passages to fit our accepted view, without first testing it with scripture. We need to honestly answer these questions based on scripture alone, and then form our view.

I will devote a chapter for each of the questions to present the scriptural evidence to consider in forming your view. There are many questions one can ask concerning the millennium, but I feel

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these five are central in forming our view of the millennium and will impact our overall understanding of Bible eschatology.

The first question is central to our study. Revelation 20 is the only place in the Bible that mentions a thousand-year period that is referred to as the millennium, or kingdom age. Even though it is only mentioned in one chapter in the Bible, it is still significant and deserving of our study. Some will use certain passages from the Old Testament as evidence referring to the millennium. The most known passages are found in Isaiah 60 & 65 and Ezekiel 40-48.

The following points are made in Revelation 20:1-10;

1. The binding of Satan.
2. Satan confined to the abyss/prison for a thousand years.
3. The first resurrection of the martyrs and those not worshiping the beast.
4. Saints reigning with Christ for a thousand years.
5. The rest of the dead not resurrected until the end of the thousand years.
6. Satan released at the end of the thousand years.
7. The nations gathered for war. (Gog & Magog)
8. Fire from heaven devours the devil and his army.

As we get into the analysis of these questions, we need to make some decisions as to how we are going to interpret the scriptures. In chapter 2, I mentioned Bible hermeneutics which is the study of the principles and methods of interpreting the text of the Bible. There are two approaches one can take. They are to interpret the scripture *literally* or to interpret them *symbolically*. We must keep in mind that the book of Revelation is apocalyptic literature that uses much imagery and figurative language. This genre of literature is interpreted symbolically. With that said, we need to be aware of the literal and symbolic interpretations of the text and that it can lead to difference conclusions.

In order to weigh the evidence of the premillennial and amillennial position, we need to stay true to the Bible hermeneutic

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used. The premillennial position will follow a literal interpretation, or plain reading of the text. That is the prevailing view in the church and is a simpler approach. The amillennial view uses a symbolic hermeneutic and may be more difficult to understand. One needs to gain an understanding of the symbolism used. In addition, we may have to fight the tendency to be influenced to follow a literal interpretation and discipline ourselves to carry through with the symbolic approach. This is part of critically analyzing the passages in question.

As I have stated several times, the book of Revelation is apocalyptic literature, that is saturated with symbols and imagery. It is easy to focus on things such as a Lamb having seven horns and seven eyes, the dragon and a woman bearing a child, a beast coming out of the sea, a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, and Satan bound with a chain, to name a few. I believe it is easy to forget that the numbers mentioned in the book of Revelation are also symbolic. Sometimes we may recognize the symbolic images, but try to interpret the numbers literally. If there are symbolic images given, then we should also consider that the numbers given are also symbolic.

In the number symbolism used, some numbers are good and some are bad. Numbers such as two, four, seven, ten and twelve are good because they are most often connected with God and His people. Bad numbers are attached to the demonic realm, to unbelievers, or to the suffering or persecution endured by believers. Fractions such as one-third, one-fourth, and one-half mean something is not complete. They represent something partial, imperfect, and unaccomplished. Some of the bad numbers are three a half, forty-two, one thousand two hundred and sixty, and six hundred sixty-six. I am not going to get into an explanation of what all these numbers signify, but some of these will be mentioned in this book.

A final comment concerning the symbolic use of numbers in the book of Revelation. Some of the modern English translations of the Bible do poorly in bringing out the numerical symbolism

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presented in Revelation. What happens is that they update the actual symbolic numbers given in the Greek, that deal with measurements and distances, and convert them to modern day equivalents. Examples of numbers changed are twice ten thousand times ten thousand, hundred forty-four, thousand six hundred, and twelve thousand. I am not going to get into a full explanation of all these numbers, but I wanted to point out there are some issues with the modern English versions of how these numbers were translated. The point is, we should not interpret these numbers literally, but recognize the symbolic nature of certain numbers in scripture.

Besides the five questions, I will also devote several chapters to reviewing some items of major interest as they relate to end time Bible prophecy. They are the mark of the beast, the seventy weeks prophecy, three-and-one half years, the two witnesses, end time judgments, and the two-age model. We will analyze these from the premillennial and amillennial perspectives.

In the next chapter we will begin to consider the five pivotal questions.

Chapter 4 - Interpreting Revelation 20

The first pivotal question to consider in our evaluation of what the Bible has to say about the millennium is as follows; How do you interpret Revelation 20:1-10? As I mentioned in the previous chapter, this is the only place in the Bible that speaks of a thousand years that we know as “the millennium.”

Hermeneutical decisions need to be made in how we interpret this passage. Is the text written to be fundamentally symbolic with some literal, or is it fundamentally literal with some symbolic things in it? Remember, the genre of the book of Revelation is apocalyptic.

I must point out a connection between the books of Daniel and Revelation. They are both examples of apocalyptic literature that uses much imagery where the message communicated many times by an angel. Consider the following verses:

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, (Revelation 1:1)	But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these: (Daniel 2:28)
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The term “made known” in the Daniel is translated from the Greek word “apocalypse” (*Apokalupsis*) in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. In Daniel, the image in king Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was symbolic of the world empires to come. The word “apocalypse” means to reveal or uncover. In the first verse of Revelation, it says how the things will be revealed that will be communicated to John. In both Revelation and Daniel, images are seen that “symbolically represent” things that will come to pass. This needs to be kept in mind as we attempt to understand and interpret the imagery used.

I will give the premillennial position first, which follows a predominately *literal* Bible hermeneutic, then I will present the amillennial position that uses a predominately *symbolic* approach of interpretation.

The text that we will be reviewing is given below:

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. ²He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and **bound him for a thousand years;** ³and he **cast him into the bottomless pit**, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

⁴And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. **And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.** ⁵But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.

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This *is* the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

⁷ Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number *is* as the sand of the sea. ⁹ They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰ The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Revelation 20:1-10, emphasis added)

In John's vision he saw a key and a chain binding a dragon, that he identifies as Satan. The angel casts the dragon into the bottomless pit (abyss) for a thousand years. Right away we see that John is speaking figuratively. We know that he did not mean there will be a literal key and chain to lock up a spiritual being like Satan. These are the images John is giving us to communicate to us in this chapter.

Premillennialism

Revelation is interpreted from the literal perspective. Revelation 19-20 shows a sequence of events. We see the second coming of Christ to fight against the armies (19:11-19) and the beast and false prophet cast alive into the lake of fire (20-21). In chapter

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20, Satan is bound for a thousand years, the martyrs and Old Testament saints are resurrected, and the rest of the dead (the wicked) will not be not resurrected until the thousand years are finished. Satan is released after the thousand years are completed, who will then deceive the nations to war (Gog and Magog) against Christ and are destroyed by fire from heaven. After this final battle, is the great white throne judgment. Chapters 21-22 describe the eternal state, or the new heavens and new earth with the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven.

All the events are seen to happen chronologically, or through a series of events. This is determined from the plain reading of the text. It is very straight forward and does not need much further explanation. The Bible says, "Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this" (Revelation 1:19). Some argue that this verse proves the chronological sequence of the book of Revelation. Chapter 8 in the book provides more information about interpreting the book of Revelation chronologically or as a recapitulative narrative providing parallel versions of history.

There are other reasons why some say the premillennial position is the correct one. Satan is obviously not bound as evidence by what is happening in the world today and what the New Testament says about Satan. The scripture says, "**whose minds the god of this age has blinded**, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them" (2 Corinthians 4:4, emphasis added). This verse would indicate that Satan can block the light of the gospel from being seen by people in the nations of the world. Another verse to consider says, "And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into and **angel of light**" (2 Corinthians 11:14, emphasis added). Finally, the scripture says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like **a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour**" (1 Peter

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5:8, emphasis added). This is a sampling of verses that give evidence, premillennialist argue, that Satan is not bound.

Those supporting the premillennial position will say that it was the view of the early first century church, and was the only belief for three hundred years. They also say the numbers used in the book of Revelation are to be taken literally. The term “a thousand years” appears six times in Revelation chapter 20. Other numbers such as three and one-half years, one thousand two hundred and sixty days, forty-two months, and five months are mentioned in a literal sense. If these numbers were meant to be figurative, then the Bible would will let you know it. When the Bible is literal, you should take it literally.

The premillennial interpretation of Revelation 20 is the popular view in the church today. Other prophetic details are harmonized around this basic sequence of events. There is the rapture of the church (pretribulation, mid-tribulation, pre-wrath, or post tribulation) which incorporates multiple resurrections, three main end time battles (first Gog and Magog war, battle of Armageddon, and final Gog and Magog war), and three separate judgments (Judgment Seat of Christ, Judgment of Nations, and the Great White Throne). There are three ages in view here. Our present age, or the age of grace, the millennium or kingdom age, and the eternal state.

The entire book of Revelation is seen as occurring in chronological order. Revelation chapter 6-19 occur during the seven years of the tribulation, also known as the Seventieth week of Daniel’s Seventy Weeks prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27). Jesus’s Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24-25, Mark 16, and Luke 21) corresponds to the seven-year tribulation.

The literal thousand years, known as the millennium or kingdom age, is the time God fulfills His promises made to national Israel in the Old Testament. Premillennialists believe God has two

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plans, one for Israel and one for the church. The following points are supported by the premillennial position.

What is the purpose of the 1,000 years?

- A. The unconditional covenants (Abrahamic, Palestinian, and Davidic) demand a literal, physical return of Christ to fulfill His covenants with Israel.
- B. Two main propositions that can be concluded regarding the purpose of the millennial kingdom: (1) The kingdom is set apart for the purpose of Christ to defeat His enemies once and for all (1 Corinthians 15:24-25); (2) The kingdom is set apart for the purpose of the unconditional covenants to be fulfilled.
- C. The Abrahamic Covenant promised Israel a land, a posterity and ruler, and a spiritual blessing (Genesis 12:1–3, 7; 13:14-15; 15:18).
- D. The Palestinian Covenant promised Israel a restoration to the land and occupation of the land (Deuteronomy 30:1–10).
- E. The Davidic Covenant promised Israel a king from David's line who would rule forever - giving the nation rest from all their enemies (2 Samuel 7:10–13).

A case is made by A-millennialists that the land promises from the Abrahamic covenant were totally fulfilled at the conquest of Canaan by Joshua. Consider the following passage.

⁴³So the LORD gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it. ⁴⁴The LORD gave them rest all around, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers. And not a man of all their enemies stood against them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand. ⁴⁵Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass. (Joshua 21:43-45)

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Based on the scripture, Israel took possession of all the land God promised them. It goes to say God gave them rest from their enemies and not one word of His promises failed because they ALL came to pass. The need for a millennial age so that God can fulfill His promises to national Israel is not necessary because they have been realized.

Even during Solomon's reign, when the temple was constructed, the kingdom was at its height in the world (2 Chronicles 9:5-8, 22-24). The scripture says, "So Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the River (Euphrates) the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. *They* brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life (1 Kings 4:21). This matches the borders of the land God communicated to Abraham. The Bible also says, "Blessed *be* the LORD, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised. There has not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised through His servant Moses" (1 Kings 8:56).

The land promises will be fully and completely consummated during the Eternal State (Revelation 21-22). Canaan is typological of a renewed creation. The scripture says, "By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God" (Hebrews 11:9-10). A-millennialists say that there is no need for a millennial kingdom to fulfill these promises to Israel. They have already been fulfilled.

This information provides a brief overview of the premillennial view. As I mentioned, this overview communicates the position many Christians have today. To challenge this view, a strong case needs to be made by amillennialism in providing the biblical evidence necessary to cause one to reconsider what they believe. The Joshua and 1-2 Kings passages may settle that case.

Amillennialism

This view does not see the book of Revelation occurring in chronological order, but it is recapitulative, or repetitive, in that it retells events from a different perspective. Revelation chapter 19 gives one perspective of the return of Jesus Christ by mentioning the final battle and the beast and false prophet being thrown alive into the lake of fire. Revelation chapter 20 is an overview of history between the two advents of Christ. Satan is bound (more about that later) so that he cannot deceive the nations until he is released at the end of the age. Then it speaks of the first resurrection of those who will rule with Christ from heaven until the thousand years are finished. The rest of the dead, or the physical resurrection of the dead will occur at the end of the age. This is history of the church age from another viewpoint. Revelation chapter 21 speaks of the coming eternal state (the new heaven, new earth, and new Jerusalem). These are not the only chapters in the book of Revelations where we see recapitulation, but it is evident throughout the book (see chapter 8 on this subject).

The amillennial view sees the thousand years as Christ ruling in heaven now with the believers in the intermediate state. The intermediate state is the spiritual body believers have after death and prior to receiving their glorified body at the resurrection/rapture. The coming kingdom of God is not in the future after Christ returns. The kingdom has been inaugurated with the coming of Christ and it will be consummated when He returns. Consider the following scripture references that state that the kingdom of God is at hand or near during the ministry of Jesus.

- and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” (Matthew 3:2)
- But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. (Matthew 12:28)

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- and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:15)
- The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless, know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.’ (Luke 10:11)
- “The law and the prophets *were* until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. (Luke 16:16)
- nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.” (Luke 17:21)
- So, you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. (Luke 21:31)
- ¹⁶for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” ¹⁷Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, “Take this and divide *it* among yourselves; ¹⁸for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” (Luke 22:16-18)
- Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. (Revelation 12:10)

The millennium is happening now. The verses referenced above show that the kingdom had come upon them during the earthly ministry of Jesus. The thousand years are not literal years, but are symbolically interpreted as representing “a long period of time.” See the following verses from scriptures that use the term thousand in a non-literal sense.

- Therefore know that the LORD your God, He *is* God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for **a thousand** generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments; (Deuteronomy 7:9, emphasis added).

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- For every beast of the forest *is* Mine, *And* the cattle on a **thousand** hills. (Psalm 50:10, emphasis added)
- For a **thousand** years in Your sight *Are* like yesterday when it is past, *And like* a watch in the night. (Psalm 90:4, emphasis added)
- He remembers His covenant forever, The word *which* He commanded, for a **thousand** generations, (Psalm 105:8, emphasis added)
- But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a **thousand** years, and a thousand years as one day. (2 Peter 3:8, emphasis added)

I think that we all would agree that God keeps His covenant promises forever. When the scripture says “a thousand generations,” it implies a number so large that it represents forever. Again, God owns the cattle on every hill, not just a thousand hills. This is a way of saying many hills, or every hill. The term “a thousand” is used in reference to time. We know that God is beyond time because He is eternal. Referencing a thousand years in relation to God is not meant to be taken literally, it is a figure of speech that means a long time is nothing to God. These examples are evidence that the word “thousand” can be used in figurative ways. The thousand years in Revelation 20:4 is a symbolic way of saying a long period of time. The apocalyptic genre of the book of Revelation is the reason we should interpret this verse that way.

There are two major events in Revelation chapter 20 that must be explained upon which the amillennial position rests. The two events are the binding of the strong man and the casting out of Satan.

Jesus gave us some important information that gives us insight to the coming of His kingdom into this world. Jesus had cast a demon out of a man who was deaf and blind. The Pharisees had accused Him casting out the demon by Beelzebub, who is the devil, the prince of demons. Jesus replied as follows:

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²⁸ But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹ Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless **he first binds the strong man**? And then he will plunder his house. (Matthew 12:28-29, emphasis added)

What Jesus taught is what He accomplished at the beginning of His earthly ministry to overcome Satan's opposition to His redemptive work. In all three synoptic gospels, Christ's temptation is the first action of Jesus after being baptized and anointed as Messiah; before any miracles were performed. After this initial victory, Jesus begins to demonstrate His victory over Satan's realm in the plundering of his house. This was the binding of the strong man. From this point forward, Jesus began to overturn the dominion Satan had over this world.

The binding of Satan is what is referred to in Revelation 20:1-3 and is described as Satan's inability to "deceive the nations." This is significant because in the Old Testament, Satan was able keep God from the gentile nations. With the coming of the Messiah, Satan is restricted from being able to stop the gospel from being preached to all nations. Premillennialists say this binding is not until after Christ comes again because it is evident that Satan is loose in this world today.

The binding of Satan is limited, or confined to a specific activity, namely the deception of the nations to thwart the gospel from being preached and people coming to faith in Christ for salvation. It is not an entire removal of Satan from the world. Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection completed this binding that was initiated during Jesus's ministry.

The next important point to consider is the casting out of Satan, or throwing him into the bottomless pit/abyss. This scripture

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says, “Now is the judgment of this world; **now the ruler of this world will be cast out**” (John 12:31, emphasis added). Jesus was speaking of His death and at that time the ruler of this world would be cast out. Jesus won the victory over Satan at the cross and disarmed him. The Bible says, “¹⁴having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵Having **disarmed principalities and powers**, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it” Colossians 2:14-15, emphasis added).

In Revelation 20:3, it describes that Satan was cast, or thrown into the bottomless pit (abyss). The word “cast” was translated from the Greek word “*ballo*” (Strong’s #906) meaning, “to throw or let go of a thing without caring where it falls.” The word “cast in John 12:31 comes from the same Greek word “*ballo*,” except it has the prefix “ek” added to it, which turns the word from “thrown/cast” to “thrown/cast out.” This makes a very close connection between the two passages. So, in the amillennial view, the binding and casting out of Satan occurs at Christ’s first coming as evidenced by the biblical evidence presented.

While Jesus’s defeat of Satan at His temptation bound Satan for the initial invasion surge of Jesus’s kingdom into this world, it is Jesus’s work at the cross that cast out Satan into the pit for the thousand years, or the church age. Again, the world is not entirely rid of Satan’s influence because he is not completely removed. That will come at Christ’s second coming.

In Revelation 20 we see the mention of the first resurrection. Premillennialists see this as a bodily resurrection at the rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). If there is a first resurrection, then there needs to be a second, which they argue is the resurrection of the wicked dead at the end of the thousand years. Amillennialism sees the first resurrection as either the life of disembodied Christians with Christ in heaven, or life in Christ that begins with the new birth (Romans 6:8-11; Ephesians 2:6; Colossian

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3:1-4). It is a spiritual resurrection. The second resurrection is a physical resurrection of the body, both of the just and of the unjust at Christ's coming (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15). This is covered in more detail in chapter 6.

The picture given mentions that judgment was given to the martyrs (sitting on thrones), and those who did not take the mark or worshipped his image, and they reign with Christ for a thousand years. Here again, in keeping with the symbolic interpretation of the book of Revelation, these believers did not give their allegiance to the beast and ruled with Christ for a thousand years (not literal years) in heaven. Chapter 9 in this book provides more details concerning the meaning of the mark of the beast from the amillennial perspective. The saints ruling in heaven with Christ may be evidenced by the following scripture, “²Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? ³Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?” (1 Corinthians 6:2-4). The thousand years are not literal, but represent a long period of time between the two advents of Christ.

Next, we must address Satan being loosed from his prison at the end of the thousand years. God and Magog are a reference to the war mentioned in Ezekiel chapters 38-39. In the book of Revelation, descriptions of the battle of Armageddon makes references to events coming from Ezekiel 39:17-20. There are not three end time battles as argued by premillennialist, but only one. We can see in the New Testament that there will be a time when Satan is no longer restrained. The scripture says,

⁶And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. ⁷For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way. ⁸And then the lawless one will be

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revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. (2 Thessalonians 2:6-8).

The passage mentions that the restrainer (possibly the Holy Spirit) will be taken out of the way that will allow the antichrist to be revealed. This could be a reference to Satan being loosed from his prison to deceive the nations and gather an army against God's people. Fire comes down from heaven, apparently at Christ second coming to devour Satan's forces. The beast and false prophet are cast into the lake of fire forever. Consider what the apostle Paul says when Christ returns:

⁶Since *it is* a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, ⁷and to *give* you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, ⁸**in flaming fire taking vengeance** on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, ¹⁰when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed. (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10, emphasis added)

Finally, in Revelation chapter 20 we see reference to the great white throne judgment. All will appear before Christ at this judgment. Those who are saved will enter the eternal state while the unsaved will suffer the second death in the lake of fire. A-millennialist see only one final judgment, not three as do premillennialists. This issue is discussed in more detail in chapter 14 in this book.

Conclusions from This Chapter

The interpretation of Revelation 20 from both a literal and symbolic lens leads to different conclusions concerning the existence of a literal thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth before the coming of the eternal state. The premillennial and a-millennial positions can both be supported by biblical evidence. The question becomes, which view is best supported by weighing the biblical evidence? That is what you, the reader, will need to determine for yourself.

The differences in Christian views of Bible eschatology should not cause division in the church. The topic of the millennium can cause heated debate because Christians are very passionate about what they believe. However, we should be opened minded to hear sound biblical reasons for views that we may not agree with. This is how we grow in our knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ when we earnestly seek Him in His Word. The scripture says, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Chapter 5 - No More Death

This chapter will deal with our second pivotal question in determining which view of the millennium is best supported by the biblical evidence. When will death be no more? Gaining an understanding of when death comes to an end unlocks a mystery concerning the millennium. I believe the passages we will be examining are definitive eschatologically. The interpretations of end time events should be driven by how they ultimately are fulfilled in their relationship to the resurrection and the end of death. This information is pivotal in the structure of end time Bible prophecy. This will become clearer as we proceed in weighing the biblical evidence.

The following passage from 1 Corinthians chapter 15 reveals the timing of when death shall be abolished:

⁵⁰ Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet**. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. ⁵⁴ So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be **brought to pass** the saying that is written: “**Death is swallowed up in victory.**”

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⁵⁵“O Death, where *is* your sting? O Hades, where *is* your victory?” ⁵⁶The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. (1 Corinthians 15:50-56, emphasis added)

This is one of the two main scriptures, along with 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 used in support of the rapture of the church. No matter which rapture timing view you hold (pre-trib., mid-trib., pre-wrath, or post-trib.), this scripture speaks of the resurrection of the dead. We could say a lot concerning this passage, but I want to focus on the phrase, “Death is swallowed up in victory.” Paul quotes this scripture from the book of Isaiah in the Old Testament. It is a prophecy that Paul says is fulfilled (brought to pass) when the dead are raised at the last trumpet. The Isaiah passage is given below:

And He will destroy on this mountain The surface of the covering cast over all people, And the veil that is spread over all nations. ⁸**He will swallow up death forever, And the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces;** The rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken. ⁹And it will be said in that day: “Behold, this *is* our God; We have waited for Him, and He will save us. This *is* the LORD; We have waited for Him; (Isaiah 25:7-9, emphasis added).

In Isaiah, it says that death will be swallowed up forever. In the NASB version, it says “He will swallow up death for all time.” The covering that is over all people is death. No one can escape the eventuality of death. There will come a time when there will be no more death. Paul is communicating through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that the end of death occurs at the resurrection. Isaiah went on to say that God will wipe away all tears from all faces. The Apostle John refers to this verse as follows, “⁴**And God will wipe**

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away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4). John is confirming that when this verse is fulfilled, there will be no more death. Death will be abolished forever at the last trumpet when this mortal puts on immortality. Take notice where this verse appears in the book of Revelation. It is in chapter 21 which is talking about the new heaven and new earth in the eternal state. When death is swallowed up, there will be no more death because we will be entering the eternal state. There is no thousand-year millennium in view here.

This conflicts with the prevailing dispensational premillennial teaching of a pretribulation rapture followed by the seven-year tribulation, and then a one-thousand-year literal reign of Christ on the earth. According to premillennialism, both dispensational and historic, there will be death after the rapture. The scripture as Paul quotes it plainly states that after the resurrection, death will be no more. This would mean both for the saved and unsaved. This favors the amillennial position which states that when Christ returns, there is one resurrection of the dead, one final battle, one final judgment, and the establishment of the eternal state. In the next chapter we will look at how many resurrections there will be since it is directly connected to the fulfillment of the Isaiah prophecy.

The premillennial view’s interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:54 is that it is referring to the first resurrection. Christ was the first fruit (1 Corinthians 15:23) from the grave and all resurrected believers will become part of the first resurrection (Revelation 20:5). In the spiritual sense, believers will never taste of death. The scripture says, “²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. ²⁶ And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26). Jesus is saying that if you believe in Him, even though you may experience physical death, you will live. Death is not a cessation of existence. It marks the passing into the next realm. Physical death

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will not be totally taken away during the millennium, but it will be taken away from those who know Christ. Jesus's death and resurrection obtained such a victory over death, that at the rapture, death will be swallowed up. A-millennialists will disagree that the first resurrection is only speaking of the bodily resurrection of believers. Their view is that the first resurrection is when one is born again (Ephesians 2:5). We will speak more to that in the next chapter.

Some will object to the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:54 that when the resurrection/rapture occurs, it will totally mark the end of death for all time. They say that it marks the end of death for those who are saved, or for those of this era. When looking through a premillennial lens, this interpretation has validity. To be truly honest with the text, where does it say it is only speaking of the saved. Is this an example of reading your own biases and assumptions into the meaning of the text? If so, this is where we need to set aside what we think we know to analyze the text to form a judgment. What seems to be a game changing prophetic truth is not always received by people until they are ready to hear it. Just as the scripture says, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 13:9).

Premillennialist may also argue that the phrase "death is swallowed up in victory" simply means we have the ultimate victory over death. However, when you look at the context in the Isaiah passage, it becomes clear that there will be no more physical death. I need to emphasize, the best way to interpret Old Testament passages is how New Testament writers quote it. As we have seen in the scriptures given, Paul and John both agree that the resurrection will mark the end of death, both for the righteous AND the wicked. According to the premillennial positions (dispensational and historical), there will be death after the rapture/resurrection. This needs to be considered in weighing the biblical evidence concerning the teaching of the millennium. Today, we know that the defeat of death has been accomplished by Jesus at the cross, even though we

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still await the last day, when physical death will be fully and finally swallowed, never to return.

The Bible says, “The last enemy *that* will be destroyed *is* death” (1 Corinthians 15:26). Death has always been an enemy of the human race. It is described in the Bible as the last enemy, but it is not the only enemy. Other enemies would be the devil (Matthew 13:39), the flesh (1 John 2:15:16), those who hate God (Acts 13:9-11), and friendship with the world (James 4:4). When death has been done away with, we have attained that final victory of what Jesus achieved at the cross. The swallowing up of death is what the plan of God has been leading up to. It is a time when the former things have passed away (Revelation 21:4 quoted earlier). When death has been eliminated, we will enter the eternal state when the New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven from God (Revelation 21:1-3). Again, there is no literal thousand-year millennium in view here. When death is gone forever, we will enter the eternal state.

In addition to Paul’s reference to Isaiah 25:8, he quotes from Hosea 13:14, where it says, “O Death, where *is* your sting? O Hades, where *is* your victory” (1 Corinthians 15:55). There is some disagreement over the translation of this verse. We need to address this issue because Paul includes the Hosea reference when he states at the resurrection, “death is swallowed up in victory.” In comparing different translations of the Bible, the following verse is translated as follows:

“I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction! Pity is hidden from My eyes.” (Hosea 13:14 NKJV).

Will I deliver them from the power of Sheol? No, I will not! Will I redeem them from death? No, I will not! O Death, bring on your plagues! O Sheol, bring on your

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destruction! My eyes will not show any compassion!
(Hosea 13:14 *NET*).

Are the first two sentences declarative (“I will”), or are they interrogative (“Will I”). If they are declarative, then the text implies God’s promise to rescue His people. If they are interrogative sentences, God is stating that He will not rescue them. When you go back and read all of Hosea chapter 14, the context of the chapter is clearly dealing with the judgment of Ephraim. A declaration of deliverance seems out of place. So, what is the correct translation? The proper translation seems to favor that they are rhetorical questions (“Will I”) where God answers and says He will not deliver them. God says He will not show Ephraim compassion, calling for the plagues of death and the sting of sheol/the grave.

This raises the question of why would Paul cite this text. In doing so, it would make it appear they were a promise of God delivering Ephraim from death. If that were the case, it would mean that when there is no more death, death’s sting and will not win in the end because of the resurrection of the dead. Paul, apparently referenced Hosea 13:14 as a taunt against death, stating how the law and sin bring us doom, but Christ brings us salvation. As the scriptures says, “⁵⁶The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. ⁵⁷But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:56-57).

It is important to emphasize that the two choices, a declarative statement, or a rhetorical question, do not present any doctrinal conflict. I am just bringing this up because it is part of the passages, we are examining that declares death will be no more

In the verses quoted from 1 Corinthians 15, Paul mentions that he is showing us “a mystery.” What is the mystery Paul is revealing to us? Let us look at the following scriptures and provide some comments.

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⁵¹ Behold, **I tell you a mystery**: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet**. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed (1 Corinthians 15:51-52, emphasis added)

but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, **the mystery of God would be finished**, as He declared to His servants the prophets. (Revelation 10:7, emphasis added)

Then the **seventh angel sounded**: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” (Revelation 11:15, emphasis added)

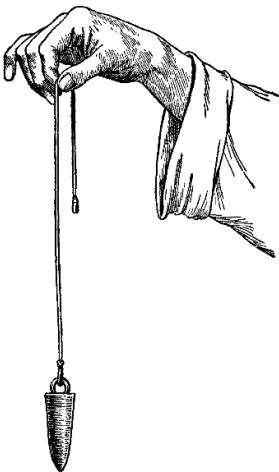
In these passages we can see the following. A “mystery” is to be revealed, which is the dead will be raised incorruptible. This is speaking of the righteous dead. In chapter 6, I present scriptures that state there is one resurrection of the dead which includes the just and the unjust (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15). When the seventh angel sounds the last trumpet, the mystery of God is finished, which includes the resurrection of the dead. At the last trumpet, the kingdoms of the world become Christ’s. This shows finality, or the conclusion of world history. All the kingdoms of this world now belong to Christ. This is the fulfilling of the prophecy in the book of Daniel concerning Nebuchadnezzar’s image. The scripture says, “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 prophecy is saying that there will be four world empires that will rule the earth.

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In the days of the last kingdom, Christ will set up His kingdom that will never be destroyed.

I must say that there is no thousand-year millennial kingdom in view from these passages. The literal thousand-year kingdom as taught by the premillennial view, will have an end, giving way to the new heavens and new earth. Based on what Daniel says, when Christ's kingdom comes, it will be forever. Where is this thousand-year age that exists between the return of Christ and the creation of the new heaven and new earth? The Bible does not provide evidence that a literal millennial age will exist. In fact, the Bible says, ²³But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming. ²⁴Then *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" (1 Corinthians 15:23-24). These verses say that when Christ raises the dead, then comes the end. This means Jesus brings in the eternal state. Not an intermediate age in between His coming and the eternal state.

Let me use another illustration that demonstrates the importance of 1 Corinthians 15:54. I believe it serves as a "**plumbline**" for Bible eschatology. The term plumbline might be foreign to some, so allow me to define the word.



A plumb line is a light line with a weight (plumb bob) at one end that, when suspended next to a workpiece, defines a vertical line. *Plumb* comes from the Latin *plumbum*, or "lead," the material that replaced stone as the weight for the bob or plummet.

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A plumb bob is suspended from a string and gravity then makes the string hang perfectly straight. Thus, the builder can ensure that the structure he is constructing is erected perfectly true and the painter can use it as a reference line.

Painters and carpenters use plumb lines to keep their work straight. A plumb line does not change or move with the whims of the carpenter. It remains true, and all work must line up with it or risk being crooked.

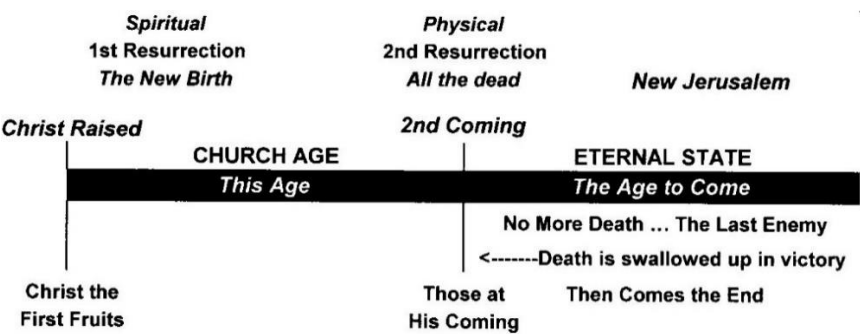
The plumb line is mentioned several times in the Bible. The prophet Amos had a vision where God was standing by a wall with a plumb line. The wall represented Israel which was straight, but became crooked when they abandoned God's Word and started to live their own sinful ways (Amos 7:7-9). God was setting a plumb line among His people to declare an end to their attempts to justify their crooked ways. God's moral law is the plumb line in which we determine right and wrong. The point I am making is the plumb line represents the standard. If we deviate from the plumb line, then the work becomes crooked and out of line.

Another time when a plumb line is mentioned in the Bible was in the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. For a time, the work was hindered and God sent the prophets Zechariah and Haggai to urge the people on to finish the work. The scripture says, "...The plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel" (Zechariah 4:10a) signifies that God will see to it that the temple will be completed. The purpose of the plumb line in Zerubbabel's hands was to keep the walls lined up correctly, to keep the work true. It was such a small thing, but without it, the walls of the temple would not have stood the test of time. Zerubbabel needed this small tool to correctly finish the work God had called him to do. Just as in our example, **the fulfillment of "Death is swallowed up in victory" is the standard that keeps the eschatological walls (all the events of the end time) straight.** All events associated with Christ's return must be in

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harmony with the fulfillment of this prophecy at the resurrection of the dead.

1 Corinthians 15:54 provides the straight line in which all Bible prophecies concerning the end of the age must line up. All prophetic events must be interpreted in such a way that they will stay true with the timing of when death shall be abolished forever. The interpretation of this verse remains the same, regardless of which interpretation lens you use (literal or symbolic). It is so plainly stated, that there is no room for interpretation. It sets a standard and is nonnegotiable. The following timeline is given to illustrate one physical resurrection and the end of death.



I believe the information provided in this chapter is the key in unlocking the mystery of the millennium. In my opinion, it provides undisputable evidence that favors the amillennial position. Of course, this is looking through the amillennial lens of interpretation. I know some will disagree with my opinion, but if there is no more death, it leaves no other alternative that we are entering the eternal state of Revelation 21-22. The conclusions drawn based on the biblical evidence provided in this chapter without question contradicts the prevailing beliefs of most believers today. Just these few verses of scripture carry such a major impact in shaping the outcome of end time events. As I mentioned earlier, all end time

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events must be seen in the light of how they are fulfilled when there will be no more death. We must line up our beliefs to what scripture says and not continue to believe what we have been taught because it is the prevailing view.

I know that even when the biblical evidence seems so clear that there will be some who will not agree. I believe that the fulfillment of Isaiah 25:7-9 as declared by 1 Corinthians 15:54 is the smoking gun that decides the question if there is a literal thousand-year kingdom age. In case you do not agree with this conclusion, and I respect your opinion, we will continue to weigh the biblical evidence.

Chapter 6 - How Many Resurrections

This chapter will deal with our third pivotal question in determining which view of the millennium is best supported by the biblical evidence. How many physical resurrections can there be based on 1 Corinthians 15? The information presented in this chapter is closely connected with the previous chapter where we discovered that when the resurrection takes place, it will mark the end of death forever.

Paul, in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 provides a wealth of information concerning our physical resurrection. Consider the following passage:

²⁰ But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³ But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming. ²⁴ Then *comes* the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵ For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. ²⁶ The last enemy *that* will be destroyed *is* death. (1 Corinthians 15:20-26)

We learn from these verses that Christ was the first fruits of those who have died. He was the first to be resurrected with a

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glorified body. This is the body that all believers will have after Christ returns. The scripture says “²⁰For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself” (Philippians 3:20-21). There is an order of our physical resurrection. Jesus Christ was first and we will be resurrected at His coming.

The pretribulation rapture view is a teaching of dispensation premillennialism, which states there will be multiple resurrections of the dead. According to this view, there will be resurrections of the dead; at the rapture before the seven-year tribulation (1 Thess.4:13-18), of the tribulation saints and the Old Testament righteous dead at the second coming of Christ, (Dan. 12:2; Rev. 20:4-5), and of believers at the end of the thousand-year millennium age (Rev. 20:5). Even though believers would be resurrected at the rapture and at the second coming, death will still be present in the earth. People will still experience death during the tribulation and during the millennium (Kingdom Age). How can this be reconciled based on what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15? Is this teaching correct when looking deeper into the passages that were quoted as being fulfilled? The best way to interpret Old Testament passages is how New Testament writers quote it. The problem for the pretribulation rapture view is if the rapture is the fulfillment of Isaiah 25:8 as discussed in the previous chapter, then how can there be death after the rapture? To give an honest assessment, there cannot be multiple resurrections of the dead based on the Isaiah passage and Paul’s quoting it as being fulfilled when Christ returns at the last trumpet.

I need to point out another issue with the pretribulation rapture. The scripture says, “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means **precede those who are asleep**” (1 Thessalonians 4:15, emphasis added). This verse is part of the most

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quoted passage (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) by pretribulation rapture believers. It is saying that believers who are alive at Christ's coming to rapture the church cannot receive their glorified bodies before those who have died receive theirs first. The scriptures go on to say, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. **And the dead in Christ will rise first**" (1 Thessalonians 4:16, emphasis added). This causes problems for both a pretribulation and post tribulation rapture/resurrection because of multiple resurrections. There will be believers who are alive at a pretribulation rapture who will be changed and receive their glorified body BEFORE martyred tribulation saints receive their glorified body at the second coming. This is not in agreement with what Paul wrote. This provides scriptural evidence that strongly supports one physical resurrection of the dead.

Next, we need to look at what Jesus said about the raising of the dead. According to Jesus, there are two resurrections. The scripture says;

²⁵ Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, **when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.** ²⁶ For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, ²⁷ and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. ²⁸ Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice ²⁹ and come forth—**those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.** (John 5:25-29, emphasis added)

We can see two resurrections, both spiritual and physical from this passage. All unbelievers are spiritually dead until they are

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born again. The Bible says, “And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). We were spiritually dead (Romans 5:12). A person needs to hear the voice of the Son of God, namely the gospel message and be born again. Jesus raised us from spiritual dead when we accepted Christ and believed. At that time, we become a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). So, we can see that there is a *spiritual resurrection*. This is called the “first resurrection” (see Revelation 20:5-6). Those who hold to a premillennial position believe that the first resurrection is when Christ raptures/resurrects believers, before and after the tribulation. The second resurrection is of the wicked after the thousand-year millennium. They see a thousand years between the two physical resurrections. Is that what the biblical evidence supports based on what Jesus said? You will need to weigh the evidence to reach your conclusion.

Jesus said that those in the grave will hear His voice. This is speaking of a *physical resurrection*. As we have seen in the scriptures presented, the physical resurrection takes place when Jesus returns at His second coming. According to what Jesus said, both those who have done good and those who have done evil are resurrected at the same time. In the book of Acts, we see this confirmed, “I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of *the* dead, both of *the* just and *the* unjust” (Acts 24:15). There is no indication that there is a time period between the resurrection of the just and the unjust. The book of Daniel also mentions the resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked as one simultaneous event, “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame *and* everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2). The scriptures are plainly stating that there is one resurrection of the dead, of the just and the unjust at the same time with no time interval in between. Again, this goes against the prevailing view that the first resurrection is of the just followed by a thousand years and then a resurrection of

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the unjust. The amillennial position believes in one physical resurrection at the return of Christ. Are premillennialists placing a thousand-year period between a resurrection of the just and of the unjust that is not plainly stated in the scripture? This could be an example of interpreting the text to fit a particular view rather than forming a view to fit the text.

The scriptures plainly state that the resurrection takes place at Christ's coming. We encounter issues when some say that there are different phases, or multiple resurrections. Does Jesus come secretly or privately to rapture believers, and then again at a public glorious appearing at the second coming? I believe we can gain insight regarding the possibility of multiple resurrections by doing a word study for the term "coming."

The Greek word "*Parousia*" is translated to the English word "coming." The Greek word "*Parousia*" means, presence, or official visit; the coming, arrival, advent. It is the future return from heaven of Jesus, to raise the dead, hold the last judgment, and set up formally and gloriously the kingdom of God. Following are some points to consider regarding the word *Parousia*.

1. The Greek word "*Parousia*" is associated with Christ's coming (Matthew 24:3, 27, 37, 39; 1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Thessalonians 4:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:1).
2. The pretribulation view says at the rapture, Jesus does not come all the way down to the earth taking away believers while the world does not know how they disappeared (secret rapture). However, the rapture scripture (1 Thess. 4:15) uses the word "*Parousia*" regarding His coming, meaning His arrival or advent. If this is not His public coming, then why is the Greek word *Parousia* used. This does not support a secret rapture.
3. The plain reading of the scriptures teaches only one second coming of the Lord, not a coming in two phases.

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4. Jesus coming as a “thief in the night” is speaking of the Day of the Lord, not a pre-tribulation rapture (1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 3:3; 16:15).
5. His coming is not secret, but every eye will see him at His glorious appearing (Revelation 1:7; Titus 2:13; Matthew 24:30).

The Greek word *Parousia* is used when referring to Christ’s glorious coming. It is used in the east as a technical expression for the royal visit of a king, or emperor. There is another Greek word “*erchomai*” that is translated to the English word “come.” It means, to come from one place to another, and is used of person arriving. It does not imply the arrival of a king. This word is used, at times, in reference to when Christ comes (Matt. 6:10; 16:27; 1 Cor. 11:26), but in these key passages referring to resurrection, the Greek word “*Parousia*” is used.

Why would Paul use the word *Parousia* for a secret rapture instead of the word *erchomai*? Paul’s word usage is an indication that Christ’s coming (*Parousia*) in 1 Thessalonians 4:15 is His public glorious appearing where every eye will see Him. Paul could have used other words, but his use of the word “*Parousia*” provides strong evidence of one, single coming of Christ. I am no Greek scholar, but I am making this simple observation based upon looking up the word “come” in Strong’s Concordance. The dispensational premillennialism view of Christ’s private coming at the rapture is just not supported by the Greek text.

If the rapture is pretribulation, why does Jesus tell us to be ready? (Matthew 24:44; Luke. 12:40). Ready for what? Ready for the fact that He is coming, or ready for the persecution that is to come because He is coming at a time no one expects. What does a person need to do to be ready for the coming of Jesus? The answer is to be born again (John 3:16). If a person is born again, it should not matter when He comes because they are ready due to the fact, they have salvation. What does the fact that we will not know when He is

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coming have to do with our readiness? Is Jesus telling us to be ready for persecution where we will have our faith tested? If we are expecting Him to rescue us from perilous times and He does not come at that time, then how can we endure to the end when He does come.

Does a person's works get them ready for the rapture? Is the rapture a *reward* for being faithful or a *benefit* of salvation? If the rapture is the believer's resurrection day, then it is a benefit of salvation. If this is the case, Jesus could be warning us to be ready for the tribulation that is to come, and not by doing certain works in order to get ready to be raptured. With only one rapture/resurrection, we need to face the fact that there will be tribulation. Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

I believe answering the questions of when will death be no more and how many resurrections of the dead will there be are crucial in forming our views concerning end time Bible prophecy. All aspects of what we believe will occur surrounding Christ's return must be in line with what the Bible says about death and resurrection.

If you have considered yourself to be a premillennialist, this information may be troubling to you. It is hard to hear information that goes against some of your long-held beliefs. I believe it is a good thing when scriptures challenge us and get us to think deeper and depend even more on the Holy Spirit to guide us. This is how we grow in the Lord. I am not trying to promote an amillennial position, but I must be honest in what I believe which view is best supported by scripture. I will leave that up to you, the reader, to weigh the evidence and come to your own conclusions.

Chapter 7 - Who is the “He” in Daniel 9:27?

The next pivotal question we are going to examine concerns Daniel’s Seventy Weeks prophecy. This is a very important prophecy concerning Bible eschatology. It really forms the foundation in how we understand the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and in our interpretation of the book of Revelation. The fourth question that will impact how we understand the millennium is as follows. Who is the “he” in Daniel 9:27? In chapter 10, we look at the entire seventy weeks prophecy. In this chapter, we are focusing on identifying the person associated with the pronoun “he” in the last verse of the prophecy.

The entire text of the prophecy is given below:

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.

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.

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

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the end of the war desolations are determined. .

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.” (Daniel 9:24-27, emphasis added)

The premillennial position states that the pronoun “he” in verse 27 is a reference to the antichrist. Who, in the middle of the tribulation (which is the last week of seven years of this prophecy) will commit the abomination of desolation (Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). This will take place in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem. In verse 26, Jesus is crucified, and the people (the Romans) of the prince who is to come (the future antichrist who will come out of the old Roman Empire) will destroy the city and the temple. This occurred in A.D. 70 when the Roman general Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. The final seven years, known as the seventieth week, is the seven-year tribulation period just prior to Christ’s second coming.

The amillennial position states that the “he” in verse 27 is a reference to Christ. The final seventieth week of the prophecy began at the start of Jesus’s ministry and He was crucified in the middle of the final week. Christ’s death on the cross no longer required the blood sacrifice of animals, therefore He brought an end for the need of these offerings. The final three and one-half years symbolically (Revelation 12:5-6) represents the church age leading up to the second coming.

In taking a critical analytical review of this passage, the emphasis is on the coming Messiah. Verse 24 gives six points that He will fulfill at the completion of this prophecy. We know that Jesus was the one the prophecy was speaking of. There are three terms mentioned; Messiah, Prince, and people of the prince. The

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identification of the “prince” will be the determining factor in knowing who is the “he” in verse 27. This can be confusing, but bear with me as I explain the terms.

Verse 25 speaks of “Messiah the Prince” which is understood to be a reference to Jesus Christ. So, we see Jesus called both “Messiah” and “Prince.” The Messiah in verse 26 is then cut off (the crucifixion). Again the “prince” is mentioned, but referring to the “people of the prince who is to come,” and that they will be responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. The question needs to be asked, did the identity of the “prince” in verse 25 change with the reference to the “prince” in verse 26? Contextually, there are no grounds for changing the meaning of the terms. English translations of the Bible capitalize the “P” for prince in verse 25, but use the lower case “p” in verse 26. Some translations use the word “Anointed One” in verse 25 and “ruler” in verse 26. Have the English translations been influenced in how they render these verses? I believe we should allow a plain reading of the text direct us in how to identify who these terms represent.

If the “Prince” in verse 25 is the Messiah, then keeping with the line of thought, the “prince” in verse 26 should also be the Messiah. The “people” of the prince would be the Jewish people. The “prince to come” is still the prince in the previous verse, but is recognizing the fact that when this prophecy was given, the coming prince will be in the future. On what grounds would there be a change in the identity of the prince in verse 26. Is it possible some are reading into (eisegesis) the text a change of identity of the prince that is not plainly stated in the scripture?

It is a historical fact that the Roman army destroyed Jerusalem under the general Titus in A.D. 70. Some will say the “people of the prince” cannot be the Jewish people because it was obviously the Romans. However, who was responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem? The Romans performed the act, but it was

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God's wrath on the Jewish people for their sin. That makes the Jewish people responsible. Jesus said the following in His Olivet Discourse:

²⁰ "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. ²¹ Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. ²² For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. ²³ But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be **great distress in the land and wrath upon this people.** ²⁴ And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (Luke 21:20-24, emphasis added)

In the Old Testament, Deuteronomy chapter 28 speaks of the blessings that will come upon the Jewish people for their obedience to God's commandments and the curses that will come upon them for their disobedience. The curses, or God's wrath that will come upon them include bringing their enemies upon them and scattering them throughout the entire earth. See the following passage:

⁴⁵ "Moreover **all these curses shall come upon you** and pursue and overtake you, until you are destroyed, **because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God**, to keep His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you. ⁴⁶ And they shall be upon you for a sign and a wonder, and on your descendants forever. ⁴⁷ "Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything, ⁴⁸ therefore you shall serve your enemies, whom the LORD will send against

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you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in need of everything; and He will put a yoke of iron on your neck until He has destroyed you. ⁴⁹**The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar**, from the end of the earth, *as swift* as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you will not understand, ⁵⁰a nation of fierce countenance, which does not respect the elderly nor show favor to the young. ⁵¹And they shall eat the increase of your livestock and the produce of your land, until you are destroyed; they shall not leave you grain or new wine or oil, *or* the increase of your cattle or the offspring of your flocks, until they have destroyed you. (Deuteronomy 28:45-51, emphasis added)

Based on this passage, God will use a nation to execute wrath on His people for their disobedience. We can see this very thing being carried out by the Romans in A.D. 70. God also did it by using Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon against Jerusalem in 586 B.C. (2 Chronicles 36:15-16, 19-21; Ezra 5:12). These examples are evidence that Israel's sin is the reason God used their enemies against them in pouring out His wrath. King Nebuchadnezzar and the Roman General Titus were the instruments of judgment, but were not responsible for the judgment. I believe this biblical evidence makes a case that the word "prince," in the phrase "people of the prince who is to come," is a reference to the Messiah and not the antichrist. This needs to be considered in the weighing of the biblical evidence for the meaning of the millennium.

The identify of the "He" in verse 27, whether it is Christ or the antichrist, has a major impact in the interpretation of the seventy weeks prophecy. If it is Christ, then the symbolic interpretation of the seventy weeks would favor the amillennial position and that millennium is happening now in heaven. If it is speaking of the antichrist, then the literal interpretation of the seventy weeks would

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better support the premillennial position and a literal thousand-year kingdom age.

Chapter 8 - Chronological or Recapitulative

The number “seven” is the ruling number in the book of Revelation. It is the number that represents fullness, perfection, and completion. It is God’s number. Mentioned in Revelation are seven candlesticks, seven churches, seven Spirits, as well as the seven seals, trumpets, and bowls of wrath. There are fifty-five sevens, five sevenths, and thirty-five phrases of sevens in the book of Revelation. It truly shows the divine inspiration of the book.

The next pivotal question we need to address is the following. Is the book of Revelation chronological or recapitulative (retelling/parallelism)? This question will be addressed from both the premillennial and amillennial perspectives.

As it has been pointed out in this book, the lens you use to interpret Revelation, a literal or symbolic approach, can result in different conclusions in how you see the end time events unfolding. Revelation’s reoccurring use of the number “seven” and its apocalyptic genre, requires us to give serious attention to interpreting it symbolically and recognizing of use of recapitulation in its structure.

Premillennial / Chronological:

The book of Revelation is basically in chronological order with parenthetical portions providing details. There are various views concerning this, so it is difficult to give an absolute answer in how this order works out. Some perspectives see an overlapping of events

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described in the book of Revelation. In our evaluation of the premillennial and amillennial views, we will state that premillennialists agree on a chronological interpretation of the book. The following timeline illustrates this basic layout of the book of Revelation. The numbers given are the chapter numbers in Revelation.

Church Age	John in Heaven	Satanic Trinity Emerges			Christ Return		Eternal State
		First Half of Trib.	Abomination	Last Half of Trib.	Mill		
1-3	4, 5	6-11	12-13	14-18	19	20	21-22

Some chapters provide additional details to what has already been given. These are called “parenthetical visions” Chapters 7, 10-14, 17, and 18 are considered parenthetical chapters. A “parenthetical vision” is an aside (addition) that explains or reveals other concurrent happenings.

If the 22 chapters of the book were portrayed on a line, it would appear as follows. Parenthesis are placed around the chapters that provide additional information.

|---|
1 2 3 4 5 6 (7) 8 9 (10 11 12 13 14) 15 16 (17 18) 19 20 21 22

The main structure of prophecy in the book of Revelation centers on the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments. The chapters dealing with these judgments are organized as follows:

Seals: Chapters 4 – 8:1

- Introduction Chapters 4-5
- Events Chapters 6 & 8:1
- Interlude Chapter 7

Trumpets: Chapters 8:2 – 11

- Introduction Chapter 8:2-5
- Events Chapters 8:6-9 & 11:14-19
- Interlude Chapters 10-11:13

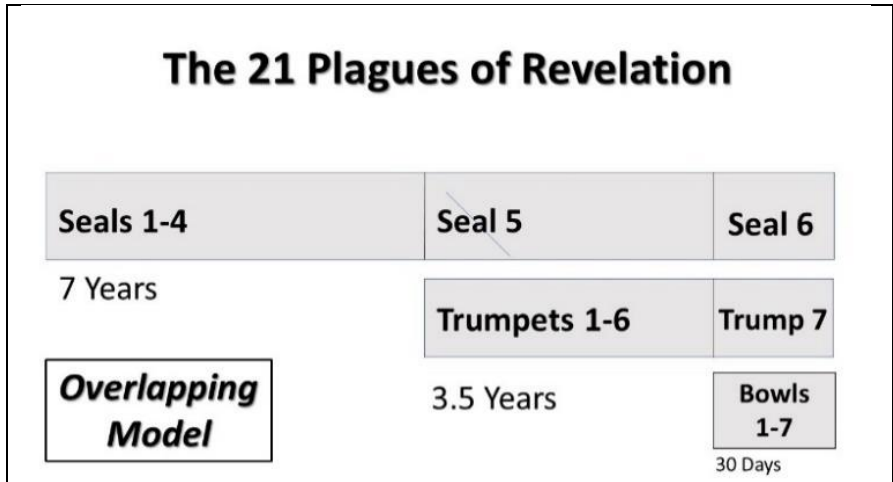
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Bowls: Chapters 12 – 19

- Introduction Chapters 12-15
- Events Chapters 16
- Interlude Chapters 17-18

Each set of judgments, or periods have an *introduction*, seven *events*, and an *interlude*. The *introduction* prepares us for understanding the descriptions of the period. The *event* descriptions provide step-by-step details of what will take place. The *interlude*, or parenthesis, discusses the period from a broad perspective.

This is an illustration of how the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments could overlap and not occur in a strict chronological sequence. There can be some variation in how premillennialist view the order of events, but they are still basically chronological. This model is based on the similarities of the events described in the sixth seal, seventh trumpet, and the seventh bowl.



It is evident throughout the book of Revelation that it is in chronological order. There are some “parenthetical” sections and chapters in the book that appear during the chronological order that presents more details, and thus takes a break from presenting the

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chronological order for a moment. The following verse illustrates the sequential order of Revelation, “Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this” (Revelation 1:19). The “things which you have seen” refers to John’s past, the “things which are” to his present, and the things that will take place “after this,” to the future. This verse demonstrates a chronological order of events.

Based on the chronological order of Revelation and the literal interpretation of the text, Revelation 20:3 which says, “and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while” is the key in supporting the premillennial position. The scripture plainly confirms a literal thousand-year age in which Satan is confined until he is release at the end.

Amillennial / Recapitulative:

Revelation is not in chronological order, but it repeats itself, providing information from a different perspective. This retelling, or repetitive nature of the book is termed recapitulation. It simply means, to summarize and state again the main points of, to retell or repeat to give a different emphasis or perspective. When you recognize this feature of the book of Revelation, it takes its meaning to another level. The Bible’s use of recapitulation is evident in the fact that the Bible has four gospels. Each one giving an account of the life and ministry of Jesus, but from different writers. In Revelation, this retelling occurs within the book itself. As I have expressed before and cannot over emphasize, when you look through another interpretative lens, you can gain new insights.

The book of Revelation should be seen as a narrative of seven set of events repeated seven times, each with increasing intensity. In different ways, they each tell the same story of Jesus returning to

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save and judge. Due to this recapitulation, the following timelines demonstrate how chapters in the book of Revelation start over and retell what occurs during the time between Christ's advents. Following Christ's return, then comes the eternal state.

--Resurrection -----2 nd Coming--	Eternal State --->
----- 1-3 Seven Churches -----	
----- 4-7 Seven Seals -----	
----- 8-11 Seven Trumpets -----	
----- 12-14 The Woman -----	
----- 15-16 Seven Bowls -----	
----- 17-19 Fall of Babylon -----	
----- 20 Satan Bound, Final Judgment--	----- 21-22 ----->

As you can see, the chapters in the book of Revelation do not follow sequentially, but they parallel each other. Each of the seven sections depicts the church and the world from the time of Christ's first coming to the time of His second.

In Revelation, seven times we see the end of the age:

Rev. 6:12-17 The Sixth Seal

Rev. 11:15-19 The Seventh Trumpet

Rev. 12:17 The Dragon makes war with the offspring of the Woman

Rev. 14:14-20 The Reapers at the harvest of the earth

Rev. 16:17-21 Battle of Armageddon

Rev. 19:11-21 Second Coming of Christ

Rev. 20:7-10 Gog and Mag

What is happening, Revelation presents one view of the course of church history, and then starts over again and gives another description, but from a different view. This is a common aspect of apocalyptic literature.

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This retelling of history has a tremendous impact on how one interprets the millennium. Amillennialism believes Revelation Chapter 19 shows Christ is coming in one way, and then in chapter 20, it presents history again from another viewpoint. When interpreted in this way, as a retelling of history, the need for a literal thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth, before the eternal state, is not evident.

When you couple the recapitulative structure of the book of Revelation with the symbolic interpretation hermeneutic, it will lead to different conclusions as given in the premillennial position. The question then becomes, is this the proper way to interpret the book of Revelation?

History Repeats Itself (Repetition Pattern of Judgment):

The following is my thoughts concerning the possibility that history repeats itself. I believe one can make the case that there is a repetitive pattern in the Bible of how God deals out judgment.

The seal judgments reflect a “pattern of God’s judgment.” In other words, there is a course to judgment, progress to judgment, or road to judgment. They run through the course of history. There is a repeated pattern of fulfillment. When you study the scriptures, you can see that God sends sword, famine, and pestilence as judgment on His people for their sin. For example, the scripture says:

⁹ I will deliver them to trouble into all the kingdoms of the earth, for *their* harm, *to be* a reproach and a byword, a taunt and a curse, in all places where I shall drive them. ¹⁰ And I will send the **sword**, the **famine**, and the **pestilence** among them, till they are consumed from the land that I gave to them and their fathers.’ ” (Jeremiah 24:9-10, emphasis added)

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There are 24 times where the words sword, famine, and pestilence occur in scripture. Most of these appear in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. All of them reflect ways in which God sends judgment. In Jesus's Olivet Discourse, consider the following;

⁶ And you will hear of **wars** (i.e. **sword**) and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be **famines**, **pestilences**, and earthquakes in various places. (Matthew 24:6-7, emphasis added)

God used the sword (wars), famines, and pestilences as forms of judgment in the Old Testament. I believe we see again God using the sword, famines, and pestilences as it relates to His judgments in the New Testament. This is a pattern, or blueprint of how God sends judgment on His people and an unbelieving world. Therefore, in a sense, history repeats itself. The repetitive nature of God's judgment can be seen in what is called "dual fulfillment of prophecy (see Chapter 10 for an explanation).

I believe you can make the case that the Olivet Discourse has a dual fulfillment. The events Jesus was speaking of had a fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and again in the course of time leading up to the second coming of Christ. There is a near and a far fulfillment in what Jesus said. It happened leading to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. It is also happening over the course of history leading up to Christ's coming.

Partial Preterist Interpretative Approach to Revelation

It would be remiss of me if I do not make some comments concerning the preterist interpretation method of the book of Revelation. This interpretation method argues that most of the

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events described in the book were fulfilled in the first century with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70. I go into more detail with this interpretative approach in chapters 15 and 16 in this book that deal with Jesus's Olivet Discourse.

The opening of the book says, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which **must shortly take place**. And He sent and signified *it* by His angel to His servant John (Revelation 1:1, emphasis added). Notice John says the things he is writing about must shortly take place. Again, in the third verse of chapter one he says, "**for the time is near**." How could John say these events will take place in the near future if they were prophecies pertaining to the end times in the distant future. John concludes the book by making these same statements such as these "**things which must shortly take place**" (Revelation 22:6), "**for the time is near**" (Revelation 22:10). Jesus Himself says, "**Surely I am coming quickly**" (Revelation 22:20). The stated nearness of these events serves as bookends that frame the book.

A large factor that affects how to interpret the book of Revelation concerns the date it was written. Preterists hold to an early date of A.D. 66-68, during the reign of the Roman Emperor Nero, for the writing of the book. Most Bible scholars, however, believe in a later date around A.D. 95 during the reign of the emperor Domitian. If Revelation was written in A.D. 95, it would make no sense that John would be writing about prophetic events that happened twenty-five years in the past. That would support a futurist approach to interpreting the book. A strong case can be made for the early date by internal evidences found in Revelation itself, that would support a preterist interpretation of the book.

If the book of Revelation is an apocalyptic version of Jesus's Olivet Discourse, then analyzing the Olivet Discourse can give us great insight into how to interpret the book of Revelation. I believe the hermeneutic approach of interpreting complex scriptures with those that are more clear applies in this case. The preterist approach of interpretation is drastically different from the futurist (literal) and the idealist (symbolic) methods, but deserves consideration in the interpretation of the book of Revelation. I felt the need to mention

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the preterist viewpoint in the interpretation of the book of Revelation.

Conclusions:

Whether you read the book of Revelation as being in chronological order, or as a series of parallel narratives of the history of the church age, it will lead to different interpretations concerning the millennium. The fact that the genre of the book of Revelation is apocalyptic literature must be taken into consideration in how to approach the reading and the interpretation of the book. The weight of the biblical evidence determined from the chronological or recapitulative reading of the book of Revelation should greatly impact your view regarding the millennium.

Chapter 9 – The Mark of the Beast

In this chapter, I want to give another perspective on the mark of the beast. Many have taught, from a premillennial perspective, that the mark is possibly a computer chip embedded just under the skin on the forehead or right hand. The scripture says. “¹⁶ He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, ¹⁷ and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name (Revelation 13:16-17). This is one of the most fearful verses found in the scriptures because of the consequences for one who takes the mark. The following passage details what will befall anyone who takes the mark of the beast.

⁹ Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰ he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” (Revelation 14:9-11)

Anyone receiving the mark of the beast will suffer from the wrath of God by being tormented in hell, day and night, for ever and

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ever. There is no hope for anyone taking the mark. This is why these are the most feared verses in the Bible.

We need to give some background to the term “the beast.” In the book of Revelation, the beast has come to represent the world system. The beast will also be manifested as a person that is known as the antichrist, the son of perdition, the personification of evil. The scripture says, “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” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). The following passage speaks of the beast.

Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.² Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like *the feet of* a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.³ And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast.⁴ So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who *is* like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?” (Revelation 13:1-4)

The beast is described as coming out of the sea having seven heads and ten horns. It is obvious that this passage is not to be taken literally, but is symbolic of the nations of the world. It is a combination of the four beasts found in Daniel chapter 7 which represent the world empires from the time of the prophet Daniel and going forward in history. In the prophecy. The lion representing Babylon, a bear representing Medeo-Persia, a leopard, Greece, and a fourth beast dreadful and terrible symbolizing Rome and beyond.

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The beast coming out of the sea has a meaning of itself. The “sea” represents evil, chaos, and destruction in the world. Everything bad comes out of the sea. The sea is used as a metaphor for man, his sin, and rebellion against God. It is where all evil and human depravity come from. It is interesting that in the eternal state there will be no more sea. The Bible says, “Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also, there was no more sea. ² Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Revelation 21:1-2). When the Bible says there will be no more sea may not mean there will be no more bodies of water. It may be a symbolic way of saying that the source of human depravity will be done away with.

Much could be said about this prophecy, but the point I am making is that these beasts represent the world empires that dominated God’s people over the course of time leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70. Prior to the return of Christ, an end time beast that is the culmination of the beasts from Daniel, will emerge to dominate the world and demand allegiance and worship.

I believe we are seeing the manifestation of the beast system on our world today. My definition of “the beast” is as follows. The beast is the world system that seizes control in all areas of life; political, financial/economic, education, news media, entertainment, culture, social, moral, and spiritual; and demands allegiance/worship to the system. It redefines established norms, systems, laws, and forces changes in daily life. (See 1 Maccabees 1:41-64) It involves a systemic transformation of the world. Its purpose is to totally drive God out of life, by shifting worship and adoration towards Satan in creating a Satanic Anti-God utopia.

There was a character from history that was a forerunner of the end time antichrist (the beast). Antiochus Epiphanes was a Greek king of the Seleucid Empire who reigned over Syria from 175 BC until

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164 BC. He was known for his brutal persecutions of the Jews that brought on the Maccabean revolt. He desecrated the Jewish temple by setting up an altar of Zeus and sacrificing a swine on the altar. Following is a quote from the Old Testament Apocrypha concerning this king. Take note of how he tried to take God out of the lives of the people and how it has a striking resemblance to what is happening in our world today. Even though this book (1 Maccabees) was not included in the Bible as an inspired writing, it is valuable as a historical reference of the time.

⁴¹ Moreover king Antiochus wrote to his whole kingdom, that **all should be one people,** ⁴² And **everyone should leave his laws:** so, all the heathen agreed according to the commandment of the king. ⁴³ Yea, many also of the Israelites consented to his religion, and sacrificed unto idols, and profaned the sabbath. ⁴⁴ For the king had sent letters by messengers unto Jerusalem and the cities of Juda that they should follow the strange laws of the land, ⁴⁵ And forbid burnt offerings, and sacrifice, and drink offerings, in the temple; and that they should profane the sabbaths and festival days: ⁴⁶ And pollute the sanctuary and holy people: ⁴⁷ Set up altars, and groves, and chapels of idols, and sacrifice swine's flesh, and unclean beasts: ⁴⁸ That they should also leave their children uncircumcised, and make their souls abominable with all manner of uncleanness and profanation: ⁴⁹ **To the end they might forget the law, and change all the ordinances.** ⁵⁰ **And whosoever would not do according to the commandment of the king, he said, he should die.** ⁵¹ In the selfsame manner wrote he to his whole kingdom, and appointed overseers over all the people, commanding the cities of Juda to sacrifice, city by city. ⁵² Then many of the people were gathered unto them, to wit every one that forsook the law; and

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so, they committed evils in the land; ⁵³ And drove the Israelites into secret places, even wheresoever they could flee for succour. ⁵⁴ **Now the fifteenth day of the month Casleu, in the hundred forty and fifth year, they set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar,** and builded idol altars throughout the cities of Juda on every side; ⁵⁵ And burnt incense at the doors of their houses, and in the streets. ⁵⁶ **And when they had rent in pieces the books of the law which they found, they burnt them with fire.** ⁵⁷ And whosoever was found with any the book of the testament, or if any committed to the law, the king's commandment was, that they should put him to death. ⁵⁸ Thus did they by their authority unto the Israelites every month, to as many as were found in the cities. ⁵⁹ Now the five and twentieth day of the month they did sacrifice upon the idol altar, which was upon the altar of God. ⁶⁰ At which time according to the commandment they put to death certain women, that had caused their children to be circumcised. ⁶¹ And they hanged the infants about their necks, and rifled their houses, and slew them that had circumcised them. ⁶² Howbeit many in Israel were fully resolved and confirmed in themselves not to eat any unclean thing. ⁶³ Wherefore the rather to die, that they might not be defiled with meats, and that they might not profane the holy covenant: so then they died. ⁶⁴ **And there was very great wrath upon Israel.** (1 Maccabees 1:41-64)

This passage reflects the same beast spirit that is at work in our world today. So, the beast represents the world system and a person. In order to present another view of the mark of the beast, we need to consider some scriptures that will lay the foundation of

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what it means to be “marked.” The following passages will emphasize the forehead and the hand.

⁴“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one! ⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. ⁶“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. ⁸**You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.** ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, emphasis added)

¹⁸“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, **and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.** ¹⁹You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. ²⁰And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, ²¹that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth. (Deuteronomy 11:18-21, emphasis added)

The passage in Deuteronomy chapter 6 is one of the most quoted in Judaism. Verse 4 is the first verse of the Shema, the most essential declaration of the Jewish faith. I also included a similar passage in Deuteronomy chapter 11 that repeats God’s Word to His people. They are to love God with all their heart. They are to keep

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His Words in their heart and bind them on their hand and they shall be on their foreheads as frontlets (an ornamental piece of clothing), and written on the doorpost of their house and on their gates. God's Word was to be ingrained in their being and very evident in their lives.

These two passages speaking of having God's Word in your heart are an example of repetition in the Bible. In studying the scriptures, it can be helpful to look for repetition. Repetition can be a repeated word (Holy, Holy, Holy or Truly, truly), a repeated phrase (do not be afraid), or a repeated structure (for instance Jesus's structure in the Sermon on the Mount of saying, "You have heard ... but I say."). The biblical writers purposely repeat certain words or phrases in a text in order to make a point. Other times they will repeat something but make a slight change – we might call this repetition with variation. The Ten Commandments were given twice (Exodus. 20:1-17 & Deuteronomy 5:7-21) just as in the passages we just read concerning the hand and forehead. The biblical principle of having two or more witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15; John 8:17) is used throughout scripture as a way of establishing God's truth. The importance of having God's Word bound to your hand and worm on the forehead emphasizes how God desires to constantly influence our thought and actions. It truly is His metaphorical way of expressing that we belong to Him.

Another scripture concerning the hand and forehead can be found in the Exodus 13. God was speaking to Moses, saying to sanctify (separate) the first born of both man and beast because they belong to Him. They also were to eat unleavened bread as part of the Passover observance for seven days. This was all to be done in remembrance in how the Lord brought them out of Egypt. These observances were to serve as follows, "It shall be as **a sign to you on your hand** and as a **memorial between your eyes**, that the LORD's law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt" (Exodus 13:9, emphasis added).

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God's command of wearing His Word on their hand and forehead is taken literally by orthodox Jews by wearing phylacteries, also called "tefillin." Phylacteries are small leather boxes that contain portions of the Law of Moses. The boxes are strapped to the wrist and to a sort of headband so that one literally carries the laws of God over his eyes and on his hands. Even though these commands were meant to be figurative; some have taken them literally. That illustrates how sacred and important they honor God's Word in their lives. Wearing God's Word in this way symbolizes that the person belongs to God. It shows their allegiance is to Him and He governs over every aspect of their lives. In simple terms, the forehead represents your mind and the hand, one's actions. When a person belongs to God, their mind and actions are ruled by the Lord. God's Word on the hand and the forehead is figurative language that shows the person has been "marked" by God.

There are more examples of God marking His people. In the days of Ezekiel, a time of judgment came upon Israel for the abominations they committed in Jerusalem and the temple. God's wrath was poured out on the people. The glory of the Lord even departed from the temple (Ezekiel 10). However, before God executed His judgment, we read these verses, "⁴and the LORD said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and **put a mark on the foreheads** of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it." ⁵To the others He said in my hearing, "Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. ⁶Utterly slay old *and* young men, maidens and little children and women; **but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark**; and begin at My sanctuary" So they began with the elders who *were* before the temple. (Ezekiel 9:4-6, emphasis added). Here we see God marked His people who were crying out over the abominations that were taking place and they were spared from God's wrath.

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The final example I want to share is talking about the one hundred and forty-four thousand in the book of Revelation which are God's people. The scripture says, Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred *and* forty-four hundred thousand, **having His Father's name written on their foreheads**" (Revelation 14:1, emphasis added). Again, God's people were marked by having God's Name written on their foreheads signifying they belong to Him. They did not literally have God's Name written on them. It was a figurative way of emphasizing they were His.

This brings up to the question of what is the mark of the beast? If the book of Revelation is to be interpreted symbolically in following sound Bible hermeneutics because it is apocalyptic literature, then what does the "mark" in Revelation chapter 13 represent? Taking the "mark of the beast" can be defined as totally accepting and being committed to the beast system where it comes to the point of worship. It is giving one's allegiance to Satan. Whenever anyone pledges allegiance to Satan by rejecting Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, they are in effect taking the "mark of the beast" and will suffer the wrath of God in the lake of fire for ever and ever. The world is trying to force Christians to submit and give allegiance to the beast, but believers must resist and stay loyal to Christ. The mark of the beast is not to be taken literally, but is a way of saying a person does not belong to God, but to Satan. This has been true throughout the entire church age. If a person does not belong to Christ, they will suffer the judgment and wrath of God by spending an eternity in hell. Jesus said, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36).

The literal interpretation of the mark of the beast appears to be coming true. Today, more than 50,000 people have elected to have a subdermal chip surgically inserted between the thumb and index finger, to serve as their new swipe key, or credit card. Is this

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proof that the literal translation hermeneutic of the book of Revelation the correct one? If the imagery of apocalyptic literature is to be interpreted symbolically, why are we seeing these things coming to pass in a literal manner? I believe the answer is that the imagery is connected to the reality, so the actual events reflect that imagery. To say that again, the actual event is the shadow of the spiritual reality. Based on that logic, it is not surprising to see an apparent literal fulfillment of the mark of the beast. Is a person doomed to hell because they receive a microchip implant in order to live in a digital currency system, or because they worship the beast (Revelation 14:9-10)?

If the mark of the beast is not a future event, then the fear of taking it is unfounded. Christians have faced severe persecution all through church history. Just prior to Christ's coming there will be great persecution against the church and we will need to endure it as believers have in the past. The severe implication of taking the mark is not something a believer will have to face. I still would not want to receive a microchip implanted in my skin, but we may be reading more into these verses when taking a literal interpretation of them. Christians need to continue to pledge their allegiance to Christ and not to the Beast. The best way to resist the mark of the beast is to obey Deuteronomy 6:6-9 by getting God's Word into your heart and keeping Jesus Christ as the most important part of your daily life.

If we are forced to submit to the beast system, which a totalitarian government demands, I want to give the same response as the three Hebrew children did when faced with being thrown into the fiery furnace, by refusing to worship the king's gods, "*If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up*" (Daniel 3:17-18. emphasis added).

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Another question concerning the beast is what is the meaning of the number 666? This is the most infamous of numbers and has been the center of many debates. The following verses were given earlier, but let us look at them again and highlight another aspect of the passage.

¹⁶ He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, ¹⁷ and that **no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark** or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

¹⁸ Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: **His number is 666.** (Revelation 13:16-18, emphasis added)

From the premillennial perspective, many say that the world will implement a cashless society and nobody will be able perform financial transactions without the microchip implanted in the right hand or forehead. This chip will contain all your financial information, medical records, criminal records, and everything about you. It will be the method by which the antichrist will be able to control the masses. We practically have this now due to the capabilities of cell phones. Practically everyone has a cell phone and the beast system can use them to control the masses.

It is believed that the antichrist's name will in the same manner add up to the number 666. In both the Hebrew and Greek languages in which the original Bible manuscripts were written, the letters in their alphabets represented both letters and numbers. Because of this dual usage of the symbols used, every word and name have a numerical value. This value is called "gematria." There are many interesting mathematical relationships when the gematria of words and sentences are examined. For example, some say the

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Emperor Nero's name added up to 666 and that he may have been the antichrist. Jesus's name when written in Greek comes up with the value 888. The number "8" in scripture is the number of new beginnings and Jesus brought in the new covenant. Many believe that the antichrist's name will have the numerical value of 666. We could go on and on calculating these number combinations to identify the antichrist by determining the numerical value of various leaders' names.

In examining these verses from the amillennial perspective and interpreting these scriptures symbolically, how do we interpret this passage? What is the meaning that no one can buy or sell unless they have the mark? The meaning could be that a person cannot freely function in society, like supporting their family, without giving in to the demands of the beast and participating in the new financial system. A person will be forced to use this system in order to be able to pay their bills and provide for their family. Failure to accept these financial and economic changes will, in a symbolic way, result in death. We see in our society today, if one does not give in to the demands of the woke culture, you will be cancelled. Cancel culture is a phrase contemporary to the late 2010s and early 2020s used to refer to a culture in which those who are deemed to have acted or spoken in an unacceptable manner are ostracized, boycotted, or shunned. One can in effect, in a symbolic way, be killed in that it can ruin a person's business or job, social standing, etc. Even though a person is not literally killed, being cancelled can have very harmful effects in destroying one's livelihood.

How are we to interpret the meaning of the number "666?" In the Bible, the number six is the number of man and human weakness. In Genesis, man was created on the sixth day (Genesis 1:26-31). The number seven signifies completion or perfection. It is God's number. The number six also represents imperfection because it falls short of God's perfect number. Therefore, we can say that the number 666 is a symbolic way of saying that if you follow the

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beast/antichrist/Satan, or man's way, it always falls short. Remember, we are interpreting apocalyptic literature. If we are to interpret the symbolic meaning of a beast coming out of the sea, we should also interpret the symbolic meaning of 666 and not attempt to literalize it.

I know some Christians today are very concerned about the possible implementation of a global digital currency, thinking this is taking the mark of the beast. How should Christians react to being forced to use digital currency? I believe a Christian should respond by following the same instructions Jesus gave to the Pharisees, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:7). If digital currency is forced as the medium of exchange, using it would not constitute taking the mark of the beast. The mark involves more than what currency you use. Taking the mark of the beast may not be intended to be taken literally, such as receiving a computer chip in your forehead or right hand. It may be symbolic language speaking of who one gives total allegiance to. Based on that, if we are forced to use digital currency, it does not mean you have given your life to Satan.

This chapter is considerably longer than others in this book, but this topic is very much on the minds of people. It is important to gain another perspective of what these passages mean in the Bible. Sometimes our fears are unfounded. When we gain more understanding of the scriptures, it can ease the fears we may have. This information may be overwhelming for some to receive, but give it time and continue to pray and allow the Holy Spirit guide you as you seek a deeper understanding of God's Word.

Chapter 10 - Daniel's Seventy Weeks Prophecy

The seventy weeks prophecy of Daniel chapter 9 is considered the chronological key for end time Bible prophecy. Its importance cannot be over emphasized. For that reason, I felt it necessary to compare how the premillennial and amillennial views interpret this prophecy. The following table gives the text of the prophecy with some notes concerning the different interpretations of the passage. This is a very high-level overview of this prophecy, but is intended to give you a basic understanding of how Bible scholars interpret this text differently.

As a reminder, the Premillennial position interprets this prophecy literally. The number of years given are literal. The amillennial position interprets this prophecy from a symbolic standpoint because it is coming from apocalyptic literature. The numbers appearing in this prophecy are symbolic in nature. Please consider the information in the following table.

Daniel 9:24-27	Premillennial	Amillennial
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	The prophecy states (<i>Futurists View</i>) that God will deal with the Jewish people and the city of Jerusalem over the course of 490 literal years, or 70 weeks of years (a day	The 70 weeks of years are interpreted symbolically, and not as a literal 490 years. Seventy times seven is a term that means many. When Jesus was asked how

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in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy.	equals one year, so $70 \times 7 = 490$ years). Six key activities that will be fulfilled or accomplished at the conclusion of the seventy weeks are given.	many times should we forgive someone, He said seventy times seven (Matt. 18:21-22), meaning an unlimited amount. The six accomplishments were fulfilled with the coming of Messiah.
25 “Know therefore and understand, <i>That</i> from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, <i>There shall be</i> seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times.	The seventy weeks will begin when a commandment is given to build and restore Jerusalem. There are several decrees given in history that could be this specific commandment with the most probable dates being in 457 BC and 444 B.C. The first 69 weeks divided into 2 sections; 49 years and 434 years. After 49 years the city & its walls were rebuilt, after 69 weeks, or 483 years, Messiah is crucified.	Some point to Cyrus’ decree in 539/538 B.C. as the command to start the seventy weeks (Ezra 1:1-4: 5:13, 17). Since the 70 weeks are interpreted symbolically, there is no need to come up with the exact number of years.

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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 <i>shall be</i> with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined.	Messiah being “cut off” is speaking of His death. Jerusalem & the Temple are destroyed by the “people” of the prince (antichrist) that shall come. Roman General Titus destroys Jerusalem in 70 AD. Jesus said every stone will be thrown down in Matt. 24:2: Luke 19:44; 21:6. The time clock of this prophecy stops after 69 weeks and we are in a holding pattern before the final 7 years (70th week) occurs. The Church Age.	Messiah being “cut off” is speaking of His death at the crucifixion. The prince who is to come is Christ, the people of the prince are the Jewish people who were ultimately responsible for Jerusalem and the temple’s destruction due to their sin. There is no gap or pause in the prophecy.
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 in the wing of abomin-	The reference to “He” is speaking of the antichrist. Final 7 years starts when the antichrist makes a covenant with the Jews (probably will provide peace and	The reference to “He” is speaking of Christ (see Chapter 7). Jesus came to establish the new covenant at the start of His earthly ministry.

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ations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate.”	rights to re-establish Temple worship). Antichrist commits abomination after 3 ½ years, stops the daily sacrifice, and sets up an image of himself and demands he be worshipped. The abomination continues until the antichrist’s end and defeat at Christ’s 2 nd Coming	In the middle of the 70 th week Jesus is crucified. The sacrifice of Himself no longer requires the need for animal sacrifices Heb. 9:12-14; 10:12-14). The last 3 ½ years of the 70 th week are represented symbolically by the entire church age (Rev. 12:5-6).
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Premillennial View:

In summary (according to the *Futuristic View*), the prophecy states that God will deal with the Jewish people and the city of Jerusalem over the course of 490 years, or 70 weeks of years (a day equals one year, so 70 X 7 = 490 years). There are six key points that will be fulfilled or accomplished at the conclusion of the seventy weeks. The seventy weeks begins when a commandment is given to build and restore Jerusalem. There are several decrees given in history that could be this specific commandment with the most probable dates being in 457 BC and 444 B.C. Once the commandment is given, there will be 483 years during which the city will be rebuilt, concluding with the Messiah being put to death, as mentioned in verse 26. This death or cutting off of the Messiah was the crucifixion of Jesus on the cross. After this the Temple and the city of Jerusalem will be destroyed which occurred in A.D. 70 by the Roman army. The term “Messiah the Prince” is a reference to Jesus Christ and the

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phrase, “the prince who is to come” is speaking of the Antichrist. The “*people* of the prince who is to come” are the Romans and many believe that the Antichrist will come from a modern-day country that was once part of the Roman Empire. The seventieth week of the prophecy begins when the Antichrist confirms a covenant, believed by many to be a middle east peace treaty between the Jews and Arabs. In the middle of this seventieth week, the Antichrist stops the daily sacrifice (which may have started as part of the covenant agreement) and demands to be worshipped as God. The Antichrist sets up an image in the rebuilt Jewish Temple (the 3rd Temple) which is called the Abomination of Desolation. At the conclusion of the seventy weeks, we know from Matthew 24:29 that Jesus Christ comes after the tribulation of those days.

The first 69 weeks (483 years) of this prophecy have passed, ending with Christ’s crucifixion, followed with the destruction of the Jewish Temple in A.D. 70. The final week, or seven years has not occurred because the prophecy has been put on pause. The final seven years will be the tribulation period that leads up to Christ’s Second Coming. This final week of the prophecy is set back in motion when the Antichrist makes a covenant or peace treaty with Israel. The prophecy says, “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... (Daniel 9:27a).” This is where we get the understanding that there will be a seven-year period that leads up to the coming of the Lord.

I must point out that there are some who do not agree with the pause or gap in this prophecy between the 69th and 70th weeks (*Historicist* View). They claim that this radical interpretative gap is being read into the text because it is not plainly there. To go into a detailed defense for the gap interpretation is outside the scope of this book, but there is considerable scholarly support for placing a pause or gap between the 69th and 70th weeks.

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Amillennial View:

The Bible uses “seven” as a figure of perfection, and “ten” as a figure of completion. Therefore the “seventy sevens” represent a perfect and complete time period. When reading this prophecy, the “seventy sevens” is not seen as a formula that equals 490 literal years, but an idiom that means “many,” or “a fulness of time.” An idiom is a common phrase which means something different from its literal meaning. As used by Jesus (Matthew 18:21-22) in the gospels, it is symbolic of God’s eternal forgiveness. The seventy weeks prophecy is to be viewed by following a symbolic interpretation.

Some point to Cyrus’s decree in 539 B.C. as the starting point where the Jews were allowed to rebuild the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. The seventy sevens are not literal years, so there is no tracking of the years to pinpoint its fulfillment. Following are seven reasons why a-millennialist incorporate a symbolic interpretation of the seventy weeks prophecy:

1. Strictly speaking, no one should take it literally. The scripture says “seventy sevens” and not “seventy years.” Taken literally as seventy weeks of days, it would be about a year and four months, and nobody interprets it that way. The accomplishments of verse 24 did not happen in span of a year and a half.
2. Jeremiah’s seventy years (Jeremiah 25:11; 29:10) were not a literal seventy years. The length of the Babylon captivity was sixty-seven years from 605 B.C. to 538 B.C. However, there are other opinions concerning the time period of the captivity where some of them do equal seventy years. Seventy is a rounded number of completion.
3. Jesus’s use of seventy times seven was not intended to be the literal number of times you should forgive someone

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(Matthew 18:21-22). It was a symbolic value that meant an unlimited number of times.

4. Seventy times seven is symbolic of a ten-fold Jubilee. Every seventh year the land was to enjoy a sabbath of rest, called a Shemita (Leviticus 25:1-7). Every forty-nine years, or seven times seven Shemita years was a Jubilee (Leviticus 25:8-12). It was a time when the captives were set free, land returned to its original owner, and debts were cancelled (that represented the release of our sins). Seventy times seven is ten Jubilees and symbolic for the ultimate Jubilee.
5. Nebuchadnezzar's period of insanity was called "seven periods of time" (Daniel 4:23). Seven is used as a symbolic number for the time Nebuchadnezzar needed to recognize that God is the ruler over the realm of mankind (Daniel 4:28-32).
6. The most likely starting date of the seventy sevens is Cyrus's decree in 539 B.C. Adding 490 years to 539 B.C. does not bring you to the time of Christ, therefore it must be considered symbolically.
7. Revelation chapters 11, 12, and 13 speak of a 3 ½ year period that is symbolic of the entire period between Christ's two comings. The proof text of Revelation 12:5-6 speaks of a time of persecution of the church that starts when the Son was caught up to God. The woman (the church) fled into the wilderness and was protected for one thousand two hundred and sixty day, or 3 ½ years, being the entire church age. To the Jewish mind, reference to a 3 ½ year period means really bad times. For example:
 - The three and a half years of no rain in the days of Elijah (Luke 4:25; James 5:17). It was the days of his persecution

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- The severe persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes in 167-164 B.C.
- The siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 66 to A.D. 70.

Leading up to the seventieth week, the prophecy is divided into a period of seven weeks and then sixty-two weeks. The first seven weeks was a period of rebuilding of the Jerusalem and the temple. The next sixty-two weeks is the time leading up to the coming of the Messiah.

The amillennial view says that the “he” in Daniel 9:27 is speaking of Messiah, not the antichrist. Jesus’s death on the cross was the ultimate sacrifice that caused the sacrifices to cease because they were no longer necessary. The crucifixion occurs in the middle of the seventieth week and the last three-and-one half years are symbolically portrayed by the church age (Rev. 12:5-6). The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70 was in accordance to the prophecy.

There is no gap or pause in the prophecy for the unfolding of the final seventieth week of the prophecy. It is not a literal seven-year period just prior to Christ’s second coming. The numbers associated with this prophecy are symbolic values and are not meant to be taken literally. The seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments do not occur in a seven-year tribulation at the end of the age, but over the course of church history.

Other Comments:

A premillennial literal interpretation of the seventy weeks with the gap, enables the second coming of Christ to be calculated, starting when the covenant is confirmed by just counting the days or years. In essence, one can know when Christ will return after the tribulation begins. Scripture says no one knows the day and He comes as a thief in the night, but this is not dealt satisfactorily with

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in the premillennial view. In the amillennial view, you cannot calculate His coming by using the number of days in the seventy weeks prophecy because they are not literal days but symbolic numbers. His coming will be truly anytime and cannot be pre-determined. This satisfies the scripture that one knows the day since He comes as a thief in the night. (Matthew 24:42-44; Revelation 16:15)

It is hard for me to symbolize the seventy weeks prophecy. I am a numbers/literal black and white minded person. It can be difficult for me to think more abstract when interpreting apocalyptic literature. I believe this is the tendency of most people, but you need to put on another hat, so to speak when studying Bible prophecy. If you stick with the process in using this symbolic interpretative lens, the Holy Spirit will increase your understanding.

Dual Fulfillment of Prophecy:

It is possible that the seventy weeks prophecy is so deep that it can be interpreted in several ways, such as in a literal and symbolic way, and both be correct. Dual fulfillment of prophecy basically means that a prophecy can be fulfilled more than once. There can be a near and a far or distant fulfillment. We can see this possibility in Jesus's Olivet Discourse. For example, what Jesus said in Matthew 24/Mark 13/Luke 21 can have a near fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and a far fulfillment over the course of the church age, or at the time just prior to Christ's second coming.

I believe we can see a principle like prophetic dual fulfillment in the interpretation of the seventy weeks prophecy. It is extraordinary that when interpreting the 490 years literally, it can pinpoint Christ's earthly ministry exactly. Without going into the details of how this can mathematically be demonstrated, the end of the 483 years where Christ is cut off can be traced to the beginning of Christ's earthly ministry, or to the exact day of Christ's triumphal

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entry into Jerusalem. In fact, based on the seventy weeks prophecy, the Jews should have known that Jesus was the promised Messiah. You can use the decrees in 457 B.C. or 444 B.C. as the starting date of the seventy weeks and still come to Christ's coming. The scripture says,

⁴¹ Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, ⁴² saying, "**If you had known, even you, especially in this your day,** the things *that make* for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side. (Luke 19:41-43, emphasis added)

Jesus was saying that the Jews should have known the timing and significance of His coming. They could have based Messiah's arrival on the timing of the seventy weeks prophecy. In my opinion, this is strong biblical evidence that the seventy weeks can be interpreted literally.

The seventy weeks can also be interpreted from a symbolic standpoint and still be correct. I believe the strength of this hermeneutic comes from how you can interpret the symbolic meaning of the 3 ½ years as evidenced by Revelation 12:5-6. Using the symbolic interpretation method, we do not have to make the number of years work out exactly.

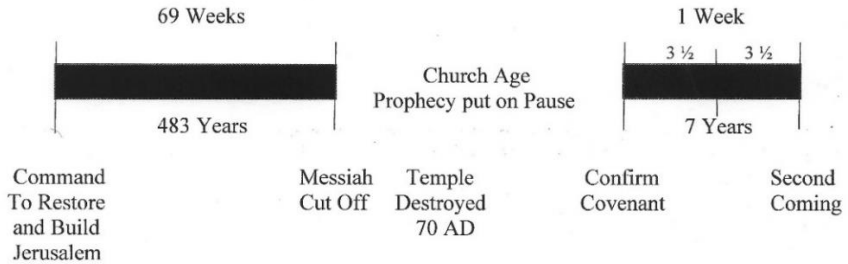
The application of the seventy weeks prophecy in both a literal and symbolic method of interpretation is totally awesome and demonstrates the depth of God's Word.

One thing I need to point out is there are different views on how the seventy weeks of years transpire, or occur on a timeline. Those who believe that the prophecy is on hold (gap theory) say the final seven-year period is the tribulation where the wrath of God is poured out. Others believe that the expiration of the 490 years occurred around 34 C.E. (historicist view). A-millennialists interpret

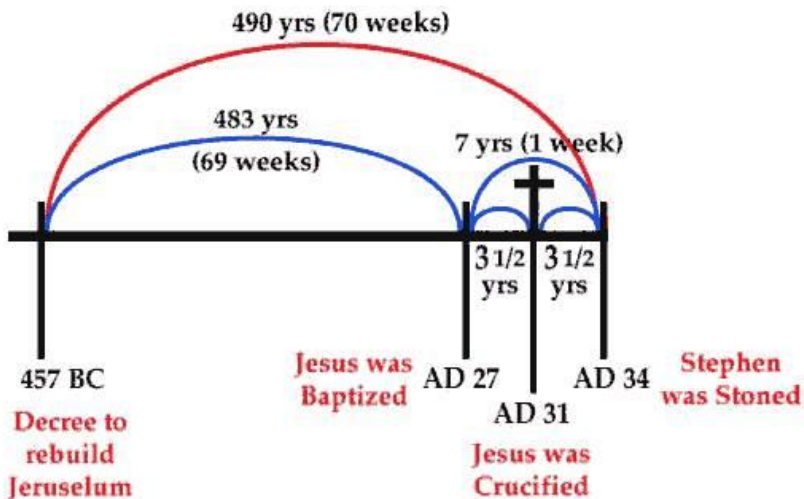
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the seventy weeks from a symbolic viewpoint. A timeline of each of these views is illustrated below:

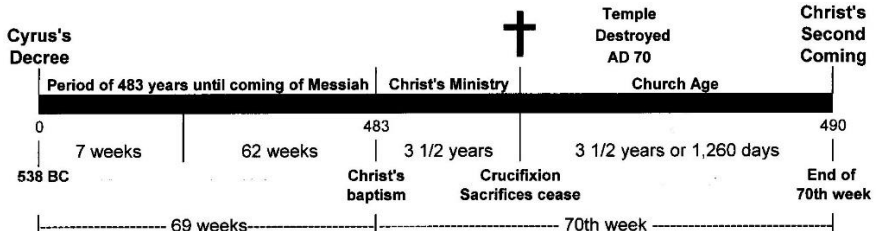
Seventy Weeks Timeline – Gap Theory:



Seventy Weeks Timeline – Historicist View:



Seventy Weeks Timeline – Symbolic View:



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As it can be seen in these timelines, one recognizes a gap in time, where the elapse time of the prophecy is placed on hold. Then a event in the future starts the timeclock again on the prophecy. In the Historicist timeline, the elapse time runs continuously and ends without any interruptions in time. Finally, the symbolic timeline is not based on the passage of a literal number of years. The numbers are symbolic values that can be defined by other scriptures in the Bible.

Conclusions:

The prevailing view in the church today is the seventy weeks gap theory interpretation which is the position of dispensational premillennialists. This view believes in a pre-tribulation rapture and a literal thousand year reign of Christ on earth. The amillennial position holds to the symbolic interpretation of the seventy weeks prophecy. In their view, there is one resurrection of the dead at Christ's second coming with no literal thousand year reign of Christ on earth. The eternal state follows Christ's return.

If focusing only on the text of the Daniel 9:24-27, each of the views presented are credible. The question is, which view carries the greatest weight of biblical evidence. One needs to consider other passages in scripture to help determine which view carries the most weight. The possibility of a dual fulfillment, or dual application (literal and symbolic) of the prophecy is fascinating.

In my opinion, the information I gave in chapter 5 concerning the end of death has a major impact on how we interpret the seventy weeks prophecy. In that chapter, I mention how I considered 1 Corinthian 15:54 a "plumline" that provides the straight line in which all Bible prophecies concerning the end of the age must come in line with and not conflict in any way. With that being said, I believe the weight of evidence leans toward the symbolic interpretation of the seventy weeks prophecy. However, I strongly support the

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calculations regarding the years leading to up the coming of Jesus that identify Him as the Messiah. You the reader may come up with different conclusions, and I respect your opinion. We cannot allow differences of how we interpret eschatological passages divide us as Christians.

Chapter 11 - Three and One-Half Years

In this chapter, I want to address the symbolic interpretation of the three and one-half years period used in the scriptures. The premillennial view takes a literal approach in looking at the three and one-half years. The amillennial positions interprets it symbolically. We see this time period mentioned in various scripture references. It may take several forms; such as three years and six months (Luke 4:25; James 5:17; Daniel 9:27), forty-two months (Revelation 11:2; 13:5), one thousand two hundred sixty days (Revelation 11:3; 12:6), and a time, times, and half of time (Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Revelation 12:14).

A literal interpretation of Daniel's seventy weeks prophecy uses the three and one half-years in a major way during the seven-year tribulation period, as a half way point when the antichrist commits the abomination of desolation. This time frame is incorporated literally to the tribulation period just prior to Christ's second coming. In this chapter I will look at the scriptural evidence for interpreting this time period symbolically.

As I mention in chapter ten of this book, three and one-half years has a special meaning to the Jewish people. There were three and a half years of no rain in the days of Elijah (Luke 4:25; James 5:17). The severe persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes in 167-164 B.C. lasted for three and one-half years. The siege of Jerusalem in 66 C.E. to A.D. 70 also lasted for that amount of time. These were all very bad times for the nation of Israel. When a Jew hears three and one half-years, it means a very bad time. It is like saying to an American the numbers 911 and 1776. They would not mean anything special

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to people around the world, but to an American they bring memories of a terrible terrorist attack and of the thought of patriotism for the country.

When using the numbers that equate to three and one-half years in apocalyptic books such as Daniel and Revelation, we should interpret these numbers symbolically in following a proper Bible hermeneutic. In doing this, it will drastically change how we view these passages.

According to amillennialism, Jesus was crucified at the midpoint of the seventieth week of Daniel's seventy weeks prophecy. His death no longer requires animal blood sacrifices (Daniel 9:27; Hebrews 9:12-14. 28). However, Daniel's prophecy gives no further information concerning the last three and one-half years of the seventieth week.

The key to the symbolic interpretation of the last three and one-half years of the seventieth week is found in Revelation chapter twelve. It can be said that chapters eleven, twelve, and thirteen, in the book of Revelation provides three parallel views of the church age. Chapter eleven from that of the two witnesses, chapter twelve from the view of the dragon, and chapter thirteen from the angle of the beast. All of this follows the recapitulative structure in Revelation.

In chapter twelve we see a woman giving birth to a child who was to rule all the nations. Every Bible scholar would agree that the child is Christ. A dragon, figuratively speaking of Satan, stood before the woman to devour her child as soon as it was born because he knows the prophecy that the seed of a woman will crush his head (Genesis 3:15). This corresponds to Herod the Great killing the children under two years old in order to kill Jesus (Luke 2:16). The scripture says the child was caught up to God which is the ascension of Christ (Acts 1:9-11). What we need to consider is the timeframe connected to the woman's flight into the wilderness.

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⁵ And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. ⁶ **And the woman fled into the wilderness**, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there **a thousand two hundred and threescore days**. (Revelation 12:5-6, emphasis added)

Amillennialism sees the three and one-half years as symbolically representing the church age, or the time between Christ's first and second comings. Notice that as soon as the child is caught up to God, the woman fled into the wilderness to be protected by God. The length of time mentioned is one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

We know God spiritually protects His people throughout the entire church age (refer to chapter 12 of this book). This timeframe is meant to refer to the entire time the woman was in the wilderness. This should make us think of the exodus when God's people journeyed through the wilderness to the promised land. The Bible says, "For the LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hand. He knows your trudging through this great wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God *has been* with you; you have lacked nothing" (Deuteronomy 2:7). In this same way, God has been with the church through its time in the wilderness. Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

During this symbolic period of one thousand two hundred and sixty days, the church will be persecuted, but God still has His hand on them. The scripture says;

¹³ Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth

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to the male *Child*. ¹⁴ But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. ¹⁵ So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. ¹⁶ But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. ¹⁷ And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. (Revelation 12:13-17)

In the symbolic reading of Revelation chapter twelve, it can be seen, that the one thousand two hundred and sixty days is not a literal time reference. This chapter is giving a view of church history from the aspect of the dragon. The woman representing God's people are persecuted, but under the care of God.

In this passage, there is no evidence of a time gap in the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy. Does the biblical evidence show that the three and one-half years is not literal, but representative of the entire church age? When looking through an amillennial lens, this can be seen. The question becomes, is this the proper way to interpret this chapter in the book of Revelation? That is the conclusion that must be drawn from weighing the biblical evidence.

Chapter 12 - The Two Witnesses

Another teaching we need to consider from the book of Revelation in the weighing of the evidence concerning the millennium is that of the two witnesses. The premillennial and a-millennial positions hold very different views concerning the identification and interpretation of the two witnesses in Revelation chapter 11. The premillennial position interprets this chapter literally while the a-millennial position follows a symbolic interpretation method. We will weigh the scriptural evidence proposed by each view concerning the two witnesses and see what effect it has on the millennium.

The text is as follows:

The Two Witnesses

Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. ²But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot *for* forty-two months. ³And I will give *power* to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

⁴These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.

⁵And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if

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anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. ⁶These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.

The Witnesses Killed

⁷When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. ⁸And their dead bodies *will lie* in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. ⁹Then *those* from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. ¹⁰And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

The Witnesses Resurrected

¹¹Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. ¹²And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. ¹³In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven. (Revelation 11:1-13)

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The literal interpretation of this passage makes things very clear. In his vision, John is instructed to measure the Temple, the altar

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and those that worship there. He is instructed to leave out the outer court because it has been given over to the Gentiles. Some say this is a prophecy that proves there will be a Jewish temple built on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The area given over to the Gentiles is the current Dome of the Rock, the Arab mosque that was built on the traditional site of the first two temples in the late 7th century A.D. It is believed that the peace treaty (Daniel 9:27) that begins the tribulation period, or the seventieth week of Daniel's seventy weeks prophecy, may give the Jews the right to build a temple without disturbing the current Dome of the Rock. The third temple, or tribulation temple, will be the site where the antichrist commits the abomination of desolation (Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4) at the mid-point of the tribulation.

God will give miracle working power to His two witnesses who will prophecy for one thousand two hundred sixty days, or forty-two months which is half of the seven-year tribulation. There are several views on the identity of the two witnesses. Some believe they are Moses and Elijah because the miracles they will perform duplicate those performed during their lives. Such as fire devouring his enemies (2 Kings 1) and shutting up the rain for three and one-half years (1 Kings 17:1; 18:1; Luke 4:25-26) were performed by Elijah. The miracles of Moses included turning the water to blood and sending the plagues on the Egyptians (Exodus 7-11). Moses and Elijah also appeared with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:3-4).

The two witnesses could be two prophets who never experienced physical death, Enoch (Genesis 5:21-24) and Elijah (2 Kings 2:11). Since the scriptures says, "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27), they will suffer death when the beast kills them at the end of their prophecy.

The two witnesses will conduct their ministry for three and one-half years after the rapture of the church. There are two of them to meet the requirement of the Jewish Law that out of the mouth of

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two witnesses, every word will be established (Deuteronomy 19:15). They will warn the world of God's upcoming judgment. Some will have faith and believe in Christ for salvation, others will hate and reject Christ. Even when God removes all believers via the rapture, He does not leave the world without a witness.

When their ministry is finished, they will be killed by the beast and their dead bodies will lie in the streets of Jerusalem for three and one-half days, not allowing them to be buried. The world will rejoice at their death and even send gifts to each other to celebrate the fact that these two who tormented them are dead.

After three and one-half days, the two witnesses are resurrected in the sight of the whole world. A voice from heaven says "come up here," very similar to what John heard in Revelation 4:1, that many say is the rapture in the book of Revelation. The two witnesses are taken up into heaven. After that there was a great earthquake killing seven thousand people.

Premillennialists have different views concerning the actual timing of the ministry of the two witnesses. Some believe it occurs during the first half of the tribulation. Others say that it occurs during the last half of the tribulation, the time Jesus calls the great tribulation (Matthew 24:21). I believe that most point to the last half of the tribulation for the ministry of the two witnesses.

The premillennial view of the two witnesses follows a literal interpretation of the text. This comes from a plain reading of the scripture. This is the prevailing view of the church today.

Amillennialism

The symbolic approach in interpreting Revelation 11 gives a vastly different view of the two witnesses than does the literal interpretation of this chapter. It is important, when interpreting symbolic passages to allow the clearer passages of scripture to interpret those that are not as clear. The Bible will interpret its own

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symbols. It can be hard for those who have been taught a literal interpretation of the book of Revelation, to hear a symbolic interpretation. It does take time to absorb and process what we hear. It may require an accumulative process over time to understand and weigh the evidence of the validity of a symbolic interpretative approach to the book of Revelation.

Revelation chapter eleven begins with the measurement of the temple of God. Measurement here signifies protection. The idea of protection connected with measuring can be illustrated by the following verses.

Then I raised my eyes and looked, and behold, **a man with a measuring line** in his hand. ² So I said, "Where are you going?" And he said to me, "To measure Jerusalem, to see what *is* its width and what *is* its length." ³ And there *was* the angel who talked with me, going out; and another angel was coming out to meet him, ⁴ who said to him, "Run, speak to this young man, saying: 'Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, because of the multitude of men and livestock in it. ⁵ **For I,' says the Lord, 'will be a wall of fire all around her,** and I will be the glory in her midst.' " (Zechariah 2:1-5, emphasis added)

This passage has a man with a measuring line to measure Jerusalem. It goes on to say that God will "be a wall of fire around her," This is speaking of God's protection. What is not measured is not protected by God. Measurement is a symbol of God's spiritual protection of His people, through great suffering, great persecution, and even through death. The New Testament speaks much about believers going through persecution.

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or

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famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶As it is written “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” ³⁷Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. ³⁸For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35-39)

This passage mentions things that happens to our bodies. You can be destroyed physically, but still be the one winning the victory. This flips our thinking upside down. The Bible says, “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). In the Christian life, we will be persecuted. Even though we may experience physical suffering, we are blessed and experience the victory spiritually in this life. From a physical angle, it looks like we lose, but from the spiritual angle, it is the exact opposite. Even if we die, we are overcoming the enemy. Consider the following:

⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. ¹⁶Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, (2 Corinthians 4:7, 16-17)

These verses show that we can be blessed spiritually, and at the same time endure severe persecution. The measurements of the temple of God are not speaking literally, but symbolically. In the scriptures just quoted concerning the suffering a Christian will

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endure. We can apply this principle to the measuring of the temple. The inner court is the spiritual side of a believer that is protected, while the outer court represents the physical side (the body) that is not protected that will endure suffering and persecution in this life.

The reference to the temple of God is not speaking of a building, but to the church, or the people of God. In the New Testament, the phrase “temple of God” appears seven times. In none of these instances is it speaking of a building. It is speaking of the body. One of these passages says, ¹⁶Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you? ¹⁷If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which *temple* you are” (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). We are dealing with a symbol for God’s church and not a building. The temple is the place where God dwells in the midst of His people.

Verse two also speaks of the holy city (the church) being tread under foot for fort-two months. In the previous chapter of this book, I addressed the symbolic meaning of the three and one-half years. It is representative of the entire church age (Revelation 12:5-6). The church will be subject to suffering and persecution until Christ returns, but she will be spiritually protected.

In verse three we see the two witnesses who will prophecy for one thousand two hundred and sixty days. The one thousand two hundred and sixty days is another term for the three and one-half years. Each prophetic month is counted as thirty days, so therefore it equals three and one-half years. The two witnesses will humbly (clothed in sackcloth) minister for the church age.

Why use a symbol for three and a half years that is going to last 2000 plus years? We can find the answer in the fact that the scripture is not speaking of an *amount of time*, but the *kind of time*. In the Jewish mind, three and one-half years represents a very bad period of time. It is used in a figurative way and not in a literal sense.

The question becomes, who do the two witnesses symbolize? Verse four identifies them as the two olive trees and the two

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lampstands. Many times, the Bible interprets its own symbols. Two olive trees and two lampstands are mentioned in Zechariah chapter four regarding the rebuilding of the temple by Zerubbabel. The two olive trees were identified as “the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth” (Zechariah 4:14). The lampstand of gold with seven lamps is identified as the scripture says, “They are the eyes of the Lord, Which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth” (Zechariah 4:10). Zechariah’s vision of a new lampstand (Zechariah 4:1–3) meant that God would certainly build His house, for the lampstand would be useless without the temple. Though the restoration was troubled and it was a day of meager beginnings, Israel would one day rejoice in fullness.

In Revelation chapter eleven, the two witnesses (anointed ones) represent the witness of the church. The church has been commissioned by Christ to preach the gospel to all nations (Matthew 28:18-20). Scripture says that it takes two witnesses to establish any matter or fact (Deuteronomy 19:15; Matthew 18:16). Jesus sent out disciples two by two to the places He was about to go (Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1). As we can see, two witness are needed to establish the gospel and they are a figurative way of speaking of the witness of the church in the earth.

The book of Revelation itself defines the meaning of the lampstands. The scripture says, “The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and **the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches**” (Revelation 1:20, emphasis added). The lampstands symbolize the church. The “stars” mentioned (Revelation 1:16, 20) are the “angels” of the seven churches. The word angel comes from the Greek word *aggelos* which means a messenger or one who is sent from God. This could mean an angel or the minister of a church. There are seven lampstands mentioned in Revelation chapter one and only two in chapter 11.

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Seven is the number of divine completion, so it is representative of all churches. Two lampstands represent the witness of the church.

In the book of Revelation, what comes out of mouths is symbolic of power, to speak truth, to kill, to injure, etc. It is not to be taken literally, but to communicate the power of words. The powers these two witnesses demonstrate, makes us think of the prophets Moses and Elijah in the Old Testament who stopped it from raining, called fire down from heaven, turned the waters to blood, and struck the earth with plagues. There is an amazing fact, it is said that Numbers chapter thirty-three mentions forty-two stopping points of the Hebrews from Egypt to the promised land. Again, the number forty-two is connected to Moses and the forty-two months symbolize the length of their witness. Moses and Elijah represent the Law and the prophets which is God's testimony to His people and to the world. The Law and the prophets ultimately are testifying of Jesus. We see Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration, seeing Jesus in His glory, "And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him" (Luke 9:35). Moses and Elijah's purpose is to point us to Jesus. These two witnesses invoking in our thoughts Moses and Elijah, represent the church witnessing to the world and the power of their testimony.

At the end of the church age when the two witnesses' prophecy is finished, the beast will overcome them (Daniel 7:25; Revelation 13:7). This is at the end of the age when the church will be brutally treated by the world. This corresponds to Satan being released (Revelation 20:7-8) to be able to deceive the nations and gather them together for war. The Apostle Paul spoke of this as when the son of perdition/destruction is no longer restrained (2 Thessalonians 2:3-7).

The death of the two witness signifies the beast overcoming them and Christianity being vanquished. The three and one-half days, using a smaller scale than the three and one-half years, represents an intense persecution of the church at the end of the age just before

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Christ returns. Their dead bodies lying in the street symbolizes the total disrespect the world has for the Christian faith (not providing a proper burial shows total disrespect). The world rejoices at the fact of its apparent demise. The raising of the two witnesses represents the resurrection at Christ return. At Christ's glorious return (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; Titus 2:13; Revelation 1:7), every eye will see Him.

Following the raising of the two witnesses, Revelation chapter eleven proclaims the blowing of the seventh trumpet (Revelation 11:15-19), also known as the last trumpet (1 Corinthians 15:51-53), where the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ. At this time, God's wrath has come and the time of judgment for the world. Whenever the scripture speaks of lightening, thunder, and earthquakes, it is speaking of the end. In Revelation chapter eleven we see an overview of history. Another overview of history is given in chapter twelve, and again in chapter thirteen, thus illustrating the recapitulative structure of the book of Revelation.

Conclusion from this Chapter

Premillennialism argues that the two witness are literal people and are most likely two prophets from the Old Testament. Amillennialism sees the two witnesses as the true prophetic witness in Revelation symbolizing the church, and they serve as the counterpart to the false prophetic witness, the beast from the land, who has two horns like a lamb (Revelation 13:11; 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). You must weigh the biblical evidence of these two positions and determine which one is best supported by the scriptural evidence.

Chapter 13 - End Time Judgments

The **premillennial position** believes that there are three judgments associated with the end times. When the rapture occurs (pretribulation view), all believers will appear before the judgment seat of Christ, also called the Bema Seat judgment. This is not a judgment that concerns heaven or hell, but rewards that will be given in a believer's service to the Lord. Everyone is saved who appears in this judgment. The judgment of nations occurs at the second coming of Christ. All nations will be gathered before Him who survived the tribulation. All believers will enter the millennium in mortal bodies while the wicked will be sent into everlasting fire. The third judgment is the Great White Throne and is the final judgment. Only the wicked appear before the great white throne and will be cast into the lake of fire, also called the second death.

The **amillennial position** believes that there is only one final judgment. The three judgments are not separate judgments of God separated by a span of time, but three different views of one event. Think of a football game where a controversial play is reviewed by instant replay. The play is reviewed by the various camera angles to get a ruling on the play. Each camera view provides different looks at what happened. The Bible is giving us different angles of the judgment when Christ returns.

The following table gives the scripture passage for each of the three judgments mentioned in the New Testament. Some other verses were included in the middle column that speak of the judgment at the last day, or the end of the age. This presentation is

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given to help in weighing the biblical evidence to determine if there are three separate judgments or one.

Judgment of Nations	Great White Throne	Judgment Seat
³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides <i>his</i> sheep from the goats. ³³ And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵ for I was	¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is <i>the Book of Life</i>. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his	⁹ Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things <i>done</i> in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:9-10) ¹⁰ But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. ¹¹ For it is written:

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hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; ³⁶ <i>I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'</i> ³⁷ "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed <i>You</i>, or thirsty and give <i>You</i> drink?' ³⁸ When did we see You a stranger and take <i>You</i> in, or naked and clothe <i>You</i>? ³⁹ Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' ⁴⁰ And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did <i>it</i> to one of	works. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵ And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11-15) ¹⁸ The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth." (Revelation 11:18) ⁴⁸ He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have	"As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God." ¹² So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. ¹³ Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in <i>our</i> brother's way. (Romans 14:10-13)
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the least of these My brethren, you did <i>it</i> to Me.' ⁴¹ "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: ⁴² for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' ⁴⁴ "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' ⁴⁵ Then He will	spoken will judge him in the last day. (John 12:48) ²⁷ And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, (Hebrews 9:27) ⁹ <i>then</i> the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, (2 Peter 2:9) ⁷ But the heavens and the earth <i>which</i> are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. (2 Peter 3:7)	
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answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do <i>it</i> to one of the least of these, you did not do <i>it</i> to Me.’ ⁴⁶ And these will go away into ever-lasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (Matthew 25:31-46)	¹⁴ Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, ¹⁵ to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” (Jude 14-15) ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, ⁴² and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in	
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	the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear! (Matt. 13:41-43) ⁴⁹ So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, ⁵⁰ and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” (Matt. 13:49-50)	
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Based on the review of the scriptural evidence, is there any indication that there are three separate judgments? All three make statements that all are gathered before God. In fact, Jesus Christ is the one who will be the judge. The scripture says;

²¹For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to *them*, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. ²²For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, ²³that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. (John 5:21-23)

In the passages presented, we can see that all must appear before God, and that some will be cast into everlasting punishment, or the lake of fire, and others enter eternal life. The scripture speaks

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of a “day of judgment,” not a series of judgments, that occurs when Christ returns at the end of the age.

Some argue that the Great White Throne is only for the wicked dead. However, we see in Revelation 11:18 the phrase “small and great,” referring to those who fear God which are the prophets and the saints. In Revelation 20:12 the phrase “small and great” appears again and says they are standing before God, which tells us the righteous are also standing before God at the Great White Throne. In the case of the righteous, we know they have eternal life.

We need to take notice that the “Book of Life” is mentioned (Revelation 20:12, 15) which records the names of those who are chosen (saved) before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4, Revelation 17:8). Why is the book of Life mentioned at a judgment which is only for the wicked? It shows that the whole of humanity will be standing before God. What is the evidence that a person’s name is written in the Book? They do not follow the beast (Revelation 13:8).

Another important point needs to be mentioned. Why do the texts that speak of judgment say a person is judged according to their works? A Christian is saved by grace through faith and not by their works (Ephesians 2:8-9). The scripture says, “¹⁶ knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified” (Galatians 2:16). In Christianity this doctrine is called justification by faith.

So, why do these texts say “the dead were judged according to their works,” or that “each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad?” Why do works play such an important role in the final judgment? I believe the answer is found in the words of Jesus;

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³³ “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; **for a tree is known by its fruit.** ³⁴ Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. ³⁵ A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. ³⁶ But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. ³⁷ For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” (Matthew 12:33-37, emphasis added)

What your actions are in this life determine where you are going to go at the judgment. Your fruit shows what kind of tree you are. Jesus is using a tree as a metaphor in representing a person's life. Your fruit does not make you a Christian, it proves you are a Christian. A transformation of life always occurs when you trust in Jesus. It is the fruit that shows the root has changed. What is in your heart will be manifested in what comes out of your mouth. A believer experiences a spiritual resurrection, or new birth, and is made a new creation in Christ. The Bible says, “Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17). A person's works is reflective of their spiritual condition, or what is in the heart. Our actions determine where we are in our status. Again, the emphasis on works at the final judgment proves if a person is saved or not and does not contradict the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

In the plain reading of the text, do three separate judgments come into view, or is there only one. That is the conclusion you must make in weighing the evidence.

We need to battle the inclination to view these judgments according to how we were taught. Are we separating these into three separate judgments because that what scripture says, or are we falling back to what we have been taught and forcing the scriptures

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to agree with our preconceived view? Are there three judgments or one? That is what the you need to decide based on the biblical evidence.

Chapter 14 - The Two Age Model

In our weighing of the biblical evidence concerning the mystery of the millennium, we can see from the premillennial position, three different ages. These ages are the current church age, the thousand-year kingdom age (the millennium), and the eternal state (the new heaven and new earth with the new Jerusalem). The existence of the millennium as a half-way consummation of Christ's return, is only mentioned in Revelation chapter 20. This view teaches that there will be people in mortal bodies co-existing with believers in glorified bodies. God's people will go back to the sacrificial system with a millennial temple in Jerusalem. The whole purpose for this age is allow God to fulfill His unconditional covenant promises to national Israel.

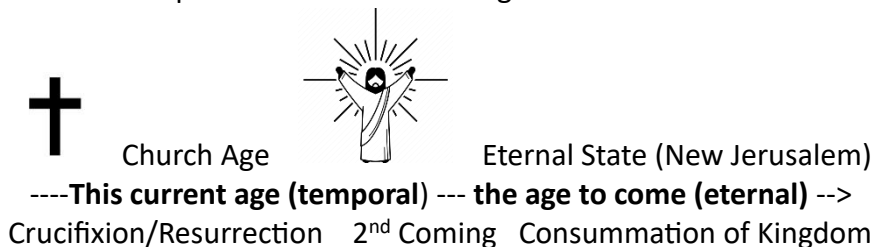
The a-millennial position argues that there is another interpretative grid in which to view the different ages from the time of Christ going forward. This interpretative grid is called the "two age model." They claim that this eschatological framework is provided for us by the New Testament writers and is known as "this age" and the "age to come." This model does not allow for a literal thousand-year age known as the millennium. In their view, the millennium is a present reality and not a future hope. Based on a recapitulative interpretation structure of the book of Revelation, chapter 20 is seen as an overview of history and not as a narrative of a continuing chronological order occurring after the second coming of Christ in chapter 19. This would support the two-age interpretative grid.

There is a concept of the "already but not yet." The theological concept of "already" and "not yet" was proposed by Princeton theologian Gerhardus Vos early in the 20th century, who believed that we live in the present age, the "now" and await the

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“age to come”. The concept of “already but not yet” implies that believers in Christ are currently taking part in the kingdom of God, but that the kingdom of God is coming in fullness sometime in the future. This idea of the “already and not yet” can be expressed in more concrete terms of “this age” and the “age to come.”

A simple timeline of the two-age model is illustrated below:



We see the “now and not yet” in the following scripture, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). The “already” refers to the eternal blessings of the age to come which are realized in the present, while the “not yet” refers to the blessings of the age to come, yet to be realized until the consummation of the kingdom.

We can see from the New Testament writers that they saw two ages and not three. This present age is always referred to as things temporal (temporary), things destined to perish. The age to come is referred to as an age of eternal life and immortality. It is the time after the rapture or resurrection, the final judgment, and the restoration of all things. Those who participate in the age to come are not characterized by the temporal, but the eternal.

The two-age concept is evidenced by the following passage, “²³ But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ’s at His coming. ²⁴ Then *comes* the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power” (1 Corinthians 15:23-24). Paul is

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speaking of the resurrection where Jesus Christ is the first to be resurrected with a glorified body. After that, believers will receive their glorified body when Christ returns (1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). In this passage we see that Jesus returns to rapture/resurrect believers and then comes the end. There is no millennium age in view here. Christ comes at the end of this age, and then there is the age to come. It is a time of resurrection and the consummation (the conclusion of God's purpose for the ages) of the kingdom.

There are some verses in the New Testament that mention in one verse "this age" and the "age to come," establishing the fact of two ages and not three. See the following:

Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in **this age** or in the **age to come**. (Matthew 12:32, emphasis added)

²⁹ So He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, ³⁰ who shall not receive many times more in **this present time**, and in the **age to come** eternal life." (Luke 18:29-30, emphasis added)

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**. (Ephesians 1:21, emphasis added)

We can see that Jesus and Paul both, spoke of just two ages. There is considerable biblical evidence for the two ages. Nowhere does the scripture give any inclination of three ages. If there is a

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millennial age to come, why were Jesus or Paul silent about it. The only mention of the millennium is by John in the book of Revelation. However, has been addressed in this book, based on different methods of interpretation, the symbolic interpretation of Revelation 20 can lead one to conclude that there is no literal thousand-year age called the millennium.

The following is a list of scripture references that speak of the two ages. Please consider these in your weighing of the evidence for the millennium.

Biblical Texts Which Speak of “This Age”

- Matthew 12:32 - There is no forgiveness for blasphemy against the Holy Spirit
- Matthew 13:40 – The tares will be gathered and burned at the end of this age
- Matthew 24:3 - The end of the age will be preceded by signs
- Matthew 28:20 - Christ will be with us until the end of the age
- Luke 18:30 - There are material rewards given to us in this life
- Luke 20:34 - The people of this age marry and are given in marriage
- Mark 10:30 - The present age is an age of homes, fields, and families
- Romans 12:2 -We are not to be conformed to the pattern of this world (age)
- 1 Corinthians 1:20 - Philosophy is the wisdom of this age
- 1 Corinthians 2:6-8 -Wisdom and rulers are of this age
- 1 Corinthians 3:18 – Those who seem wise in this age
- 2 Corinthians 4:4 - Satan is the god of this age who has blinded people’s minds
- Galatians 1:4 - The present age is evil
- Ephesians 1:21 - Christ reigns in present age

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- Ephesians 2:2 - The ways of this world (age) are evil
- Ephesians 6:12 – Wrestling against the rulers of darkness of this age
- I Timothy 6:17 - Those in this age, are not to hope in their wealth
- Titus 2:12 -We are to live Godly lives in the present age

In every instance the qualities associated with “this age” are temporal in nature. These texts describe the present course of history before the return of Christ and are things which pass away at his return.

Biblical Texts Which Speak of the “Age to Come”

- Matthew 12:32 - No forgiveness for blasphemy against the Holy Spirit
- Mark 10:30 - Eternal life as a reward in the age to come
- Luke 18:30 - Eternal life as a reward in the age to come
- Luke 20:35 - No marriage or giving in marriage
- Ephesians 1:21 - Christ will reign in age to come
- Ephesian 2:7 – Ages to come (the present Christian age and the eternal state)
- Ephesians 5:5 - Immoral people will not inherit kingdom of God
- I Timothy 6:19 – Storing up good works for the time to come
- Hebrews 6:5 – Tasting the Word of God and powers of the age to come

In marked contrast to “this age” the qualities assigned to the age to come are all eternal (or non-temporal) in nature. These references are clearly describing the future eschatological state of believers (and nonbelievers if you factor in the references to judgment).

“This age” and the “age to come” mentioned in the same verse

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- Matthew 12:32 – Speaking against the Holy Spirit not forgiven
- Luke 18:30 - Receiving many times more in this present time, and in the age to come
- Ephesians 1:21 – Christ is exalted in this age and that which is to come

The two ages mentioned in the same verse showing a distinction between the two. If there is a third age, there is no hint of it in these verses.

A Response to Premillennial Proof Texts from the Old Testament

If there is a literal thousand-year millennial age, then the two-age model would not be a correct interpretative grid. Is Revelation chapter 20 the only place in the Bible speaking of a thousand-year kingdom age on the earth? Some will argue that there are references to the millennium in the Old Testament. Many point to Isaiah chapters 60 and 65-66, plus Ezekiel chapters 40-48 for scriptural support for the millennium. There are other passages that could be given, but the ones given are the main ones often quoted.

Isaiah uses the language and categories of his day to express a future reality that transcends the language of his own day. For example, Isaiah wrote in speaking of the future, “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” (Isaiah 2:4a). Swords and spears are not the main weapons in modern warfare. If that verse were written today, Isaiah may have used tanks and missiles, but he had no knowledge of them in ancient times. The message Isaiah is getting across is that there will be a time when instruments of war will be turned into farm equipment because there is no longer a need for them. We need to be careful to

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not get caught up with the language used by the Old Testament writers when prophesying of future events.

According to premillennialism, in Isaiah chapter 65 we see descriptions of both the millennial kingdom and the eternal state. There are passages they maintain, that it is difficult to distinguish between the two. The following passage illustrates the two intermixed in the text.

¹⁷ “For behold, **I create new heavens and a new earth**; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. ¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem *as* a rejoicing, And her people a joy. ¹⁹ I will rejoice in Jerusalem, And joy in My people; The voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, Nor the voice of crying. ²⁰ **“No more shall an infant from there *live but a few days*, Nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days**; For the child shall die one hundred years old, But the sinner *being* one hundred years old shall be accursed. ²¹ They shall build houses and inhabit *them*; They shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. ²² They shall not build and another inhabit; They shall not plant and another eat; For as the days of a tree, *so shall be* the days of My people, And My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. ²³ They shall not labor in vain, **Nor bring forth children for trouble**; For they *shall be* the descendants of the blessed of the LORD, And their offspring with them. ²⁴ “It shall come to pass That before they call, I will answer; And while they are still speaking, I will hear. ²⁵ The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, The lion shall eat straw like the ox, And dust *shall be* the serpent’s food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all

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My holy mountain,” Says the LORD. (Isaiah 65:17-25, emphasis added)

It is obvious that verses 17-19 are speaking of the eternal state. However, verses 20-22 are said to be referring to the millennium. Since the text mentions death and babies being born, some claim it is speaking of the millennium, even though this section of scripture begins with the statement of the creation of new heavens and a new earth. Is this the correct reading of these verses? A case can be made that it does not mean there will be death and the birth of children. It is in effect a rhetorical statement. It may be saying that in the eternal state, there will be no man dying prematurely, or an infant dying shortly after birth as it does in this present age. The message is this will not occur at all because death has been abolished. Again, the mention of death is with the understanding that it will be no more.

Death will be abolished at the resurrection as the scripture says, **“He will swallow up death forever,** And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces; The rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; For the Lord has spoken” (Isaiah 25:8). Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:54 that the rapture/resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:51-53) fulfills the Isaiah prophecy that death will be swallowed up forever. See chapter 5 in this book where I go into this in more detail.

Another passage used to prove the millennium is as follows.

²¹And I will also take some of them for priests *and* Levites,” says the LORD. ²²“For as the new heavens and the new earth Which I will make shall remain before Me,” says the LORD, “So shall your descendants and your name remain. ²³And it shall come to pass **That from one New Moon to another, And from one Sabbath to another,** All flesh shall come to worship before Me,” says the LORD. ²⁴“And they shall go forth and look Upon the corpses of the

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men Who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, And their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.”
(Isaiah 66:21-24, emphasis added)

Here again it is speaking of the new heavens and new earth. Will there be new moon feasts and sabbaths in the eternal state? Since they are mentioned in this passage, there must be a millennial age to come. However, all the feasts, sabbaths, and offering find their fulfillment in Christ. Once Christ returns, there is no need to revert to the Law covenant.

Premillennialism states that Ezekiel chapters 40-48 describe a literal temple that will be built for the thousand-years. It is called the millennial temple. The detailed description of the Ezekiel 40-48 temple is symbolic, possibly speaking of the New Jerusalem. The descriptions seem very detailed to the casual reader. However, some have said all the measurements are two dimensional and do not provide measurements for height. There is also no commandment by God to build this structure, as He did numerous times for the construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness (Exodus 26:30). In the eternal state, there is no temple building because God and the Lamb are the Temple (Revelation 21:22). Ezekiel, using imagery familiar to the people of the time it was written, was speaking of future things beyond their understanding at the time. It is a description of a temple that never will be built because it does not need to be built due to the redemptive work of Christ. Ezekiel's temple is about the kingdom of Christ, and that has already been built in principle in His completed work.

The offerings mentioned Ezekiel 46, if required during the millennium or the eternal state, would be offensive to the Word of God. The book of Hebrews says the new covenant is a better covenant based on better promises (Hebrews 8:6) and that the new covenant has made the old obsolete (Hebrews 8:13). Christ's

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sacrificial death on the cross was sufficient to pay the penalty for our sins (Hebrews 10), so why would God require us to go back to the sacrificial system? If Jesus is the one who put a stop to sacrifices in Daniel 9:27, then there is no longer the need for further sacrifices. To revert to a system of animal blood sacrifices is to misunderstand Jesus. Why would God require sacrifices and offering in the millennium or eternal state based on these passages? We must conclude that Ezekiel chapters 40-48 is speaking figuratively.

If God wanted something to serve as a remembrance of Christ paying the price of redemption for our sins, what would He use? Some will say reinstituting temple worship serves as that reminder. However, I believe a better case can be made for the nail prints in Jesus's hands serving as that reminder. The scripture says that Jews seek a sign to believe. Thomas demonstrates this by saying "... "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). When Jesus returns, the Jews will look upon Him whom they pierced and mourn for Him (Zechariah 12:10). The piercing of Jesus is what convicts them. The scars in Jesus hands will serve as the eternal remembrance of Christ's sacrifice for our redemption.

The following are contrasts made between the millennium and the eternal state by the premillennial position:

- *The presence of death.* People will die in the Millennium but death is destroyed in the Eternal State.
- *The presence of Sin.* Some in the Millennium will join in with Satan's revolt (Rev. 20:7-10), yet in the Eternal State all people will be glorified believers.
- *The presence of a temple.* There will be a millennial temple, in the New Jerusalem, there will be no temple (Rev. 21:22).
- *The presence of the sun/light.* The sun will no longer be needed in the Eternal State (Rev. 21:23; 22:5)
- *The presence of seas.* No seas in the Eternal State (Rev 21:1), but they still exist during the millennium (Zech. 14:8-9).

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In the literal interpretation these prophetic passages, the existence of a coming thousand-year age on the earth is evident. When using a symbolic interpretation, it becomes evident that there is no coming millennial age.

Conclusion:

There is considerable biblical evidence for the two-age model. Is the millennial age on earth being read into the text? That is the question that needs to be answered by weighing the biblical evidence. If there is a kingdom age, then that will equate to three ages and not two. The two-age model is one of the pieces of evidence that must be considered in weighing the biblical evidence for a coming millennial age.

Chapter 15 - Olivet Discourse Overview

Jesus's Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24-25; Mark 13, and Luke 21 is His longest, most important discussion of Bible eschatology. In it He deals with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple that occurred in A.D. 70, plus His second coming at the end of the age. His teaching was triggered by the questions the disciples asked in verse 3 below.

Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. ² And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not *one* stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down." ³ Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "**Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?**" (Matthew 24:1-3, emphasis added)

There are several interpretative approaches to the Olivet Discourse. "Full preterists" view the entire discourse as referring to the events surrounding the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. "Partial preterists" see it referring to both the events of A.D. 70 and the future second coming of Christ. The "dispensational premillennial/futurist" interpretation views the entire Olivet Discourse as referring to the future events of Christ second coming or *Parousia*. They correspond closely with the seal judgments of Revelation chapter six. There is a "combined interpretation" that views the discourse as applying to the entire period between Christ's first and second coming. Some of the events deal with the

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destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and some portions deal with Christ's second coming at the end of the age.

The premillennial position views the Olivet Discourse as speaking of future events that will be fulfilled in the seventieth week in Daniel's seventy weeks prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27), commonly referred to as the seven-year "tribulation." Amillennialism more closely follows the combined interpretation of the Olivet Discourse. A strong argument can be made that Jesus was speaking of events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. This follows a partial preterist view. This is a major topic and would require a whole book to cover all the details of Christ's teaching. I will attempt to hit the major points that we should consider in our weighing the evidence in evaluating the premillennial and amillennial view as it pertains to the Olivet Discourse.

An important question to ask concerning the Olivet Discourse is to what generation was Jesus speaking of in His parable of the fig tree. This will have a tremendous impact on the timing of these events. Are the signs connected to historical events of the first century or events to happen in the future just prior to Christ's return? The text of the parable is given below:

³² "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer *is* near. ³³ So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! ³⁴ Assuredly, I say to you, **this generation will by no means pass away till all these things** (*the signs given in verses 4-28*) **take place.** ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. (Matthew 24:32-35, emphasis added)

The premillennial position states that Jesus was speaking of a future generation that will see all the signs fulfilled. In the scriptures, Israel is symbolized by the fig tree (Hosea 9:10; Jeremiah 24). Adherents to this position believe that the rebirth of the nation of Israel on May 14, 1948 was the event represented by the fig tree

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putting forth it leaves in the parable. The generation that is alive at the time of Israel's rebirth will be the generation that will see all the events associated with what Jesus said. If you use a period of seventy to eighty years (Psalm 90:10) to represent the length of a generation, then adding the number of years to 1948 puts you in our current time. Many are looking for the rapture of the church between the years 2018-2028. Based on this interpretation, all Jesus said in the Olivet Discourse was relating to events in the distant future. The signs given by Jesus are still in the future for us today.

The amillennial position argues that the generation He was speaking of was the current generation of His time. The date of Jesus's crucifixion is generally dated between A.D. 30-33. If you add forty years to the time of the crucifixion, which is another time-period attributed to the length of a generation, it brings you to the year A.D. 70, the date of the destruction of Jerusalem. The question we must ask, what evidence is there that would lead us to conclude that Jesus was referring to His current generation? There is a credible historical account of the destruction of Jerusalem that provides valuable information that can help us determine which generation was Jesus speaking about.

The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus was born in A.D. 37 of a priestly Jewish family. He is known for writing "The Jewish Wars" and "The Antiquities of the Jews" which tells the story of the Jews from creation to the fall of Masada, and "Against Apion," which defended Jews against pagan slanders, and a short auto biography. In "The Wars of the Jews," he describes the eyewitness events that occurred during the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70. A historical event of this magnitude, you would think, should be mentioned in the Bible, such as the destruction of the first temple in 586 B.C. by the Babylonians (2 Kings 25; 2 Chronicles 36). Jesus prophesizes of the destruction of Jerusalem in His Olivet Discourse.

The following are some of the events mentioned in Josephus's "The Jewish Wars," that I took note of while reading through the text of Book 6, chapters 4 and 5. The reference numbers are given where this information is found. When you read through

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his eyewitness account of the destruction of Jerusalem, you cannot help but think how horrendous these times were.

- A Roman soldier, without any orders, set the fire that burned the Temple. 6.4.5 (252)
- Titus tried to have the fire stopped. But the soldiers did not hear the order to quench the fire due to the noise, nor did they see the hand signal, and were distracted by the fighting. 6.4.5 (256)
- Many were trampled to death as they were crowding into the Temple. 6.4.5 (257)
- Around about the altar were dead bodies heaped upon each other. 6.4.6 (259)
- The Temple was burned on the same month and day as the first Temple. 6.4.8 (268)
- From the foundation of the first Temple to the destruction in A.D. 70 was 1,130 years, 7 months, and 15 days. 6.4.8 (269)
- The second Temple stood for 639 years and 45 days. 6.4.8 (270)
- The Temple was plundered as it was burning and 10,000 that were caught were slain. 6.5.1 (271)
- The flame was carried a long way, and made an echo, together with the groans of those slain. 6.5.1 (272)
- The multitude when seeing the fire exerted their utmost strength, and broke out into groans and outcries. 6.5.1 (274)
- The ground was not visible for the dead bodies that lay on it; but the soldiers went over heaps of those bodies, as they ran upon such as fled from them. 6.5.1 (276)
- False prophets proclaimed to go to the temple and God would give miraculous signs of their deliverance. 6.5.2 (285)
- There was a star resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year. 6.5.3 (289)

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- At the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day time; which lasted for half an hour. 6.5.3 (290)
- Before the Jews rebellion, during the Passover season (Nisan), a heifer, as she was led by the high priest to be sacrificed, brought forth a lamb in the midst of the temple. 6.5.3 (292)
- The eastern gate of the inner [court of the] temple, where 20 men had difficulty shutting it, was seen to be opened of its own accord about the sixth hour of the night. 6.5.3 (293)
- Other signs included, before sun-setting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities. 6.5.3 (298)
- Brought their ensigns to the temple, ... And there did they offer sacrifices to them. 6.6.1 (316)
- I had seen the house of God full of so many abominations. 4.3.10 (163)
- At Pentecost, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, "Let us remove hence." 6.5.3 (300)

There was an occurrence of miraculous signs during the siege of Jerusalem that could be fulfillment of what Jesus said will happen. There were signs in the heavens, a great light shone around the altar, a heifer giving birth to a lamb, a very heavy gate shutting on its own accord, and soldiers were seen running about among the clouds of heaven. As many as 1.1 million were killed during the siege. Dead bodies were heaped up upon each other. The flame of the fire made sounds along with the groans of those being killed. This could be the worst times the world has ever seen.

Some historians believe Titus sacrificed a pig in the temple in A.D. 70. It was part of the Roman ritual called *suovetaurilia*, that consisted of sacrificing a pig, sheep, or bull to Mars, the god of war. It was practiced for land purification ceremonies to cleanse the past and future sins on the land. Some argue that Titus committed the

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abomination of desolation mentioned by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14). Josephus also mentions that the soldiers brought their ensigns (idolatrous representations of Caesar and the Roman eagle on standards) into the temple, offered sacrifices to them and that the house of God was full of so many abominations.

This is just some of the information contained in Josephus's "The Jewish Wars." Even though this is not scripture, it is a very valuable historical record of the eyewitness events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. The siege of Jerusalem occurred from April 14 through September 8, A.D. 70, lasting three months and four days. The Roman army was led by the future emperor Titus. Many people were in the city due to the celebration of the Passover which attributed to the high death toll. I believe many Christians are not aware of the savagery, cruelty, devastation, and monstrosities that occurred during this event and its importance in Bible prophecy.

Jesus's Olivet Discourse can be interpreted in how it relates to the seventieth week of Daniel's seventy weeks prophecy. The following timelines show the Olivet Discourse portrayed on a vertical timeline. The one on the left illustrates the signs Jesus mentions in relation to a future seven-year tribulation period (dispensational premillennial/futurist). The timeline on the right reflects a preterist/idealist (combined) interpretation of Jesus's teaching that view the events occurring over the course of church history. A strong case can be made that many of the events Jesus spoke of are related to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and that is illustrated on the timeline. It is possible these events have a short term and long-term fulfillment.

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Futurist Literal 7 Years	Preterist / Idealist Combined
0 Covenant Confirmed Beginning of sorrows / birth pangs False Christs, deception 1 Wars, rumors of wars Nation against nation Kingdom against kingdom Famines 2 Pestilences Earthquakes False prophets deceive many People's love will grow cold 3 Deliver you to tribulation, kill you Abomination of Desolation Jerusalem surrounded by armies 4 Flee to the mountains Great tribulation, worst times Days shortened for the elect False prophets, great signs 5 6 Gospel of the kingdom preached for a witness to the whole world Endure unto the end 7 2nd Coming of Christ Angels gather His elect	Beginning of Jesus's ministry - A.D. 30 Crucifixion / Resurrection - A.D. 33 Wars, rumors of wars Nation against nation Kingdom against kingdom Famines Pestilences Earthquakes False prophets deceive many People's love will grow cold Deliver you to tribulation, kill you Destruction of Jerusalem - A.D. 70 Titus defiles the altar in the temple Temple destroyed (within generation) Flee to the mountains Great tribulation, worst times Days shortened for the elect False prophets, great signs Jews led captive into the nations <i>(The signs leading up to Christ's return may also be manifested over the course of church history, or a dual fulfillment.)</i> Times of the Gentiles fulfilled 2nd Coming of Christ - A.D. 20XX?
All events fulfilled during the 7 years of Daniel's 70th week at the end of the church age	Some events applying to the destruction of Jerusalem and some to Christ's coming at the end of the age

According to the dispensational premillennial view, once the confirmation of the covenant occurs (Daniel 9:27), one can calculate the exact number of days to Christ's second coming. It is a matter of adding two thousand five hundred and twenty days (seven prophetic years of 360 days) to the date that the covenant was confirmed. This means that Christ's return can be pinpointed to the day. They argue that the rapture is the event that no one knows the day or hour of His coming and it occurs prior to the beginning of the seven-year tribulation.

Amillennialism states that the destruction of the temple can be dated by signs, but the second coming of Christ cannot. Many Christians attempt to align the signs Jesus gives in the Olivet

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Discourse to future events, rather than recognizing the possibility they apply to historical events that occurred in the past leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem. When Jesus gave these signs to His disciples, they were future events that would occur within their generation during the first century, not in a generation two thousand years in the future. There will be signs and events indicating when the temple will be destroyed, the second coming of Jesus at the end of the age will be unannounced. This agrees with the statement Jesus made that no one knows the day and hour of His coming (Matthew 24:36, 42; 25:13; Mark 13:32). Jesus will come during normal, but very bad times, without warning.

If all the signs Jesus gave in the Olivet Discourse were given concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, did Jesus give any warning of what to expect before His return? He did address that by giving the days of Noah analogy (Matthew 24:36-44; Mark 13:32-37; Luke 17:26-37; 21:34-38). The conditions of the times just prior to His return will be comparable to the condition of the times before the flood. Does the Bible give us any information concerning the state of the world before His coming? The following scriptures give some insight as to what will be happening at the end of the age.

Conditions of Noah's Time:

⁵ Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.

¹¹ The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. ¹² So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. ¹³ And God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth. (Genesis 6:5, 11-13)

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Conditions Prior to Christ's Return:

²⁸And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; ²⁹being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, ³⁰backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; ³²who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them. (Romans 1:28-32)

Now we ask you, brothers *and sisters*, regarding the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, ²that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit, or a message, or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³No one is to deceive you in any way! For *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 NASB)

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ²For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of

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good, ⁴traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. ²And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber. (2 Peter 2:1-3)

³ knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, ⁴and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." (2 Peter 3:3-4)

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. ¹¹Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹²looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? ¹³Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2 Peter 3:10-13)

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In our day we can see how evil and wicked people are becoming. As Paul said in the book of Romans, those who do not want God will be given over to a reprobate/debased/depraved mind. There will be a great falling away (apostasy) from the Christian faith. He speaks of perilous/difficult times and gives a list of traits that people exhibit. There will be false teachers and great deception in the church. Peter says Jesus will come as a thief in the night and that we are to look for new heavens and a new earth. The depravity of man will be on full display. All these things are happening today and will lead to the coming of the Lord. We could call these conditions the signs of the times. Jesus condemned the Pharisees and Sadducees of His day because they did not know the signs of the times (Matthew 16:1-4) concerning the Messiah. Will the church make the same mistake by not knowing the signs of His coming? This is why it is important to understand the signs Jesus gave in His Olivet Discourse.

It can be very useful to compare the three versions of the Olivet Discourse in a side-by-side manner. I have taken the text from Matthew, Mark, and Luke and have put them into three separate columns on a page. By doing this, you can read through the passages all at one time and see the differences in the accounts. This helps bring some things to light, especially the destruction of Jerusalem. Only Luke describes it (Luke 21:20-24) and when you see what he says, and the way he says it, it can bring some new insight on Matthew and Mark's version. In the next chapter of this book, I provide my analysis of the parallel version of the Olivet Discourse. I have included the parallel text in the Appendix for your reference.

The Olivet Discourse has been closely associated with the book of Revelation. The signs that Jesus gave can be compared to the seal judgments. Does Revelation mostly deal with events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem, or does it speak of events in the far future that relate to the second coming of Christ. Full preterist say that the book of Revelation was fulfilled in the first century. They will point to verses in the book of Revelation that say these things must shortly take place and that Jesus is coming quickly (Revelation 1:1; 3:11; 21:6, 20). There are verses in the book of Revelation that would

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favor an idealist or futurist interpretation (passages such as Revelation 11:15-16; 14:14-20; 19:11-21). Is there something that could give us an indication of how we should view the timing of the Olivet Discourse and the book of Revelation? I believe that knowing the date when the book of Revelation was written can give us some insight in what timeframe these scriptures are referring to.

The book of Revelation is the Apostle John's apocalyptic vision of Jesus's Olivet Discourse. The two are speaking of the same events, but from two different literary genres. The challenge becomes how to reconcile or harmonize the two together. The Olivet Discourse should be interpreted literally while the book of Revelation is to be viewed allegorically. Jesus gives us the outline or template of the destruction of the temple and His coming. We need to interpret unclear passages (Revelation) with those that are clearer (Olivet Discourse).

The date of the writing of the book of Revelation can provide us the best perspective in how to interpret these passages. Some believe in an early writing of the book of Revelation. They claim that the Roman Emperor Nero banished John to the Isle of Patmos during his rule between A.D. 54-68 where he wrote the book of Revelation. Other scholars believe in a later date where the emperor Domitian, who ruled between 81-96, exiled John near the end of his rule. The time here is of crucial importance. The early date would favor a preterist or idealist interpretation of the book of Revelation where most of the events related to the first century. The later date would favor a futurist interpretation where many of the events point to the distant future when Christ returns at the end of the age. Something to keep in mind, if Domitian sent John to Patmos, he would have been close to 90 years old at the time. If Nero sent John to Patmos, he would have been 62. Bible scholars are divided on the timing of the writing of the book of Revelation,

The date of the writing of the book of Revelation can be determined from external and internal sources. External evidence means writings outside the books of the Bible. Internal evidence is speaking of information found in the Word of God. I will briefly provide some examples of each source of evidence.

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The main piece of “eternal evidence” is a quote from Irenaeus (A.D. 130-202), who was a student of Polycarp, who was a disciple of the Apostle John. In his book “Against Heresies,” written in A.D. 180, there is a statement where he is speaking of the number and name of the antichrist. His statement is as follows.

“Had there been any need for his name to be openly announced at the present time, it would have been stated by the one who saw the actual revelation. For ***it was seen*** (***he was seen***) not a long time back, but almost in my own lifetime, at the end of Domitian’s reign.” (*Against Heresies*, 5.30.3, emphasis added)

Many have considered this quote as a proof text that the book of Revelation was written at the end of the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian in A.D. 95-96. Well after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The phrase “*it was seen*” is translated from the Greek word ἑωράθη. It is a third-person singular verb, which means the subject can be either he, she, or it. This word could have been translated “*he was seen*.” If “*it was seen*” is correct, then Irenaeus is referring to when John’s apocalyptic vision (the book of Revelation) was written. This would support the later date for the writing of the book of Revelation. If a better translation is “*he was seen*,” then he was referring to the fact that the Apostle John was seen alive during Domitian’s reign, not long prior to the time of Irenaeus. This translation supports the early date for the writing of the book of Revelation. Only the context in which ἑωράθη was used can best determine how to translate this word. I am no Greek scholar, but based on my research, it makes perfect sense to translate Irenaeus’s statement as “*he was seen*.”

Which translation is correct? That is subject to opinion. The popular view favors that Irenaeus was speaking of WHEN John’s apocalyptic vision was written. The translation of Irenaeus’s statement comes down to which makes the most sense. John could have revealed the name of the antichrist personally because **John**

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was seen alive not that long ago (based on Irenaeus's time) or **John had the apocalyptic vision** not that long ago. John could have lived many years after he wrote the book of Revelation and could comment on what he saw in his vision. It is interesting that this translation of the word in question is ambiguous (has more than one meaning). Again, in my opinion, I believe the context in which this Greek word was used strongly favors the translation "*he was seen*," thus supporting the early date of the writing of John's apocalypse.

Probably the best evidence for dating the writing of the book of Revelation comes from "internal sources," the Bible itself. There are three key pieces of information we should consider that would support an early date for the writing of the book of Revelation.

1. When John writes, the temple is still standing (Revelation 11:1-2). He expects the events he is writing about to occur soon (Revelation 1:1, 3). He mentions that the temple is in the holy city, which is Jerusalem. There would not have been a temple there if he wrote in A.D. 95, but it is there prior to A.D. 70. Revelation 11:2 and Luke 21:24 parallel each other. Both speak of trampling and it being given to the gentiles. The forty-two months mentioned by John (Revelation 11:2) is the exact length of time of the siege of Jerusalem that lasted from the spring of A.D. 67 to August of A.D. 70.
2. Scripture addresses those who have the right to be called "a Jew." The early church, prior to A.D. 70 had a problem of Judaizers who said Christians must follow the ceremonial Law of Moses. Those who say they are Jews, but are not, are of the synagogue of Satan. Paul calls Christians the "Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16); the true circumcision (Philippians 3:3); and that a believer is a Jew inwardly who is circumcised of the heart (Romans 2:28). The true Israel, the right to be called a Jew, are the children of the promise (Romans 9:6-8), those who are in Christ. In the future, the literal Jew will be humbled and will know the truth. This contention in the early church existed before A.D. 70. Since then, Christianity and Judaism

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have gone their separate directions. John's writing in the book of Revelation brings this to light and confirms an early date.

3. The reference to seven kings in Revelation 17:9-11 provides evidence to the timing of John's writing. The passage in figurative language speaks of the city of Rome and seven kings, where five have fallen, one is, and one is to come. This is a reference to seven Caesars: Julius Caesar (49-44 B.C.), Augustus (27 B.C.–A.D.14) Tiberius (A.D. 14–37), Caligula (A.D. 37–41), Claudius (A.D. 41–54), Nero (A.D. 54–68), and Galba (June A.D. 68–January 69). Nero was the sixth and the current Caesar when John had his apocalyptic vision, placing the date of his writing prior to A.D. 70 and the destruction of Jerusalem.

One of the oddest facts concerning the later date for the writing of Revelation, is that no mention is given to the most dateable, climactic, and apocalyptic event in Jewish history, the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. It is incredible to believe that John is silent about this event that occurred twenty-five years prior to his vision with no mention of it. Also, no mention of Christ's prophecy in the Olivet Discourse being fulfilled, such as the practice of New Testament writers noting the fulfillment of prophecy. Those supporting the early date of the writing of Revelation see the vision given to John was meant to reveal the apocalyptic events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

If the early date concerning the writing of the book of Revelation is correct, then the date of its writing would be prior to A.D. 70 and the destruction of Jerusalem. That would greatly favor the preterist interpretation. The generation Jesus was talking about in His Olivet Discourse would have to be the first century generation. That would agree with Revelation in saying that the things it describes must shortly take place because the time is near (Revelation 1:1, 3.). It makes perfect sense that Jesus, and John in the book of Revelation, would warn believers of an event, with the magnitude of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, before it

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took place. If the later date is the correct date. The book of Revelation would have been written between A.D. 95-96, well after the destruction of Jerusalem, so that the things written must refer to events in the future.

It can be said that there is a dual fulfillment regarding the signs Jesus gives in that there is a near fulfillment and a far fulfillment, or that the first occurrence of the signs foreshadows a later occurrence. The far fulfillment being that the signs occur during the seven-year tribulation period, or they occur over the course of church history. The biblical evidence seems to favor that the generation Jesus was speaking of was His current generation. Some say that Matthew 24:4-35 relate to the destruction of Jerusalem and verses 36-44 to Christ's second coming.

So much can be said about the Olivet Discourse. I am going to give my assessment based on a parallel reading (side-by-side comparison) of the Olivet Discourse in Matthew, Mark, and Luke in the next chapter. I am not fully endorsing any of the interpretive approaches (full/partial preterist, idealist, futurist, or combined). This is my interpretation and you can agree or disagree.

In conclusion, properly identifying the generation to whom Jesus was speaking in the Olivet Discourse is the determining factor in interpreting the timing of the signs and events Jesus describes in His teaching. I presented information concerning the destruction of Jerusalem as described by Josephus in his book "The Jewish Wars." Many Christians are not familiar with the information contained in his book and the importance it has in Bible eschatology. In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus was either speaking of events in the far future during the time of tribulation (Daniel's 70th Week), or of the signs preceding the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, with the days of Noah analogy pointing to the signs of the times leading up to His return and the end of the age. The dating of the writing of the book of Revelation also has major implications of when these things took place. You must weigh the evidence of scripture to determine for yourself how to interpret Jesus's teaching.

Chapter 16 - Olivet Discourse Commentary

I will give my interpretation of the Olivet Discourse based on a parallel reading of Matthew, Mark, and Luke's version of Jesus's teaching. When comparing the three accounts in a side-by-side manner, it provides a complete picture of the series of events concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the coming of Christ at the end of the age. This is called *harmonization*, or taking the separate narratives and blending them into one complete account. The biblical text of the parallel version can be found in the Appendix of this book. Please refer to it as I give my interpretation of the Olivet Discourse. I will break down my analysis into sections with the scriptural references given that correspond to the parallel text provided in the Appendix. This commentary favors a "partial preterist" view; some of the events deal with the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70 and some portions deal with Christ's second coming at the end of the age. The "futurist view believes all the signs Jesus gives apply to His second coming. The "idealists" view of some a-millennialists, interpret the discourse as applying to the entire period between Christ's first and second comings. This commentary will seek to follow the text to where-ever it leads in properly understanding this every important teaching given by Jesus.

To properly understand the meaning of the Olivet Discourse, it is imperative that we understand the context behind what led up to Jesus's prophecy of the destruction of the temple. If you go back several chapters in the gospel accounts of the Olivet Discourse to the triumphal entry and read forward, you will see what Jesus was going through. The chapters that precede the Olivet Discourse, set the stage for how Jesus answers the disciples' questions regarding when the temple will be destroyed and the coming end of the age.

The triumphal entry was the fulfillment of the prophecy where the Messiah is described as Israel's king entering Jerusalem on

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a donkey (Zechariah 9:9). The chief priests and the elders witnessing Jesus's entry into Jerusalem, and knowing the time frames given Daniel's Seventy Weeks Prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27), should have given them an expectation that the coming of the Messiah was at hand. Their knowledge of these prophecies and Jesus's entry into the city should have pointed to the fact that He was the prophesized Messiah. As Jesus entered Jerusalem that day, He wept over it because they did not recognize the significance of "this day" that their King was coming to them (Luke 19:41-44).

The first act that Jesus did upon entering Jerusalem was to cleanse the temple of the moneychangers (Matthew 21:12-17) because they made it a place of selling merchandise. At the end of that day, Jesus leaves the city and lodged in Bethany. The following day when returning to Jerusalem He curses the fig tree that bore no fruit (Matthew 21:18-22) and tells the parable of the landowner who planted a vineyard that produced no fruit (Matthew 21:33-46). It is a picture of the Lord sending His prophets to the Jewish people, and eventually His Son, whom they mistreated by beating, stoning, and killing them. Because of this, the scripture says, "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it (Matthew 21:43). Jesus's authority was challenged by the chief priests and the elders while He was teaching in the temple (Matthew 21:23-27). He tells the parable of the two sons which emphasizes doing the will of God. This illustrates that some will say "yes" to God, but they do not perform His will.

Jesus tells the parable of the marriage feast which is a clear message of the coming destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 22:1-14). The meaning of the parable is that the king invited His people as guests to the marriage feast, but they "paid no attention" and went on their own way. The king therefore, sent his armies (Roman army) to destroy the city by setting fire to it. The king then invites others (the Gentile Church) to the feast, but they had to have on the wedding garment (Isaiah 61:10; Revelation 3:5). The Pharisees tried to trap Jesus in His words by asking if it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar (Matthew 22:15-22). The Sadducees then came questioning Him about the resurrection (Matthew 22:23-33). The Pharisee again,

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testing Him, asked what is the greatest commandment in the Law (Matthew 22:34-46). As you can see, the chief priests and elders were in His face, testing and interrogating Him, trying to find fault in His words. This resistance to Christ's message is very evident in their treatment of Him and the Jewish leaders' rejection of Jesus as the Messiah.

Finally, leading up to the Olivet Discourse, is Jesus's denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees by pronouncing seven woes on them (Matthew 23). Jesus says, "Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation (verse 36). Let me emphasize that Jesus says "this generation," meaning the people alive at that time will experience the coming judgment. This statement needs to be kept in mind to know what generation Jesus was speaking of in Matthew 24: 34 in the Olivet Discourse (Also see Luke 17:24-25). Jesus makes the following statement before we get to the Olivet Discourse. ³⁷ "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! ³⁸ **See! Your house is left to you desolate;** ³⁹ for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' " (Matthew 23:37-39, emphasis added).

I needed to give you this information to set the stage and the context for the Olivet Discourse that comes next. More than likely, Jesus would have been still feeling the effects from the interactions with the scribes and Pharisees, when He was walking through the temple grounds with His disciples, as they were admiring the buildings of the temple. This is the context that led to Jesus's proclamation that not one stone will be left from the temple. When considering the setting leading up to the Olivet Discourse, is Jesus primarily addressing a distant future generation, or the first century generation facing the coming destruction of Jerusalem? That is the context we must consider in understanding Jesus's response to His disciples' questions.

Jesus Predicts the Destruction of the Temple (Matthew 24:1-3; Mark 13:1-4; Luke 21:5-7)

The scripture begins by the disciples showing Jesus the buildings of the temple and how beautiful they were. He responds by saying it will be destroyed with one stone not being left upon another. Of course, this prediction of the destruction of the temple would have a great effect on the disciples. The temple was the center of Jewish worship and its destruction would greatly impact the people. Later, when they were on the Mount of Olives, they asked Him about His statement. In paraphrasing their questions, they asked; When will the temple be destroyed and what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age? Jesus proceeds to answer their questions. Many who hold to a futurist view of the Olivet Discourse argue that His response gives signs for His coming at the end of the age. In this interpretation method, very little attention is given to the destruction of the temple. It makes sense that Jesus would address the destruction of the temple first before explaining the signs concerning His coming and the end of the age.

Jesus answers the disciples' questions by first addressing the destruction of the temple and then, speaks about His coming at the end of the age. When you compare the gospel accounts in a side-by-side comparison, you can see how Jesus first addresses the destruction of the temple. It can be said that Jesus launched into a detailed description of the destruction of Jerusalem that also doubled as a prophetic description of the state of the world immediately prior to His second coming.

Jesus gives various signs when answering the disciples' questions. I believe He is using two types of signs. One is called "*impending signs*" and the other "*identifying signs*." Let me illustrate the meaning of these terms by comparing them to road signs that you would see on the highway. An impending sign is one that says how far you are from a particular city or freeway intersection. It allows you to measure the *progress of your journey* in reaching your destination. This type of sign will indicate you are a certain number of miles from a particular destination. An identifying sign marks the

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specific location of a place. It is like seeing the corporation limit sign for a city. It announces the *reaching of your destination*. Jesus gives numerous signs leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem. He then gives a sign that identifies His coming. I believe these terms help us in understanding the signs Jesus gives in the Olivet Discourse. I will illustrate this reasoning as we review the biblical text.

Let me first say that the “impending signs” are given regarding the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. They indicate the events that occur prior to Jerusalem’s destruction by the Romans in A.D. 70. The “identifying signs” relate to Jesus’s coming at the end of age. They are indicators of the actual coming of Christ and refute the false claims that He has already come. His return will be obvious to all and every eye will see Him.

Impending Signs (Matthew 24:4-14; Mark 13:5-13; Luke 21:8-19)

Jesus begins by addressing the disciples question concerning the destruction of the temple. The first sign He gives is a warning of not being deceived that Christ has come. Deception is a main tool used by Satan against God’s people. Jesus gives other signs such as there will be wars and rumors of wars. There will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes. You can say that these signs have occurred throughout the church age and can be indicators of Jesus’s second coming. That is a valid argument, but as we proceed in analyzing the Olivet Discourse, I believe we will see that these signs are more specific to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Jesus goes on to say that they, the disciples to whom He was speaking, would be delivered up to tribulation. They will be beaten, brought before councils, prisons, kings and rulers, for His name’s sake as a testimony to them. Some believe that this is speaking of the seven-year tribulation before Jesus returns, but the context of the passage indicates that Jesus is speaking of His disciples suffering this persecution.

At this point, Jesus makes the statement that the gospel must first be preached in all the world as a witness, and then the end

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comes. This seems to be speaking of the end of the church age at the second coming of Christ. Surely, the gospel had not reached the whole world during the first century. This is a difficult passage to explain when trying to tie these signs to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. There are several verses of scripture that could verify the fact that the gospel did reach the known world at that time. Paul, in his epistle to the Colossians was speaking of our being reconciled in Christ. The scripture says, “if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from **the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven**, of which I, Paul, became a minister” (Colossian 1:23, emphasis added). If the gospel was preached to everyone under heaven, then it can be used as a proof that it did reach the whole known world. In Paul’s epistle to the Romans, he commended them for their faith where he says, “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of **throughout the whole world**” (Romans 1:8. emphasis added). Again, Paul implies that the gospel had reached the whole world. As we continue in our examination of the Olivet Discourse, this verse may, in fact, be an impending sign of the destruction of Jerusalem.

Destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:15-28; Mark 13:14-23; Luke 21:20-24)

At this point in our parallel analysis of the Olivet Discourse, we come to a verse that is found only in the gospel of Luke. It reads, “**But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near**” (Luke 21:20, emphasis added). This verse signals that all the signs given in the preceding narrative are referring to the destruction of Jerusalem. His warning is that when Jerusalem is surrounded by armies, they are to know that its destruction is imminent. Jesus also spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem in the following passages.

⁴¹ Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, ⁴² saying, “If you had known, even you,

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especially in this your day, the things *that make* for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³**For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side,** ⁴⁴and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.” (Luke 19:41-44, emphasis added)

³⁴ “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 brood under *her* wings, but you were not willing! ³⁵**See! Your house is left to you desolate;** and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until *the time* comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ ” (Luke 13:34-35, emphasis added)

Jesus gave the warning that when Jerusalem is surrounded by armies, they were to flee to the mountains. Quotes from the fourth-century Church Fathers Eusebius of Caesarea and Epiphanius of Salamis state that the early Christians had been warned to flee to Pella in the region of the Decapolis across the Jordan River before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. These quotes are given below:

The people of the Church in Jerusalem were commanded by an oracle given by revelation before the war to those in the city who were worthy of it to depart and dwell in one of the cities of Perea which they called Pella. To it those who believed on Christ traveled from Jerusalem, so that when holy men had altogether deserted the royal capital of the Jews and

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the whole land of Judaea..." —Eusebius, Church History 3, 5, 3

This heresy of the Nazoraeans exists in Beroea in the neighbourhood of Coele Syria and the Decapolis in the region of Pella and in Basanitis in the so-called Kokaba (Chochabe in Hebrew). From there it took its beginning after the exodus from Jerusalem when all the disciples went to live in Pella because Christ had told them to leave Jerusalem and to go away since it would undergo a siege. Because of this advice they lived in Perea after having moved to that place, as I said." —Epiphanius, Panarion 29,7,7-8

For after all those who believed in Christ had generally come to live in Perea, in a city called Pella of the Decapolis of which it is written in the Gospel that it is Ancient sources situated in the neighbourhood of the region of Batanaea a originated here after they had moved to this place and had lived —Epiphanius, Panarion 30, 2, 7

The authority of these statements from these ancient writings is a debated question. Some have said that all Christians in Jerusalem at this time escaped to Pella based on Jesus's warning. With the weapons available in the 21st century, a command to flee to the mountains would seem futile in attempting to escape an invading army in today's world. Based on this assumption, one must conclude that Jesus is speaking to a first century audience on fleeing Jerusalem as the Roman army surrounded the city.

The Romans, during the siege of Jerusalem, encircled the city with a wall to cut off supplies completely and thereby drive the Jews to starvation. Jesus also said concerning Jerusalem that their house would be left unto them "desolate" (a desert, wildness, deserted place). This agrees to the seventy weeks prophecy where Daniel used the same term, "And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate" (Daniel 9:27b). Because of the abominations,

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the temple will be left desolate because they did not know the time of their visitation (the coming of their Messiah).

At this point in the parallel account, Matthew and Mark do not mention the destruction of Jerusalem, but they speak of the abomination of desolation. Luke never mentions this term. I believe that the destruction of Jerusalem and the abomination of desolation are synonymous terms. The abomination of desolation focuses on the Temple which is part of the overall destruction of Jerusalem.

Many interpret the abomination as occurring in the future at the middle of the seven-year tribulation before Christ's second coming. It is the time when the antichrist stops the daily sacrifice in the rebuild third temple. However, Jesus's command to flee to the mountains when this takes place is the same language used in Luke when the armies are surrounding Jerusalem. The verses that follow in each of the gospels speak of the same things. They are instructed not to return to their houses to get anything such as their clothes. Woe to those who are pregnant and nursing babies when this occurs. Jesus said to pray that their flight not be in the winter or the sabbath. The mentioning of the sabbath puts this in a Jewish context. There will be great tribulation such as the world has never seen. These passages have been applied to a future event by many, but in context with the scripture, they are speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem.

The book of Daniel mentions a time of trouble/destress never ever experienced; however, it appears to be speaking of Christ's second coming. The following passage from the book of Daniel connects these events to a time when His people will be delivered/rescued and there will be a resurrection of the dead.

At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; **And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time.** And at that time your people shall be delivered, Everyone who is found written in the book. **And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some**

to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt. (Daniel 12:1-2, emphasis added)

We have an issue where Daniel places these worse times ever experienced at the time of Christ's second coming when He resurrects the dead. In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus makes the same statement, but based on the context of the parallel passages, it places these times at the destruction of Jerusalem. There may be a near fulfillment of these signs at the destruction of Jerusalem and a far fulfillment at the end of days. Daniel says the Jewish people will be delivered while Jesus says the people will be led away captive into all nations. To stay true in following a critical analysis of the scripture, I need to bring up the tension between these texts.

Some will argue that the great tribulation represents the last three and one-half years of Daniel's seventieth week (Daniel 9:27). During this time the world will experience the worse times ever seen. If this was fulfilled during the siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, how can it have been the worst times ever experienced in the world? Since then, there was the bubonic plague in the fourteenth century that killed more than a third of Europe or 25 million people. In the twentieth century there were two world wars with a combined death count of approximately 100 million people. The Jewish holocaust occurred between 1933-1945 where six million died in the German death camps. Jesus said the great tribulation will be the worst times ever seen and you would expect it to be far worse than the historic events I just mentioned.

I believe if you look closely at the events that took place during the siege of Jerusalem, it may qualify as the worse times ever seen. I gave a summary of the events recorded by the historian Flavious Josephus in his book "The Jewish Wars," in the previous chapter of this book. In a little more than three months, it is estimated that 1.1 million people died in the siege. In the final siege, thousands perished from famine and pestilence. Josephus wrote of a woman who killed her nursing child for food (War of the Jews Vol. 6, Chapter 3:4). She did one of the most unimaginable things to eat her own child due to starvation. The ground was not visible for the dead

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bodies that lay on it. Roman soldiers ran over heaps of dead bodies as they pursued after those who fled from them. There were miraculous signs in the heavens and in the temple that signaled the judgment taking place. For that span of time during the siege of Jerusalem, it may have been the worst times the Jews have ever experienced.

It is estimated that the Jewish population during the first century was between 4-5 million. If 1.1 million were killed during the siege of Jerusalem in A.D 70, that would equate to about 24%. The total worldwide population of the Jews in 1933, the start of the holocaust, was 19.5 million. With six million Jews killed during the holocaust (1933-1945), that equals about 30%. Even though that was spread over a twelve-year time period, that averages to 500,000 per year. During a three month span of the siege of Jerusalem, there were an estimated 1.1 million killed. If you extrapolate that rate over a year, it would amount to 4.4 million killed in one year. Just based on the numbers of those killed, the siege of Jerusalem had the most killed during a specific time period. With that statistic, and the other events associated with it, that could qualify as the worst times ever suffered by the Jewish people.

In Matthew and Mark's account, Jesus says if the days of tribulation were not shortened, then no flesh would be saved. However, for the elect's (God's chosen people) sake, the days will be shortened. Jesus shows that He is still in control of everything, and He will shorten those days, not that the individual days will be less than 24 hours, but that the trouble of these days will not be allowed to get to the point of destroying everyone.

How can we put to rest the issue of when the worst times the world has ever seen occurred; at the destruction of Jerusalem, or the time prior leading up to Christ's coming? Jesus may have been speaking only of wrath affecting the Jewish people while Daniel was referring to the worst times on a global scale affecting all nations. The events Jesus spoke of will be repeated on a larger scale at the end of the age. One can make the argument that of all the impending signs leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem can be verified as taking

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place based on Josephus’s work, “The War of the Jews.” Others will say that the signs are pointing to Christ’s coming at the end of the age. Your view on this issue will be a determining factor in how you see the timing of the Olivet discourse. This is a controversial issue and there are various interpretations concerning it.

The following is a table that compares Daniel chapter twelve with the Olivet Discourse. Jesus did speak of His coming at the end of the age, but the language in the parallel accounts that compares to Daniel 12 is speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem. Even though there is similar language in both passages, they still can represent separate events. Take note of the comparison below.

Daniel 12	Olivet Discourse
1. Time of trouble/distress	1. Great tribulation, wrath upon this people
2. Worse times ever	2. Worse times ever
3. Your people will be delivered/rescued	3. Jews led captive into all nations
4. Resurrection of the dead	4. No resurrection of the dead mentioned
5. Deliverance after people shattered	5. Time of judgment, not deliverance
6. Shattering lasts for 3 ½ years	6. Jewish diaspora during church age
7. From abomination shall be 1,290 days	7. Time of the Gentiles
8. Words for the time of the end of days	8. Words for 1 st century generation
9. No mention of Jerusalem	9. Jerusalem is the focal point
10. Worst time for the Gentiles, but not for the Jews	10. Worst time for the Jews, but not for the world

From the table above, items 3-5 and 8-10 are different. This would indicate they are speaking of different events. These are difficult passages to compare, but if you consider the context of what

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is being said, I believe you can see that they can be speaking of separate events.

As we continue to review the parallel passages, Jesus said people will say “look here” or “look there,” because they are claiming that the Messiah has come and is in a certain place. Jesus says His coming can be compared to lightning flashing from the east to the west, in that it will be obvious and visible to all. Jesus is not coming secretly, but everyone will see it (Revelation 1:7).

“Wherever the body (or carcass) is, there the eagles/vultures will be gathered together” has been interpreted in various ways. An eagle does not usually go in quest of carrion (the decaying flesh of dead animals), this may refer to a vulture that resembles an eagle. However, eagles do eat dead animals. While eagles are perfectly capable hunters (seeing as they are birds of prey), they are inclined towards eating carrion and stealing other birds’ or animals’ food.

The destruction of Jerusalem was judgment upon the Jewish people because of their disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). The scripture says, “⁴⁹ The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, *as swift* as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you will not understand,⁵⁰ a nation of fierce countenance, which does not respect the elderly nor show favor to the young” (Deuteronomy 28:49-50). Notice the reference to the eagle. Eagles have always symbolized freedom, strength, and power. It is a positive symbol in the Bible (Isaiah 40:31). However, in the Olivet Discourse it may have a more negative meaning attached to it. In 102 B.C., Gaius Marius decreed that the Eagle alone become the defining emblem of Roman power. In the Roman Empire, the eagle over time became the emblem of the emperor as the head of the army, and then as the universal symbol of the Roman state. The eagle was a prominent symbol used in ancient Rome, especially as the standard of a Roman legion.

In the writings of Josephus, he mentions the Romans brought their abominations, or ensigns, into the temple bearing the image of an eagle. Could the meaning of where a dead body is, there will the eagles/vulture gathered is a picture of the Roman army walking over

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the heaps of dead bodies as a sign of judgment on Israel? Premillennialist say this is a reference to the rapture, but it may be a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Luke's gospel mentions that those who do not fall by the edge of the sword will be led captive into all nations. One of the curses God said would befall His people for their disobedience is that they would be scattered around the world. The scripture says, "Furthermore, the LORD will scatter you among all the peoples, from *one* end of the earth to the other; and there you will serve other gods, *made of wood and stone*, which you and your fathers have not known" (Deuteronomy 28:64).

Jesus then says that Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. The times of the Gentiles is the biblical designation for a period of time beginning with the Babylonian Captivity (606 B.C.) and ending with the physical return of Christ to the earth at the end of the age. Some believe that the times of the Gentiles ended with the 1967 Six Day War that reunified the city of Jerusalem.

From this point on in the Olivet discourse, Jesus focuses on answering the question concerning the sign of His coming and the end of the age. The next section of the Olivet Discourse is speaking of the coming of the Son of Man.

Full preterist believe that Jesus did return in A.D. 70 (Matthew 24:30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27). His second coming was in the form of judgment against Israel in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, but not a visible return on the earth. They deny the bodily resurrection of all believers from all ages, saying the resurrection was spiritual and already occurred. In my opinion, this clearly is not in agreement with scripture that teaches a bodily resurrection (John 5:28-29; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; Philippians 3:21), and a visible public return (Acts 1:11; Revelation 1:7). This is why I support a "partial preterist" or even a "combined interpretation" method for the Olivet Discourse.

The destruction of the second temple in A.D. 70 brought about a dramatic change in Judaism. Rabbinic Judaism is a religion centered around the teachings and writings of rabbis. After the

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destruction of the temple the rabbis reorganized Judaism, adding many new laws, rules and traditions. Today, their writings and commentaries (Talmud, Midrash, etc.) form the foundation of Rabbinic Judaism. Temple or Biblical Judaism practiced animal blood sacrifices and all the ceremonial laws. Rabbinic Judaism replaced temple ritual with prayer service in synagogues that was built upon practices of Jews in the diaspora dating back to the Babylonian exile. The form of Judaism practiced today is not the same as at the time of Moses to Jesus Christ. To re-establish temple worship and blood sacrifices would be a major change for Judaism today.

Coming of the Son of Man (Matthew 24:29-31; Mark 13:24-27; Luke 21:25-28)

The interpretation of this section of the Olivet Discourse is the most controversial. When interpreted literally, it is easily seen as speaking of Christ's second coming. In examining this passage closer, it can be argued that Jesus is using metaphorical terms in warning of the coming judgment upon Jerusalem that occurred in A.D. 70. These are two vastly differing interpretations that must be examined using sound biblical hermeneutics.

The futurist interpretation of the coming of the Son of Man (Matthew 24:29-31; Mark 13:24-27; Luke 21:25-28) in the Olivet Discourse, relates to Christ's second coming at the end of the age. His coming in the clouds is in the same manner as He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9-11). His coming will be glorious (Titus 2:1), in the clouds where every eye will see Him (Revelation 1:7), when He comes to judge and wage war (Revelation 19:11). This comes from a literal interpretation of these verses in the Olivet Discourse.

The preterist view of the coming of the Son of Man is that Jesus is pronouncing judgment on the Jewish people that occurred in A.D. 70 at the destruction of Jerusalem. In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus makes numerous references to Old Testament passages that speak of coming judgment in metaphorical language. Jesus's use of phrases such as; the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light

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(Isaiah 13:9-10; Joel 3:15), the powers of the heaven will be shaken (Isaiah 9:13; 34:4; Joel 3:16), the Lord coming in the clouds (Isaiah 19:1; Daniel 7:13-14), and the flashing of the lightning (Zechariah 9:14) were understood by the Jewish hearers of coming judgment. This is not the physical return of Jesus at the second coming. This passage is not speaking of the coming of Christ at the end of the age, but of the coming of the kingdom of God. Jesus came preaching that the kingdom of God (Luke 4:43; 10:9; Acts 28:31) is at hand (Mark 1:15; Luke 21:31), that it has come upon you (Matthew 12:28), is received as a little child (Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17), that it is within you (Luke 17:21), and that you must be born again to see and enter it (John 3:3, 5). At Christ's first coming, the kingdom was inaugurated and at His second coming, the kingdom will be consummated (1 Corinthians 15:23-24).

The difficulty for many is connecting Matthew 24:29-31, Mark 13:24-27, and Luke 21:25-28 to the coming of the destruction of Jerusalem, rather than the second coming of Christ. The disagreement deals with Jesus's statement that "this generation" (1st century or 21st century?) will see ALL these things (signs) take place. Jesus did not physically come in A.D. 70. When the Olivet Discourse is interpreted from the futurist perspective, this passage of scripture seems very clear in its description of the second coming of Christ. The problem, in my opinion, is this interpretation does not fit the context of Jesus's teaching leading up to this point in the Olivet Discourse. If the context places these events during the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, how can His coming in the clouds been fulfilled in the past? In harmonizing the scriptures, we need to interpret this passage with proper hermeneutical principles, so that it stays true to the context of everything Jesus said up to that point.

When interpreting the Olivet discourse from a partial preterist viewpoint, there is a definite dividing line between the events of the destruction of Jerusalem, and that of Christ's second coming. That dividing line is at Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32, and Luke 21:34. Everything before that point deals with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Everything after that point is speaking of Christ's second coming.

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An interesting piece of information that would support a partial preterist interpretation of the Olivet Discourse concerns the meaning of the word “*coming*.” We will look at the Greek word usage in Matthew 24:29-31 and Matthew 24:37-39. One comes before the dividing line I just mentioned, and the other usage comes after the dividing line.

There are several Greek words that are translated into the English word “coming.” There is the Greek word “*erchomai*,” meaning “to come from one place to another, or to come into being.” Another word “*Parousia*,” means “presence, the coming, arrival, advent, the future visible return from heaven of Jesus, to raise the dead, hold the last judgment, and set up formally and gloriously the kingdom of God.” It is the Greek word “*Parousia*” that is used to communicate the visible second coming of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Thessalonians 4:15; 5:23; 2 Peter 3:12; 1 John 2:28). Consider the following passages from the Olivet Discourse and their use of the Greek word for “coming,”

²⁹ “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. ³⁰ Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man **coming** (*erchomai*) on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And He will send His angels (*aggelos*) with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Matthew 24:29-31)

³⁷ But as the days of Noah *were*, so also will the **coming** (*Parousia*) of the Son of Man be. ³⁸ For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the

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day that Noah entered the ark,³⁹ and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the **coming** (*Parousia*) of the Son of Man be. (Matthew 24:37-39)

As you can see, the verses most attributed to the second coming (Matthew 24:29-31) do not use the Greek word "*Parousia*," but "*erchomai*." This could mean that these verses are not speaking literally of Christ's second coming, but metaphorically of the coming judgment upon Jerusalem for their rejection of the Messiah (Matthew 23:37-39; Luke 19:44). The verses speaking of the Days of Noah and Christ's second coming use the Greek word "*Parousia*," which is the word associated with Christ's visible return. I believe that the usage of these Greek words gives us a valuable tool in interpreting these passages.

We also see the Greek word "*erchomai*" used where Jesus is on trial before the Sanhedrin on the night He was betrayed, where Caiaphas inquires if He was the Christ. Jesus replies by saying, "... I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and **coming** (*erchomai*) with the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62, emphasis added). Jesus uses the phrase "coming with clouds," but the Greek word used is "*erchomai*" and not "*Parousia*," keeping in line with the same language used in the Olivet Discourse. When Jesus says "you (Caiaphas) will see," He may be implying that the generation alive at the time will see the coming judgment when the Son of Man is seated on the right hand of Power.

There is also the matter of the translation of the Greek word "*aggelos*" found in Matthew 24:31 that was translated into our English word "angel." Strong's Concordance's definition for this word is "a messenger, envoy, one who is sent, an angel, a messenger from God." This can be a human or angelic messenger. Is it possible that the translators of the English versions of the Bible were influenced by the dispensational premillennial/futurist eschatological model in rendering "*aggelos*" as "angel?" Consider how the interpretation of this verse would change if it was translated into the English word "messenger," such as a minister or missionary. This would mean that

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God sends His ministers into all the world to preach the gospel in gathering (Ephesian 1:10) His elect from all over the world to be a part of His spiritual body, the church. If this translation is more accurate, then this verse takes a totally different meaning and can be compared to the great commission in Matthew 28:19-20. This interpretation would also place the timing of this passage in the first century, keeping it within the context of Jesus's response in answering His disciples' questions.

As I have stated, the passage given above has been understood by many to be speaking of Christ second coming. All the things Jesus said up to this point in the Olivet Discourse, can be argued, are concerning the destruction of the temple. Does Jesus at this point begin to refer to His coming at the end? The following verse, however, makes it difficult to place the above passage in the distant future at the 21st century, ³⁴Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. ³⁵Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" (Matthew 24:34-35). Jesus did not physically return and raise the dead in the first century. How can we reconcile these two conflicting statements?

Many have used Isaiah 13:9-13 as a prophecy of the Day of the Lord at Christ's second coming. However, when considering the context of Isaiah Chapter 13, it is prophesying of the judgment coming upon Babylon as carried out by the Medes. The description of these heavenly signs was not literal, but metaphorical. Jesus borrows this same language from the Old Testament prophets in describing the coming judgment upon Jerusalem. Based on this observation, interpreting Jesus's statements in this way, keeps Jesus's comments within the context of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

The only way to resolve this conflict is to understand that Jesus was using Old Testament apocalyptic language in describing the coming judgment on the Jewish people. See the verses below that speak of judgment coming upon Babylon in Isaiah and upon the nations in Joel.

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- For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not give their light; The sun will be darkened in its going forth, And the moon will not cause its light to shine. (Isaiah 13:10)
- The earth quakes before them, The heavens tremble; The sun and moon grow dark, And the stars diminish their brightness. (Joel 2:10)
- The sun and moon will grow dark, And the stars will diminish their brightness. (Joel 3:15)

If these verses are not to be taken literally, but interpreted as the coming judgment on the Jewish people for their rejection of their Messiah, then Jesus was correct by saying ALL THESE THINGS took place at the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Interpreting the passage as given above gives a totally different emphasis than what many have been taught. Jesus is speaking to a first century, second temple audience, bringing together Old Testament language in describing the events leading up to the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem. The things Jesus spoke about in Matthew 24:4-35, Mark 13:5-30, and Luke 21:8-33, all took place with the destruction of Jerusalem, or the end of the Jewish age. The scriptures following that point, beginning in Matthew 24:36, Mark 13:32, and Luke 21:34, relate to Christ's second coming at the end of the cosmic age, or the eschaton.

Now, Jesus answers the disciples' question, "And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" The time of Christ's physical return will be unknown and comparable to the days of Noah and Lot. The spiritual and moral depravity in Noah's day will be repeated in the time leading up to Christ's coming. On another occasion when Jesus was teaching concerning His second coming (Luke 17:22-37), He mentions His coming will also resemble the days of Lot (Genesis 19:1-11), which was a time of rampant homosexuality. We see this wickedness and sexual immorality reaching unprecedented levels in our time. What we are experiencing on a global level, is the transformation to a reprobate culture/society

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(Romans 1:18-32). These conditions are present today just as Jesus said they would be at the coming of the Son of Man.

Just as the old world perished in the flood (2 Peter 3:5-7), our present world will come to its end, that will bring about the new heavens and new earth. Just as the dead are raised at Christ's coming, the earth will be resurrected, without the curse and sin (Revelation 21:4-5; 22:3) where righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:10-13) in the new heavens and new earth.

The partial preterist interpretation of Jesus coming in the clouds may be difficult for many to accept. However, one must realize this is looking through a different lens in interpreting this passage. We need to harmonize these scriptures in staying true to Jesus's statement that ALL these things will take place (in the first century). The reader needs to determine which lens (futurist or partial preterists) best supports the biblical text.

Let me give another possible way of interpreting this section of the Olivet Discourse where it applies to the second coming at the end of the eschaton. When Jesus says, "after the tribulation of those days," He is referring to the extended time of tribulation that occurs over the entire church age (John 16:33). Jesus could be speaking only of the tribulation of the days leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem, but the coming in the clouds statement does not seem to fit in the first century. The Jews being led captive into all the nations during the time of the Gentiles could imply that the tribulation they will suffer will occur over the course of time, and not just during the siege of Jerusalem. Jesus coming in the clouds is His physical return at the end of the cosmic age.

Then we have the issue of the parable of the fig tree where Jesus says "ALL these things take place." Many sceptics declare that Jesus is a false prophet because He did not physically come and raise the dead in the first century. When viewing the time of tribulation as occurring over the entire church age, Jesus's words are true. His coming in the clouds will occur at His second coming "after the tribulation of those days."

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This interpretation is taking a more literal/futurist approach in understanding this passage. The events Jesus describes provides a detailed description of the destruction of Jerusalem that also doubled as a prophetic description of the state of the world immediately prior to His second coming.

I can see two “eschatological models” that attempt to explain the events surrounding Christ’s second coming. The popular view held by most Christians is what I term the “Tribulation/God’s Wrath Model” and the other the “Days of Noah Paradigm.” Each of these views provides a lens that serves as a blueprint or template for how the end time events will take place. Given below are bullet points that define each of the models.

- A. Tribulation/God’s Wrath Model (preceded by signs)
 - Seven-year tribulation of God’s wrath being poured out / mark of the beast
 - The rapture & 2nd coming are separate events (except post trib. rapture view)
 - Multiple resurrections of the dead
 - Literal 1,000-year kingdom age of Christ ruling on earth
 - Two peoples/plans of God (Israel & The Church)
- B. Days of Noah Paradigm (no preceding signs)
 - Surprise nature of Christ’s return/eschaton (like Pearl Harbor & 9/11 attacks)
 - Reprobate Society/Culture as typified of the days of Noah & Lot
 - God’s people will be oppressed/vexed by the filthy/depraved conduct of the wicked.
 - The wrath of the Lamb poured out at Christ’s second coming.
 - One resurrection, one end time battle, one final judgment.

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Parable of the Fig Tree (Matthew 32-35; Mark 13:28-31; Luke 21:29-33)

The Parable of the Fig Tree, is used by Jesus to give His disciples a time frame in which all the “impending signs” will take place leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem. Many premillennialists view this parable as speaking of the time leading up to the second coming. The fig tree is representative of the nation of Israel. When Israel became a nation in 1948, the generation that is alive at that time will see all the signs pointing to the coming of the Lord. However, this parable may be referring to the generation of Jesus’s disciples, in the first century, who will witness the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Based on the context of the scripture, Jesus may have been speaking of the first century generation. The destruction of Jerusalem occurred within forty years of the time Jesus’s Olivet Discourse, well within their generation.

Jesus says that all the signs He gave will take place leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem. The signs would be the “impending signs” that mark the progress toward the destruction of the temple.

The identification of which generation Jesus was referring to is a major factor in determining the timing of the Olivet Discourse. Is it speaking of a generation in the distant future or a generation in the lifetime of His disciples? The biblical evidence seems to support it is the generation of the disciples in the first century.

No One Knows the Day (Matthew 24:36-51; Mark 13:32-37; Luke 17:26-36; 21:34-38)

In the remainder of the Olivet Discourse, Jesus is providing information concerning His coming. He begins by warning them not to be weighed down by carousing, drunkenness, and the cares of this life because that day will come unexpectedly, or as a snare on all people. Jesus makes a major statement that no one will know the day of His coming. The day Jesus is speaking of is His second coming, or the Day of the Lord. Many premillennialists believe He is speaking of

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the rapture. If this were true, then one could know the time of the second coming by counting the number of days as specified in Daniel's seventy weeks prophecy. From the a-millennialist viewpoint, there is no way to calculate Christ's second coming, based on a symbolic interpretation of the seventy weeks. This aligns more to what Jesus said.

The following verse is used by dispensational premillennialist as a proof text for a pre-tribulation rapture, "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy **to escape all these things that will come to pass**, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36, emphasis added). It is frequently interpreted to mean that we should be closely watching current events so we know how close we are to Christ's return. The common paraphrase of this command is "watch world news, so that as you begin to see prophecy unfold, you can escape the horrors of the Tribulation." They argue that all the "impending signs" Jesus gives relate to the wrath of God being poured out during the tribulation. This verse proves Jesus will remove believers before the tribulation.

The key to understanding Luke 21:36 is to consider the context of the verses around it. We see the emphasis of the fact that no one will know the day or hour of His coming. If we are instructed to watch and pray, what are we to watch and pray for if He is coming unexpectedly? This may be speaking of the condition of one's heart and state of readiness to meet Christ. We are to watch and pray in maintaining our walk with the Lord and to stand strong in the face of persecution and even death. When we stand strong for Christ, He will make a way of escape for us. This does not mean He will snatch us away so the evil will not come on us, but that He will make a way for us to endure until the end. Take note of what Paul says in the following passages.

¹²Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also **make the way**

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of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:12-13. Emphasis added)

¹⁶The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, **if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.** ¹⁸**For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.** (Romans 8:16-18, emphasis added)

¹⁶Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷**For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,** ¹⁸while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:16-18. Emphasis added)

No matter what suffering we may experience in this life, it is nothing compared to what God has in store for all who love Him. Those who are joint heirs with Christ will be able to escape the judgment that is coming on this world. Jesus said, “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28).

Next, Jesus gives what I call the days of Noah analogy. In it He compares the conditions of the time of His coming with that of the conditions present in the days of Noah before the flood. Many have used this portion of scripture as a proof of a pretribulation rapture. They state that the flood represents the wrath of God being poured out on the world. The righteous will be taken and the wicked will be

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left behind. This concept was made popular by the “Left Behind” books by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins.

The “impending signs” were given for the destruction of Jerusalem, but the main warning for the return of Christ is the days of Noah analogy. If you take a closer look at the days of Noah passage, it becomes clear that the “Left Behind” mindset is opposite to what was being said. The flood is representative of Christ’s second coming. In Noah’s time, life was going on as normal as evil as it was. They had no forewarning of the flood and had no knowledge of it until the flood came. When the flood came, it took “them” away, not Noah and his family who were under God’s protection in the ark. The righteous were left behind and the wicked carried off by the flood which figuratively reflects being taken off to judgment.

During Noah’s time, the scriptures describe the conditions of the day, “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth” (Genesis 6:11-12). These same conditions will be present on the earth when Christ comes again. The world will grow increasingly more evil and wicked with man’s depravity on full display. Let me emphasize, the world will be caught by surprise by Christ’s coming. If there is a seven-year tribulation where God’s wrath is being poured out, surely some will connect it to what the Bible says about the end times. Will they be totally caught by surprise? The severity of the events taking place could not be considered normal and life is going on usual. This could be an indicator that a seven-year tribulation may not be a correct way of measuring the end times.

The Importance of Watching / Parables (Matthew 24:42-51; 25:1-46; Mark 13:35-37)

Jesus continues by telling the parable of the Master of the House. It carries the message of the unexpectedness and suddenness of His coming. Jesus’s command is for us to watch because we do not know when He is coming, just as one does not know when a thief comes to break in your house. It catches you by surprise if you are

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not watching and prepared. His coming could come at any time of day or night and we should not be caught asleep and not watching.

The Olivet Discourse continues where Jesus teaches the Parable of the Ten Virgins, the Parable of the Talents, and describes the Judgment of the Nations. These are only found in the gospel of Matthew.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins follows the Jewish marriage custom. The groom comes unannounced for His bride to be taken to the home he has prepared for them. The ten virgins are the bride's attendants. Five were prepared and ready for the coming of the groom by having a supply of oil for their lamps. The other five were unprepared by not taking enough oil with them. They all slumbered and slept because the groom delayed his coming. This represents the time believers have been waiting for the coming of Christ. When the groom finally comes, those who were ready went with him to the wedding. This parable teaches the importance of being ready for His coming.

In the Parable of the Talents, Jesus is teaching that we should be using the talents and abilities the Lord has given us for use in the kingdom. Everyone is given talents according to their ability. Some are given more than others. The key is that you use what the Lord has given you. I do not believe the amount is important here, but what you do with what you have been given. The servant who was given one talent did nothing with it to produce an increase for his master. He was the unprofitable servant and was cast into outer darkness. This shows the importance of using our talents and giftings in working for the kingdom of God. We cannot sit back and do nothing.

Finally, Jesus concludes the Olivet Discourse by speaking of when the Son of Man will judge the nations. I spoke of this in chapter thirteen of this book. When Christ comes in glory, He will judge the nations. There is to be a separation of the sheep (believers) and the goats (unbelievers). The sheep will inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. The goats will be sent into everlasting fire or punishment, prepared for the devil and his angels. This account may be another view of the final judgment. Jesus

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emphasizes that those who minister out to others (providing food and clothing for those in need, taking care of the homeless, visiting the sick and those in prison, etc.), are in effect, doing it to Him. They are the righteous and inherit eternal life. Those who do not minister out to others (the goats), will go into everlasting punishment.

Conclusion

The parallel account of the Olivet Discourse does shed light on the timing of the signs Jesus talked about. We can see Jesus addressing the destruction of the temple, plus His return at the end of the age. Jesus is answering the questions His disciples asked in an orderly fashion. The major points of disagreement centers on the following.

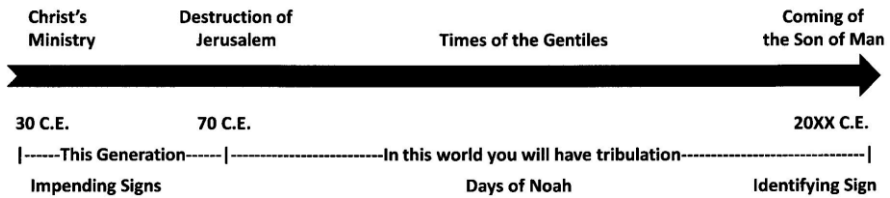
1. The gospel being preached in all the world before the end comes,
2. The abomination of desolation occurring in A.D. 70,
3. When will be the worse times ever experienced,
4. Interpretation of Jesus coming in the clouds,
5. Which generation was Jesus speaking to, and
6. Explanation of escaping all these things (Luke 21:36)

All these points were addressed in my commentary. In seeking to interpret Jesus's teaching, one must consider other prophecies so that there is harmony in the conclusions reached.

There will be multiple *impending signs* (A.D. 30–70) leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem, but one *identifying sign* for the coming of the Lord at the conclusion of the church age (A.D. 70-20??). Based on what Jesus said in the Olivet Discourse, He will come unexpectedly as a thief in the night. One must consider the signs of the times, the days of Noah analogy to realize His coming is near.

The following is a basic timeline of the Olivet Discourse based on the parallel account given in this chapter.

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When examining the Olivet Discourse using the side-by-side comparison of Matthew, Mark, and Luke's gospels, it shows the importance of the destruction Jerusalem and the temple had in the New Testament. When harmonizing the Olivet Discourse with other the eschatological scriptures, such as what I termed the plumb line verse of 1 Corinthians 15:54 in chapter five in this book, the biblical evidence seems to favor the amillennial view. Premillennial dispensationalism does not adequately explain the unexpectedness of Christ's coming. You will need to consider the information provided in this chapter in weighing the biblical evidence regarding if there is a literal thousand-year kingdom age preceding the eternal state.

Chapter 17 - Final Items of Consideration

This chapter covers several items that should be considered in our weighing the biblical evidence in support of the millennium. The items are the sealed of Israel, end time battles, two peoples of God, Zechariah 14, and some final comments.

The Sealed of Israel (144,000)

The number one hundred and forty-four thousand is mentioned in Revelation chapters seven and fourteen. In chapter seven, it talks about two groups of people. Verses 1-8 speak of sealing of the twelve tribes of Israel and verses 9-17 speaks of a great multitude coming out of the great tribulation and are before the throne of God in heaven. In Revelation chapter fourteen, the one hundred forty-four thousand are mentioned again who are identified as the “redeemed from the earth.” It is important to understand how the premillennial and amillennial positions interpret these passages.

The dispensational premillennial view takes the literal futurists approach in interpreting the book of Revelation. In the first group of chapter seven, the one hundred forty-four thousand is a literal number of Jews, twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes, living during the seven-year tribulation. They are sealed which means they have the special protection of God. Their mission is to evangelize the post-rapture world and proclaim the gospel. They are the first fruits of redeemed Israel (Zechariah 12:10; Romans 11:25-27).

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The second group of people in Revelation chapter seven are the martyrs who gave their life for Christ during the seven year-tribulation. These gentiles who are saved during tribulation will be temple servants, waiting on Christ and His bride. Their service is in the millennial temple that is described in Ezekiel chapters 40-48.

According to the amillennial view, the one hundred and forty-four thousand emphasizes the Israelite heritage of the New Testament people of God. It is a symbolic number representing the whole church. The sealing of God's people is His guarantee of their protection from spiritual harm (Revelation 3:12; 9:4; 14:1). The book of Revelation clearly states God's people will suffer physical suffering, persecution, and possibly death (Revelation 2:10, 13; 13:15), but Satan cannot destroy their salvation.

The number of the sealed is twelve thousand for each of the twelve tribes listed for a total of one hundred and forty-four thousand. The equal and round numbers for each of the tribes suggests that twelve is a symbolic number. The number twelve in scripture speaks of governmental perfection or rule. Service, power, and deliverance are manifested in a perfect system of government. The number one thousand can represent many, a very large amount, or everything. The way in which the word "thousand" is used will determine how it is to be defined. In apocalyptic literature, it will carry a symbolic meaning of everything. In the case of one hundred forty-four thousand, the number "12" is squared (possibly the 12 tribes multiplied by the 12 apostles) and multiplied by one thousand. This number is a two-fold way of emphasizing divine governmental perfection and completeness.

The listing of the twelve tribes does not correspond to any of the twenty different variations of the list in the Old Testament (Genesis 29-30, 49, Numbers 1, Ezekiel 48). Judah is listed first, but the tribe of Rueben is listed first in the other lists. The tribes of Dan and Ephraim are omitted from John's listing. There are some other differences, but the point to be made is that the way the list is given

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in Revelation chapter seven is an indication that the list is symbolic. Listing the tribe of Judah first is a symbolic way of saying the people of God fall under the authority of Jesus as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5).

In Revelation chapter fourteen, the one hundred and forty-four thousand are mentioned as having God's Name written in their foreheads, representing they belong to Him. They are a picture of the redeemed from the earth (Revelation 14:1-5). They are not described as Israel, but as the redeemed, or the church.

Finally, in Revelation 7:9-17, we see a multitude coming out of the great tribulation. There were so many that no one could number them from all the nations. This portion of scripture emphasizes the church's international character. This reflects the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham that through him, shall all the families of the earth will be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3).

The amillennial view sees the one hundred and forty-four thousand as symbolizing the church. The two groups mentioned in Revelation chapter seven are not two different groups, but are the same group, the church, viewed from different perspectives, at different stages of their existence and experience. There is nothing said in these passages that speak of the one hundred and forty-four thousand functioning as evangelists.

One must conclude, according to the amillennial view, that the one hundred and forty-four thousand in Revelation 7:3-8 and 14:1-5 and the innumerable multitude in 7:9-17 refer to the same group of people viewed from different perspectives.

End Time Battles

The Bible mentions three battles, or one end time battle from three different perspectives, known as the Ezekeil 38-39 war (the first Gog and Magog War), the Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16), and the Gog and Magog War (the second war of that name

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mentioned in Revelation 20:7-10). The premillennial position sees these as three separate wars and the amillennial position views these as one final end time battle.

The premillennial view, which takes a literal interpretation approach, states these are three separate and distinct conflicts occurring at the end of days. The Ezekiel 38-39 war occurring sometime in the early part of the seven-year tribulation, after the pretribulation rapture and the confirming of the covenant (a peace treaty between Israel and its Arab neighbors). The battle of Armageddon to take place after the tribulation at the second coming of Christ. The Gog and Magog war will take place at the end of the literal thousand-year Kingdom Age.

The timing of the Ezekiel 38-39 war is early in the seven-year tribulation because Israel is living securely in a land of unwalled villages (Ezekiel 38:10-12). Israel has faced threats from its enemies that surround it since it became a nation in 1948. The peace treaty that triggers the beginning of Daniel's seventieth week, or tribulation, will give Israel a false sense of peace. Israel will then be attacked by a coalition of nations, headed up by Russia, Iran, and others (Ezekiel 38:1-6). God will destroy five sixths of the invading army (Ezekiel 38:16, 19; 39:1-8) and it will take Israel seven years to burn the weapons of war (Ezekiel 39:9-10). Premillennialists say the weapons cannot be burned during the millennium, so this war needs to occur early in the tribulation to allow for the seven years to burn the weapons. We can see this coalition of nations forming now and leads many to believe this war may occur very soon.

An overview of the Battle of Armageddon is given by the bullet points below;

- All nations against Jerusalem, city taken – Zech. 14:1-2; Joel 3
- Jerusalem devastated by overpowering might of the Antichrist's forces – Zech 12:1-3; 14:1-2

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- Jesus Christ returns to fight against those nations – Zech. 14:3; Matt. 24:29-31; Rev. 19:11-21
- Christ returns to the Mount of Olives which splits in two – Zech. 14:4; Acts 1:9-12
- A global shaking earthquake triggered – Zech. 14:4-5; Rev. 16:17-19
- Their flesh shall consume/dissolve and their eyes in the sockets – Zech. 14:12; 2 Thess. 2:8
- The Babylonian (word means “confusion”) system will be destroyed – Rev. 17-18
- The fall of the one world system encompasses economic, governmental, and religious areas.

A third end time war occurs at the end of the millennium (Revelation 20:7-10). People born during this time still have a sin nature and many will resent the fact they cannot freely pursue their worldly lusts, even though Jesus reigns in righteousness (Isaiah 11:4-5). When Satan is released at the end of the thousand years, many will unite in one final rebellion. A fire from God out of heaven comes down and destroys them. Satan is thrown into the lake of fire.

According to the amillennial view, there is only one end time battle. What may appear as three separate wars is three different views of one war. The best way to interpret Old Testament passages is how New Testament writers quote it. In Revelation 19, John borrows language from Ezekiel 38-39 (1st Gog and Magog War). In Revelation 20, John again uses Ezekiel 38-39 to describe this other battle scene (2nd Gog and Magog War). John is referring to the same Old Testament passage to describe two scenes in Revelation. This is illustrated in the following bullet points:

- Assemble for great supper/sacrificial meal, birds gather (Rev. 19:17; Ezek. 39:17)
- Birds eat the flesh of kings and the mighty (Rev. 19:18; Ezek. 39:18, 20)
- Mentions Gog and Magog by name (Rev. 20:8; Ezek. 38:2)

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- Nations deceived and gathered for battle (Rev. 20:8; Ezek. 38:11)
- Set on fire (Rev. 20:9; Ezek. 39:6)

Ezekiel is describing the final judgment of God's people and John uses the word pictures from that scene to describe the judgment in both Revelation 19 and 20. Based on how John is referring to the same Ezekiel passage to describe two scenes in Revelation, it must be one event. He is describing one event from two different perspectives. Couple this with the recapitulative structure of the book of Revelation (see chapter 8 in this book), chapters 19 and 20 are retelling the same event from two different viewpoints. This means that the Battle of Armageddon in Revelation 19 is the same battle as mentioned in Revelation 20 that John calls Gog and Magog.

A-millennialists will say, how many final battles are there in the end times? In Ezekiel, the scripture says that the nations will know that God is the Lord. The scripture says;

⁷ So I will make My holy name known in the midst of My people Israel, and I will not *let them* profane My holy name anymore. Then the nations shall know that *I am* the LORD, the Holy One in Israel. ⁸ Surely it is coming, and it shall be done," says the Lord GOD. "This *is* the day of which I have spoken. (Ezekiel 39:7-8)

The day that the Lord is speaking of must be the day of the Lord (Isaiah 13:9-13; Revelation 19:11-16). This occurs at the second coming of Christ. This is the final climax of history as Christ returns in glory. On that day, there will be a great earthquake (Ezekiel 38:19; Revelation 6:17-18) and Christ will make Himself known in the sight of many nations (Ezekiel 38:23; Matthew 24:30; Revelation 1:7). If this all occurs at Christ coming, how can there be yet another battle

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at the end of a thousand-year Kingdom age. The Bible is speaking of one end time conflict when Christ returns.

That is the perspective of the end time battles according to the premillennial and amillennial views. Which view does the biblical evidence support?

Two Peoples of God

The book of Romans chapters nine through eleven are Paul's dissertation on Israel. Romans 11:16-24 gives the illustration of an olive tree. Both Israel and the Church are spoken of as "branches." Israel is represented as the "natural branches," and the Church as "the wild branches." All the branches are partakers of the root of the olive tree, which represents God's covenantal promises to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3) that will be extended to Jews and Gentiles. This truth is reiterated by the following:

¹³ Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree"), ¹⁴ that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Galatians 3:13-14)

²⁹ And if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:29)

In the olive tree example, if the natural branches were broken off so that the wild branches can be grafted in, God is able to graft the broken branches back in again (Romans 11:19-24). Israel is set aside, but there is a remnant. The Gentiles do not displace Israel, but

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they partake of the root, enjoying the same blessing and a diversity, neither replacing the other.

With this background information, an issue needs to be mentioned that concerns Israel and the Church. Do Gentile Christians become “Jewish” based on their relationship to Jesus? Does the “church” replace the Jewish people in God’s plan as the new Israel? We need to have a basic understanding of the relationship between Israel and the Church. Much could be said, but I will give a brief overview of three different interpretative systems that attempt to answer these questions. They are as follows:

Replacement Theology – the church has replaced Israel in God’s plan and that many of the promises made to Israel are fulfilled in the Church, not Israel. The Jews are no longer God’s people but the Church is the new and improved Israel. The promises and blessing and restoration of the nation of Israel are spiritualized or allegorized into promises that are fulfilled in the Church. Jews must convert to the Gentile Christianity. Many may attribute this teaching to amillennialism, but more on that later.

Separation Theology – Israel and the Church refer to different groups of people. This is the view held by dispensational premillennialism. It uses the grammatical-historical approach to interpreting scripture that leads to a clear distinction between Israel and the Church. The covenants and promises of ethnic Israel are not transferred to the Church. The Church is a new spiritual entity with a distinct purpose and destiny. This view supports the need for a literal thousand-year kingdom age so that the promises God made to national Israel can be fulfilled.

Remnant Theology – the Church is to be a subset of faithful ethnic Israel who receive Jesus as the promised Messiah. The Gentile Church partakes of the covenants and promises given to remnant Israel. Gentile Christians must identify with remnant Israel. Not all who are born Jewish are part of the saved remnant (Romans 9:6-7),

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as the scripture says, “That is, those who *are* the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed” (Romans 9:8). The Church is incorporated into the chosen remnant of Israel, and not the other way around. The Bible says concerning the believing Gentile, “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 2:29).

A lot can be said on this subject. In the debate between premillennialism and amillennialism, we must determine if there are two peoples of God with two distinct plans or is there one people of God. The premillennial position supports separation theology and is consistent with Orthodox Jewish understanding of the scriptures. Some a-millennialists support what they call “*expansion theology*.” There is not a replacement of Israel as God’s chosen people, but there is an “expanded” definition of who is Israel. A True Jew is not saved by the fact of their ethnicity, but by their faith and becoming children of the promise (Romans 9:8). The scripture says;

²⁶ For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you *are* Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:25-29)

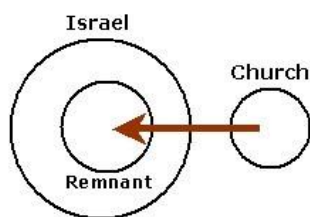
Paul makes us aware that the God’s promises were to Abraham and his Seed, not seeds. The scripture says, “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ” (Galatians 3:16). When God originally gave the promises to

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Abraham (Genesis 12-17), it appeared they were to Abraham and his physical descendants. Later we learn that it was limited to the descendants of Isaac and not Ishmael (Genesis 17:19-21). The promises are narrowed down even further to the descendants of Jacob and not Esau (Genesis 25:19-34). Finally, in the New Testament we learn the Abrahamic blessing is narrowed down to one, Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:16). The result in who receives the promised blessings is not based on being an ethnic Jew or Gentile, but if you are in Christ by faith.

This expanded definition of the people of God reflects the relationship of Israel and the Church. In Ephesians chapter two Paul makes this relationship clear. Believing Gentiles are now equal members of the “commonwealth of Israel” (2:12), creating “one new man *from* the two” (2:15), and are “fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God” (2:19). Believing Jews and believing Gentiles are co-heirs of the promises made to the Old Testament patriarchs.

An expansion theology follows the remnant theology defined earlier. The remnant theology can be illustrated by the following:



The relationship of Israel and the church overlap in some manner. The Church is understood to be a subset of faithful Israel who received Jesus as the promised Messiah. This faithful subset of Israel is called the Remnant or the “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:15-16).

There is some debate on whether “all” of ethnic Israel will be saved when the Lord returns (Romans 11:25-29). The conclusion of the matter of the relationship between Israel and the Church and our faith in Christ, can be expressed by the scripture, “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich

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to all who call upon Him. For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved” (Romans 10:12-13).

Is Zechariah speaking of the millennium?

According to premillennialists, after Christ’s second coming, there will be a judgment of nations (Matthew 25:31-46). This is also known as the judgment of the sheep and goats, the analogy Jesus used in His Olivet Discourse. The sheep represent the righteous who inherit the kingdom. The goats represent those who will go into everlasting punishment. Believers who survive the tribulation will enter the millennial age in mortal bodies. The following text from the Old Testament is a reference to those living in the millennial kingdom.

¹⁶And it shall come to pass *that* everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. ¹⁷And it shall be *that* whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be **no rain**. ¹⁸If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they *shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague* with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. ¹⁹This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. (Zechariah 14:16-19, emphasis added)

The premillennial position uses this passage as a proof text that there will be a literal thousand-year kingdom age. Those living at that time will receive no rain if they fail to go to Jerusalem for the feast of tabernacles. They argue that this cannot be speaking of the eternal state because there is sin (refusing to go to Jerusalem for the

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feast). This is based on the plain reading of the text. The millennial reign of the Messiah is the realization of the feast of tabernacles.

In order to critically analyze this text, we first must understand some general information about the book of Zechariah. Zechariah lived at the time of the Jews return from exile in Babylon and was instrumental in the rebuilding of the temple around 520 to 470 B.C. Chapters 9-14 are early examples of apocalyptic literature. The visions given are not as fully developed as those found in Daniel and Revelation, they contain apocalyptic elements such as speaking of the day of the Lord.

We need to admit that Zechariah 14 is a very difficult passage to interpret. Verses 16-19 are not directly quoted in the New Testament, although there are some allusions (echoes) to it in the book of Revelation. There are some things we need to keep in mind when interpreting this difficult passage.

The passage is apocalyptic in structure. This is evidenced by the use of symbols and metaphors such as the Mount of Olives splitting open to form a large valley and that living waters will flow out of Jerusalem. There is a prophetic perspective throughout the chapter. The chapter is speaking of the Day of the Lord when Christ returns to strike those nations coming against Jerusalem and their flesh will rot and their eyes will consume in their sockets (Zechariah 14:1-3, 12-15). Zechariah also speaks of Christ becoming King over the entire earth (Zechariah 14:9). Those not coming to Jerusalem for the feast of tabernacles will be punished by receiving no rain.

In the Old Testament, when the scripture says there will be no rain, it is speaking of a punishment for sin. This is telling us that there will be sin in the millennium. However, according to the amillennial position, we will enter the eternal state after Christ returns when there will be no more sin. How do we interpret this verse?

In order to understand this passage, we must consider how New Testament writers quote Old Testament passages. This scripture is not directly quoted in the New Testament. If we are to interpret unclear passages with those that are more clear, the description of the coming of the Lord in the New Testament gives us a clear message of the how these events will unfold. Those living in Old Testament

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times had no understanding of the redemptive work of Christ and the implementation of the New Covenant. Zechariah is using language and concepts familiar to the people of his day.

When the Messiah came and died on the cross, it was no longer necessary to keep the feasts from the Old Testament because they found their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. To go back to animal sacrifices and literally keeping the feast of tabernacles is to conflict with the redemptive work of Christ. The book of Hebrews says we have a new covenant based on “better” hope, covenant, promises, sacrifices, possession, heavenly country, and resurrection. The scripture says, “In that He says, “A new *covenant*,” He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away” (Hebrews 8:13). If the old covenant is to vanish away, why would God have His people revert back to its practices, even as a remembrance when the new covenant is better in Christ.

The feast of tabernacles celebrates the fall harvest, the final harvest of the year. The people were instructed to live in booths (a temporary dwelling) to commemorate God’s protection and provision during the exodus from Egypt. Many scholars believe that this feast day points to the Lord’s promise that He will once again “tabernacle” with His people when He returns to reign over all the world. The reference to the feast in Zechariah 14 represents the consummation of joy and glory typified by the feast of tabernacles will be realized. The eternal state is the consummation of God’s kingdom on earth.

The amillennial position views Zechariah symbolically and its events point to Jesus Christ.

Final Comments about the Millennium

According to premillennialism, the millennium is an intermediate age between the church age and the eternal state. Christ is physically ruling in Jerusalem, yet co-existing with evil, where people still procreate, experience death, animal sacrifices (even if as a memorial) are being made in a rebuilt temple, and at the end of the

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thousand years, people will still join in Satan's final rebellion against Christ. Only believers can enter the millennial kingdom with some in mortal bodies and others in glorified bodies.

Those who enter the millennium in glorified bodies will be believers raptured before the tribulation (dispensational premillennialists), and those resurrected after the tribulation at Christ's second coming consisting of Old Testament saints and believers saved during the tribulation who were martyred. Believers who survive the tribulation will enter the millennium in mortal bodies. Everyone entering the millennium will be believers, but many children born to those in mortal bodies will join in Satan's final rebellion at the end of the kingdom age.

Historical premillennialism and post millennialism believes the rapture/resurrection occurs at Christ's second coming. This creates a problem. If all believers are resurrected and receive their glorified bodies, who will be left to populate the millennium in mortal bodies? Based on this issue, the dispensational premillennial position would appear to be the correct view. Another problem arises with the following verse, "Now I say this, brothers *and sisters*, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable" (1 Corinthians 15:50). Paul is saying that our mortal body cannot inherit the kingdom of God. This poses a problem for dispensational premillennialists that say believers in mortal bodies will enter the kingdom.

The amillennial position settles the issues found in the premillennial and post millennial positions. They argue that there is no literal thousand-year kingdom age and that believers, all in glorified bodies, will enter the eternal state that follows Christ's second coming. According to amillennialism, the millennium is happening now where Christ is ruling in heaven. The age to come after the church age is the eternal state, not a literal thousand-year kingdom age on the earth.

As I have state earlier in this book (see chapter 5), I believe 1 Corinthian 15:54 serves as a plum line along with what Jesus said about the resurrection in John 5:28-29, that should guide our understanding of events surrounding Christs return. All scriptures

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concerning end time events must be interpreted in such a way that they stay true to the fact of when death will be abolished forever and that there is only one physical resurrection of the dead. In my view, these scriptures are very straight forward and it is very difficult to support millennial views that support multiple resurrections of the dead.

Concluding Comments

In this chapter I wanted to bring up several points of interest that affects our understanding of the millennium. There is just so much information that can be considered on these topics and it is not my purpose to give an exhaustive analysis on all possible points that can be considered on this subject. What has been covered should greatly help in laying the foundation of the biblical evidence needed to support or not support a literal thousand-year kingdom age preceding the eternal state.

Chapter 18 - Premillennialism and Amillennialism

Since we have completed the analysis of the five pivotal questions, I wanted to present a simple comparison of the premillennial and amillennial views. These do not represent all the various items that could be compared, but are key in our evaluation of the two views.

The following table presents 27 points showing the differences between the two views. This book will not touch upon all the items listed. That would require another book. The table illustrates how the Bible hermeneutic impacts the interpretation of eschatological passages.

Premillennialism (<i>literal</i>)	Amillennialism (<i>symbolic</i>)
Physical Kingdom on Earth after 2 nd coming	Spiritual kingdom in Heaven now
The 1,000 years are literal. (Rev. 20:2-7)	1,000 years symbolically represents a long period of time. (Deut. 7:9; 1 Chron 16:15; Psa. 50:10; 105:8). It is a symbolic number.
Two peoples or programs of God, Israel & the Church.	One people of God comprised of Jews & Gentiles (Gal. 3:28).
Christ's Kingdom fulfilled in Millennium	Christ's Kingdom fulfilled in Eternal State
Now living in the Church Age/Age of Grace.	Millennium is happening now.

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Daniel & Revelation are fundamentally <i>literal</i> with some symbolism (literal hermeneutic).	Daniel & Revelation are fundamentally <i>symbolic</i> with some literal (apocalyptic literature).
Seals, Trumpets, & Bowls occur during the Tribulation at the end of the age.	Seals, Trumpets, & Bowls occur over the course of history.
Events of Olivet Discourse fulfilled in the future during the Tribulation at the end of the age.	Events of the Olivet Discourse <i>mostly</i> fulfilled in 1 st century by destruction of Jerusalem at the end of the Jewish age.
Timing of 70 weeks are literal timeframes with 70 th week laying out timing of the end.	Timing of 70 weeks uses numbers figuratively/symbolically.
70 th week is the tribulation period. (gap)	70 th week begins with start of Christ's earthly ministry.
Last 3 ½ years of 70 th week is the Great Tribulation or Time of Jacob's trouble.	Last 3 ½ years of 70 th week symbolically represents the time between Christ's advents. Rev. 12:7, 14; Dan. 12:7
Antichrist stops sacrifices in rebuilt Temple at midpoint of 70 th week in event called abomination of desolation.	Christ's work at the cross no longer requires Temple sacrifices, therefore they cease or are no longer necessary. Titus committed abomination of desolation in A.D. 70.
Once Trib starts, 2 nd coming can be calculated	2 nd coming cannot be calculated.
The mark of the beast is a microchip implanted in forehead or right hand and required to buy or sell and condemns the person to hell (Rev. 13:16-18; 14:9-11).	The "mark of the beast" is a counterfeit for the seal of God's name on the saints (Rev 7:2-8; 14:1). The "mark" is symbolic of who you give

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Given at mid-point of 7-year tribulation.	allegiance/devotion to. It metaphorically speaks of your mind/forehead and actions/hand (Exo. 13:8-9; Deut. 6:4-9; Eze. 9:4). Mark of the beast is like an anti-Shema. This has been true for all the church age.
The false prophet requires all to receive a mark in the Tribulation to buy or sell, probably a microchip implanted as part of a cashless society.	A person cannot freely function in society without giving in to the demands of the beast and participating in the governmental system.
Pre-Tribulation Rapture (Dispensationalists) or Post-Tribulation Rapture (Historical).	Post-Tribulation Rapture. Rapture & 2 nd Coming are simultaneous event.
Death occurs after the Rapture; during the Tribulation and in the Millennium.	When Jesus returns, physical death ends (1 Cor. 15:54; Isaiah 25:8).
Rev 19-20 interpreted chronologically	Rev 19-20 are recapitulations
Second coming in two phases, Rapture and 2 nd coming a period of time later.	One 2 nd coming when Christ raises believers in glorified bodies (rapture)
Multiple bodily resurrections, at the rapture, 2 nd coming, end of the millennium, the resurrection of the wicked and final judgment.	One physical resurrection of the just & unjust, then the final judgment and the new heavens & new earth (Dan 12:2; Jn 29; Acts 24:15)
First resurrection = Rapture (physical)	First resurrection = the new birth (spiritual)
Second resurrection = Wicked (physical) after the Millennium.	Second resurrection = bodily (physical) of righteous & wicked at 2 nd coming.

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Binding of Satan at 2 nd coming (Rev. 20:2-3).	Satan bound at Christ's temptation (Matt. 4:17; 12:29) and cast out (Jn 12:31) by Jesus's work at the cross during Christ's ministry.
The Ezekiel 38-39 war, the battle of Armageddon, and the Gog Magog War are 3 separate battles. Armageddon & Ezekiel War occurring before the millennium and Gog & Magog War after the millennium.	The Ezekiel 38-39 war, the battle of Armageddon, and the Gog Magog War are all speaking of the single battle at the end of the age. They are different views of the same event.
The Bema Seat, Judgment of Nations, and Great White Throne are seen as separate events. The first two occurring before the millennium and the last after.	The Bema Seat, Judgment of Nations, and Great White Throne are seen as the same event, just different descriptions, or views in speaking of it.
The Millennium is the time God fulfills His promises to national Israel. The Eternal State comes after the Millennium.	The Bible only speaks of one age to come (eternal state), not two (kingdom and eternal state). Matt. 12:32; Mk 10:30; Lk 18:30; Eph 2:7 (does say ages); Heb. 6:5
Historic Premillennial view seems to be the view of the early church fathers until Augustine. Dispensational premillennialism did not appear until the 1830's.	Augustine and the early church reformers (Calvin, Luther, Catholics, and many protestants) were a-millennialist. It became the dominate view in the early church.

The influence of the premillennial position on the church today (especially in America) has built into us a certain number of expectations. Many believers are looking for the coming of the Lord

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with a Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other, trying to connect current events to prophecies on the Bible. This is based on the literal interpretation of the books of Daniel and Revelation.

Is it possible that looking for events such as a middle east peace treaty (confirming of the covenant) and the rebuilding of the Jewish temple and reinstitution of the blood sacrificial system, as signs that Jesus is about to rapture the church are unfounded? What if these events do not have to literally happen because we have been looking through an incorrect lens in interpreting these passages.

The amillennial position uses a different set of criteria of connecting prophecies to their fulfillment. You could call it a different standard of measurement that can produce another set of results.

If the amillennial position is correct, how is it different from the prevailing premillennial view? The following points will be drastic changes from what many have believed to be true from the premillennial perspective.

1. No peace treaty required. (To start the timeclock on the 70th week of Daniel's prophecy).
2. Temple not required to be built.
3. Seven-year tribulation does not occur since the tribulation has occurred over the entire church age. No way to calculate Christ's second coming from counting the days given in the book of Daniel.
4. A literal abomination of desolation occurred in A.D. 70 and has occurred spiritually over the entire church age. Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.
5. Microchip is not the mark of the beast. One is marked by giving allegiance to the antichrist or Satan. This has been true over the course of church history.
6. No pretribulation rapture, only one second coming.
7. Truly no way to calculate the second coming by counting the days (according to Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy). No one knows the day because Christ comes as a thief in the night.

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Believers will not be taken by surprise because they should be ready anytime.

8. One physical resurrection instead of multiple.
9. One end time final battle, not three.
10. One end time judgment, not three.
11. No literal thousand-year kingdom on earth, but the Eternal State arrives after Christ returns.
12. There are not two plans for God's covenant people (Israel and the Church).

There will be very bad times just prior to Christ's return, but they may be much shorter than expected if there is no literal seven-year tribulation period. Jesus said in the Olivet Discourse, "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:22). In addition, there is no way to calculate when Christ will return because the counting of the days given in the book of Daniel and Revelation are not to be taken literally. This makes the second coming an event where no one knows the day or hour.

It can hard to process these differences because we have come so accustomed to a "left behind" mindset. It does take some time to be able to receive the amillennial position and hear their reasons for interpreting the scriptures as they do. In order to do a valid assessment of the two positions, we need to put away our biases and allow the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us in all truth (John 16:13).

Chapter 19 - Wrestling with the Scriptures

I want to speak to the process one can go through when confronted with the possibility of changing what they believe concerning biblical teachings. How can it affect us when facing challenging passages of scripture?

Before I share the process, we can go through when changing our beliefs, I want to mention Ezra, who was a priest in the Old Testament. He led a group of Jews that were exiled in Babylon, back to Jerusalem and was involved in getting the people back to serving the Lord. Much could be said about his impact on the rebuilding of the temple, but I want to focus on his attitude in receiving the Word of the Lord. The Bible says, “For Ezra had **prepared his heart** to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do *it*, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel” (Ezra 7:10, emphasis added). Notice it said he “prepared his heart.” He was ready to listen to what the Lord had to say in His Word. He was resolved to “to seek, “to do it,” and “to teach,” the Law of the Lord. We should follow his example in preparing ourselves to hear what the scriptures have to say. In preparing ourselves to hear, we need to be willing to change, if needed, what we believe based on a deeper understanding of His Word.

When truly testing our beliefs with scripture, sometimes there is no other option, but to revise our thinking. Our goal should be that our beliefs are fully supported by scripture, without blindly accepting what we have always been taught. This does not mean we are to distrust our pastors and Bible teachers, but to ensure what they say is supported by scripture. Any pastor or teacher should want

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to be held accountable to the scriptures. There are times when we will go through a process of wrestling with the scripture in seeking to properly understand them.

The process of changing your long-held beliefs can be troubling and cause you to go through a process comparable to the five stages of grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance). This change does not happen overnight. Let me elaborate on each of these steps of how this process can work out.

When confronted with an opposing view on something we have believed, the first reaction is to *deny* it. The person does not give any credibility to the other viewpoints and disregards them altogether. Even when given sound biblical reasons for a different view, they do not allow it to influence them.

The next stage is *anger* where one begins to see some validity in the biblical reasons given for the other positions in question. It can anger you because you have been slow to hear what the scriptures are saying. You may also feel anger because you have allowed yourself to only hear one side of the argument. It can also make you angry because the biblical evidence was there all the time and you failed to see it.

In the stage of *bargaining*, you try to maintain your belief in a teaching even though there are very good arguments for the other views. You try to coexist with the other views and hope your current view will win out as the correct one. It is part of human nature to not want to change and we try to negotiate a way around it.

The next stage is *depression* where you feel sadness that you may need to change what you believe on a long-held teaching. Some of your long-time Christian friends will think you have lost it, or are backsliding. One may even lose interest in talking about it and try to avoid dealing with it.

The final stage in the process is *acceptance*. This is where you acquiesce to the fact that you need to change your view so that you come into agreement with the biblical evidence. It is the point where

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you accept that you were indoctrinated by accepting a set of beliefs without the objective analysis and evaluation of the issue in order to form a judgment. Maybe the Holy Spirit was trying to lead us to a proper understanding and we resisted it. Going forward, you realize you need to have a healthy questioning attitude about new information that you are exposed to and not blindly believe everything certain Bible teachers teach you. We need to test everything we are taught with scripture and weigh the biblical evidence in deciding what to believe.

This is the process some can go through when considering changing their belief. It can be hard to come to grips with the fact that your long-held belief on a particular Bible doctrine was not totally in line with what the scriptures say. I believe it is proper for us to wrestle with God concerning challenging scriptures in order to gain a deeper understanding. This is how we grow spiritually and bring our thoughts into line with God's Word.

I am reminded of the time Jacob wrestled with an angel for a blessing who turned out to be God (Genesis 32:24-29). Jacob lived a life of struggles. His name means, "heel-catcher" and carries the sense of "one who follows after to supplant or deceive." Without going into the detail of his story, the result was that he wrestled with God and received His blessing. However, God put the socket of his hip out of joint, and changed his name to Israel, which means, "he struggles with God." Jacob's experience was painful, but He struggled with God and man, and prevailed. We too, can wrestle with God in seeking a greater understanding of Him and receiving His blessings. God will come to us and manifest Himself to us in our struggles, no matter what they may be.

I believe that we all can agree that there are difficult passages in the Bible to understand, especially in the area of eschatology. Even Peter said that Paul wrote of things which are difficult to understand. Peter wrote;

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¹⁵and consider *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, ¹⁶as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are **some things hard to understand**, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures. (2 Peter 3:15-16)

In the chapter just quoted from Peter's second epistle, he was speaking about the day of the Lord where the heavens will pass away with a great noise and that we look for new heavens and a new earth. Peter states that these events, that are associated with Christ's second coming, were also spoken of in Paul's epistles, and that there are some things that are hard to understand. These difficult passages can be twisted, or distorted by unlearned teachers. It is possible we could have been influenced by ill-equipped teachers in the past that helped form our views. When we come to hear teaching that is credible, we may be slow to receive it. The book of Acts mentions a group of people who had a zeal to receive the Word of God, but examined it to confirm that what they heard was true. The following quote is from my previous book;

We should exercise the same discipline as the Berean Christians mentioned in the book of Acts in how they received the Word of God. When Paul and Silas arrived at Berea during their second missionary journey, they went to the Jewish synagogue and preached the gospel to them. The Bereans possessed a remarkable moral character and practiced the discipline of reading and studying the scriptures daily. The Bible says, "Now these people were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the

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Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.” (Acts 17:11 *NASB*). They received the gospel message and examined it in light of the Old Testament scriptures. They weighed the biblical evidence and many concluded that Jesus was indeed the prophesied Messiah. The Bereans serve as a positive example of how a person or a group should respond to biblical teaching. We should have an eagerness to receive the Word and examine what we are taught in light of what the scriptures actually say. We should hold scripture in such a high regard, that it becomes our daily pursuit and source of truth in our lives. (The Rapture Timing Mystery, Weighing the Evidence, pages 14-15)

There can be times when we exercise this type of discipline when studying scripture, it may challenge some of our long-held views. This is when we may go through the stages I mentioned in this chapter when changing our views as we receive a deeper understanding of scripture.

Chapter 20 - Where I Stand

I feel I must confess where I stand on the topic of the millennium. My intent in writing this book is to present the two main views concerning the millennium and encouraging the reader to weigh the biblical evidence in forming their view. I do not want what I believe to be evident and be used as a criticism in saying I am promoting a particular view. I want every Christian to base their beliefs on scripture and not on their personal opinions, the culture, or what other people say. Even though it is my intent to not influence you on a particular position, I cannot escape the fact that I do have my own beliefs based on the research I have done and feel I need to make them known to you.

Several years ago, I would consider myself as a dispensational premillennialist with a futurist view on the interpretation of the book of Revelation. I believed in a pretribulation rapture and a literal thousand-year kingdom age or millennium. As I allowed myself to take a closer unbiased study of eschatological topics, I found that I had to revise my beliefs on end time events. This was difficult for me. As a Bible teacher over forty years, I have taught numerous Bible studies from the dispensational premillennial perspective and did not give any credibility to the other views. I learned that I did not critically analyze the biblical texts concerning end time Bible prophecy.

I know some of my Christian brothers and sisters will think I have taken a big step backward in my view of Bible end time prophecy. It is not easy to go against the prevailing view of Christians today. I do not like the fact that I may have been wrong in my view of Bible eschatology for nearly forty years. What would make me feel even worse, is that in the face of a mountain of biblical evidence, I

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resisted changing my view because of how I may be perceived by others. This did not happen overnight for me. My change in thinking took place over a span of about three years. The first major change for me was to no longer accept the pretribulation rapture view. As I weighed the biblical evidence, I realized the rapture/resurrection takes place at Christ's second coming, and not a two-phased coming. The more research I did, it eventually caused me to change my views on the millennium and how to interpret the book of Revelation.

In reading a parallel account of Jesus's Olivet Discourse, I realized most of what He said concerned the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. He was not speaking of events in a distant future generation. However, part of the Olivet Discourse speaks of Christ's return at the end of the age. Based on my study, it became apparent that the biblical evidence favored a partial preterist position. This in turn affects the reading of the book of Revelation and how to interpret Daniel's Seventy Weeks Prophecy. It became evident that a combination of the interpretation methods of the book of Revelation (historicist, preterist, idealist, and futurist) best supports the biblical evidence.

Based on my understanding of the scriptures, my only alternative was to accept the amillennial position. I do not declare that the premillennial position is incorrect, but that I believe the amillennial position best supports the events of the end times. There are many credible Bible scholars who hold to different views and I do not want to be dogmatic about these teachings.

I have had conversations with other Christians who defend the dispensational premillennial position with a passion. They maintain their view even when confronted with the 1 Corinthians 15:54 verse that was the game changer for me. When it comes to teachings of the end times, I need to ask this question. Are you defending your position, or are you defending what scripture says? We all experience the inclination to resist teachings that challenge what we have believed and allow scripture alone to be the final authority.

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Please allow me to give several reasons why I favor the amillennial position. The first is a *hermeneutical reason*. Apocalyptic literature should be interpreted symbolically and we must interpret scripture in the light of the rest of scripture. Unclear passages should be interpreted in the light of scriptures that are more clear. One must also give strict attention to how New Testament writers quote Old Testament passages. This allowed me to look through a different lens in interpreting passages in Daniel and Revelation.

Another reason why I lean to the amillennial view is for *theological reasons*. The amillennial position is the most Christ centered. The dispensation premillennial view's focal point is Israel. The promises made to national Israel must be fulfilled which is accomplished in the millennium. The emphasis for postmillennialism is on the church. They believe the church will eventually conquer the world for Christ before He returns. Their focus is on the church and not Christ. The amillennial view believes the promises made to Abraham were not to his seeds (plural), but to his seed (singular) who was Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:16). Christ becomes the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham and not national Israel.

A third reason I favor the amillennialism view is the recapitulative (retelling/parallelism) structure of the book of Revelation. Once I saw the book of Revelation could be interpreted in this way, the points made by the amillennial position made much more sense.

Finally, as I mentioned earlier, the plumb line verse (1 Corinthians 15:54), in my opinion, settles the question of how to view the millennium. Other eschatological passages must be interpreted in the light of how they are fulfilled when death shall be abolished forever. This prophetic fulfillment, at the resurrection of the dead, makes the existence of a thousand-year kingdom unnecessary and therefore unscriptural.

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I hope that my beliefs were not too apparent in this book because I truly want everyone to weigh the evidence of scripture for themselves when forming their beliefs.

In the conclusion of the end time Bible prophecies. Jesus Christ will come again physically for all the world to see. He will raise the dead, fight the final-end time battle, conduct a final judgment, and create a new heavens and new earth, with the new Jerusalem being the final dwelling place for God with His people. God's people living in glorified bodies on a glorified earth. It will be the consummation of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is God's people, in God's place, under God's rule, experiencing God's blessings. No matter what view you hold, premillennialism or amillennialism, these are the end results of what will come to pass.

I believe that one can find issues with each of the views concerning the millennium, whether premillennial, post millennial, or amillennial. However, in the end, it is my opinion that the amillennial view is best supported by the biblical evidence.

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Craig R. Cordle is a Bible scholar and teacher living in London, Ohio with his wife Mary. He is a 1975 graduate of Ohio Northern University, Ada, Ohio with a BA in Accounting. He has owned and operated his book-keeping and tax preparation business for over thirty years.

Craig has been an avid student of the Word of God and active in the teaching ministry since 1981, heading numerous Bible study groups in churches. Also, he has spent five years in the prison ministry teaching the Bible to inmates. His passion for the Word of God is evident in his teaching and in his desire to share the Bible message with his students. His passion for studying end time Bible prophecy and his desire to prepare believers for the coming of the Lord has inspired him to write on subjects concerning Bible eschatology.

Other Books Published: Are We Alone in the Universe; A Biblical Perspective
The Rapture Timing Mystery; Weighing the Evidence

Appendix 1 - Parallel Passages of the Olivet Discourse

Matthew 24	Mark 13	Luke 21
Jesus Predicts the Destruction of the Temple		
Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. ² And Jesus said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not <i>one</i> stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”	Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, “Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!” ² And Jesus answered and said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”	⁵ Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said, ⁶ “These things which you see—the days will come in which not <i>one</i> stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down.”
Impending Signs Leading up to the Destruction of the Temple		
³ Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what <i>will be</i> the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”	³ Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, ⁴ “Tell us, when will these things be? And what <i>will be</i> the sign when all these	⁷ So they asked Him, saying, “Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign <i>will there be</i> when these

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	things will be fulfilled?"	things are about to take place?"
⁴ And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. ⁶ And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all <i>these things</i> must come to pass, but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these <i>are</i> the beginning of sorrows. ⁹ "Then they will deliver you up to	⁵ And Jesus, answering them, began to say: "Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁶ For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am <i>He</i>,' and will deceive many. ⁷ But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for <i>such things</i> must happen, but the end <i>is</i> not yet. ⁸ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These <i>are</i> the beginnings of sorrows. ⁹ "But watch out for your-selves, for they	⁸ And He said: "Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am <i>He</i>,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them. ⁹ But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end <i>will</i> not <i>come</i> immediately." ¹⁰ Then He said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. ¹¹ And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven. ¹² But before all these things, they

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tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. ¹⁰ And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. ¹¹ Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. ¹² And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But he who endures to the end shall be saved. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.	will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. ¹⁰ And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. ¹¹ But when they arrest <i>you</i> and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.	will lay their hands on you and persecute <i>you</i>, delivering <i>you</i> up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. ¹³ But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. ¹⁴ Therefore settle <i>it</i> in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; ¹⁵ for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist.
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	¹² Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father <i>his</i> child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. ¹³ And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.	¹⁶ You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put <i>some</i> of you to death. ¹⁷ And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. ¹⁸ But not a hair of your head shall be lost. ¹⁹ By your patience possess your souls.
Destruction of Jerusalem / Great Tribulation		
¹⁵ "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in	¹⁴ "So when you see the 'abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not"	²⁰ "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Luke 19 ⁴³ For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, ⁴⁴ and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one

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the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand),	(let the reader understand),	stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”
¹⁶ “then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.	“then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.¹⁵ Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house.	Luke 21 ²¹ Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her.
¹⁸ And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.	¹⁶ And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.	²² For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.
¹⁹ But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! ²⁰ And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on	¹⁷ But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! ¹⁸ And pray that your flight may not be in winter.	²³ But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

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the Sabbath. ²¹ 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. ²² And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. ²³ "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. ²⁴ For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ See, I have told you beforehand. ²⁶ "Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; <i>or</i> 'Look, <i>He is</i> in the	¹⁹ For <i>in</i> those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. ²⁰ And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days.	For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. Luke 17 ²³ And they will say to you, 'Look here!' or 'Look there!' Do not go after <i>them</i> or follow <i>them</i>.
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inner rooms!’ do not believe <i>it</i>. ²⁷ For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ²⁸ For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.		²⁴ For as the lightning that flashes out of one <i>part</i> under heaven shines to the other <i>part</i> under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day. Luke 17 ³⁷ And they answered and said to Him, “Where, Lord?” So He said to them, “Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together.” Luke 21 ²⁴ And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled
The Coming of the Son of Man		

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²⁹ “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. ³⁰ Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the	²⁴ “But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; ²⁵ the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶ Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of	²⁵ “And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; ²⁶ men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷ Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.”
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four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.	earth to the farthest part of heaven.	
Parable of the Fig Tree		
³² “Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer <i>is</i> near.³³ So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! ³⁴ Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.	²⁸ “Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near.²⁹ So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors! ³⁰ Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.	²⁹ Then He spoke to them a parable: “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. ³⁰ When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. ³¹ So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. ³² Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place. ³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.
No One Knows the Day or Hour / Days of Noah/ Watching		
		³⁴ “But take heed to yourselves, lest your

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³⁶ “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. ³⁷ But as the days of Noah were, so also	³² “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. ³⁴ <i>It is</i> like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch.	hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. ³⁵ For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.” Luke 17 ²⁶ And as it was in the days of Noah, so
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will the coming of the Son of Man be. ³⁸ For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark. ³⁹ and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ⁴⁰ Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.		it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: ²⁷ They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. ²⁸ Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; ²⁹ but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed <i>them</i> all. ³⁰ Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. ³¹ “In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods <i>are</i> in the house, let him not come down to take
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⁴² Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief	³⁵ Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming-in the evening, at mid-night, at the crowing of the	them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. ³² Remember Lot's wife. ³³ Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. ³⁴ I tell you, in that night there will be two <i>men</i> in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. ³⁵ Two <i>women</i> will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. ³⁶ Two <i>men</i> will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left."
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would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. ⁴⁵ “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? ⁴⁶ Blessed <i>is</i> that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. ⁴⁷ Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. ⁴⁸ But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming, ⁴⁹and begins to beat <i>his</i> fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, ⁵⁰the	rooster, or in the morning— ³⁶lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. ³⁷ And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!”	Luke 12 ⁴² And the Lord said, “Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom <i>his</i> master will make ruler over his house-hold, to give <i>them their</i> portion of food in due season? ⁴³ Blessed <i>is</i> that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁴ Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. ⁴⁵ But if that servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat the male
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master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for <i>him</i> and at an hour that he is not aware of, ⁵¹ and will cut him in two and appoint <i>him</i> his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.		and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, ⁴⁶ the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for <i>him</i>, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint <i>him</i> his portion with the unbelievers. ⁴⁷ And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare <i>himself</i> or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many <i>stripes</i>. ⁴⁸ But he who did not know, yet, committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.
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		Luke 21 ³⁷And in the day-time He was teaching in the temple, but at night He went out and stayed on the mountain called Olivet. ³⁸Then early in the morning all the people came to Him in the temple to hear Him.
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Matthew 25 (*Parallel passages not found in Mark and Luke*):

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

25 “Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² Now five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish. ³ Those who *were* foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, ⁴ but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. ⁵ But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. ⁶ “And at midnight a cry was *heard*: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ ⁷ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us *some* of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ ⁹ But the wise answered, saying, ‘*No*, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ ¹⁰ And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.

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¹¹ “Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ ¹² But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’

¹³ “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming

The Parable of the Talents

¹⁴ “For *the kingdom of heaven* is like a man traveling to a far country, *who* called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. ¹⁵ And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. ¹⁶ Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. ¹⁷ And likewise he who *had received* two gained two more also. ¹⁸ But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord’s money. ¹⁹ After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

²⁰ “So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’ ²¹ His lord said to him, ‘Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ ²² He also who had received two talents came and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.’ ²³ His lord said to him, ‘Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’

²⁴ “Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵ And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, *there* you have *what* is yours.’

²⁶ “But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. ²⁷ So you ought to have deposited

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my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. ²⁸ So take the talent from him, and give *it* to him who has ten talents.

²⁹ 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. ³⁰ And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

The Son of Man Will Judge the Nations

³¹ "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats. ³³ And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; ³⁶ I *was* naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

³⁷ "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed *You*, or thirsty and give *You* drink? ³⁸ When did we see You a stranger and take *You* in, or naked and clothe *You*? ³⁹ Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' ⁴⁰ And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.'

⁴¹ "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: ⁴² for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'

⁴⁴ "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and

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did not minister to You?’ ⁴⁵Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do *it* to one of the least of these, you did not do *it* to Me.’ ⁴⁶And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Appendix 2 – Glossary of Eschatological Terms

Abomination of Desolation – The act that desecrates the holy place in the temple. Is a phrase from the Book of Daniel describing the pagan sacrifices with which the 2nd century B.C. Greek king Antiochus IV Epiphanes replaced the twice-daily offering in the Jewish temple. Besides Antiochus, some believe it occurred in A.D. 70 by Titus the Roman general and later emperor of Rome, and the end time Antichrist in the rebuilt third temple. It is mentioned by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse.

Abyss – The pit, the immeasurable depth, a metaphorical reference to the place of evil spirits, a place of confinement for evil spirits. Also referred to as the bottomless pit.

Amillennialism – The word means no millennium, which is a term that does not accurately reflect this interpretation of the millennium. This view states that Jesus is currently ruling from heaven. The millennium is happening now, not in a thousand-year period after the second coming of Christ.

Antichrist – Against Christ; the adversary of the Messiah. It is the spirit that denies Jesus is the Christ. It also is a person (the beast) who leads the one world government of the end times.

Apocalypse – Is a Greek word meaning to uncover or reveal; revelation. In modern usage, it means the destruction of the world.

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Apocalyptic Literature - Is a literary genre that reports an amazing, often fearful, violent vision that reveals truths about past, present, and/or future times in highly symbolic and poetical terms.

Battle of Armageddon – (Hill of Megiddo) The place where the kings of the earth under demonic leadership will wage war on the forces of God at the end of history.

Beast (person) – Can represent the end times empire or a person. As an individual, it is the leader of the one world government of the last days. Another term for the beast is the antichrist.

Beast (system) - The world system that seizes control in all areas of life; political, financial/economic, education, news media, entertainment, culture, social, moral, and spiritual; and demands allegiance/worship to the system. It redefines established norms, systems, laws, and forces changes in daily life.

Bema Seat Judgment - When the rapture occurs (pretribulation view), all believers will appear before the judgment seat of Christ, also called the Bema Seat judgment. This is not a judgment that concerns heaven or hell, but rewards that will be given in a believer's service to the Lord. Others (amillennial) believe this is another view of the final judgment.

Critical Analysis - An appraisal based on careful analytical evaluation; the analysis of available facts, evidence, observations, and arguments to form a judgement. Being aware of your own biases and assumptions when encountering information, and apply consistent standards when evaluating sources. It is an unbiased analysis not favoring a particular view.

Day of the Lord – Is a day of God's wrath when He executes vengeance on His enemies. It is when God punishes the world for its rejection of Christ and its treatment of Israel. God's anger eventually leads Him in taking action in executing punishment. The Day of the

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Lord can also be a time of blessing and salvation where He fulfills promises made to His people.

Days of Lot – Jesus said the times before his coming will resemble the days of Lot where there was rampant homosexuality.

Days of Noah – A time where the earth was full of violence and corruption that led to God send the flood as a judgment on the world. Jesus said the conditions of the times of His return will be comparable to the days of Noah.

Dispensational Premillennialism - This view sees God structuring His relationship with mankind through seven stages of revelation (Innocence, Conscience, Human Government, Promise, Law, Grace, and Kingdom/Millennium Age), or dispensations. Believes in a pre-tribulation rapture, a literal millennial age, and that God has two separate plans for His people. One for Israel and one for the church.

Dragon – Represents Satan (Revelation 20:2). The book of Revelation speaks of a dark trinity, that counterfeits the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, by the dragon (Satan), the beast (antichrist), and the false prophet.

Exegesis - To draw out; is legitimate interpretation which reads out of the text what the original author meant to convey.

Eisegesis - To lead into; on the other hand, reads into the text what the interpreter wishes to find or thinks he finds there.

Eschatology – The study of last things, especially of the second coming of Christ, or Parousia.

Eternal State – The final state of the earth after God creates the new heavens and new earth. At that time the New Jerusalem will come out of heaven prepared for Christ's bride, the eternal home for God's

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people when God dwells with mankind on the earth forever. It is God's people, in God's place, under God's rule, experiencing God's blessings.

False Prophet – The second beast mentioned in Revelation 13 coming out of the earth whose mission is to force humanity to worship the antichrist (the first beast coming out of the sea). He has all the power of the first beast because he is empowered by Satan and is able to deceive and perform miraculous signs.

Full Preterist – The belief the book of Revelation and all the signs given by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse were fulfilled in the first century A.D.

Fulness of the Gentiles – Is the time when the Gentile domination on earth ends. It addresses the idea that salvation, which God extended to the Jews, via the blessings of Abraham their father, would be yet extended to the Gentiles as well. Mentioned in Romans 11:25.

Futurist – An interpretation method of the book of Revelation that sees the events recorded in chapters 4-22 as speaking of future events. This view is closely associated with premillennialism.

Gematria - The practice of assigning a numerical value to a name, word, or phrase by reading it as a number, or sometimes by using an alphanumerical cipher. The original Bible manuscripts were written in both Hebrew and Greek. In each of these languages, the letters of the alphabet represent both letters and numbers. Every word therefore has a numerical value which could have symbolic meaning.

Genre - A category of artistic, musical, or literary composition characterized by a particular style, form, or content.

Glorified Body – The resurrected body that God's people will have in the Eternal State.

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Gog and Magog – The prophesied invader of Israel (Gog) and the land (Magog) from which he comes. Premillennialist state that the war mentioning Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38-39 is a separate war from that mentioned in Revelation 20. The first occurring early in the seven-year tribulation and the other at the end of millennium. Amillennialist believe the two passages are two different views of the same battle, also called the battle of Armageddon, at Christ's second coming.

Great Tribulation – The term Jesus used in the Olivet Discourse to describe the times after the abomination of desolation. It is the worst times since the beginning of the world until that time. Some believe this is speaking of the last 3 ½ years of the seven-year tribulation before Christ's second coming. Others believe it is speaking of the times during the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Great White Throne Judgment – The final judgment mentioned in Revelation 20. The dead stand before God and are judged according to their works. The books (possibly the 66 books of the Bible) were opened and the book of life (the book in which God records, or will record, the names of every person who is destined for Heaven and the world to come) and are judged according to the books.

Hermeneutics - The study of the principles and methods of interpreting the text of the Bible. Three Crucial Laws of Biblical Interpretation: Interpreted literally by its plain reading unless a passage is intended to be symbolic; Passage must be interpreted historically, grammatically, and contextually; Scripture is the best interpreter of scripture. View unclear/symbolic passages in light of those that are clear.

Historic Premillennialism - Sees God structuring His relationship with man through covenants. The two main covenants being a "covenant of works" and a "covenant of grace. Believes in a post tribulation

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rapture and a literal thousand-year kingdom age after the second coming.

Idealist – An interpretation method of the book of Revelation that sees the scenes of Revelation depicting principles of spiritual war, not specific events. These principles operate throughout the church age and follow a repeated pattern of fulfillment.

Intermediate State – The state a believer is in after death when they are with Christ in heaven. They have a spiritual body and will not receive their glorified body until the physical resurrection of the dead at Christ's second coming. It is called intermediate because the existence of the spiritual body alone is only temporary, where the glorified body continues for eternity,

Jewish Feasts/Festivals – Seven holy days, or special sabbaths, instituted by God for the Jewish people (Leviticus 23). They commemorated historic events concerning Israel and prophetic events, finding their fulfillment in Christ. The four spring feasts (Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, and Pentecost) were prophetically fulfilled by Christ's first coming. The fall festivals (Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles), in turn, will find their fulfillment in Christ's second coming.

Judgment of the Nations – The judgment described by Jesus in Matthew 25:31-46. Some believe this judgment determines who will enter into the millennial kingdom, others believe it is another description of the final judgment.

Judgment Seat of Christ – Another term for the Bema Seat Judgment.

Kingdom Age – It is the thousand-year age, also known as the millennium, where Christ literally rules on the earth for a thousand years. This is a dispensation of time where God fulfills His promises to national Israel.

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Last Trumpet – The sounding of the last trumpet marks the resurrection of the dead. Some believe it is the last trumpet blast on the Jewish festival of Rosh Hashanah, and others believe it represents the seventh, or last trumpet judgment in the book of Revelation.

Mark of the Beast – In the literal sense, it is believed to be a microchip embedded under the skin that is required to be able to buy or sell. Anyone taking the mark is doomed to eternal punishment in hell. From a symbolic perspective, it is totally accepting and being committed to the beast system where it comes to the point of worship. It is giving one's allegiance to Satan.

Metaphor – A figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them.

Millennial Reign – also known as the kingdom age where Christ literally rules on the earth from Jerusalem for a thousand years.

Millennial Temple – The future temple described in Ezekiel chapters 40-48. It is believed by many to be the temple built that will exist through the millennial kingdom, or thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. Others believe it is symbolic and not a literal temple that will be built.

Millennium – The thousand-year period mentioned in Revelation chapter twenty.

Mystery Babylon – The whore of Babylon described in Revelation 17-18, the evil world system controlled by the antichrist.

New Heaven and New Earth - The state of creation after Jesus' return and final judgment. It is the time when the curse will be removed and the earth will be free from sin, evil, sickness, and death. Things will be completely new, and the old order of things, with the

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accompanying sorrow and tragedy, will pass away. It is also referred to as the “eternal state.”

New Jerusalem – It is the final dwelling place for God and His people. It is the place God prepared for His bride (John 14:2) where they will live forever. It will be the consummation of the kingdom of God; God’s people, in God’s place, under God’s rule, experiencing God’s blessings.

Number of the Beast – It is the number 666, the most infamous number in the Bible. Many believe it is the gematria of the name of the antichrist (or beast). It also could be symbolic of the number of man and human weakness (7 being God’s perfect number and 6 the number of man that always falls short).

Olivet Discourse – Jesus’s longest, most important discussion of Bible eschatology (Matthew 24-25; Mark 13, and Luke 21). It was triggered by His disciples’ questions about the timing of the temple’s destruction and His coming at the end of the age.

Partial Preterist - See the book of Revelation and Jesus’s Olivet Discourse as referring to both the events of A.D. 70 and the future second coming of Christ.

Parousia – Coming; means, presence, or official visit; the coming, arrival, advent. It is the future return from heaven of Jesus, to raise the dead, hold the last judgment, and set up formally and gloriously the kingdom of God. The word is used in the east as a technical expression for the royal visit of a king, or emperor. It is the word used for the public visible appearing of the Lord Jesus from heaven.

Plumb Line - A light line with a weight (plumb bob) at one end that, when suspended next to a workpiece, defines a vertical line. When suspended from a string, gravity makes the string hang perfectly straight. Metaphorically, it is a passage that serves as the standard

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that keeps the eschatological walls (all the events of the end time) straight.

Postmillennialism – This view holds that Christ will return after a golden age where the whole world is Christianized. The millennium is not a literal thousand years and began at Christ resurrection or shortly thereafter. Due to the preaching of the gospel, the world gets better before Christ returns.

Premillennialism – The view that says Christ will return at the end of the church age and will rule on the earth for a literal thousand years. The millennium is Christ's kingdom on the earth where God fulfills His promises made to national Israel in the Old Testament.

Preterist – A person who maintains that the prophecies in the Apocalypse have already been fulfilled.

Prophecy – Is the foretelling or prediction of things to come, something that is declared by a prophet, especially a divinely inspired prediction, instruction, or exhortation. Declaring things that have not yet occurred (Isaiah 46:10). In the New Testament, one prophesies edification, exhortation, and comfort (1 Corinthians 14:3) to people. It also can be attributed to the testimony of Jesus (Revelation 19:10).

Prophetic Year – Years mentioned in the Bible of 360 days in length.

Rabbinic Judaism - Is a religion centered around the teachings and writings of rabbis. After the destruction of the temple the rabbis reorganized Judaism, adding many new laws, rules and traditions. It replaced temple ritual with prayer service in synagogues that was built upon practices of Jews in the diaspora dating back to the Babylonian exile.

Rapture – The Greek word "*harpazo*" means to be caught up, or to seize, carry off by force, to snatch out or away. It is the believer's

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resurrection where they receive their glorified body in which they will live for eternity. There are different beliefs as to the timing of the rapture such as pretribulation, mid-tribulation, pre-wrath, and post tribulation.

Recapitulative – To summarize and state again the main points of, to retell or repeat to give a different emphasis or perspective.

Replacement Theology - The church has replaced Israel in God's plan and that many of the promises made to Israel are fulfilled in the Church, not Israel. The Jews are no longer God's people but the Church is the new and improved Israel. The promises and blessing and restoration of the nation of Israel are spiritualized or allegorized into promises that are fulfilled in the Church.

Resurrection – The physical body being raised back to life. In the Bible, some were raised from the dead back to their mortal body, only to die again. At Christ's coming, all the physical dead are resurrected, some to eternal life and others to condemnation (final judgment in the lake of fire).

Rosh Hashanah – The term comes from the Hebrew meaning the "head of the year" and also is referred to as the "Day of Judgment," It is known in the Old Testament as the Feast of Trumpets that begins a ten-day period known as the "days of awe," leading up to Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement. Many believe that it will be fulfilled by the rapture of the church when Christ catches up believers at the last trumpet (1 Corinthians 15:51-53).

Sacrifice – To give up something valuable to you to help another. An offering to God to atone, or cover sin where the innocent pays the penalty for the guilty.

Seals, Trumpets, and Bowl Judgments of Revelation – Are three series of judgments given in the book of Revelation that will befall the earth. Some believe these represent God's wrath poured out during

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the seven-year tribulation prior to Christ's second coming. Others believe in a symbolic interpretation of these judgments, or that they are recapitulative, in that they retell events to give a different emphasis or perspective.

Second Coming of Christ – Jesus Christ's second advent. He first came as the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world. He is coming again as King of King and Lord of lords to judge and make war. At this time Christ will raise the dead, fight the final war, hold the final judgment, and create the new heavens and new earth.

Seventy Weeks Prophecy – A prophecy found in Daniel 9:24-27 that outlines God's dealing with the Jewish people. Considered by many as the chronological key to end-time Bible prophecy. When interpreted literally, it represents seventy weeks of years, or 490 years, during which God will accomplish what is stated in verse 24. Some see a gap between the 69th and 70th week representing the church age and the final seventieth week is the seven-year tribulation. Others do not see the gap in time. A symbolic interpretation sees the final week as fulfilled between Christ's two advents. Bible scholars are divided in their interpretation of this prophecy.

Signs – An object, quality, or event whose presence or occurrence indicates the probable presence or occurrence of something else. An indicator that communicates that an event is about to happen. An impending sign signals the progress of your journey. An identifying sign, announces the reaching of your destination, validates that the anticipated event has arrived, or confirms the fulfillment of a prophetic event.

Symbolic - Something used for or regarded as representing something else; something that stands for or suggests something else by reason of relationship, association, convention, or accidental resemblance. A word, number, event, or prophecy in the Bible that

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has a deeper alternative meaning that is in addition to the plain, and obvious reading of the text.

Temple – A religious building that is meant for worshipping or praying. In the Old Testament, it is the place where God meets with the priest in the holy of Holies. The New Testament says our bodies are the temple, or dwelling place of the Lord.

Temple Judaism - Practiced animal blood sacrifices and all the ceremonial laws given by Moses in the Old Testament.

Temple Mount – The site on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem when the first and second Jewish temples were built. This is the place where Abraham was instructed by God to sacrifice his son Isaac, and the site of the threshing floor of Ornan that King David purchased for the location of the temple.

Thief in the Night – The phrase that describes the unexpected suddenness of Christ's coming. It is compared to the fact that no one knows the timing of when a thief comes during the night,

Time of Jacob's Trouble – A term found in Jeremiah 30:6. Is the Old Testament term for the Great Tribulation mentioned by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse where Israel will suffer great persecution in the last days.

Time of the Gentiles – The time period Jerusalem will be controlled by other nations. Its beginning goes back to the time of Nebuchadnezzar, runs through the time of the Romans and the destruction of Jerusalem until a time in the future.

Thousand Years – In the literal sense, it is a thousand years of roughly 365 days in each year. Symbolically, it means a long time, a round number meaning an undefined length of time, or an indefinite period of time.

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Tribulation – A pressing, pressing together, pressure. A time of trouble or suffering. A time some attribute to the last seven years prior to Christ's coming that are the worst times the world has ever experienced.

Two Peoples of God – A teaching of dispensationalism that God has two plans for His people. One for Israel and one for the church. God turned from the Jewish people because of their rejection of Jesus to the church. After the pretribulation rapture God will turn back to the Jews. The millennium, or the literal thousand-year kingdom is needed for God to fulfill His promises to national Israel. Amillennialism does not see this distinction between two peoples and two plans of God. All believers are one in Christ (Galatian 3:28).

Two Witnesses – Mentioned in Revelation 11 who will prophesy and perform miracles like those performed by Moses and Elijah. A literal interpretation sees them as actual messengers from God who minister during the tribulation. They can also be seen in a symbolic sense since Revelation is apocalyptic literature.

Types and Shadows - A prophetic foretelling of future events. Something that prefigures, or is a picture of something that is to come. It is not the exact image (shadow) of what is to come, but is representative of it. For example, the Passover lamb is a type of Jesus being the true Passover Lamb who took away the sins of the world.

Wrath of God - The holy action of retributive justice towards persons whose actions deserve eternal condemnation. "Wrath" is defined as *the emotional response to perceived wrong and injustice*. Wrath involves action. Anger is an emotional response to an activating event (a broken law or promise). When anger escalates from feeling to action, it becomes wrath.