

ABC OF ESCHATOLOGY

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Preface

The unknown is always a fascinating subject. When we drive a car at high speed and if we know that at a particular point in time and at a particular spot a truck will collide with our car, we will definitely avoid that collision and prevent that accident. If we know that a month from now the price of the stock we hold in our hands will rise high we will wait for the moment before we sell it. Or if know that these stocks will plummet down like a rocket we will download it today like a hot potato. What will not we give today to know the questions that we are going answer in tomorrow's exam. What will not General give to know today the outcome of the battle tomorrow? Yes, tomorrow is always fascinating. The wise man says: "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for you know not what a day may bring forth".

Many have tried by occult means, to know the future. Yet, it is only God who knows the future. "I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done".

God not only knows the future, but it has also pleased him to declare it to us early. Bible is full of prophecy. Prophecy is history written before it has happened. Bible speaks to us as to who we are, how we came into the world, and why we suffer and what is going to be our end etc.

This little volume in the ABC of Theology Series, is my attempt to set forth in as simple words as possible, a chronology of prophecy. Of course I have taken a dispensational pre-Millennial, pre-Tribulational view of the scripture because I believe it does more justice to the Word of God. It is my hope and earnest prayer that our Lord may be pleased to use this effort for the edification of His saints and also for some needy souls to find the Saviour.

Silas C. Nair

Introduction

End-time events is a topic that ought to bring out the best in us but ends up doing just the opposite. Here is something that should turn each one of us into sober and alert Christians, ever conscious of our duty before we meet with our everlasting destiny. It is a topic that should turn teachers into prophetic expositors, who forthtell the events to come, calling people to accountability. However, reality is contrary to this.

The popularization of Dispensationalism by JN Darby, CI Scofield, and the Bible schools and seminaries in the forefront of dispensational teaching saw to it that the study of end-time events became an all-consuming passion of Christians worldwide. However, this increased interest [nay, obsession] soon resulted in the rise of date-setters who emotionally manipulated and led astray the church of God. Thousands of people around the world set dates for rapture, destroying tens of thousands of lives when it did not take place on the date declared with “certainty”. While most of this took place in western countries, India also had a fair share of date setters.

Thus as long as a person discusses or writes on anything even remotely related to end-time events, the audience immediately expects a fire-and-brimstone message with a maximum probability limit being announced for our survival on planet earth. But there is nothing of this sort in this book. This is a soberly written study of a fairly wide scope. This kind of writing

and teaching was made popular by the late KG Kurian from the Assembly pulpits, and Dr. OM Samuel through his teachings, which can be seen concisely in his Malayalam book “The Beginning of The End”. Another person who wrote in this expository style was the late AM Samuel, whose classic “Prophecy’s Blueprint” could not gain the wide circulation it ought to have received.

The present work by Dr. Silas C. Nair reflects the same culture of careful study and exposition. At the same time, it is a totally independent work. Rather than follow a single writer, he has sifted and sorted through all the available dispensational material [and also some that are not so favourable to Dispensationalism] to bring out the most reasoned out exposition of this subject. Of course, it is not easy to write a comprehensive work that is acceptable to all, and more so in the field of Eschatology. Yet he has been able to do justice to the expectation that we all have after reading the first three volumes of his ABC of Theology.

All movements are based upon certain philosophies, desires and yearnings, and expectations. The Christian faith is no different. It is based not only upon Christ’s atoning work for the sinner, but in practical life it is also highly dependent upon our expectation for future. However, this expectation is only part of the entire plan of God, of which a substantial portion finds an exposition and explanation in Eschatology. Since this book is a serious work, covering almost all the important aspects of eschatology in reasonable detail, the work is expected to be useful for many decades to come.

The book was adopted by Scofield Graduate School of Theology based in California as soon as its manuscript was seen by the faculty. This is just but one indication of the way

this book is going to gain popularity.

I wish that the good Lord might honour this work by Dr. Silas C. Nair, who toiled day and night to produce it in spite of his failing vision, declining health, and ever-busy schedule.

**Dr. Johnson C. Philip, PhD, ThD, DSc
Chancellor**

Forward

It is indeed a privilege to write this forward to the latest volume in the ABC of Theology Series that comes from the prolific pen of my beloved brother and valued friend Silas C. Nair. This work was originally presented by him as a Thesis for a Doctorate in Theology: “A chronological statement regarding the Second Coming of Christ.” It is now suitably modified and expanded to be published in a book form. Seldom, if ever, have I read a more thorough survey of the great prophetic themes with unusual clarity and refreshing arrangements like the present volume in Biblical prophecy, in which the author teaches God’s plan for the ages. The purpose of this book is to present a brief Biblical survey of the last day events from the pre-millennial pre-tribulational point of view. Many Christians have an interest in what the future holds but lack information concerning it.

All the major eschatological events are discussed in chronological order. As each event is presented, the pertinent scripture passages are set forth, with the more important portions having analyzed.

It is a distinct privilege to commend this most interesting and informative book to the Christian public. May this exceptional work on the prophetic subject be used of the Lord to quicken the hope of believers and awaken a new interest in those who have been slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

Dr.O.M.Samuel

Principal

B.B.I. Pathanamthitta.

I.INTRODUCTION (PART I)

Out of Old Testament's 23,210 verses, around 6641 contain predictive material, which works out to about 29% of the entire Old Testament. Out of the New Testament's 7914 verses, around 1711 contain predictive material, which works out to around 22% of the whole New Testament. Thus for the entire Bible's 31,124 verses, 8352 contain predictive material, which works out to around 27% of the whole Bible. If so, prophecy is an enormously important subject. God alone declares the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isa.46.10). Since God knows everything and He does not lie, the prophecy in the Bible is accurate.

"The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev.19.10). Prophecy is history written before it has happened. History is His story. Bible tells us of God, His creation of man and His dealings with him. What does Scripture has to say about prophecy?

A. What is predictive prophecy?

Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Their prophecy had two aspects. One is forth telling i.e. speaking the word of God just as it was given to them. The other is foretelling of the future. The first is non-predictive prophecy and the latter is predictive prophecy. This is history written before it happened. There have been prophets other than the Judeo-Christian prophets. A short mention of them needs to be made before we turn to Biblical prophecy.

Nostradamus is one of them. He prophesied violent convulsions of the earth in California either in 1986 or 1988. Once this date began to approach, people were getting hyped up, preparations were perhaps made, and even the television news saw fit to report on this subject. The days came and passed by but nothing happened. There was a movie, "The Man who saw tomorrow", which exclusively deals with the predictions of Nostardamus. He predicted that there would a

World War III by 1999. But there was no such war.

Some psychics of our day also predict the future. Some of them are very specific also. But their predictions are not fulfilled. Sylvia Brown and others predicted that President George Bush will be re-elected in 1992, but it did not happen. Ms Dixon prophesied that either African or Asian Nations influenced by China would plunge US into a world war in 1980. This did not take place. Saddam Hussein was not assassinated in 1992 as Sylvia Brown predicted. It may be true that some of the predictions of the above as also Edgar Cayce came true, but can they be compared to the Biblical prophecy? No, it can not be compared.

One main difference between these 'prophets' and the prophets of the Bible is that while these prophets claim that their prophecy is the result of what they saw or heard while in trance, the prophets of the Bible claim that they received it from God and prefix their statements with the words. "Thus says the Lord" or that the "Word of the Lord came to them". God's standard of a true prophet is contained in these words: "When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken, but the prophet has spoken it presumptuously: thou shall not be afraid of him" (Deut.18.22). One hundred percent accuracy is the standard of God.

Bible claims that God is the source of all prophecies in the Bible. "And if God is the source of the Biblical prophets' words of predictive prophecy, then it stands to reason that God is also the source of the non-predictive prophecy which accompanies it *and which is the context in which one can make sense of the predictive prophecy*".

One would like to say that in general terms Hebrew literature written by divine inspiration has a hundred per cent truth/fulfillment with regard to making pronouncements about the way in which the universe works that were totally ahead of their time. In other words, while in other literature of antiquity we can expect to find various assertions made concerning the origin of the universe and things thereof, in the pages of the Holy Bible we find a number of such assertions

that turn out to be true yet theoretically should be known only through scientific processes developed until hundreds or thousands of years down the road and into the future.

Before the emergence of things such as geometry, complex mathematics, and circumnavigation, primitive man perhaps had a natural tendency to assume that the world is flat and non-spherical or that the sun revolves about the earth and not vice versa. Moreover, pronouncements that the earth consists of crust, mantle and core or that black holes exist in space should not be expected to exist among the ancients, for they should never think of such things given the limited amount of knowledge and limited bank of tools that they possessed for gaining knowledge. However, within the pages of the Holy Bible we find rather bold or even audacious claims made about the nature of various things of the universe—claims that would go well against the “conventional wisdom” of the time. For instance, if the book of Isaiah declares that the world is circular or spherical in form, then this is a declaration at odds with a more general view of the time that the world was flat or rectangular”.

God spoke at sundry times and in divers manners in time past unto the fathers by the prophets (Heb.1.1). Such prophecies were a medium of divine communication. Revelation from God came to Israel through three basic classes viz prophets, priests and the wisemen. Israel forgot their God and devised plans to persecute His prophet Jeremiah. Their reasoning was, “for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet” (Jer.18.18). The wise in Israel were inspired to compile proverbial wisdom and communicate them to the people. The Levitical priests taught by the Law of the Lord, were equipped to instruct the people of divine standard and restore the fallen. Yet it was the prophets who occupied the central position to reveal God’s will. They appeared on the scene to reprove the people of their sin and bring them back to God’s word.

“Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet.1.21). When the Spirit of Christ, which was in the prophets prophesied of the sufferings of Christ and the glory

that should follow, the prophets searched diligently to understand their own predictions (1 Pet.1.10-11) and sometimes they did not understand it like Daniel (8.27) and Zechariah (4.13).

Jesus Christ is the heart of prophecy. In Him we find all the fulfillment of their prophecies. God alone possess the knowledge of the future. “Thus says the Lord....I am the first and I am the last: and beside me there is no God. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? And the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them. Fear you not, neither afraid: have not I told these from that time and have declared it? You are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? Yes, there is no God: I know not any” (Isa.44.6-8). Therefore it naturally follows that only he can really “show the things that are to come hereafter” (Isa.41.23).

God spoke at different times and in diverse manners (Heb.1.1). His revelation has been progressive. Therefore there was diversity but in this diversity a unity. We find some prophecies were at first general in nature but in later revelations we find definiteness and particularity in them.

B. How can we be sure of the accuracy of predictive prophecy?

Many today reject Bible prophecy “as irrelevant because it lacks logic and accuracy” Predictive prophecy is relevant, logical, and accurate. The whole of the Bible, though completed 2000 years ago is very much relevant today in-spite of the changing times. Some of the passages that describe the characteristics of the latter days sounds like our present day newspaper reports. The truth of the Scripture when it speaks on any subjects whether it be science, astronomy, astrology, geology, geography etc. is as relevant today as it was when it was written. Since God alone knows the future and He wants to speak to man about it, it is logical that He has done so. The Bible is accurate too, which we will discuss below. Apostle Peter has answered the issue two thousand years ago. “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark

place, until the day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts (2 Pet.1.19).

Peter says, “We have not declared cunningly devised fables”. Peter’s writings were not based on mythology. The mount of transfiguration strengthened the faith and hope of the apostle. He received from the open heaven the revelation concerning the Son and now he communicates the truthfulness of God’s word. It is a light that shines in a dark place. This word gives direction and guidance and also a warning at the same time. Hope is strengthened and sustained by the word of revelation. Prophecy is made sure by its fulfillment. If what is mentioned earlier were fulfilled, what is said of the future would also be fulfilled. A classic example of fulfilled prophecy is that of Tyre. Through Ezekiel, His prophet, the Lord spoke, “I am against thee, O Tyre, and will cause many Nations to come up against thee, as the sea causes its waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyre, and break down her towers; I will also scrape her dust from her and make her like the top of a rock.....I will make thee like the top of a rock’ thou shall be a place to spread nets upon, thou shall be built no more; for I the Lord, have spoken it, says the Lord” (Ezk.26.3,4,14). The following note is taken from Scofield Reference Bible: “The fate predicted for Tyre is unique and has been remarkably fulfilled.

At the time of Ezekiel, Tyre was on the coast of Phoenicia at the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. As Ezekiel predicted, Nebuchadnezzar conquered and destroyed the city. He had no reason, however, to fulfill v.12 by casting its ruins into the sea. Some of the people from Tyre escaped to an (nearby) island and built a new city there. Three hundred years later Alexander the Great, desiring to conquer this island city, built a causeway to it and threw all the remains of ancient Tyre (called Palaeo Tyrus by the Greeks) into the sea, fulfilling Ezek 26.12. The old city of Tyre has never been rebuilt, but has remained like the top of a rock. Remains of ancient Sidon (Ezk.28.20-24) have been excavated, and a flourishing town now stands on its old site, but the remains of ancient Tyre are in the sea under Alexander’s causeway”.

“The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy”

(Rev.19.10). It was mentioned earlier that Jesus Christ is the heart of prophecy. The prophetic spirit shows itself in its testimony to Christ (1 Pet.1.10-11). Those who have the testimony of Jesus will believe that, in spite of everything to the contrary today, Jesus Christ will rule the earth one day. God will fulfill all the promises concerning Jesus. Faithful is He that promised.

In the fullness of time God sent forth His son made of a woman made under the Law (Gal.4.4). But His goings forth has been of old, from everlasting to everlasting (Mic.5.2). The following is a list of forty prophecies concerning the Messiah, fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ at His first coming:

1. He is the seed of the woman Gen.3.15; Gal.4.4
2. He would be the Son of Abraham Gen.12.3; Mt.1.1
3. He would be the descendent of Isaac Gen.17.19; Lk.3.34
4. He would be the descendent of Jacob Num.24.117; Mt.1.2
5. He would be from the tribe of Judah Gen.49.10; Lk.3.33
6. He would be the heir to the throne of David Isa.9.7; Lk.1.32,33
7. He will be the anointed One Ps.45.6,7; 102.25-27; Heb.1.8-12
8. He would be born in Bethlehem Mich.5.2; Lk.2.4,5,7
9. He would be born of a virgin Isa.7.14; Lk.1.26,27,30,31
10. The flight to Egypt Hosea 11.1; Matt.2.14,15
11. His way would be prepared Isa.40.3-5; Lk.3.3-6.
12. His forerunner Mal.3.1; Lk.7.24, 27.
13. Declared the Son of God Ps.2.7; Matt.3.17.
14. His Galilean ministry Isa.9.1,2; Matt.4.13-16.
15. A prophet like Moses Dt.18.15; Acts.3.20,22.
16. He binds up the broken hearted Isa.61.1,2; Lk.4.18,19.
17. Rejected by His own people Isa.53.3; Jn.1.11

18. Priest after the order of Melchizedek Ps.110.4; Heb.5.5,6
19. His triumphal entry to Jerusalem Zech.9.9; Mt.11.7-11
20. Betrayed by a close friend Ps.41.9; Lk.22.47, 48
21. Betrayed for 30 pieces of silver Zech.11.12; Matt.26.14, 15
22. False witnesses rise up Ps.35.11; Mk.14.57, 58
23. He was silent to accusations Isa.53.7; Mk.15.4, 5
24. He was spat upon and struck Isa.50.6; Mt.26.67
25. He was hated without a cause Ps.35.19; Jn.15.24, 25
26. Substitutionary sacrifice Isa.53.5; Rom.5.6,8
27. Crucified with malefactors Isa.53.12; Mk.15.27, 28
30. Hands and feet pierced Zech.12.10; Jn.20.27
31. Mocked Ps.22.7, 8; Lk.23.35
32. Reproached Ps.69.9; Rom.15.3
33. He prayed for his enemies Ps.109.4; Lk.23.34
34. Casting lots for His clothing Ps.22.17-18; Mt.27.35, 36
35. Forsaken by God Ps.22.1; Mt.27.46
36. No bones broken Pa.34.20; Jn.19.32, 33,36
37. His side was pierced Zech.12.10; Jn.19.34
38. He was buried with the rich Isa.53.9; Mt.27.57-60
39. He will rise again Ps.16.10; Mk.16.6, 7
40. He will ascend to God's right hand Ps.68.18; Mk.16.19

While writing about the prophecies concerning Tyre, Peter M. Stoner in his book "Science Speaks" evaluates the chance of all the seven predictions concerning Tyre being fulfilled, "If Ezekiel had looked at Tyre in his day and had made these seven predictions in human wisdom, these estimates mean that there would have been only one chance in 75,000,000 of their all coming true. What would be the chance of all the above forty prophecies of the Messiah being fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ? It is incalculable! Yet they were fulfilled. Jesus Christ is God and it is God who through the prophets spoke concerning the Messiah.

There are also many predictions concerning the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ when He will establish His kingdom. A few of them are listed below:

1. His coming will be sudden and unexpected as in the days of Noah. He will come as a thief in the night and in such an hour as you think not (Matt.24.39; 42-44, 48, 50; 25.13; Lk.12.37-40).
2. He will come after the Great Tribulation (Matt.24.29, 39).
3. There will be great disturbances in the sun, moon and stars (Matt.24.29; Mk.13.25-26; Lk.21.25-27).
4. He will come in the clouds of heaven and in great power and glory (Mt.24.20, 21; 26.64; Mk.13.26).
5. Everyone will be rewarded at His coming (Mt.16.27; 1 Cor.4.5)
6. All nations will be gathered together before him for judgment (Mt.25.31, 32).
7. He will come with ten thousands of his saints Jude.14. These predictions will be fulfilled.

C. Historical Prophecy

The Book of Revelation is the book of prophecy. But various schools of thought have interpreted this book and its prophecies variously.

Preterist interpretation: This view holds that the book of Revelation is concerned only with the events of the first century. Therefore all the events that are described in this book have already taken place either during the time of Nero or Domitian. “All of the symbolism therefore is to be understood in terms of the conditions contemporaneous with the writing of the book and in no way predictive of the future”. This view holds Babylon as the Roman church, the woman of chapter 12 as the persecuted church, the judgments as the contemporary natural calamities. Of course, it is needless to say, that it does violence to understanding of the Scriptures and to the predictive prophecy. If you follow this school of thought any person could interpret prophetic portions of the scripture as he sees fit.

Historicist Interpretation: According to this school of thought the entire course of church history until its consummation is depicted in the book of Revelation. The stages of development of the Church are marked chronologically in the seal, trumpets and bowls judgments. The book begins with the churches of Asia and ends with the New Heavens and the New Earth and New Jerusalem. Therefore, they conclude, what is in between describes the intervening historical process of the Western church. But what is in between is of an undefined period of time. Therefore how can one identify a particular symbol with a particular period of history?

Idealist Interpretation: This view assumes that the visions are not literal at all. The general conflict of good and evil in apocalyptic figures are depicted in the book of Revelation. Therefore it is applicable to all ages of the church. If the words in the book of Revelation are not to be taken literally, every man will have his own interpretation. That is anarchy in interpretation!

Futurist Interpretation: This is the fourth view. Apostle John was given a vision of “the things which thou has seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter” (Rev.1.19). The dispensationalists interpret this three-fold division as what John has seen (Ch.1), the things which are (Chs.2-3) and the things, which shall be hereafter (Chs.4-22). This follows the futurist interpretation, which is the only grammatical-historical-theological interpretation. Only this view incorporates both the Old and New Testament prophecies harmoniously. The churches in chapters two and three represents seven distinct types of churches through out the period of Church history preceding the second coming of Christ or seven successive periods of Church history Then “it can be seen that Ephesus (2.1-7), though a local church in the apostle’s day, is typical of the first century church as a whole; Smyrna (2.8-11) characterizes the church under persecution, e.g. from A.D.c.100-316; Pergamum (2.12-17), “where Satan’s throne is” (2.13 cf.2.14-15) is suggestive of the church mixing with the world, e.g. in the Middle Ages; Thyatira (2.18-29) reveals how evil progresses in the church

and idolatry is practiced; Sardis (3.1-6) is representative of the church as dead, yet still having a minority of godly men and women, as during the Reformation; Philadelphia (3.7-13) shows revival and a state of spiritual advance; and Laodicea (3.14-198) is illustrative of the final state of apostasy which the visible church will experience". (Scofield Reference Bible). This Thesis follows the Futurist Interpretation.

D. Israel in Prophecy

God called Abraham from the Ur of the Chaldees and took him to a land flowing with milk and honey. He promised him the land. But told him that his descendents would serve another nation for 430 years. Joseph, and later the family of Jacob went to Egypt. There they became slaves and it was in Egypt they were molded into a nation and redeemed by Jehovah. Israel is the name of Jacob from whom the twelve tribes of the Nation came.

Israel is the witness of God amidst the idolatrous nations around them. They were witnesses of the monotheistic faith (cf. Deut. 6.4) "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord." Paul answers the rhetoric: Who are the Israelites? (Rom. 9.4,5). Apostle Paul enumerates the blessings they have and answers the question: "who are the Israelites?"

"To whom pertains the adoption". They have divine sonship. Jehovah had entered into a covenant relationship with them. Israel is my firstborn (Jer. 31.9). When the first born of the Egyptians died, all the first born of the Israelites in Egypt lived because of the Passover Lamb that was sacrificed. The first born of Israel became the Lord's.

"And the glory". They had the divine presence with them. The Tabernacle in the wilderness and later the Temple in the Promised Land was the dwelling place of God amidst the people. The Shekinah glory in the Tabernacle and the temple ensured the presence of God with them.

"The covenants". God had made a covenant with them. The land was promised to Abraham and his descendants. To David and his descendants the throne was promised. Jehovah himself was their king.

“The giving of the law”. They had the divine instructions. The responsibility to receive, preserve and transmit the scriptures to the next generation was given to them (cf. Rom. 3.1-2). These instructions separated them from the other nations and preserved them to this day as the people of God.

“The service of God”. The divine ministry was given to them. Israel worshipped the True God as no other nation did. Detailed instructions were given to them to approach and worship God.

“The promises”. Divine promises were given to the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and others. All the promises of God are in the person of Christ. “Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers” (Rom.15.8) Some were fulfilled and some others will be fulfilled at the second coming of the Lord Jesus.

“The Fathers”. They have the genealogies. They had their Father Abraham and from whom came the others like Isaac, Jacob etc.

“Christ came from them”. The godly seed was preserved in these fathers. Legally Christ was the son of Abraham, the Son of David.

Israel as a nation rejected their Messiah when He came. They crucified Him. It does not mean that God has rejected Israel forever. In Romans Chapters Nine to Eleven, apostle Paul explains God’s dealing with the Nation of Israel in the past, present and future. In the past He called Abraham and molded his descendents as a nation in Egypt. He redeemed them and brought them into the Promised Land. But they rebelled and God sent them into captivity. They returned from captivity, but as slaves. They were under the Roman rule when the Messiah came. But they rejected and crucified him. Today they are in unbelief. After the consummation of this age of grace, God will start dealing with them again as a nation. Still in unbelief they will be re-gathered and regenerated. Jesus Christ will reign as their King for a thousand years. The promise of the land made to Abraham and the Kingdom promised to David will be realized.

E. Nations in prophecy:

Though the Old Testament mainly deals with Israel, it has also much to say about many other nations, especially in their relation to Israel. In their alphabetical order these nations are Ammon, Assyria, Babylon, Edom, Egypt, Greece, Moab, Persia, Philistia, Phoenicia, Rome and Syria. But chronologically Egypt comes first. We would attempt a brief survey of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome

Egypt: Joseph was sold as a slave by his brethren into Egypt. But in the providence of God, he became the Prime Minister of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh. The first prophecy concerning Egypt was seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Egypt hosted Abraham's children for 400 years but also afflicted them. It was during these years the Lord molded them into a nation and delivered them by judging the Egyptians.

Isaiah prophesied that Assyria would waste Egypt and Ethiopia. Isaiah was commanded by the Lord to "Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoes from thy foot. And he did so walking naked and barefoot. This was a sign and wonder upon Egypt and Ethiopia. So shall the King of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners and the Egyptian captives young and old, naked and barefoot even with their buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt (Isa.20.2-4). This prophecy was fulfilled (Cf. Nahum 3.8-10).

When the prophet looks forward through desolations and beyond, he sees a different picture. "And the Lord shall be known in Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea they shall vow a vow unto the Lord and perform it. And the Lord smites Egypt; he shall smite and heal it; and they shall return even to the Lord, and he shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them. In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land.

Whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance” (Isa.19.21-25).

Prophet Joel says regarding Egypt, “Egypt shall be a desolation and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land. But Judah shall dwell forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the Lord dwells in Zion” (Joel 3.19-21).

These above two prophecies of Isaiah and Joel has brought confusion in some minds. J. Barton Payne, Charles Erdman and others who follow his school of thought find the prophecy of Isaiah 19.21-25 fulfilled in the case of Egypt from the 3rd to 7th centuries, particularly the conversion of Egypt to become a leading Christian country. They equally see that during the millennium Egypt will be desolate (Joel 3.23) (p.304. 411. of Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy, by J. Barton Payne).

The prophecy of Isaiah looks through the gloom to the blessing of the kingdom. The repeated phrase “in that day” six times in the last verses of this chapter speak of the millennial reign of Christ and not the period between 3rd to 7th centuries. It is true that in that day Egypt shall be like unto women stricken with fear because of the hand of the Lord. Isaiah says elsewhere, “when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness (26.9). Even in the prophecy under discussion (Isa.19) it says, “he shall smite and heal it, and they shall return even to the Lord, and he shall be entreated of them, and he shall heal them”. God shall punish Egypt for her sins, but then she shall turn to the Lord in repentance. The expressions, “Five cities in the land of Egypt shall speak the language of Canaan; there shall be an alter in the midst of the land of Egypt; the Lord shall be known in Egypt” etc. are nothing but the conversion of Egypt unto the Lord. A glorious future awaits Egypt. Whereas Joel only speaks of judgment, Isaiah speaks both of judgment and blessing.

Assyria: Tigleth Pileser brings the Northern Kingdom,

Israel, to an end and takes them captive. Israel's sin was idolatry. The Lord said, he shall smite Israel as a reed is shaken in the water and he shall root up Israel out of this good land....and shall scatter them beyond the river (1 King 14.15-16). In fulfillment of this judgment the king of Assyria carried Israel away into Assyria (2 King 17.6-7; 22-23). He will accomplish widespread desolations in Judah, but through the voice of the Lord the Assyrian shall be dismayed; with His rod He will smite him (Isa.30.31) The Lord will defend Jerusalem. The Assyrian shall fall by the sword, not of man, and the sword, not of men, shall devour him (31.8). Rabshakeh, the captain of Sennacherib, attacked Judah. King Hezekiah spread the Assyrian's blasphemous letter before the Lord and the Lord, through the prophet Isaiah, promised deliverance. 1,85,000 Assyrians were slain by an angel of the Lord in one night and Sennacherib was murdered in his own land (Isa.37 & 38).

During the time of Jonah the prophet, he was asked by the Lord to prophesy doom of Nineveh. Jonah reluctantly complied with the command but they repented. A hundred years later Nahum prophesied the doom of Assyria. The theme of Nahum is his anticipation of divine vengeance upon Judah's Assyrian oppressors (Nah.1.1; 2.1; 3.1). "His prophecy may be dated between the destruction of Thebes or No (3.8) by Ashurbanipal in 666 B.C. and the capture of Nineveh by the Babylonians and their allies in 612 B.C. It is predicted by Micah that when the Messiah come, "He shall be the peace when the Assyrian hall come into our land...then shall we raise against him seven shepherds and eight principal men and they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword and the land of Nimrod in the entrances of it; thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian (Mic.5.5,6). This would happen during the campaign of Armageddon.

Babylon After the battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C. Nebuchednezer planned to expand his kingdom. At the same time because of the sin of Judah, the Lord promised his prophet Habakkuk that he will bring the Babylonians to punish Judah, and Babylon itself will be punished later for its sins. It was hard for Habakkuk to accept this and his question

was: “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity; why looks thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holds thy tongue when the wicked devours the man that is more righteous than he?” (Hab.2.13). The Lord answered that the vision is yet for an appointed time. The prophecy was fulfilled. Nebuchednezer overpowered Jehoiachin and permanently banished him from Judah. Jeremiah was directed to speak to king Jehoiachin and to the queen mother...the crown of your glory is come down and they would be given unto the hands of Nebuchednezer (Jer.13.18; 22.25) He was to die in exile (22.26-27) and this was fulfilled (2 King.25.27-30). He captured, blinded and exiled Zedekiah, king of Judah and the southern kingdom came to an end.

Nebuchednezer was struck with madness because of his pride till he learned that the Most High God, the possessor of heaven and earth, rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomsoever he pleases. This too was fulfilled (Dan.4.35f).

Nebuchednezer was frequently absent from Babylon due to active military service; he was ousted and his weak son Labashi Marduk became king for a few months. Another coup brought Nabonidus to the throne. In the last year of his rule Persian army clashed with Babylonians and the army led by Ugbaru, the district governor of Gutium entered Babylon without bloodshed. This was made possible due “to the diversion of the River Euphrates which rendered the flood defenses useless and enabled the invaders to march through the dried up river bed to enter by night. Belshazaar was killed (Dan. 5.30).

Isaiah prophesied that Babylon will be completely destroyed. ”Babylon the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. (Isa.13.19-22). Babylon was destroyed, but not completely and as described by the Lord.

“According to Scripture, Babylon was the glory of

kingdoms (Isa.13.19), the golden city (14.4), abundant in treasures (Jer.51.13) and the praise of the whole earth (Jer.51.41). In Daniel Two, Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom recalled the golden head. The city of Babylon had one hundred massive gates of shining brass, and walls that were thirty-five feet high and so wide that six chariots could ride abreast on them. When this city was at the height of its glory and was still the queen of the nations, the prophets predicted not only its total overthrow but at the same time gave the minutest details of its fall. The specific nations that would seize and destroy it were mentioned more than a century beforehand (21.2; Jer.51.11). The time when this would take place was mentioned (Jer.25.11,12). The name of the commander is even mentioned (44.28; 45.1). The expert manner in which the city would be seized is repeatedly described (44.27; Jer.50.34,38; 51.30, 36). Isaiah specifically describes the exact hour of the nightly drinking party during the capture. When it is realized that at the time of Isaiah's prophecy, the Persians were a poor and insignificant people and did not count at all in the gallery of nations, then we see clearly the finger of God" (Isaiah, by Harry Bultema, pp.158-159).

But Babylon was never overthrown like Sodom and Gomorah. This prophecy has a near and far view. The near view is the destruction of Babylon by Persians. This is partial fulfillment. But the far view is yet to be fulfilled, which is what is described in Revelation Eighteen. If this is to happen the Old Babylon has to be rebuilt.

"Babylon the great is fallen" (Rev.18.2) is yet to be fulfilled. After the Church is raptured, the apostate Christendom would still remain on the earth. This is the ecclesiastical Babylon that would be headed over by the Papacy. There would also be a political Babylon, which is the confederate empire of the Beast, the last form of the revived Roman Empire. Ecclesiastical Babylon (the great whore of Rev.17.1) will be destroyed by the political Babylon as described in Rev.17.15-18. At the second coming of the Lord Babylon will be completely destroyed.

Persia The Persians conquered Babylon and became the world power. They were the next world empire. This is the

kingdom depicted by “the breast and arms of silver” of Nebuchednezer’s image (Dan.2.32). This is the dual kingdom of Medo-Persians (two arms) but the Persians became stronger. In Daniel’s own dream of beasts (chapter 7) the second beast, like a bear, “raised up on one side” (7.5) corresponds to the dual kingdom of the image’ breast and two arms. Further in 8.4 Daniel’s vision of the conquering ram, before whom none could stand, serves to illuminate the concept of the “unbalanced” bear; for the ram ‘had two horns, and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last (v.3). They are the kings of media and Persia, “the horn higher than the other”, became stronger.

150 years before Cyrus came on the scene, Isaiah prophesied about him by name (Isa.44.28). “Who says of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure; even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shall be built, and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid”. Cyrus is the proof to the fact that even heathen played a considerable role in God’s counsel. Those who will not accept predictive prophecy say that Isaiah was written after Cyrus became king. This is not true. The name “Cyrus”, in Persian means ‘sun’ and in Aramaic ‘shepherd’. Cyrus is called the anointed of the Lord:

“Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand have I held, to subdue nations before him, and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut: I will go before thee and make the crooked places straight, I will break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut in sunder the bars of iron....for Jacob, my servants sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name; I have surnamed thee, though thou has not known me (Isa.,45.1-5). In dealing with the nation of Israel, either in judgment or in blessing, the Lord uses other nations. Though the Babylonians punished Israel, the Persians were favorable to them.

The foreign policy of the Persians was different from the Babylonians. Cyrus gave more religious freedom to his foreign subjects. It is mentioned of him that, “various statutes of gods which had been collected into Babylon by the last native king , Nabonidus were returned to their own shrines” (New

Bible Dictionary p.914). Josephus in his Antiquities relates that when Cyrus came across his name mentioned in this place in Isaiah 200 years before he lived, he was seized by a holy desire to fulfill what was written of him.

It is unique in Scripture that Cyrus is called Jehovah's anointed, or as the original has it, Messiah. In Isaiah 45.1-6 Cyrus is one who does not know lord. But it does not matter. The Lord who has anointed him, defeats other kings before him and promises to go before him and open the doors for him and promises to give all the hidden treasures of Babylon. God's object in doing this is that Cyrus would acknowledge him in His greatness as Israel's God. This objective was reached. He released the Jews and sent them to rebuild the temple. All the vessels of the temple that Nebuchadnezer had plundered from Jerusalem were returned to the Jews. The Lord did all this for the sake of 'Jacob' His servant..

Greece: Greece succeeded Persia as the next world empire as predicted by Daniel the prophet. The image of Nebuchadnezer's dream had "its belly and thighs of bronze" A third kingdom shall bear rule over all the earth (2.32,3). In the vision of the beasts it is represented as a four-headed "leopard, which had upon its back four wings" In chapter eight a 'he goat' came from the west over the face of the whole earth and smote the ram (Medo-Persia) and magnified himself exceedingly. The goat is specifically identified as Greece and the he-got as its king, Alexander the Great. After him, his empire was divided into four parts and was shared by his four generals, the four notable horns toward the four winds of heaven (Dan.8.8).

Out of one of them came forth a little horn (8.9) and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away (v.11) and the sanctuary is made desolate. This is partially fulfilled in the life of Antiochus Epiphanes, one of the successors of Alexander the Great..

"Seven times in Daniel the "desolation" is spoken of: (1) of the sanctuary 8.13, fulfilled by Antiochus Epiphanes B.D. 175-170; (2) Of the sanctuary, 9.17 the condition in Daniel's time, when the Jews were in exile and the sanctuary desolate;

(3) Generally of the land 9.18, also referring to Daniel's time;
(4) Of the sanctuary 9.26, fulfilled in AD 70 in the destruction of city and temple after the cutting off of Messiah (Lk.221.20);
(5. 6 & 7) Of the sanctuary by the Beast 9.27; 11.31; 12.11
Cf. Mt.24.15; Mk.13.14; 2 Thes.2.3, 8-12; Rev.13.14,15).

The ultimate fate of the persecuting horn is that "he shall be broken without hand" i.e. not by the sword but by an act of God. Antiochus died by sickness in 164 B.C. and this prophecy was fulfilled too.

Rome: Rome is the last world empire and the last of the gentile world power. Romans defeated Antiochus at Magnesia in 190 and he died in the course of an expedition 3 years thereafter. Daniel 11 narrates the wars of Antiochus (vv.10-20). First he was victorious and then vanquished. In his final campaign he was confronted by the Romans. "The Romans sent ambassadors to Lysimachia to confront Antiochus but he was contemptuous of them. The Roman consul Acilius met him at the pass of Thermopylae and defeated him and expelled him from Greece. A few months later he tried to plunder the temple of Bel (the Elymaian Zeus) but the local inhabitants defeated him. As the scripture says, he stumbled and fell and was found no more (Dan.11.19).

Rome was the world empire when Jesus Christ was born and the Jews were subject to them. Yet religious and civil powers were given to the Jews by Rome. The power of the sword still rested with the Romans and it was the Roman governor Pilate who crucified the Lord Jesus Christ.

Nebuchednezer's image had legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay (Dan.2.13). This is the fourth world empire. "A stone was cut out without hands which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay and break them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver and the gold broken to pieces together and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (Dan.2.34-35). The fourth empire was not

destroyed at the time of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ ushered in a period of grace, the Church Age. For the prophecy to be fulfilled, after the Church is raptured, the final Roman Empire will have to be revived and it will be revived. This is the empire of the Beast discussed earlier. The Gentile world powers will come to an end at the end of the campaign of Armageddon and the Lord Jesus Christ will come and establish His Millennial Kingdom.

F. The Church in Prophecy

The distinction of the two entities, the Church and Israel, is crucial to the understanding of prophecy. There was no Church in the Old Testament. It was a mystery hidden in God who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph.3.9-11). It is true that believers in Christ were chosen before the foundation of the world and in the plan and purpose of God the Lamb of God was slain before the foundation of the world. But there was no revelation of the church in the Old Testament; but now it is revealed to His apostles and prophets.

At Caesarea Philippi the Lord asked His disciples: “Whom say ye that I am”? Peter answered: Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Then the Lord said, “On this rock I will build my church.”

After his death, resurrection and ascension, He sent forth the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. On that day the disciples were fused (baptized) together into one body by the Spirit and the Church was born. From then on the Lord added to the Church daily all those who were saved. The Church comprises of all regenerate believers from the day of Pentecost to the day of Rapture. They have part in the first resurrection. All of them were baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ. Thus they have the unity of the Spirit. Christ is the Head of the Church. She is a virgin espoused to Christ and is awaiting the return of

the Bridegroom. She will be translated to heaven at the return of Christ.

All the blessings that belong to the Church are spiritual. Church comprises of all the heavenly people of God. Whereas Israel are the earthly people of God and its blessings are temporal, the Church is purchased by the blood of Christ. (Acts 20.28; 1 Cor.6.20; 1 Pet.1.18-19). Though Israel is the people of God what is said of the Church is not true of them. Israel and the Church are distinct and God's plans for both are different too. Without this understanding, a student of prophecy will only stumble.



INTRODUCTION PART (II)

A. An Over View of Scriptures

God created man in His own image and He created him upright (Gen.1.26, 27; 2.7; Ecc.7.29). Man disobeyed the commandment of God and sin entered the human race (Gen.3.6, 7; 14-19; Rom.5.12). In His mercy God sent man out from the Garden of Eden but promised a Saviour‘ the Seed of the woman (Gen.3.15). This is the first promise of redemption of man.

When wickedness of man increased and God saw that ‘every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually’ He destroyed the world by flood but Noah and his family found grace in the sight of God and He saved them. He called Abraham from the Ur of the Chaldees and promised to bless him and multiply his seed after him as the sands of the seashore and stars of heaven. Out of Abraham God brought out the Jewish nation (Gen.12.2; 17.4-6). He had told Abraham that his progeny will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years (Gen.15.13). Their disobedience was judged and they became slaves in Egypt from where God molded them into a nation.

Moses was the deliverer God raised up to bring them out of Egypt and through him God gave the Ten Commandments. The wilderness period of the Nation was from B.C.1446-1406. During this period of 40 years they also received instructions and guidance as to how to approach and worship God. The Tabernacle in the wilderness was the resting place of God among His people. After the death of Moses, God raised up Joshua as the leader and he brought them to the promised land of Canaan. God Himself was their King and He raised up judges to rule over them. Israel demanded a king like other nations around them and God gave them a king in His anger and thus begins the period of Monarchy in Israel. Though God promised David, a man after His own heart, to establish the kingdom, after Solomon the Kingdom was divided

into two, Judah the Southern Kingdom and Israel the Northern Kingdom. The united Kingdom of Israel lasted from 1050-950 BC.

Israel had a series of Kings beginning with Jeroboam but they were all wicked. Judah also had a series of Kings of whom many feared the Lord and walked in His ways. The Kingdom of Israel fell to Assyria in 722 BC. And Israel was taken into captivity. They never returned. In spite of the judgment upon Israel Judah did not repent and they were also taken captives by the Kingdom of Babylon in 606 BC. The Seventy Weeks as prophesied by Daniel began. After 70 years a remnant of Judah returned from exile. Babylon was defeated by the Medes and Persians in 539 B.C. and Judah still remained under foreign rule. But during this period the walls of Jerusalem was rebuilt and the temple was also restored. The Persian rule continued for about hundred years even after Judah returned from captivity. In 333 B.C. Greece defeated the Medo-Persian Empire. The Gentile domination continued and Rome defeated the Grecian Empire in 63 B.C. For Jewish history from Malachi to Mathew we have to depend on secular records. But it was during this period of 400 silent years the Jewish sects of Pharisees and Sadducees came into being and the Jewish Talmud (comprising of Mishna and Gemara) was written.

When Jesus Christ was born the Jews were under Roman rule. The four Gospels record the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Numerous prophecies concerning the birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ were fulfilled. There are many others that are yet to be fulfilled. These will be fulfilled at His Second Coming.

Fifty days after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ He sent forth the Holy Spirit in fulfillment of His promise. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit fused the believers together into the Body of Christ and the Church was born.

Jerusalem was plundered and destroyed in A. D. 70, again in fulfillment of His prophecy and the Jews were scattered to different parts of the world. The Jews who were dispersed from their promised land remained without a land of their

own for many centuries. In 1948 A.D. they had a land of their own and started returning to Palestine.

When the Jews rejected Jesus Christ their King, God stopped dealing with the Jews as a nation. The dispensation of Law came to an end and the period of Grace was inaugurated. This is the Church Age, which was not a subject matter of Old Testament prophecy. This period will come to a close with the Rapture of the Church. The judgment seat of Christ will follow the Rapture when the works of believers will be examined and rewarded and the marriage supper of the Lamb will take place.

Then God will start dealing with the Jews again as a nation. The Rapture will be followed by a seven-year period of Great Tribulation when the Jews as a nation will be tested. This will be a period of unprecedented tribulation ending with the battle of Armageddon, at the end of which Jesus Christ Himself will come and deliver His people from trouble. He will sit in the throne of David in Jerusalem as the King of kings and establish peace throughout the world. The nations also will be judged and rewarded. During the millennial reign of Christ Satan will be bound and there will be perfect peace in the world.

After the millennium Satan will be loosed and he will gather the nations to fight with the Lord Jesus Christ. They all will be defeated and Satan will be cast into the lake of fire. All those who are dead will stand before the Great White Throne for judgment and everyone whose name was not found written in the Book of Life will be cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death.

The present earth will be destroyed by fire and the Lord will create the New Heaven and the New Earth. The Son will give the Kingdom to the Father and God will be all in all. This is the subject matter of the Bible.

B. The Dispensations

God does not change. He is perfect in His attributes and He deals with man in the perfection of His attributes. Sinful man is saved only by the grace of God and this is true of

Adam and all his progeny. God is able to deal with man in grace because of the work of the Son on the cross of Calvary. Before the Cross, man was saved in prospect of Christ's atoning sacrifice and after the Cross by believing on the finished work of Christ.

God's revelation concerning Himself and His work has been progressive and man was expected to live up to the light of revelation that he has received. In other words obedience to the revealed will of God was expected of man.

Since revelation has been progressive and obedience to this revelation has been expected from man the degree of obedience was cumulative. Moral responsibility increases with the amount of revelation a person has received.

Therefore, though God does not change, and His dealings with man does not change but always has been in grace, the responsibility of man during each time period differs. These time periods are called 'dispensations'.

Bible unveils seven such dispensations. They are Innocence, Conscience, Human Government, Promise, Law, Grace and Kingdom.

1. The Dispensation of Innocence

God created Adam and Eve as sinless persons. In total innocence they were placed in perfect harmony with God, with one another and with the nature. The loving nature of God provided for them all that they needed. But they were warned not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Satan tempted Eve and she fell. Adam willfully followed her and our first parents became sinners. They were expelled from the Garden. In the dispensation of innocence they were tested but were found wanting. They failed.

2. The Dispensation of Conscience.

When our first parents fell they knew good and evil, but not like God. They knew what was good but was not able to perform it. They knew what was evil but was unable to prevent it. In the dispensation of conscience man was to follow the dictates of his conscience in doing good and avoiding evil.

Man failed here again. His thought was continually evil and wickedness increased in the world. God came down in judgment and destroyed the earth by flood but saved Noah and his family who found grace in His sight. Eight souls were saved.

3. The Dispensation of Human Government

The blessings given to Adam and Eve to 'be fruitful and multiply upon the earth' was now given to Noah and his family. They and the human society should now follow the principles of God's law. A human government under the command of God was created. The sanctity of human life was emphasized and they were to rule the earth with righteousness. Man tested in this dispensation was also a failure. Cruelty increased on the earth and injustice prevailed everywhere. Man shed man's blood with scant regard for life. Yet God has permitted this until the return of His Son to rule the earth. He will establish His Kingdom in peace.

4. The Dispensation of Promise

Failure of man does not frustrate the purposes of God. The promise made to Adam that the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent has to be fulfilled. In spite of repeated failures on the part of man God still works out to fulfill His plan. God calls and uses Abraham and his descendents to provide a Savior for mankind. Abraham and his children have to be obedient and faithful to Him. God promised to Abraham to bless him and make him a great nation. He promised them the land of Canaan as their eternal inheritance. All those who bless Abraham will be blessed by God, and all those who curse him will suffer the judgment of God. The history of all the nations in the world can be read only in relation to the blessing or cursing of Abraham and his descendents.

Abraham's descendents were unfaithful. But God's promises still stand and future blessing and restoration of Israel to the promised land still stand.

5. The Dispensation of the Law.

The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. This dispensation starts from giving of the Law to Moses and continues till the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. When the Law was given, without realizing the seriousness of it Israel repeatedly promised that they will obey the law. The Law was the school- master to lead them to Christ. The sacrifices and ceremonies and rituals contained in the law could not take away sin. It only brought to them the remembrance of their sins and taught them the need of a perfect savior. Again and again Israel failed to keep the law and came under judgment of God.

All the above five dispensations demonstrated the failure of man again and again. God alone has to find a perfect sacrifice to atone for the sin of man.

6. The Dispensation of Grace

Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. God sent forth His Son to fulfill the law. Jesus Christ not only obeyed the law but bore on his own body the penalty for breaking the law. He introduced the dispensation of grace. Though many would accept salvation freely offered by God in the person of His Son, many more would still reject. The failure of man will be total in rejecting God. The dispensation of grace will end with the Rapture of the Church.

7. The Dispensation of the Kingdom

God's plan for the redemption of man will be complete with this dispensation. God's eternal kingdom upon earth will be established and Jesus Christ will be the King. God's promises to Israel and through this nation to the world will be fulfilled. Jesus Christ who came as the King of the Jews will return and rule from the throne of David in Jerusalem. All Israel will be saved. The creation itself, which was subject to bondage because of the sin of Adam, will be delivered from the curse.



II. THE LAST DAYS

In the fullness of time God sent forth His Son made of a woman, made under the law (Gal.4.4). He accomplished the work of salvation and ascended into heaven. Today He is the High Priest seated in the heavenly places interceding for His saints. He has promised to come again. No one knows the exact time when He will come again. Yet there are many indications in the Scripture that tell us that we are living in the last days and we can expect our Lord to come for us any time.

The Lord will come again to receive His bride unto Himself and also to fulfill the promises He made to Abraham and his descendents. Scriptures thus indicate that there are two stages of his coming and also gives us sufficient reasons to believe there will be a gap of minimum seven years between these two stages. Therefore, when we study the conditions in the world before the 'coming' of the Lord as indicated in the scriptures, these conditions apply to both these 'stages'.

A. The days of Noah. Matt.24.37-39; Luke 17.26-30 (cf. Gen.6). "But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be". The book of Genesis describes the spiritual, personal, mental and religious conditions that were prevailing in the days of Noah. (Read Gen. 4 & 6).

Spiritually, the people were at a very low ebb Gen.,6.3,5. They were insensitive to their spiritual needs. Noah's preaching of righteousness and coming judgment had no effect in their life. Socially, they were degraded Gen.6.1,11. They were corrupt and violence was common. Sinful depravity were prevalent Gen.4.19; 6.5. "Eat, drink and be merry" were their slogan. Excessiveness in food and drink and promiscuousness in sexual life characterized their living.

Scientifically there was much progress Gen.4.20-

22. Musical instruments and works in brass and iron were made. Since in their minds they had rejected God, mentally they were deluded Gen.6.8-19. Their minds were occupied with pleasures of this world.

Godly people were very few Gen.6.8-9. When the judgment of God came only eight people of that generation were saved. All the others had rejected God. Suddenly, the judgment came Gen.6.7; 7.11. They did not believe Noah's word and thus were not expecting the judgment to come.

B. Faithless generation. Luke 18.1-8. "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth". In the parable the Lord emphasized the persistence of the widow. Will such kind of faith be found when the Lord returns? But could it also mean that the Lord will not find faith that brings salvation when He comes again?

C. The suddenness of his coming. 1 Thes.5.2-3 "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape".

In the only other instance in the N.T. the word is translated 'unawares' is in Luke 21.34. This day will come "deceptively, suddenly, destructively, inevitably and inescapably" It is inevitable and unavoidable as labor pains upon a pregnant woman (Wm. Macdonald)

D. The falling away. 2 Thes.2.3 "For that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition". What is this 'falling away'? Is it:

a. Falling away from the faith? This is the sense in 1 Tim.4.1 or

b. Departing of the Church? Cf.v.7

This will be discussed fully at the appropriate time in this book. Let it suffice to say now that evidence points out to the fact that the falling away is the departure of the church from the world, i.e. The Rapture.

E. Influence of seducing spirits. 1 Tim.4.1,2 “Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron”.

Seducing spirits are those who deny Incarnation. (deceiver = one who seduces). Antichrist and false prophets deceive by words and false signs (Mt.24.5,11,24; 2Pet.2.18). Those who say they have not sinned (1 Jn.1.8). Satan is a deceiver (Rev.20.3)

F. Form of godliness without its power 2 Tim.3.1-5 “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away”.

The word for “perilous”, (Greek: chalepos) is translated ‘exceeding fierce’ in Mathew 8.28. Hard to deal with. What was outside has come inside the professing church.

G. Those who will not take a firm stand for the doctrine. 2 Tim.4.3,4 “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables.”

They will say that preaching of the doctrine is not essential. But see the admonitions given to Timothy and Titus. 2 Tim. 1. 13 and Tit. 1. 9. (Sound Hugiaino = to be healthy; Eng. hygiene)

H. Scoffers. 2 Pet.3: 3,4. Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation?” Peter continues that these scoffers are willingly ignorant of certain things. When the

Scripture has clearly narrated the creation, the judgment by flood etc. these scoffers refused to believe this. This is because of their desire to continuous lustful lives. Mockers are those who are childish and not serious minded. Their own ideas and desires govern them.



III. THE PRESENT AGE

Throughout history God has dealt with his people in different ways. Some times he dealt with a single man and at other times with a particular people or a particular race. God did not change and his principles did not change. But revelation has been progressive and there was a continuing requirement of obedience to the revelation given. God has only one way of salvation, and that is through the Cross of Christ His son. Men were saved only through grace in all the dispensations.

God dealt with Adam in his state of innocence, and after his fall there was the moral responsibility. From the time of Noah human responsibility was fixed. Law was given through Moses but grace and truth came by the Lord Jesus Christ.

With the coming of Christ, his death, resurrection and ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost a new era was ushered in: The dispensation of Grace. The different characteristics of the present age may be noted.

A. This is the age of grace. Jn.1.17; Rom.5.20, 21.

The Law was given through Moses. The law demanded obedience. The law demanded holiness. It demonstrated the holy character of God. It also gave man a standard to measure himself morally and spiritually. This was given to demonstrate the unrighteousness of man. The law was the School Master to bring us to Christ. (Gal.3.24). The law pointed out the need of a savior. The law did not save anyone. Even here salvation was only through grace.

But the dispensation of grace ushered by Jesus Christ overwhelmed all the previous manifestations of grace.

B. This is the day of salvation 2 Cor.6.2

Jesus Christ said: Salvation is of the Jews (Jn.4.22). The Samaritans did not know God fully because they did not have the full revelation. They could not worship God fully. The Jews had the full revelation and they were appointed by God to be his witnesses. The scriptures have been given to them. This

was the advantage that they had (Rom.3.1) The Messiah also came through the Jewish nation. The blessedness of the Jews is described by Paul in Romans 9.4, 5. This was the old dispensation.

But today God has set aside dealing with the Jews as a nation. In a later day He will deal with them as a nation, but today it is not so. Today all differences between a Jew and Gentile has been done away with. In this day of salvation God is dealing with individuals of all races and nations and tongues. On the basis of the finished work of Christ on Calvary today anyone can come to God for salvation. Whosoever shall call upon the name of God (in Christ) shall be saved.

C. This is the age of the gospel. Mark 16.15.

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures. This is the gospel.

Jesus Christ has told the disciples to preach repentance and remission of sins in His name to all nations. (Lk.24.48) This gospel is to be preached to every creature and He who believes and baptized will be saved. (Mark 16.15) Every believer who has heard and accepted this truth and thus saved is given authority to preach this message and make disciples of all the nations.(Matt.28.18-20).

Gospel is the only message of salvation today. There is also no other name given among men under heaven whereby a man can be saved (Acts 4.12). Those who reject the gospel have no other way. The sin that never will be forgiven is the sin of rejecting Christ (Matt.12.31).

D. This is the Church age. Eph.3.6

Though the Old Testament is predominantly a book where God's dealing with the Jews is described it also mentions about the gentiles.

- a. God will bless the gentiles. Gen.12.3; 22.18; 26.4; 28.14. But these blessings were to come to them through Abraham and his progeny.

- b. The Gentiles will serve God Ps.72.11
- c. The Messiah will come to the Gentiles Isa.11.10; 49.6; 54.1-3; 60.1-3.
- d. The Gentiles will be saved Hos.1.10; Amos 9.11

But Church was a mystery hidden in God but now revealed to his apostles and prophets (Eph.3.6) The Law of Moses created a barrier between the Jews and the gentiles (Eph.2.13-15) and also between man and God (Eph.2.16-18) In the Church age this barrier has been removed. The Lord said I will build my church Matt.16.18. This He started doing from the day of Pentecost. In the Church, which comprise of individual Jews and Gentiles, the gentiles became fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ thorough the gospel. (Eph.3.6) Today mankind is divided into three groups - The Jew, the Gentile and the church of God. (1 Cor.10.32).

Though there will be only born again believers in the Church, many of those who profess to show faith in Christ will join the visible church. They are the pretenders. This will hinder the growth of the church to some extent. Many will apostatize in the end (2 Thes.2.5-8; 1 Tim.4.1-2; 2 Tim.3.1; 4.3-4; 1 Jn.2.18-20). Then the Lord will come and rapture the church of God.

E. This is the age of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2; Jn.14.16-17; 1 Cor.6.19; 3.16.

This age was ushered in when the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost. He convicts the world of sin, or righteousness and of judgment (Jn.16.7-11) He indwells every believer who has confessed his sin and turned to Christ for salvation. (Eph.1.13-14). As the *Shekinah* glory of God filled the Tabernacle in the wilderness and the Temple today Holy Spirit indwells the temple of God, the Church. The Spirit of God also prepares the believer for the coming of Christ and produces the fruit of the Spirit in Him.

F. This age was a Mystery.

The character, the course and the end of this age were

not a matter of prophecy in the Old Testament (Eph.3.1-12; 5.32; 6.19; Col.1.24-29; 1 Cor.15.51). A Mystery in the New Testament sense is something that was hidden in God and was not revealed in the Old Testament, but revealed in the New Testament.

G. This is a parenthetical age.

Old Testament deals with the Jews primarily. God is going to deal with the Jews as a nation again after the church age is over. The promises made to Abraham and David are yet to be fulfilled completely. This will be fulfilled. Though His dealing with the Jews as a nation in the past and also in the future was a matter of prophecy, the present age was not so.. Jesus Christ is the Messiah. He came unto His own but His own received him not (Jn.1.11). They rejected Him and He was crucified. When He comes again, they will look unto Him whom they have pierced and they will receive him. Jesus explained these things in his parabolic teaching of the Kingdom of God in Mathew 13. In relation to the church of God, the course of the church age is described in Revelation two and three. At the end of this age, the Lord will come and rapture the church.



IV. THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM

There are many who see the Church in the Old Testament. And they hold the view that Israel in the Old and the Church in the New Testament are one and the same.

The Kingdom

Israel was a theocracy. God Himself was their king. After the rule of Judges, whom God has raised up, Israel asked for a king. (1 Sam.8.5-7). This displeased the Lord and He knew the people have rejected him as their king. God gave them a king in his anger (Hos.13.11) After Saul God himself raised up a king in Israel, a man after his own heart, David. To David God promised: I will setup thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thine own body and I will establish his kingdom....I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. (2 Sam.7.12, 13).

After Solomon the kingdom was divided. The Northern Kingdom was taken captive by Assyria and these ten tribes never came back from captivity. The Southern kingdom was taken to Babylon and though these two tribes came back after 70 years captivity, they had no king and kingdom.

Centuries later according to the prophecy of Micah, that the ruler of Israel shall come forth from Bethlehem (Mich 5.2) Jesus was born as the King of the Jews.(Matt.2.2).

John the Baptist came preaching: Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matt.3.2). He was the forerunner who came to prepare the way. But John was put in prison. From that time Jesus began to preach and to say Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The principles of the kingdom are declared in chapters five to seven of Mathew. In Chapters eight and nine in the ten miracles performed by Jesus, the power of the King is manifested. Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum etc. were the places chosen by Jesus to test the nation of Israel. The message was to be taken only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt.10.5, 6; 15.24; Rom.15.8). They did not repent. The King was morally rejected (Matt.11.20-24).

When the King and the offer of his kingdom were rejected by Israel, the realization of the kingdom was postponed. The King from then onwards stopped dealing with Israel as a nation and began to deal with individuals (Matt.11.28, 29). He also began his discourse about the “mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” in parables (Matt.13).

When the offer of the kingdom was rejected, He began to speak about his death to the disciples (Matt.20.17, 18). Caesarea Philippi was a turning point in the ministry of the King.(Matt.16.13-20). When Israel rejected its King, Jesus also announced his purpose of building his church. This purpose was not revealed in the Old Testament.

Jesus the King was officially rejected by Israel and He was crucified (Matt.27. 22-26). As prophesied earlier he arose again conquering death on the third day and sent forth the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost to indwell the believers and also the Temple of God, the Church.

V. THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

The coming of the Lord was a matter of prophecy in the Old Testament. The prophet Isaiah while prophesying of the kingdom blessings for re-gathered Israel said: "Behold your God will come with vengeance, even God, with a recompense he will come and save you" (35.5). Their God came amidst them but they did not recognize Him. Even John the Baptist who introduced the Messiah to Israel with the words: "behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1.29) was doubtful while the enemy put him in prison. Therefore he sent two of his disciples to Jesus to enquire: "Are you he that should come? Or look we for another? (Lk.7.20). Jesus in that same hour cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, "Go your way, and tell John what things you have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me" (vv.22, 23). In other words Jesus referred John the Baptist back to the Old Testament Scriptures of what would happen when the Messiah appeared. Because of the spiritual blindness that happened to them Israel did not recognize the Messiah.

Christ's two advents are introduced in one verse in the book of Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn (63.1,2). When the Lord Jesus visited the synagogue at Nazareth, he read the first portion of the above verse and closed the book and told them "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your years" (Lk.4.19). He did not read about the day of vengeance.

What we understand from these verses is that though the first and second comings of the Lord were a matter of

prophecy, they were not mentioned as such in the Old Testament. In other words, the Old Testament did not say, “this is the first coming” and “this is the second coming”

In the words of Peter, the Spirit of Christ in the prophets prophesied of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow (1 Pet.1.10,11), but they did not fully understand it. After Calvary, we of course understand that there are two comings of the Lord, the first and the second. The church is waiting for the second coming of the Lord. Today we are living in the Church age, which was not a matter of prophecy.

Likewise, the second coming itself has two stages. First, he comes for the Church in mid air and then he comes for Israel to the earth. The first is called the Rapture and the second the Revelation. First we shall deal with the Rapture of the Church. There are different view about the Rapture too. They are:

A. No Rapture

The basic premise of those who hold this position is that the Kingdom is now. They teach that by her preaching and teaching, the Church will conquer and be victorious on earth. The Church will usher in the millennial kingdom and there will be no rapture.

The Scripture teaches that the world which now lies under the wicked one (1 Jn.5.19) will get worse and worse (2 Tim.3.13). Peter adds that the havens and the earth, which are now, are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the Day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men (2 Pet.3.7). Paul also teaches that the Lord Himself will come to take the church away (1 Thes.4.13-17).

The Church will be victorious in the sense that the grave will not hold it down. The promise of the Lord is that “I will build my Church and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it”. But this is true only of the true church, which comprises of all born again believers from the day of Pentecost to the day of Rapture. The visible churches today may have many unbelievers as their members. Bible gives us examples of many such persons. Instead of the church being victorious and

ushering in the millennial kingdom, the Lord Himself asks this question: “Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Lk.18.8). The victory gained by the Lord at Calvary will be fully realized by the Church only when the Lord comes again to rapture the church. Therefore the “no rapture” theory does not hold good and is not supported by the Scriptures.

B. Partial Rapture.

The teaching of this position is that all those who believe in the Lord will not be caught up when the Lord comes. There will be those who have made themselves ready by practical sanctification and only they will be caught up. They divide the Body into two – those who are sanctified and those who are not, those who are watching and waiting and those who are not; those who love his appearing and those who do not. Those who are not sanctified in their daily lives will go through the tribulation when they will be fully cleansed. The blood of Jesus Christ is sufficient to cleanse everyone from sin and condemnation and to be accepted by the Lord. and finally redeemed..

Many of those who believed in the Lord are already dead and they asleep in the Lord. Will they not all be raised up at the coming of the Lord? Paul makes no distinction, but makes a clear statement that those who are asleep in Christ Jesus will be raised incorruptible when the Lord comes. The Church is the body of Christ and is united. So when the marriage of the Lamb takes place in heaven, will part of the Bride be going through purification on the earth. If some of them on earth are not even purified will they be lost for ever?. Those who hold the view of ‘partial rapture theory’ leaves many question unanswered.

This view is against the clear teaching of the word. Though practical sanctification is taught in the scriptures it is nowhere stated that our being taken to the heavenly home is on the basis of our practical sanctification. Salvation from beginning to end is the work of God. Our hope is that “the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming

of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thes.5.23). Our citizenship is in heaven and our entrance into the presence of God now and our entrance into our heavenly abode in future are on the basis of the shed blood of Jesus Christ. He that has begun a good work in us will perfect it on the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Phil.1.6). All those who are dead in Christ will be raised up and those who believe and remain alive at the coming of the Lord will be transformed and caught in the air to be with the Lord for ever.

C. Mid-Tribulation Rapture.

This view holds that there will be a seven-year period of Tribulation. The Church will go through the first three and a half years of tribulation and then she will be raptured. This view has arisen because of certain scriptures, which seem to teach that the church will go through tribulation and certain others, which are against it. They hold that the second half of the Tribulation is the manifestation of God’s wrath. This is a compromise view. “It concurs with the pre-tribulation view in holding that the church will be raptured as an event distinct from the second advent, that the restrainer of 2 Thessalonians 2 is the Holy Spirit, that the church is promised deliverance from wrath. In common with post-tribulationism it holds that the church is promised tribulation on the earth and is in need of purging, that Scripture does not teach the doctrine of imminence, and that the church is seen on the earth after Revelation 4.1.

The Great Tribulation is a time of Jacob’s trouble when God will deal with Israel as a nation before they enter the millennial kingdom. The mid-tribulation rapture theory has arisen because of the confusion of mixing up the Church and Israel.

D. Post-Tribulation Rapture.

This position holds that the Church will go through the seven years of Tribulation. The judgment and the wrath of God will fall upon the Church. Then the Church will be caught up to be with the Lord in the air and will come down again to the earth. The Lord has said that in the world you will have

tribulation (Jn.16.33). The essential bases on which post-tribulationism rests are: (1) This must be passed on a denial of dispensationalism and all dispensational distinctions. It is only thus that they can place the church in that period which is particularly called “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer.30.7). (2) Consequently, the position rests on a denial of the distinction between Israel and the church. (3) The position must rest on a denial of the scriptural teaching concerning the nature and purpose of the tribulation period. Whereas Scripture uses such terms as wrath, judgment, indignation, trial, trouble, and destruction to describe this period, and states that the divine purpose in the period is to pour out judgment on sin, the advocate of this position must deny this essential teaching of the Word. (4). The post-Tribulationist must deny all the distinctions observed from the Scriptures between the rapture and the second advent, making them one and the same event. (5) The post-Tribulationist must deny the doctrine of imminence, which says that the Lord may come at any time and substitute the teaching that a multitude of signs must be fulfilled before the Lord can possibly come. (6) The post-Tribulationist denies any future fulfillment to the prophecy of Daniel 9.24-27, claiming for it an historical fulfillment. (7) The post- Tribulationist must apply major passages of Scripture that outline God’s program for Israel (Matt.13; Matt.24-25; Rev.4-19) to the church in order to support his views. It will thus be observed that the position rests essentially on a system of denials of the interpretations held by the pre-Tribulation rapture, rather than on a positive exposition of Scripture”. (pp.164-165 Things to Come by JD Pentecost) They also fail to distinguish between tribulation and the Great Tribulation.

Every believer in Christ, and therefore, the Church also is free from the judgment. There is therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom.8.1). Our sin question will never be brought up again. Our judgment as sinners is already past. The judgment seat of Christ before which the believers will stand is to receive rewards and not for condemnation.

E. Pre-Wrath Rapture.

This is a recent view propounded by Marvin J. Rosenthal who was earlier a pre-Tribulationist. When he was convinced that this view is not correct he found, according to him, a scriptural view, which he called pre-wrath rapture. The theses of his work is based on the following:

1. The Rapture of the church will occur immediately prior to the beginning of the Day of the Lord.
2. The Day of the Lord commences sometime within the second half of the seventieth week.
3. The cosmic disturbances associated with the sixth seal will signal the approach of the Day of the Lord.
4. The Day of the Lord will begin with the opening of the seventh seal (Rev.8.1)

He writes: “The objective of this volume is to demonstrate that the Day of the Lord is the time of divine wrath. It will be recognized as about to begin by the cosmic disturbances associated with the sixth seal (Joel 2.0-11, 30-31; Rev.6.12-17; Cf. Matt.24.29) and will begin with the opening of the seventh seal (Rev.8.1). The Rapture of the Church will immediately precede the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord will begin sometime within the second half of Daniel’s seventieth week” (p35 Pre-Wrath Rapture by M.Rosenthal).

According to him the following reasoning leads men to an erroneous conclusion:

1. The Day of the Lord will come “as a thief in the night” (1 Thes.5.2) that is a correct biblical statement.
2. You (believers) “are not darkness, that that day (the Day of the Lord) should overtake you: (v.4) – correct again.
3. “For God has not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation (deliverance” (v.9) – once again correct.
4. Therefore, the reasoning continues, since the Day of the Lord begins with the Tribulation period, and the believer is not appointed unto wrath, the believer is raptured before the Tribulation period begins. That conclusion, however, is incorrect.”
5. He continues to write that the Rapture will occur before the Day of the Lord, as pre-tribulationists contend. That

is precisely what Paul is teaching in 1 Thessalonians 5 and 2 Thessalonians 2. Further, not only does the rapture occur in connection with the Day of the Lord, but the rapture occurs on the very day the Day of the Lord begins.

But from a discussion of 2 Thessalonians 2 above, it will be found that the rapture must precede the Day of the Lord, and this day does not begin “some time with in the second half of Daniels’ 70th week” but at the beginning of the 70th week itself.

This view is very similar to mid tribulation rapture theory. The first three and half years of the Great Tribulation are the beginning of sorrows. During this time the four seals will be broken. Then begins the Great Tribulation when the fifth seal will be broken. The cosmic disturbance happens when the sixth seal is broken. Then the Church will be raptured and then only the day of the Lord begins. It is the day of the judgment of the Lord or when the wrath of the Lord will be poured out.

F. Pre-millennial Pre-Tribulation Rapture.

This view holds that the Church, the believers who asleep in Christ will be resurrected and those who believe and remain will be transformed and be removed from the earth before the Great Tribulation takes place. The basis for this belief is because of the following:

The scripture has to be interpreted literally wherever possible. Apostle Paul writes: “In our letters we say no other things to you, but those which you are reading and to which you give agreement” (2 Cor. 1.13). The only interpretation that makes sense is the one that takes the Bible exactly for what it says. The Golden rule of interpretation as said by D. L. Cooper is this:

”When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense, therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise.”

Of course it does not mean that we ignore figures of speech and expressions. If the interpretation of one passage contradicts other passages it does not make sense. Therefore any and all scripture passage has to be interpreted in the light of the whole of the Bible. The Word is truth, but it is the sum total of the word. If one takes some portion as literal and spiritualizes others, and allegorizes yet others how is one to decide which portion to take in which manner? There will be total confusion. A dispensational interpretation of the scriptures is the only one, which takes all the aspects of the Scriptures into consideration. Israel and the Church are two different entities. God's promises and blessings made to Israel are earthly. The Church was a mystery hidden in God and it was revealed only in New Testament times through his apostles and prophets. When Israel rejected their King this age or dispensation was introduced. God will resume his dealings with Israel as a nation when the program for the Church is completed. The blessings to the Church are heavenly.

Since the promises made to Israel have not been completely fulfilled and they have to be fulfilled because of a literal interpretation of the Scriptures, the same method is to be applied to the church also. One cannot interpret some portions of Scriptures as literal and spiritualize some other portions. This is doing violence to the Word.

According to the literal interpretation after the Great Tribulation Israel's King, the Lord Jesus Christ will usher in His millennial rule. But this can happen only after the Church is raptured.

G. Imminent return of Christ

The Lord is coming according to his promise to take His bride home. But when is this event going to take place? When the disciples showed the Lord the glory of the temple, He told them, "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matt.24.2). Then the disciples asked him three questions: a) When shall these things be? And b) What shall be the sign of thy coming? c) And of the end of the world? The Lord then gave them the signs that must come to pass before He comes again. But these are the

signs of His Second coming for Israel and not for the church. The context clearly reveals this.

The Scripture is very clear that immediately after the rapture there will be a period of seven-year tribulation, at the end of which the Lord will come again. The signs foretold by the Lord are the events that will take place during the Great Tribulation. Therefore, it is but natural that the effects of some of the signs at the beginning of the Tribulation will be applicable for His coming for the Church also. But there are no clear signs given which must precede the coming of the Lord for His church.

There are four important passages in the New Testament concerning the Rapture of the church. They are: (1) John 14.1-3; (2) 1 Thes.4.13-18' (3) 1 Cor.15.50-58; and (4) Phil.3.20-21). We would deal with them in this order.

(1) The Promise of His Coming Jn.14.1-3

Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father. He knew that the Father had given all things into his hands (his authority) and that he was come from God (his deity) and went to God (his glory) (Jn.13.1, 3). He was preparing his disciples for their life and testimony afterwards.

Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. The promise was to comfort them: "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also". He knew that they were troubled. There were causes enough for that. The Lord washed their feet and they did not understand the meaning of this. There was fight among them as to whom among them should be accounted the greatest (Lk.22.24). They were not able to understand their own hearts! When the Lord spoke of His death, they were fighting for leadership among them. He had told them that one of them would betray him. Judas had deserted them and went out into the night (Jn.13.30). His death also was discussed with

them (v.33). The Lord had told Peter that before the cock crew he would deny Him thrice. The disciples were greatly troubled (tarasso) (agitated) as the water at the pool of Bethesda (Jn.5.7) was troubled and they needed comfort. Faith in God and Jesus Christ is what overcomes fear and troubled hearts.

He told them of His Father's house. He had already spoken to them of the Father's house (oikos) earlier. But this was of the earth, the temple of God. But now he uses another word. In My Father's house are many mansions (monai); if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place (rupon) for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself that where I am, there you may be also (Jn.14.2-3). The word 'mansions' in v.2 is translated 'abode' in v.23. The Father and the Son will make their abode with those who keep the words of Christ. Therefore the 'mansions' are permanent dwelling places. They are real. The Lord Jesus assures them that heaven is a real place. He is preparing the place for the believers. "We believe that by "mansions" the Lord referred to the availability of, and opportunities for faithful service on high. The Lord has entered to appear in the presence of God for us (Heb.6.20; 9.24). He did not go to prepare the mansions, rather to prepare a place, namely the entering in freely by believers since under the earthly temple systems, all entry was barred by the veil. As those who enter in, "his servants shall serve him" (Rev.22.3)

He will come again to receive his people unto himself. This is not his post resurrection appearances, but his visible coming for his people at the Rapture. They shall ever be with Him

At the same time, together with what is taking place in heaven, the Lord is preparing His bride in the world. He died and purchased the bride with His blood and now he is washing her by the word and sanctifying her (Eph.5.26). The purpose is that He will present to Himself a glorious church, not having any spot or wrinkle, or any such thing that she should be holy and without blemish. He has been preparing a place for His bride for the past 2000 years. What a glorious reunion

will be this! His promise is true.

He is nourishing (**ektrepho** – as a mother cares for a child) and cherishing (**thalpo** – to keep warm, comfort, to foster with tender care) His bride now. But one day He will present to himself a glorious church without spot or wrinkle.

(2) The Presence (parousia) of Christ (1 Thes.4.13-18)

The believers in Thessalonica had the hope of Christ's return. During the short period of three weeks that he was in Thessalonica, Paul had taught them of the death, resurrection and the second coming of the Lord. But they were concerned over Christians who were already dead. Will they rise again when the Lord Jesus returns? Even then believers were being martyred. What about them? God's power and glory will be displayed when Jesus returns. Will those who are already dead share in this glory?

The world had come with its own answers. Aeschylus, "classical Athens great tragic dramatist" (BC 525-455) said: Once a man dies there is no resurrection. Theocritus, (BC 300-260) lamenting for Daphnis, who died of unrequited love, said: "There is hope for those who are alive, but those who have died are without hope". Catullus (d. c.54 BC) Roman poet "whose expressions of love and hatred are generally considered the finest lyric poetry of ancient Rome", was of the view that, when once our brief light sets, there is one perpetual night through which we must sleep.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, apostle Paul wrote: "But I would not have you to be ignorant brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we, which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them, which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the triumph of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we, which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord

in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord (1 Thes.4.13-17). The dead in Christ will arise. Those who sorrow will be comforted. There is hope for the Christians whether dead or alive. This is sure and is based on the word of the Lord.

The appearance of the Lord will be quite dramatic and personal. While Jesus ascended into the heaven the disciples were watching. The two men in white apparel comforted them with these words: “You men of Galilee, why stand you gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven (Acts 1.11). Those who are waiting for him will recognize him!

The coming of the Lord will be inaugurated by:

a) *Shout of the Lord*; The Greek word for ‘shout’ (**keleusma**) is only used here in the New Testament. It is a military word of command. It is the command, a rallying shout, to gather the church. Once they marveled at the gracious words that proceeded from his mouth (Lk.4.22). “Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more” (Jn.8.11) were words of balm to the wounded soul. Every one of His sheep had heard the word of the shepherd and followed Him. Lazarus of Bethany heard the voice of the Lord in the grave and came forth (Jn.11.43). Now it is one command to all those who are asleep in Him. This is how Paul expresses death. Those who are dead in Christ are asleep in Him. It is only for a short duration. Their Lord will wake them up.

Those who are alive and remain also will hear the command. Paul in his great chapter of resurrection (1 Cor.15) hastens to explain and reveal another mystery. “Behold I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Cor.15.52). The living saints shall be transformed and caught up together to be with the Lord forever.

b) *Voice of the archangel*; There are many angelic beings. There are the fallen angels who are reserved for the

everlasting fire (Matt.25.41). There are the seraphim who cry one to another, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts” (Isa.6.2). There are the principalities and powers in heavenly places unto whom the manifold wisdom of God is made known by the Church (Eph.3.10). There are the elect and holy angels who watch the behavior of the Church (1 Cor.11.10). But two angels are specifically named in the Scriptures. They are Gabriel who announced the birth of John the Baptist (Lk.1.19), and Michael the archangel in Jude 9. Michael is mentioned 6 times in the Word. He stands in Daniel 10, to defeat Satanic powers to bring answer to Daniel’s prayers. During the time of Great Tribulation defends Israel (Dan.12.1). Concerning the body of Moses, it was Michael who disputed with Satan (Jude 9). Michael is the leader of the angels who defeat the satanic army and cast them into the earth from heaven (Rev.12.7-9). The prince of the power of the air (Eph.2.2) who once controlled sinners will have to contend with Michael at the resurrection of the saints.

- c) *With the triumph of God.* Once the believers heard the trumpet call of the gospel and came to the Lord. Now with the trumpet call we will be caught up unto him. This is the last trumpet we already quoted above (1 Cor.15.52)

There are commentators who argue that these three sounds, viz. shout of the Lord, voice of the archangel and the trump of God are qualitative and not quantitative. Whatever the interpretation it is clear that the Lord will come and call his church home. Paul adds that we shall ever be with the Lord. Here also is the comforting reminder to us that the earth is not our permanent residence. But we shall be in our Father’s mansions with the Lord.

(3) The Mystery Explained (1 Cor.15.51-58)

In First Corinthians Fifteen Paul clearly explains the truth and the manner of resurrection. He does not deal primarily with the Rapture here. He has already dealt with this in 1 Thessalonians Four, but the emphasis is on the change that takes place at the Rapture. Jesus Christ died and was buried. God raised him from the dead (Acts 2.24; 3.15; 4.10 etc.) by

the glory of the Father (Rom.6.4) and made alive by the Spirit (1 Pet.3.18). But He rose again in his inherent right. All the three persons in the Godhead are involved in the resurrection of Jesus. He appeared to His sovereign, selective choice of witnesses. This is the proof of his resurrection. If the resurrection is not true, the logical outcome is that, a) The Preaching is in vain; b) Their faith is misplaced and has no value; c) The Preachers were exposed as false witnesses; d) Their faith is futile and fruitless; e) They are still in their sins and there is no atonement; f) They are perished and are on their way to hell; and g) Their case is miserable – given up this world and there is no other world for them!

Paul goes on to explain the sequence of events. Christ is the first fruit of resurrection and they that are Christ's at his coming (**parousia**). He concludes with the nature of the resurrection body and the time of resurrection. The resurrection body is identical with our present body in the sense that each believer looks like him only. You can reap only what you have sown. It is also different in the sense that it is a spiritual body. Our physical body in which we live today is only suited to live on this earth

The Resurrection Body How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come? (1 Cor.15.35). At death the body is not buried, but sown! You bury a body to dispose it of. The sowing is done with the hope of a harvest. Paul uses four contrasts to describe this.

- a) It is sown in corruption but raised in incorruption. The present body will decompose and decay when it is sown. "Dust thou are and into dust thou will return". But when it is raised up it will never again deteriorate and disintegrate. It will be permanent and fresh always. The present body is a tent, but the resurrection body is a permanent home. The present body was made with hands but the resurrection body is not made with hands, not of this creation, but that which is eternal in heaven.
- b) It is sown in dishonor but raised in glory. The present body is the body of sin. It is dishonored by sin, in nature and practice. But it will be raised in glory. Evil passions

will never be able to control it again. This vile body of humiliation will be fashioned like unto His glorious body (Phil.3.21). We will have a shining beautiful body like our Lord.

- c) It is sown in weakness but raised in power. This body of clay at its best is weak. The strongest also bow down to the infirmities of our nature. It needs protection from the ravages of nature, whether of water, fire, or air. But the body of power can withstand any and every forces that are arrayed against it. If the mark of our present body is weak, the mark of our raised body will be of power.
- d) It is sown a natural body but raised a spiritual body. The present body is suited to live in the physical realm in which we live. But we are going to live in a spiritual realm and we need a spiritual body. Once apostle Paul cried: "Who shall save me from this body of death". Immediately he himself answered, "The Lord". He described the life of a spiritual man in Romans Eight. But now it becomes a reality in its fullest sense. The spiritual body does not mean a body composed of the spirit but expressing the life of the Spirit and suited to live in the spiritual world.

Revelation of the mystery1 Cor.15.51 When we were saved we were declared righteous and were assured of a place in heaven. The blood shed by the Lord was the basis for this. We received a new nature, divine nature, when we were regenerated. Now the salvation is consummated and our waiting for the redemption of the body is over.

Resurrection was not a mystery. The dead will rise again, some to everlasting life and some to everlasting shame. But here apostle Paul reveals a truth that was hidden in God (a mystery) but made known to us through him. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed".

Though we were all responsible for the death of Christ, there was one generation which literally crucified the Lord Jesus Christ (Cf.Matt.27.22). There was one generation who should repent and be baptized for the remission of sins and then only they will receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 2.38) because it was this generation, which literally rejected the Lord once.

There will be one generation of believers who will never taste death. This is the generation, which believe and live when the Lord Jesus returns. All of them shall be changed, transformed. There is no partial rapture! All believers who have died will be raised and all believers who live will be changed. The words of the Lord Jesus Christ, “I am the resurrection and the life” is true. He is resurrection to those who are dead and life to those who live and believe. The dead in Christ shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed.

The change will be instantaneous. In the beginning when the Lord created the heavens and the earth, he just called everything into existence out of nothing. It was instantaneous. But this is quicker than that. The corruptible have put on incorruption and the mortal have put on immortality.

The duration is described by the apostle as “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye”. A moment is a split second. It is too small a period of time to calculate. A minute we can understand. 1/60th part of it is a second. But in less than that time we shall be changed! At the Cross of Calvary by His death, the Lord Jesus Christ destroyed him that had the power of death (Heb.2.14,15). He died once and death has no dominion over him (Rom.6.9). Now the saying “Death is swallowed up in victory” (Isa.25.8) has come to pass. The saints here celebrate the victory that the Lord had won for them at Calvary. “O, death where is thy sting”? It stung on the Lord once and its poisonous power is nullified. Now the living saints sing this song. The dead that arose sing: “O death, where is thy victory”? Death could not hold them down. They come out of the grave victorious. What a celebration it would be! “The sting of death is sin”. Now the sin question is finally dealt with. The penalty of sin was paid for the believer when he believed. Throughout his earthly life he was being saved from the power of sin. Now he is saved finally from the presence of sin itself.

(4) The Expectation Realized (Phil.3.20-21)

“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we

look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself”.

Our conversation (politeuma = community, citizenship) is in heaven! Paul asked the saints at Philippi, “let your conversation be as it becomes the gospel of Christ” (Phil.1.27). It is acceptance of the message of the gospel that bought us this citizenship. Today our Lord is in heaven, seated at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens (Heb.8.2). As citizens of heaven we are strangers here, away from our home; and pilgrims i.e. on our way to our home. We may die. But sky and not the grave is our hope.

Job said, “I know my Redeemer lives, and I shall see Him”. Abraham looked for a city that has foundations whose builder and maker is God Heb.11.10). Paul said, to depart and to be with Christ is far better (Phil.1.23). Our life is hid with Christ in God and when Christ who is our life shall appear, and then you shall also appear with him in glory (Col.3.1-3). Through these past many centuries those of faith labored and looked for His coming. Even now we look for Him. He is not slack concerning His promise. Faithful is He that promised. He will come!

When the Lord comes, He shall change our vile (tapeinosis) body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body. Our present body is a body of humiliation. This body belongs to our humble state (NEB). There is nothing “vile” in the body. One need not read into the translation the Stoic contempt for the body. It is true Paul said that “in me, (that is in my flesh) dwelling no good thing (Rom.7.18). This is because the body is corrupt because of sin. But when God created he saw that it was very good. This body that we live in is of the earth, earthy (1 Cor.15.47). It is good only for this earth. And it is only a tent, a temporary dwelling place, which will be dissolved (2 Cor.5.1).

Our Lord will change this body of humiliation. While the body we now have is temporary, the body that the Lord gives is permanent. This is a house not made with hands – not of

this creation. It will be fashioned like unto his glorious body. It is the power of Christ, which is able to subdue all things to Himself that will do this. Once the Divine Potter fashioned our body of earth with His hands. It was very good. But sin marred it. “Dust thou art and unto dust thou shall return” were the words of the Judge. Sickness, death and decay resulted. Now, without touching by his hands but by command and power He gives a new and permanent body to us! In the words of apostle John, “we shall be like him”. This is only in outward form.

H. The Resurrection Body of Christ:

We saw that when the Lord comes He shall fashion our body like unto his glorious body. We shall be like him in outward form. But what is this body like?

- a. ***It has flesh and bones*** (Lk.24.39). The resurrected Lord appeared to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus. They returned to Jerusalem and told the eleven that the Lord has risen. Then the Lord himself came stood in the midst of them; but they were terrified and frightened and supposed they had seen a spirit. But the Lord told them to see his hands and feet. The spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see me have said the Lord. There was no blood on this body. It was shed on the cross of Calvary for the remission of sins.
- b. ***It is glorified body*** (Phil.3.21). Paul said that when the Lord comes again he will change our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body. Our body was sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is not earthly but heavenly. The first Adam was of the earth, earthly (made of dust); the last Adam is the Lord from heaven (1 Cor.15.47). This body is not subject to the gravitational pull of the earth and is able to pass through material things. This body is not subject to decay and death.
- c. ***It is immortal body*** (Rom.6.9). Death has no more dominion over this body. The body that we presently live in is called, the body of death (Cf. Rom.7,.24).
- d. ***It is a spiritual body*** (1 Cor.15.44). While discussing resurrection Paul said, “So also is the resurrection of the

dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body (1 Cor.15.42-44). "The Spiritual body rising from the dead will no longer be under bondage to gravitational and electromagnetic forces, as at present, but only to spiritual forces of which we now have no real knowledge. We do know, however, that our spiritual bodies will be like that of the resurrected body of Christ (1 Jn.3.2) able to move through solid walls (Jn.20.19), and move with tremendous speed between earth and God's throne in heaven (Jn.20.17-19). The body of the resurrected saints will be like the resurrected body of Christ, suitable to live in spiritual realm.

The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ are inseparable. If His death was one side of the coin His resurrection was the other side. His death was the payment for our sin and His resurrection is the receipt given for that payment. He rose again for our justification and death has no more dominion over him.

The change of place - We shall be with Him The hope of believer is more related to a person than a place (cf.1-Thes. 4:17; Jn. 14:3 etc. We shall be with Him. When he appears we shall also appear with him in glory (Col.3.4) etc. Without telling when this event will take place the church was asked to expect the coming of the Lord and be ready. Now He is with us in spirit. His promise is that where two or three are gathered in His name, he is in their midst. We cannot see Him now. But when He comes He will be with us in body and we shall be with him in glory. When, he was transformed on the mount of transfiguration Peter thought it would be good to dwell together with Him in the mount itself. On the resurrection morning Mary wanted to cling on to His feet. All these aspirations and more are going to be realized when we see Him.

In the early centuries the Church was occupied with Christological and other controversies. Reformation dealt with soteriological problems and gave back to the Church the

doctrine of Justification by faith. It was only during the 19th century and later eschatological disputes were discussed. Yet from the beginning itself the disciples expected the Lord to return during their lifetime. Though the Reformers mainly gave back to the Church the doctrine of Justification by faith they also believed “at any moment coming” of the Lord. Luther wrote that all the signs, which are to precede the coming of the Lord, have already taken place.

I. The “falling away” of 2 Thessalonians 2

The living believers in Thessalonica were concerned with the believers who were dead. Paul addressed the problem in his first epistle to them. Now they were troubled in their minds that the Rapture has taken place and the Day of Christ (The Day of the Lord) has already come. Even when Paul was in Thessalonica (Acts 17), the Jews persecuted him and this continued and they thought they were living in the Day of the Lord. In Second Thessalonians Two Paul corrects their misunderstanding (2 Thes.2.2-12).. He wrote to them to say, “That day shall not come, except there come a falling away first and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition”. First there should be a) “a falling away”; b) “he who now lets will let, until he be taken out of the way; c) then only the day of the Lord will come and the man of sin be revealed.

Commentators are of different views concerning “the falling away” and the beginning of “the day of the Lord”. Because of this their eschatological views are different. What is the “falling away”? There are mainly four different interpretations. They are briefly discussed below:

1. The man of sin. The term apostasia in 2 Thessalonians 2.2 refers to the “man of sin” This view is called the oppositional view. The ancient commentators like Augustine, Theophylact, etc. says that the ‘apostasia’ is the Antichrist. Many modern scholars do not agree with this. But a minority like James Moffat believes Paul speaks of the antichrist in this verse. But this cannot be. Paul is very clear. The falling away must come first and the man of sin be revealed then. Is speaks of two different things.

2. The 'falling away' is from the faith. This view holds that it is a religious defection of the last days and Antichrist or the man of sin will be revealed only after this. Our English word 'apostasy' comes from the same word. According to apostle Paul this sign of 'falling away' must precede the Day of the Lord. 'Apostasy' is a state of having rejected one's religious views. Together with this there are also scholars who hold the view that apostasy must precede the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. "This view seems to have originated with the Kings James version in 1611" (The Return by Thomas Ice and T. J .Demy p.150). There are differences of opinion among those who holds this view as to who falls away. Some say it is apostasy within the Church. Others say that it is the Jews who fall away. Yet others say it is those who have once exercised their faith in Jesus who fall away. The faith of those who exercised their faith in Jesus as Lord is irrevocable. Once God has accepted this, the believer is sealed with the Spirit of promise and the transaction is complete.. They can never deny that faith. The security of their salvation depends solely on the Lord Jesus. But there may be those who profess to be Christians but actually are not. It is possible for them to fall away.

3. The falling away is a revolt. While defection may be passive it is said revolt or rebellion is active. Then it may be a political or military apostasy. There have been those who rejected the faith in the first century itself. In his first epistle to Timothy, Paul mentions that 'some' (1.6, 19; 5.15; 6.10,21) have denied their faith. These are those who have made mere professions but denied it later. Throughout the Church history this has continued and will continue also. In his second epistle to Timothy Paul describes the characteristic of the last days (3.1-5). What was already in the world from the Fall has now entered the professing church. The Lord himself has said that when the Son of Man comes shall he find faith on the earth? (Lk.18.8).

"David Williams states that there is no real difference between rebellion and apostasy, and that the apostasy may have been political in nature in view of Romans 13.1. 'At all

events, in common with other New Testament writers and like Jesus himself (Matt.24.10-13) Paul envisages a final upsurge of evil before the end of the age, heralding the onset of the end. Some have understood the apostasia as a falling away within the church, but the word expresses not so much apathy as deliberate opposition, and it is better to see this as a reference to events outside the church, which, however, will profoundly affect the church. The rebellion will be the church's 'great tribulation' (Rev.7.14)". F.F. Bruce argues, like Williams, that the rebellion is a "large scale revolt against public order" and that, rebellion against "governing authorities" is rebellion against God since He instituted them". (Thomas Ice, The Return, p.153),

4. It is the Rapture. The fourth view is that *apostasia* refers to the Rapture of the Church. Before the man of sin appears on the scene the church should be caught up from the world. In a number of Bible translations (Wickliffe Bible of 1384; Tyndale Bible of 1526; Coverdale Bible of 1535; Cranmer Bible of 1539; Breches Bible of 1576; Beza Bible of 1583 and Geneva Bible of 1608) before the King James version of 1611 the word *apostasia* has been translated as "departure" Scholars are of the opinion that "the noun form allows for *apostasia* as a simple departure in the classical period. The context in which the word occurs is very important. In all the five chapters of Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians Paul deals with the rapture of the Church. They were "waiting for His Son from heaven" (1.10). These believers were Paul's crown of rejoicing at the coming of the Lord (2..19,20). At the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, they will be established (3.13). The Lord will come to rapture the church (4.13-18). The Lord will establish us unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (5.23). In this epistle Paul dealt with the question that those who were dead in Christ will be raised when the Lord returns.

In the Second epistle, Paul is trying to correct their belief. They were led astray by some letter purporting to come from the apostle. This letter said that the Day of the Lord has already come. Therefore, they were confused about the hope offered in the first epistle. Paul argues here that the believers are still on the earth and the man of lawlessness has not come

and this is proof enough that the Day of the Lord has not come. A defection from the faith is no comfort to these confused Christians but a departure from the world at the coming of the Lord is. So the context favors the view that the ‘falling away’ is the departure of the Church.

The antithetical parallel in this chapter is also very important. Paul argues that the Day of the Lord will not come unless the ‘restrainer’ is removed from the scene. Who is this restrainer?

“The Restrainer” is the one who prevents the appearance of the man of sin.. Who is this person? Satan now rules as the god of this world. Iniquity abounds in the world even today but it has not reached the saturation point. When you look at the world map one would marvel at the influence of Christianity in the world. A group of believers anywhere in the world is an open rebuke to sin. As ‘salt’ the preservative, and ‘light’ that drives away darkness they prevent the iniquity reaching its zenith in the world. This is because of truth and holiness, which dwells in the believer individually and in the church corporately. Once the Church is taken away there is nothing to restrain the appearance of the man of sin.

“The day of Christ” The day of Christ is actually to be translated as “the day of the Lord”. The day of Christ is a day of blessing to the Church beginning with the Rapture. But the Church will be in heaven then not in the earth. But the day of the Lord is a Day of Judgment in the world. Paul had already told the Christians in Thessalonica about this earlier when he was with them. Henry Alford in his Greek Testament condemns the rendering “as that the day of Christ is at hand” as contrary to all the oldest authorities and renders it as ‘the day of the Lord’. Whatever the rendering both the day of Christ and the day of the Lord will run concurrently for some time, the former in heaven and the later in the earth. The Scripture teaches clearly that Christ could come any moment. This was the expectation of the church in the first century, and the expectation of believers in every generation and it is still the expectation of the church today.

We conclude that (!) the word ‘apostasia’ can be and has

been translated as 'departure'; (2) context favors the view that the apostasia is the rapture; and (3) the antithetical parallel also supports this. Paul speaks that the Rapture must precede the Day of the Lord.



VI. THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

A. Introduction

As children of God we have various responsibilities in our lives. As sons we imitate the Father (1 Thes.2.11-12); as sheep we hear the voice and follow the shepherd; as strangers and pilgrims we manifest our pilgrim character (1 Pet.2.9-12); as soldiers we fight the good fight of faith; and as servants we serve our Lord and Master.

Our salvation spans the past, present and future. We are saved; we are being saved and we will be saved. We are saved from the penalty of sin; we are being saved from the power of sin; and we will be saved from the presence of sin. Our spirit is saved; our soul is being saved; and our body will be saved. In the same fashion our judgment is past; we are being judged now; and we will be judged.

We were judged as sinners. There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. When Jesus Christ died on the cross of Calvary and we accepted his death as our death and we believed him for salvation, we were judged as sinners. Our sin question will never be raised again.

Today we are judged as sons. This is the judgment at present. We are children of God and those who are saved from sin. Yet sin is still in us (1 Jn.1.8). We should not commit sin (1 Jn.2.1); but if and when we sin we should confess and forsake sin. When we judge ourselves we will not be judged (1 Cor.11.31).. And when this is not done God Himself will judge us. This is the chastening of the Lord. Whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives (Heb.12.6). Sometimes this chastening will result in sickness or even death (1 Cor.11.30).

We will be judged as servants. This is yet future. We are servants in relation to our Master (doulos); we are servants in relation to our superior (huperetes); we are servants in relation to our commission (oikonomos); and we are servants in relation to the work we do (diakonos). Our devotion, our obedience, our loyalty and our faithfulness will be tested.

B. Who will stand for judgment? (The Persons)

Writing to Corinthians apostle Paul tells them, that: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Cor.5.10). Paul is writing to the Church of God at Corinth with all the saints, which are in all Achaia (1.1). From Chapter Two onwards he is building up his argument for a worthy Christian ministry. This ministry is a i) triumphant ministry (2.14-16); ii) a sincere ministry (2.17); iii) a commended ministry (3.1-3); iv) a dependent ministry (3.5-6); v) a superior ministry (3.7-18); vi) an open ministry (4.2); vii) a Christ honoring ministry (4.5-7); viii) a suffering ministry (4.10,14,15-18); ix) a confident ministry (5.1-9).

“We know” that a glorified permanent body is reserved for us in heaven (5.1). “We have” this body in heaven; it is an assured reality. “We groan” and desire to possess this body (5.2). While we are at home in this body we are absent from the Lord. We walk by faith and are willing to be absent from this body and be present with the Lord. Therefore our labor is with a view to be accepted by the Lord. Then Paul says: because, we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. No one is excluded from this. All believers must appear for judgment.

There are four main portions of scripture in the New Testament, which treat the subject of judgment seat of Christ. They are (1) Rom.14.10-12 (The Persons); (2) 1 Cor.3.10-15); (3) 1 Cor.4.1-5; (4) 2 Cor.5.9-10).

“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. For it is written, “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then each of us shall give account of himself to God”. Among the believers there are those who are weak in the faith and there are those who are not. Rom.14.1-9 discusses this subject. Eating food, and regarding a day are the subjects in the immediate context. Whether one eats a particular food or not he is persuaded in his own mind that what he does is right. Likewise one esteems one day more than the other days, but another esteems all days alike. He

believes that what he does is right and he is doing it as unto the Lord. There are no doctrinal or moral issues involved here. The Lord is able to make both the weak and strong believer to stand before Him. Therefore they should not judge one another. Each believer is free to hold his own opinion; but each believer should be persuaded in his own mind; because each believer will have to give an account to the Lord. The context of Isaiah Forty Five, which Paul quotes, makes the position very clear. Cyrus is here called the anointed of the Lord. The Lord has called him and told him to send His captive people back to Israel. The Lord has called Cyrus for the sake of Israel. There is no other God beside Him. And the word has gone out of his mouth that every knee shall bow before Him. There is no escape. We must all stand before the judgment seat.

C. Where will we stand? (The Place)

The place where we stand for judgment is the ‘Judgment seat of Christ’ (Rom.14.10). The word for ‘judgment seat’ is bema (bema). Gallio once sat on the judgment seat at Corinth (Acts 18.12, 16-17).. The word is again used to describe the judgment seat on which Pilate sat to judge the Lord (Matt.27,19; Jn.19.13). These are the official tribunal of the Roman governors from which they pronounced judgment and either condemned or set them free.

Paul uses the same word to describe the judgment seat of Christ. The word was used to “denote a raised place or platform, reached by steps, originally that at Athens in the Pnyx Hill, where was the place of assembly; from the platform orations were made. The word became used for a tribunal” (W.E.Vine). It is the divine tribunal that is meant in Rom.14.10 and 2 Cor.5.10. Therefore, Bema is a place of judicial authority from which Jesus Christ tests the service of all his servants and rewards them according to their faithfulness.

D. When will be the judgment (The Time)

The time of this judgment will be after He comes to receive his people in mid-air (1 Thes.4.13-17) but before He comes

with his saints (Jude 14) There is a time of recompense of then just (Luke 14.14). Our labor in the Lord is not vain (1 Cor.15.58). When the Lord comes again with His saints, His army in white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean (Rev.19.11.14). So, by this time the judgment is over and they have received the rewards.

E. How will we be manifested (The Manifestation)

When the Lord comes we shall see Him as he is and we shall be like him (1 Jn.3.2, i.e. he shall change our vile bodies like unto His glorious body (Phil.3.21). We are removed from the presence of sin. We are transferred and transformed (Cf.1 Cor.4.6; 2 Cor.11.14,15). Therefore we not only have a change of body but also a change of place.

He that judges me is the Lord (1 Cor.4.4). He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart. There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid that shall not be revealed (Luke 12.2). The Judge is One that has eyes like flames of fire. His knowledge is complete and clear and infallible. David once said: “If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. The darkness hides nothing from thee. The darkness and light are both alike unto thee” (Ps.139.11.12).

David also said: “Thou understands my thought afar off” (Ps.139.2). The counsels of the hearts of man are known to Him. He is able to judge not only our actions but also our motives and intentions. Everything is open and naked before Him with whom we have to do.

Paul asked the Corinthians: “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers (attendants) (huperetes) of Christ and stewards (oikonomos) of the mysteries of God (1 Cor.4.1). A huperetes is a servant in relation to his superior and an oikonomos is a servant in relation to his commission (as a steward). The ‘minister’ here is the lowest, most menial, despised galley slave – an under-rower in a galley. His fidelity, sincerity and humility will be tested here. Unquestioned

obedience is required of him. As a 'steward' his faithfulness (1 Cor.4.1,2), uprightness (Lk.16.8) and blamelessness (Tit.1.7) will be tested. A steward is accountable to his Master. Accountability is not something to be afraid of, but it is a safeguard. Before the Thessalonians he witnessed that they are witnesses and God also how he behaved while he was with them (1 Thes.2.5,10). The service that Paul rendered was not for the satisfaction of men. Therefore he is not worried about their judgment about him. He knew he was only a slave and he should please his Master. Even if Paul does not know anything against himself, yet he knew that it is the Lord who will judge him. Therefore his service was conditioned with the above considerations.

F. What is the nature of judgment (The Nature)

The Corinthian Church was divided. They were characterized by a party spirit. They had different teachers, like Paul, Peter, Apollos etc. Thus their tendency was to form opinions concerning the relative merits of these teachers. Paul admonished them that these are fellow workers engaged in the work of God and one planted and another watered but it was God who gave the increase. As a wise master builder Paul laid the foundation according to the grace God had given him. The Church at Corinth was formed by the work of Paul. The others should take care to see how they were building the super structure. They are God's building. There are those who build with gold, silver and precious stones. Yet others tried to build with wood, hay and stubble. The former may seem small, but it was lasting and would stand the test. The latter may seem big but would not last.

The work will be tested at the judgment seat. It will be tested by fire. The fire here seems to be, the eyes of the Lord, which are like a flame of fire (Rev.1.14), all seeing and all knowing. The day shall declare it. It is the day of the Lord Jesus Christ, beginning with the rapture of the Church.

G. Why are we judged? (The Purpose)

Why do we labor for the Lord? We do not labour for our salvation. This has been given to us as a free gift. But we are

His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works (Eph.2.10). When we have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord the course is charted and set before us. We walk worthy of the vocation where with we are called (Eph.4.1). We are the exponents of Christianity in the world today. We walk worthy of God as sons (1 Thes.2.12). We also walk worthy of the Lord as his servants (Col.1.10). The compelling motive of our life and service is love towards Him. We want to please Him and be accepted by Him (2 Cor.5.9). Because we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. All pretences in our life will drop off. Our innermost soul will be made bare. Why are we judged? It is to receive “the things done in the body”. It is not to receive the rewards. That question was discussed in 1 Cor.3.10-15. Here who we are will be made manifest. Our character will be clearly seen. What a believer has done in his body whether good or bad is given back to him. This is a very solemn thought

He did not “as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God” was his service (2 Cor.2.17). There was fear in him as Paul served the Lord. Even then he was ‘made manifest unto God’. Not only so, his trust was that he was also ‘made manifest in your consciousness” (2 Cor.5.11).

Today God is a witness as to how we live and serve Him (1 Thes.2.5,10). He knows us (Jn.2.24) exactly as we are. If He entrusts any work to us it is because he has counted us faithful (Cf.1 Tim.1.12). Paul was a blasphemous in his behavior. He was injurious to the church. He persecuted the church and made havoc in the church. But God forgave him and entrusted the ministry to him. On that day when we stand before His judgment seat we will be made manifest exactly we are.

H. Who will be the Judge? (The Judge)

The Son of God was manifest in the flesh. He became the Son of Man. Tempted in all points like we are yet without sin. He lived as a man, suffered and died as a man and rose again as a man. Today there is a Man in heaven – the God-Man Christ Jesus. The Father who raised Him from the dead has

made Him both Lord and Christ (Acts 2.36). He has given Him the authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man (Jn.5.27). By His death and resurrection Jesus Christ is qualified to judge man. As the Redeemer He completed redemption in the past, and as Savior in the present He saves all who come to him in faith, and in the future He comes as Lord to reward His servants. "The Lordship of Christ is a much forgotten truth now, hence, the questionable methods adopted in so-called Christian work, and the setting up of man's opinion in the place of God's truth; but Christ's Lordship will be recognized then, for His eyes will be as flames of fire to search into the motives of things. Everything that applies to our service will stand out in unmistakable plainness then, as seen by Him now".

I. What are the rewards

Our sin question and our eternal destiny has been decided once and for all. This question will not be opened up again.

- (a). We must appear before Christ. The four words used in this connection bring before the strong certainty of this event. We are "made manifest". We will shine forth. There will be the awful holy presence of the Lord. We are "declared", i.e. made evident. We are "revealed" i.e. uncovered. There is no shelter, which will hide us from the presence of the Lord. We are "tested", as gold is tested to purify it.
- (b). We all must give an account. We are stewards of the manifold grace of God. As the certain rich man asked his steward our Lord will ask us: Give an account of your stewardship (Lk.16.2). Accountability to the Lord of the time, talents, and stewardship must be given to him. Out of our own mouth we will be judged (Lk.19.12). We will not have any excuse to give.. By our words we will be justified and by our words we shall be condemned (Matt.12.37). Words carry a thought and they shape a destiny God shaped the universe with His words (Gen. 1.2) He sustains the universe by His word (Heb.1.3). He performed miracles by His word (Rom.4.17). God designed us to accomplish things by the wise use of our words. The idle words that we speak should be given

account in the Day of Judgment (Mt.12.36).

- (c.) We shall give an account of our productivity (att.25.14-30). This is the account of how we used the talents given to us. Any investment expects good return.
- (d.) We shall give an account of our deviation from truth. The church of God is the ground and pillar of truth (1 Tim.3.15). Today we are building this church and not anything else. What materials did we use – Gold, silver and precious stones or wood, hay and stubble? If we are deviated from the path of building we shall give an account of this. What is our ambition? Is it to make a name for ourselves or for our organization?
- (e.) Shepherds will give an account of the flock of God under their care (1 Pet.5.1-4; Acts 20.28; Ezk. 34).
- (f.) Some rewards are mentioned as crowns. The crown of rejoicing is given to the soul winner (1 Ths.2.19). The Chief Shepherd will give the crown of glory to His under shepherds (1 Pet.5.4). The faithful servant will receive the crown of righteousness (2 Tim.4.8).A crown of life is promised to the over comer (Jas.1.12). These will be the incorruptible crowns (1 Cor.9.25).



VII. MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

There are many pen pictures of the Church in the Bible. Church is the body of Christ and He is the Head of the body. Church is the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in it. Church also is the Bride of Christ and He is the Bridegroom. In Romans 7, apostle Paul writes that we are dead to the law and married unto Christ (7.4). Writing to the Corinthians Paul reminds them that he has espoused them to Christ as a chaste virgin (2 Cor.11.2). In describing the marriage relationship between a husband and wife, Paul exhorts husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it. Now he is washing her by the water of the word and one day He will present her to himself without spot or wrinkle (Eph.5.25-27). In the book of Revelation John speaks of the marriage of the lamb and the marriage supper (Rev.19.7-8; 21.1-22.7).

We saw in the foregoing pages that the Lord will come and take the church to be with him. The Church will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and receive rewards. Then the marriage of the Lamb will take place. Sometimes the marriage of the lamb is described on the analogy of a Jewish marriage.

The first stage: The betrothal is over. When a sinner repents of his sin and confesses Jesus as His lord, his sins are forgiven and he becomes part of the bride of Christ. Today the Lord is nourishing and cherishing her. He is cleansing His bride by the word of God. When He comes again the sanctification will be complete. She will be perfect.

Today the Bride is keeping herself pure and adorning herself with the doctrine of God.

The Second Stage: When does the marriage take place? The Lord's second coming has two stages. He comes for the church in mid air and takes his bride home and the next is the Lord coming with his bride to the earth to establish his kingdom. Therefore the marriage takes place between these two stages. In Rev.19.7 it is announced that the marriage of

the Lab is come and his wife has made herself ready. The words 'is come' (elthen) is said to be in the aorist tense and signifies a completed act. Therefore the marriage has taken place already by this time. She is pictured as one who is granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. This could only mean that the judgment seat of Christ is already over and she has received the rewards. Thus the marriage has already taken place between the judgment seat of Christ and the second advent of the Lord.

Where has the marriage taken place? It was in heaven. The judgment seat was in heaven as it was shown before. It was from heaven the Bride and the Groom returns.

The Third Stage: The final and last stage is the marriage supper of the lamb. We should distinguish between two phrases viz. the marriage of the Lamb and the marriage supper of the lamb. In the marriage only the Bride and the Groom is involved and it takes place in heaven. The marriage supper is an event where Israel also is involved and it takes place on the earth.

In the Olivet discourse, in the parable of the 10 virgins (Matt.25.1-13) the Lord portrays Israel as one who waits for the coming of the Bridegroom. The Groom may arrive any moment and they hear the midnight cry, "Behold the Bridegroom comes; go you out to meet Him" (v.6). The wedding supper takes place on the earth, during the entire millennial period. Israel will be invited to this Supper during the time of the Great Tribulation. Some will reject this invitation and the invitation will go to the gentiles also. Many of the gentiles too will join the wedding supper.

Blessed are they, which are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev.19.9). There is no need to confuse between the marriage supper (Rev.19.9) and marriage (feast) (Matt.25.10). They are one and the same and it takes place on the earth.



VIII. THE GREAT TRIBULATION

In His sermon on the mount our Lord Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God. In the beatitudes he said, “Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matt.5.11, 12). Later in His upper room discourse, He said: In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world (Jn.16.33). While describing the apostasy of the last days, apostle Paul said: all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 Tim.3.12). For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for his sake (Phil.1.19). All these verses go to prove that believers in Christ Jesus will suffer tribulation. It is because though they are in the world, they are not of the world and the world does not know them. The whole world lies under the wicked one and he will persecute the children of God.

The sufferings of Christ are of two kinds. He suffered for us, the just for the unjust. This is vicarious and no one has any part in it. But there is a suffering for righteousness sake. This also he suffered at the hands of the enemy. This suffering is part of the Christian life. But in this section we deal with the Great Tribulation and not the common tribulation, which is for every believer.

A. What is the Great Tribulation?

The Lord called Abraham from the Ur of the Chaldees and made a great nation out of Him – the Nation of Israel. A land and a kingdom were promised to them. They rejected the King and the Kingdom was postponed. The Lord stopped dealing with Israel as a nation and inaugurated the Church Age, this present dispensation. After the Rapture, He is going to deal with the nation of Israel and also with the other nations of the world, the gentiles.

“The Time of Jacob’s trouble” A well-known name for the Great Tribulation is “The time of Jacob’s trouble”. Jeremiah

says, "Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it" (Jer.30.7). It is true that this was partially fulfilled during the Babylonian captivity and the suffering experienced by Israel, but refers also to the Great Tribulation. Jeremiah continues in v.9 that they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king whom I will raise up unto them. After their return from 'afar' Jacob is promised rest and quiet, and that none shall make him afraid. This was not fulfilled when they returned after the Babylonian captivity. Since no other day of trouble can be compared to this, "that none is like it", it is yet future. Though the nature of the trouble is not identified here the fact is. They will experience severe oppression at the hand of the Antichrist. This will be a time of preparation for them to receive their Messiah. They need to be corrected and they will be corrected. They must be brought to a frame of mind receptive to their Messiah. They were not ready to receive Him when He first came but rejected Him. This Tribulation experience will bring about this change in them. The trouble will be severe and in the words of Zechariah, "And it shall come to pass, that in all Israel, says the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein" (13.8). How true is the adage, that "the mill of God grinds slowly, but they grind exceeding fine". But they shall call on His name and God says, "I will hear them; I will say, it is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is My God" (13.9). They shall be saved out of this trouble.

The New Scofield Reference Bible defines the Day of the Lord as follows: The Day of the Lord (Jehovah) is that period of time when God openly intervenes in the affairs of men – in judgment and in blessing. It will begin with the translation of the Church and will terminate with the cleansing of the heavens and the earth preparatory in the bringing into being of the new heavens and the new earth.

The order of events appears to be: (1) the Rapture of the Church just preceding the beginning of the Day of the Lord (1 Thes.4.13-17); (2) the fulfillment of Daniel's seventieth week (Dan.9.27) the latter half of which is the Great Tribulation

(Matt.24.21); (3) the return of the Lord in glory to establish the millennial kingdom (Matt.24.29-30); (4) the destruction of the beast, the false prophet, and their armies, which is the “great and terrible” aspect of the day (Rev.19.11-21); (5) the judgment of individual Gentiles according to their treatment of Christ’s brethren, the Jewish people (Zech.14.1-0; Matt.25.31-46) and the judgment of Israel (Ezk.20.34-36) (6) the millennial reign of Christ on earth (Rev.20.4-6); (7) the satanic revolt and its judgment (Rev.20.7-10); (8) the resurrection and final judgment of the wicked (Rev.20.11-15); (9) the destruction of the present earth and heavens by fire preparatory for the future “day of God” (2 Pet.3.10-12); and (10) the creation of the new heavens and the new earth (Isa.65.17-19; 66.22’ 2 Pet.3.13; Rev.21.1).

Following the above broad outline the Rapture of the Church is followed by the Day of the Lord, beginning with the 70th week of Daniel, the latter half of which is the Great Tribulation. The purpose of the Great Tribulation is primarily to prepare the nation of Israel to receive her Messiah. It is a time of “Jacob’s trouble”. Jeremiah says, “Alas for that day is great, so that none is like it; for it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it” (Jer.30.7). In the Olivet discourse our Lord clearly spoke of it (Matt.24.9-26). It is during these days that the national conversion of Israel will take place. The gospel of the Kingdom, that the King is about to return to establish the Kingdom will be preached (Matt.24.14).

The next purpose is to pour out judgment upon the unbelieving nations of the world.(Jer.25.32-33; Isa.26.21). The Tribulation was a subject matter of prophecy in the Old Testament but the Rapture was not.

The Day of the Lord. Different prophets have prophesied of this Day and described it. We would do a short survey of this Day as spoken by the prophets:

Moses: Deut.4.30; 32.35; Moses spoke that Israel’s disobedience will be punished and the Lord will scatter them among the nations. Tribulation will come upon them in the latter days, but when they turn unto the Lord, He will not

forsake them.

Zephaniah 1.7,15,16,18; 2.2-3. He uses the terms the Day of the Lord, which is a day of trouble for Israel. It is a day of God's wrath, a day of distress, destruction and desolation. It would be a day of darkness, alarm and Lord's anger. The fire of jealousy will burn on that day.

Joel 1.15; 2.2. He also speaks of a Day of darkness and gloom and it will be a day of destruction and ruin from the Almighty.

Isaiah: He spoke of the Day of the Lord (2.12; 3.6,9) as a Day of birth pangs and a day of indignation (21.3; 26.17-18, 20; 66.7),

Daniel: He saw this day as a day of trouble (12.1).And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which stands for the children of thy 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 thy people shall be delivered every one that shall be found written in the book.

The Day of the Lord is not one day. It is a period of time. Since different prophets have described some particular aspects of that Day, no one prophet has fully described it. Therefore, to point out any particular aspect of that Day and claim "this is the of beginning of that Day" is not correct.. "The term "day of the Lord (Jehovah) is that period of time when the Lord openly intervenes in the affairs of men, when man's day has closed. It will be inaugurated with the rapture of the Church (1 Cor.15.50-58; 1 Thes.4. 13-18). Since the prophets saw historical events from God's viewpoint, they saw the unity of God's program. Thus they discerned that visitation of God in their time, were near fore-shadowing of an ultimate fulfillment. In this sense the term is frequently used by Joel. The Day of the Lord in prophetic times will cover the time of the coming tribulation (Rev.6-19) and the reign of Christ on David's throne (Rev.20). it will be brought to an end by the judgment of the great white throne (Rev.20.11-15), and the ushering in of the new heavens and earth, called "the day of God" (2 Pet.3.10-13) (New Scofield Reference bible p.929).

Though the Church was not a subject matter of prophecy

in the Old Testament, the Lord's dealing with Israel is. According to the interpretation given by Daniel of the image saw by Nebuchednazar in Chapter Two, four world empires were to rule the world – Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. Rome was the world empire when Christ was born and ushered in the Church age. This Roman Empire will be revived into a confederation of a new Roman Empire. In Daniel 7, the fourth beast had ten horns (7.7) signifying the ten kings, corresponding to the ten toes of Daniel 2, of the last kingdom. This again confirms the vision of Daniel 2 regarding the confederation of the 10 kings. Among the ten horns there arises another 'little horn' (a king) who destroys three of the first 10 horns (i.e. three kings of the confederation). This little horn or king will become the head of the restored Roman Empire.

The Seventieth Week of Daniel

Israel did not listen to their Lord when He spoke to them through His prophets. Jeremiah prophesied that because of this they were to serve the king of Babylon seventy years. This captivity began from about 604 B.C. with the deportation during the reign of Jehoiakim, the second in 597 during the reign of Jehoiachin and the last in 586 in the reign of Zedekiah.

As the Most High God, the possessor of heaven and of earth, He rules over the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever he will (Dan.4.32). The scepter He gave to David in one sense is now taken from David's house and given to Nebuchennezer. Thus began the Times of the Gentiles. But we should remember that the right to rule has not been taken away from the house of Judah. "The Scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a Law giver from between his feet until Shiloh come and to him shall be the obedience of the people" (Gen. 49:10)

Daniel saw from the book of Jeremiah, the prophecy quoted above, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolation of Jerusalem. He sought the face of the Lord with fasting and prayer to know what will happen to Jerusalem and his people now that the seventy years are accomplished. The God of Israel sent Gabriel to give Daniel skill and

understanding and gave him the vision of the seventy weeks. “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, and the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself; and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, and the end of it shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm *the covenant with many for one week*; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease and for the over-spreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate” (Dan.9.24-27). This is the most remarkable prophecy of “seventy weeks” which gives us a brief outline of the future history of the world.

We need to consider some of the basics to get a clear understanding of this prophecy. Our one solar year consists of 365.25 days. But this was unknown in ancient times. The Jews determined the length of months by the course of the moon. According to their records their one-year consists of twelve lunar months of 30 days each (i.e. 360 days). We have an example of this calculation during the time of Noah. Noah and his family were shut up in the ark on the seventeenth day of the second month and they landed on the mountain five months later on the seventeenth day of the seventh month. The time elapsed was 150 days. Five months of 30 days each is 150 days (Gen.7.11, 24; 8.3-4). Another example is found in the book of Revelation. John prophesied that the last half of the Tribulation period would last 1260 days. This corresponds to the “time, times and half a time” prophesied by him (Cf.Rev.12.6 with 12.14). These are the forty-two months of 30 days each - $42 \times 30 = 1260$ days. (Rev.13.5).

Another fact to be noticed is 70 weeks. These are the ‘seventy sevens’ of years. The Jews violated the command to observe the sabbatical year and this brought them into seventy years of captivity (Cf. Lev.25.1-22; 26.33-35; 2 Chr.36.19-21). The example of Laban requiring the service of Jacob for a week to give him Rachel also illustrates this. He served for 7 years for Rachel (Gen.29.26-28). Therefore we find that the prophecy of seventy weeks is for seventy sevens of years i.e. 490 years.

The prophetic time clock of the seventy weeks starts “from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem”. Artaxerxes the King issued this decree in his twentieth year in the month of Nissan to rebuild the fortification of Jerusalem (Neh.2.1). This was in the year 445 B.C. Our Lord’s public ministry began according to Luke in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar. Sir Robert Anderson in his book “The Coming Prince” fix the date as between August AD 28 and April AD 29. Therefore, he concludes, the Passover of the crucifixion was in AD 32. After 69 weeks (i.e. $69 \times 7 = 483$ years) the Messiah was cut off. Sir Anderson calculates this meticulously to 6th April AD 32. He writes: “What then was the length of the period intervening between the issuing of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem and the public advent of “Messiah the Prince” – between the 14th March B.C. 445 and the 6th April, AD 32? The interval contained exactly and to the very day 1,73,880 days, or seven times sixty-nine prophetic years of 360 days, the first sixty-nine weeks of Gabriel’s prophecy”. (given to Daniel)

The Messiah was rejected and crucified. The prophetic clock for Israel has stopped ticking from that day. Today God is not dealing with the Nation of Israel, but is taking out a people unto himself both Jew and Gentile alike, (cf. Act. 15:14-17) which is the church. Unless and until the church age is finished, the clock will not start ticking again. This is only after the Rapture. The prophecy of seventy weeks is for Daniel’s people, the Jews and Daniel’s city, Jerusalem.. Therefore the 70th week is for the Jews primarily and for gentiles in their relationship to the Jews. Therefore, a seven-year period of prophecy still awaits fulfillment, when God will deal with Israel

again as a nation. This seven-year period which follows the Rapture is the Period of Great Tribulation which is unprecedented. During this seven-year period, the God of Israel will start dealing with Israel as a nation and judge them. Since the “man of sin appears” during the Tribulation period, we would consider about him now.

B.Antichrist, a man with many names

Antichrist is not a Christian invention. Among the legends of Judaism, he is known as Armilus. Since there are many mentions of this person in the Old Testament it is not surprising.

Whereas some expect the Antichrist to arise from Dan (see below), others suggest Armilus will arise from Ephraim: Both of these tribes are omitted in the list of tribes which are sealed for protection during the Tribulation. Is Antichrist from the Jews or Gentiles? Those who say he is from the Jews give the following reasons in their favor.

1. His acceptance by Israel is thought to imply a Jewish connection (Dan. 9.27; John 5.43)
2. His role as a “false” Messiah (pseudo-Christ).
3. The omission of the tribe of Dan from the 144,000 of Revelation 7 is inferred as a hint as to his possible origin.
4. He may be a key in initiating the rebuilding of the Tribulation Temple and interpreted as the Messiah who fulfills Zechariah 6.12.
5. The KJV translation refers to ‘the god of his fathers’ “ (Dan.11.37) which is thought to be a reference to the true God of the Jews. Therefore it is believed that Antichrist will be an apostate Jew. The argument is built upon the foundation that this person will deceive the Jews as being their Messiah and this cannot be done unless he is a Jew. But the argument against this is based on the fact that the word for “God” in Dan.11.37 is Elohim, a general term for God and not specific like Jehovah. But those who oppose this view bring Scripture to their support also.

There is an explicit statement in Scripture which supports his Gentile origin (Dan.9.27) coupled with the facts of the Roman overthrow of Jerusalem in A.D. 70). The only biblical typology of Antichrist is in Antiochus Epiphanes, a Gentile. The Beast of Rev.13.1 comes out of the sea and the sea represents the Gentile nations. Another argument is that he is the final ruler of the world powers, and therefore he must be a gentile. But it cannot be proved conclusively whether he is a Jew or a Gentile.

For six thousand years Satan has had full opportunity afforded him to study fallen human nature to discover its weakest points and to learn how best to make men do his bidding. The Devil knows full well how to dazzle men by the attraction of power, and how to make them quail before its terrors. He knows how to gratify the craving for knowledge and how to satisfy the taste for refinement and culture, he can delight the ear with melodious music and the eye with entrancing beauty. If he could transport the Savior from the wilderness to a mountain, in a moment of time, and show Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, he is no novice in the art of presenting alluring objects before his victims today. He knows how to stimulate energy and direct inquiry, and how to appease the craving for the occult. He knows how to exalt men to dizzy heights of worldly greatness and fame, and how to control that greatness when attained, so that it may be employed against God and his people.

Satan's work is restrained now. Though the mystery of iniquity does already work even now, unless the Church is raptured and the Spirit, the restrainer is removed he will not appear (2 Thes.2.7). Satan need the full darkness of night in order to shine at full strength. But a day will come when darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness over the people (Isa.60.2). God also will send upon them who have not obeyed the truth a strong delusion so that they believe the lie (2 Thes.2.13).

The world is now looking for the superman and the Devil will provide one, the "Seed of the Serpent", the Devil's masterpiece.

What kind of a person he will be? He will be “a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences” (great shrewdness and intelligence L.B.)(Dan.8.23). He is “the horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spoke very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows (Dan.7.20). The ‘horn’ speaks of strength and ‘eyes’ intelligence. He will understand *dark sentences* (*hard questions 1 King 10.1*). Queen of Sheba came to Solomon with hard questions to test Solomon. Ezekiel says of him, “thou are wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee” (Ezk.28.3). The picture that Bible portrays of this evil person is of an intellectual genius.

Daniel spoke of him as one who spoke very great things. Our Lord was One who spoke gracious words and people marveled at Him. They were astonished at his doctrines and exclaimed from where He received the wisdom (Matt.7.28; 13.54). But this counterfeit person will speak very great things. He would command respect with his oratory and with a “mouth of a Lion” (Rev.13.2) his will be majestic words. His words will be characterized by majestic oratory.

Daniel speaks of the “little horn” thus. In his estate will stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom. But for how long? He shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries (Dan.11.21). Revelation describes this person as one who rides a white horse with a bow (but no arrow). He will win over the people by flatteries – a successful politician!

A time is going to come when “no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark or the name of the beast or the number of his name” (Rev.13.17). Concerning the king of fierce countenance Daniel says, “through his policy also he shall cause craft (deceit NIV) to prosper in his hand” (Dan.8.25). Commerce under his control! He will trust in the abundance of his riches (Ps.52.7); A god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor with gold and silver and with precious stones and pleasant things (Dan.11.38); He will have power over the treasures of gold and silver (Dan.11.43; Ezk. 28.4,5). He will be a prosperous commercial lord!

He shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper and practice and shall destroy the mighty and holy people (Dan.8.24). The rider on the white horse will go forth conquering and to conquer (Rev.6.2). Who is able to make war with the beast? (Rev.13.4). He will be a powerful military general who will make the earth to tremble and kingdoms to shake (Isa.14.16)

The world is looking for one ruler par excellence. Apostle Johns speaks of the beast that rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and tern horns, and upon his horns ten crowns and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast, which I saw, was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion. The ruler of the revived Roman Empire will have the glory and power of Rome, Greece, Persia and Babylon. They will give the kingdom unto the beast (Rev.17.17). He will be a super power.

He will not be satisfied with any of the above. He will demand that divine honors be paid to him as he sits in the temple as god (2 Thes.2.4). All the people will wonder at the beast. Though wounded to death by a sword he will live again (Rev.13.3) and then men will be ready to pay him homage.

Look at this person. He is an intellectual genius, majestic orator, prosperous commercial lord, successful politician, powerful military general, super power and now he wants to be a god?

In his book "The Antichrist" A.W.Pink draws out the following comparisons between Christ and the Antichrist.

Comparisons between Christ and the Antichrist.

"Satan is the master-counterfeiter, and in nothing will this appear more conspicuously than in his next great move. He is now preparing the stage for his climactic production, which will issue in a blasphemous imitation of the Divine incarnation. When the Son of Perdition appears he will pose as the Christ of God, and so perfect will be his disguise, the very elect would be deceived, were it not that God will grant them special illumination. It is this disguise, this simulation of the true Christ which we shall now examine, pointing out

the various parallelisms which Scripture furnishes”

1. Christ was the subject of Old Testament prophecy: so also is the Antichrist; many are the predictions, which describe this coming one, see especially (Daniel 11:21-45).
2. The Lord Jesus was typified by many Old Testament characters such as Abel, Joseph, Moses, David, etc. So also will the Antichrist be: such characters as Cain, Pharaoh, etc., foreshadow the Man of Sin.
3. Christ was revealed only at God’s appointed time: such will also be the case with the Antichrist. Of the one we read, “But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son” (Galatians 4:4); of the other it is said, “And now we know what withholds that he might be revealed in his time” (2 Thessalonians 2:6).
4. Christ was a Man, a real Man, “the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5); so also will the Antichrist be — “that Man of Sin” (2 Thessalonians 2:3).
5. But Christ was more than a man; He was the God-Man; so also will the Antichrist be more than a man: the Super-man.
6. Christ was, according to the flesh, a Jew (Romans 1:3); so also will the Antichrist be.
7. Christ will make a covenant with Israel (Hebrews 8:8); so also will the Antichrist (Daniel 9:27).
8. Christ is our “Great High Priest”; so Antichrist will yet be Israel’s great high priest (Ezekiel 21:26).
9. Christ was and will be the King of the Jews (Matthew 2:1); so also will the Antichrist be (Daniel 11:36).
10. Christ will be the King of kings (Revelation 17:14); so also will the Antichrist be (Revelation 17:12,13).
11. Christ wrought miracles: of Him it is said “approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs” (Acts 2:22); so also will the Antichrist, concerning whom it is written, “whose coming is after the working of Satan with

all power and signs and lying wonders” (2 Thessalonians 2:9).

- 12.** Christ’s public ministry was limited to three years and a half; so also will the Antichrist’s final ministry be (Revelation 13:5).
- 13.** Christ is shown to us riding a “white horse” (Revelation 19:11); so also is the Antichrist (Revelation 6:2).
- 14.** Christ will return to the earth as Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6,7); so also will the Antichrist introduce an era of peace (Daniel 11:21); it is to this that 1 Thessalonians 5:3 directly refers.
- 15.** Christ is entitled “the Morning Star” (Revelation 22:16); so also is the Antichrist (Isaiah 14:12).
- 16.** Christ is referred to as Him “which was, and is, and is to come” (Revelation 4:8); the Antichrist is referred to as him that “was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit” (Revelation 17:8).
- 17.** Christ died and rose again; so also will the Antichrist (Revelation 13:3).
- 18.** Christ will be the object of universal worship (Philippians 2:10); so also will the Antichrist (Revelation 13:4).
- 19.** The followers of the Lamb will be sealed in their foreheads (Revelation 7:3; 14:1); so also will the followers of the Beast (Revelation 13:16,17).
- 20.** Christ has been followed by the Holy Spirit who causes men to worship Him; so the Antichrist will be followed by the Anti-spirit — the False Prophet — who will cause men to worship the Beast (Revelation 13:12).

There are also contrasts in their respective designations, and careers. The people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Who is this prince? He is described in many ways in the Scripture.

The following is a quick survey of this evil person as found in the Old and New Testament.

1. He is the seed of Satan. Gen.3.15 is the first prophecy

and proto-evangelism. After the Fall of Adam the Lord said that the “seed of the woman will bruise the head of the serpent and he shall bruise his heel”. He is Satan’s seed and will attempt to do the will of his father.

2. The king of Babylon: Isa..14.4. The coming Antichrist will rebuild Babylon and will make this his capital. Israel will rejoice at his defeat.
3. The prince of Tyre. Ezk.28.2. The language used in this chapter and in Isaiah 14 goes beyond the king of Tyre.
4. The Little Horn: Dan.7.8. In the vision of Daniel 7, the revived Roman empire is pictured as the dreadful and terrible beast that has ten horns. Out of it came one “little horn” which destroyed three of the first ten horns and becomes the ruler. This little horn will be a powerful speaker able to impress the people.
5. The king of fierce countenance: Dan.8.23. There are at least three views concerning this person. (1) He is the king of the north referred to in 11.40. (2). He is a type of the Roman beast of the end time (Dan.7.23-27). (3) He is the final Roman beast. He is the one who will stand up against the Prince of princes, but he shall be broken without end. He is the antichrist. He would be a man of great charisma and striking appearance.
6. The prince that shall come: Dan.9.26. The people of this prince are the ones to destroy the city of Jerusalem. It was the Roman army that destroyed it in AD 70. So the prince of this people, is the leader of the revived Roman empire, the Antichrist.
7. The willful king Dan.11.36. Many interpreters consider him as the ‘little horn’ of Daniel 7 and the head of the revived Roman empire. He is said to exalt himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods
8. The man of sin: 2 Thes.2.3. As far as the Church is in the world this person cannot appear. It is the Spirit who indwells the Church that prevents his appearance. Once the Church is raptured he will appear on the scene.

9. The beast of the bottomless pit (Rev.11.7) and the beast that rise out of the sea (Rev.13.1) He is satanically energized (13.2,4); he and his image are worshiped (vv.4,8,12,15); he is acknowledged as possessing supreme military power (v.4); he exercises a universal authority (v.7); he persecutes the believers in Christ (vv.6-7).
10. He comes in His own name: Jn.5.43. Our Lord said that the Jews will one day accept the one who comes in his own name.

The covenant with Antichrist

“He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week”. Antichrist will make a covenant with the Jews for 7 years at the beginning of the Great Tribulation.. There will be world peace in the beginning and Israel will dwell in peace. But this will only be the calm before the storm. After the Rapture of the Church there is nothing to hinder the Antichrist to employ his plans.

Revelation chapter one is the beautiful and wonderful vision of the One like the Son of Man walking amidst the seven lamp-stands, which are the seven churches. Chapters Two and Three are the vision of the seven churches of Asia which describes the church age till the end time. In the cry of “come up here” in 4.1 many see the Rapture of the church. Chapters four and five are the descriptions of the throne room in heaven and the Lamb that was slain, and is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, who takes the book from the hand of Him that sits on the throne. When the first seal of the book is opened things begin to happen on the earth. The Book is seen by many as the ‘title deed of the earth’. The dominion that was given to first Adam was lost but is now regained by the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ. When he opens the first seal, a white horse and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him, and he went forth conquering and to conquer (Rev.6.2). Without firing a shot this person conquers the world. He is the Antichrist who makes a covenant with the Jews. This is described as a covenant with death and with sheol (Isa.28.15). In the middle of the seventieth week, i.e. after three and a half years the covenant will be

broken.

In His Olivet discourse the Lord Jesus said, “When you, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whosoever reads, let him understand), then let them who are in Judea flee into the mountains (Matt.24.15,16). Daniel’s prophecy was that “in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate”. Israel has no temple now and thus no sacrifice. But Daniel and the Lord prophesied of the Holy Place and the abomination of desolation. Therefore, it is sure that before the first three and a half years of the Great Tribulation is over, Israel will build the Temple and restore the sacrifice. During the first half of Tribulation because of the covenant of peace signed with the Antichrist Israel will have peace and will be able to build the temple. It is also probable that Antichrist will himself sit in the temple or set his idol in the temple and demand worship. After the return from the Babylonian captivity the Jews were never idol worshippers. They were cured of this sickness once and for all and when an idol is set in the temple they will object and reject it and there will be a Great Tribulation, which has never happened before.

The Third Temple

For the abomination that makes desolate to sit in the temple there should be a temple.

Sometimes this temple is called the “Tribulation Temple”. Now Israel does not have a temple. But this will have to be built. How is this going to be built?

After the temple was destroyed by the Roman army in AD 70, the Jews were scattered throughout the earth. Though a state of Israel was inaugurated in 1948, the Jews never had a temple in Jerusalem. They will have a temple only at the former sight of the temple, where now stands the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aksa Mosque. The Muslims will never allow that Mosque to be destroyed. This is the dilemma that will face the Jews when they make a covenant of peace with the Antichrist. How the problem will be solved by him is yet to be

seen.

Longings for a third temple: The 137th Psalm, a hymn of the exiles of Jerusalem during the Babylonian captivity, eloquently expresses the yearnings of the Jewish people for their homeland, their city and their temple, then and now. Jerusalem, “City of Peace” has known many wars and destructions since its existence was first known to us from the Biblical record. Abraham’s meeting with Melchizedek about 2000 BC reveals that there was in the city (known then as “Salem”), even at that early date, a righteous Gentile king, Melchizedek, ruled there as “priest of God Most High” (El Elyon). Jerusalem was plundered in AD 70 by the Roman army and should have long since fallen into oblivion. But it did not.

Today, though there are centers of modern commerce and trade in Tel Aviv or Haifa, Jerusalem is more of a city of religion, art, culture, and museums than an economically viable regional marketplace or a center of business activity. Yet the city, full of mystical attractiveness and endless fascination, thrives on in our day too.

In its history Jerusalem has been fought over by armies of the Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, Ptolemies, Seleucids, Romans, Byzantines, Persians, Arabs, Seljuks, Crusaders, Mongols, Mamelukes, by the Turks, the British, and the Jordanians. As a religious center Jerusalem remains sacred to all three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Thus all the eyes of the world are upon Jerusalem, City of Peace, today as never before. The ruler-ship of Jerusalem has changed hands some twenty-six times since 1948 Jerusalem has experienced four wars. From the time of the establishment of the State of Israel in May of 1948 until 1967, the city was divided. In June of 1967 the Jews were involved in a war that resulted in the liberation of the Old City of Jerusalem. On the third day of the Six Day War, Israeli paratrooper Motta Gur, mounted on a half-track, announced that the Temple Mount has been regained. On June 7 of that year the Israeli troops moved into the Old City and stood at the Western Wall (Wailing Wall) for prayer. Rabbi Shlomo Goren declared: “We have taken the city of God. We

are entering the Messianic era for the Jewish people, and I promise to the Christian world that what we are responsible for we will take care of.” The city of Jerusalem was reunified and the Star of David flew again from its ramparts.

“Ten days later, on Saturday June 17, 1967, Defense minister Moshe Dayan entered the Al-Aksa Mosque for a historic meeting. In a gesture of good will, Dayan sat down on the prayer carpet with five leaders of the Supreme Muslim Council (the Waqf) of what had been Jordanian-controlled Jerusalem. That discussion fixed Israel’s policy regarding the Temple Mount, a policy that remains unchanged to this day. Dayan had ordered the Israeli flag removed from on top of the Dome of the Rock on the afternoon of the Old City’s liberation.. The administrative control over the Temple Mount was to be the sole responsibility of the Supreme Muslim Council - the (Jordanian) Waqf. Shortly after the Temple Mount was recaptured, Rabbi Shlomo Goren, then chief chaplain of the Israeli army, and one of the leading advocates for the rebuilding of the Temple, attempted to establish a Jewish identity on the Mount. The Western Wall below the Mount, was all that Israel actually possessed, and to Goren that was not enough. He believed regaining Jewish presence on the Mount would be a major step towards Israel’s long-awaited redemption. On August 15, 1967, Goren led demonstrative Jewish prayers on the Temple Mount compound. His actions caused shockwaves and much apprehension among Muslims as to the fate of their sacred sites. Goren prayed within the Temple Mount courtyard, but this was contrary to the newly agreed arrangement with the Israeli government. The Waqf responded by locking the entrance gate above the Western Wall that leads to the Temple Mount. The keys to that gate were confiscated soon thereafter by the government of Israel and Jewish military police have been on duty at the entrance gate ever since”..

The two chief Rabbis of Israel (Sephardic and Askenazi) then compiled a joint statement forbidding Jews to visit the Temple Mount. Their position was that the Jewish people were ceremonially unclean and might accidentally tread on the place where the holy of holies stood in the Temple.

The Political Scene. The Temple Mount had become a political issue as far back as 1930 when Mufti Haj Arain El-Husseini turned Solomon's Stables into a shooting range and whipped up frenzy over Jewish prayer at the Western Wall. The current PLO-controlled Supreme Muslim Council looks to a 1931 decision that the Temple Mount is exclusive Waqf property. Prior to 1967 the central structure on the Mount for the Muslims was the Al-Aksa Mosque. After the city was recaptured in 1967, the Waqf began to term the entire Temple Mount as Al-Aksa. In effect, they annexed the entire Mount.

Since 1967 there have been various attempts by individuals and by groups to assault the Temple Mount in order to perform Jewish blood sacrifices, to destroy a Muslim building, or to upset the balance of power and to alter the status quo. The Temple Mount Remains a Volatile Issue

Even though the Temple Mount has been regained and is officially part of the State of Israel, it is still being profaned as far as the God of Israel is concerned. When the Mount fell into Jewish hands after the Six Day War, Israel took the Western Wall Area but left administration of the Mount to the Muslim Council of Elders. Israel also banned Jewish worship. The secular Jews did not care and many of the Orthodox Jews believe that the Third Temple would have to await the arrival of the Messiah. These issues remain stalemated to the present day.

Current Preparations To Build A New Temple

There have been various groups who have been involved one way or another in plans for the rebuilding of the Temple in recent decades. These groups change frequently. Some fade away or move to other pursuits, others join forces for a time - but nothing remains very static for very long.

The following advertisement appeared in the Washington Post, on May 21, 1967—before Jerusalem was liberated.

TO ALL PERSONS OF THE JEWISH FAITH ALL OVER THE WORLD:

“A project to rebuild the Temple of God in Israel is now

being started. With Divine Guidance and Help the “Temple” will be completed. Jews will be inspired to conduct themselves in such a moral way that our Maker will see fit to pay us a visit here on earth. Imagine the warm feeling that will be ours when this happy event takes place. “THIS IS MY GOD” is the book that was the inspiration for this undertaking. God will place in the minds of many persons in all walks of Jewish life the desire to participate in this work. Executive talent, Administrations, and Workers on all levels are needed. All efforts will be anonymous. GOD will know those desiring to participate”.

Although the ban on visiting the Temple Mount is in effect it has not stopped those in Israel for thinking about the realization of a long lost dream, the rebuilding of the Temple. Once the city of Jerusalem was retaken this was no longer a pipe dream. Time magazine reported:

“Since the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70, Conservative and Orthodox Jews have beseeched God four times a week to ‘renew our days’ as they once were—a plea for the restoration of the Temple. Although Zionism was largely a secular movement, one of its sources was the prayers of the Jews for a return to Palestine so that they could build a temple . . . Learned Jewish opinion has long debated when and how the temple can be rebuilt. The great medieval philosopher Maimonides, in his Code of Jewish Law, argued that every generation of Jews was obliged to rebuild the temple if its site was ever retaken, if a leader descended from David could be found, and if the enemies of Jerusalem were destroyed”

In 1982, after years of disagreement about methods of approach, three groups of devout Jews, The Jerusalem Temple Foundation, To the Mountain of the Lord, and The Faithful of the Temple Mount combined their forces to plan for and build the Third Temple. More recently The Temple Institute has begun to build the sacred vessels to be used in the Third Temple. One yeshiva (Yeshivot Ateret Cohanim) is presently located in the Old City in the historic Torat Haim Yeshiva building. Prior to the Arab riots of 1936 this area of the Old City was a thriving Jewish community. The yeshiva’s location

places it not far from the spot the Holy of Holies (Kodesh Hakodoshim) once stood on the Temple Mount.

Are Materials for the Third Temple Ready?

For a number of years, especially back in the '70's, there were rumors that pre-cut stones have been cut in America and shipped to Israel for the building of the Third Temple. Evangelist John Wesley White wrote:

“Late in 1979 I was riding in Indiana with a local Presbyterian minister. At a certain point along the highway he informed me that we were driving past the gate of a company which purportedly handled a highly classified order of the finest building stones in the world. Sixty thousand tons of pre-cut stones had been shipped on 500 rail cars. They were allegedly bought by the Israeli Government, and had already arrived in Israel” Are such claims highly unlikely as some claims? Though rumors abound, no concrete evidence has come forward to support this idea.

A New Priesthood

If a new Temple is to be constructed then there must be a functioning priesthood to perform the proper rites and ceremonies. Such a priesthood today exists, claim some people. In an old stone building in the Old City of Jerusalem, a small group of young scholars are preparing for the building of the Third Temple and the coming of the Messiah.

The founder of one particular yeshiva (school) is Motti Hacoen. Hacoen knew he was a priest but that never affected his life very much. Until, that is, the day he looked up from his opened Talmud while he was studying at a Yeshiva on the Golan Heights and saw a friend pouring over a tractate dealing with the laws of the temple and the priesthood. Hacoen asked him why he was studying such obscure laws. His friend responded, “Why aren't you? He told Hacoen that he should be more interested in the Temple regulations seeing that he was from the priestly line. Hacoen decided to take up the challenge. He then began a search for a yeshiva that could teach him matters concerning the rebuilding of the Temple. Finding none that would satisfy his needs Hacoen

founded the Tora Kohanim.

”On Good Friday, 1990, one hundred fifty devout Jews, members of the Yeshivot Ateret Cohanim, moved into four buildings in the Christian quarter of Jerusalem causing a protest from both Muslim and Christian groups. The site of the building, just around the corner from the church of the Holy Sepulchre, was chosen to help create Jewish settlements in the Old City of Jerusalem geographically near the Temple Mount”. (The city is presently divided into separate quarters for Christians, Muslims, and Jews and each district’s residents are very sensitive to outsiders moving into their territory for any reason).

The Ark of the Covenant

One of the main issues surrounding a Third Temple is the long lost Ark of the Covenant. What will be its place, if any, in the Third Temple? The last mention of the Ark is 2 Chronicles 35:3 where it is placed back into the Temple in the realm of King Josiah. There was no ark in the Second Temple. There is no concrete evidence today that the Ark still exists or that someone has it. Does the Ark exist? If it does will it appear before the Third Temple is consecrated. Most Orthodox Jewish believers in Jerusalem who are working towards the building of the Third Temple believe that the Ark of the Covenant is safely hidden in a chamber under the Temple Mount. They feel certain that God has preserved the Ark for 25 centuries and that it will be available when the Temple is restored.

The Ashes of the Red Heifer

Some rabbis claim that one of the things necessary for a Third Temple is the ashes of the Red Heifer. Of all the sacrifices for sin mentioned in the Old Testament, only the slaying of the Red Heifer was “outside the camp,” i.e., not in the temple. Numbers Chapter 19 describes this offering, and instructions for preparing water for ritual purification from the ashes of the sacrificed animal after it had been burned. Red heifers without spot or blemish are today being bred and raised by at least one group in the United States,

Rebuilding the Temple and the sacrifice

Standing today in the historical location of the Temple is the Dome of the Rock a Muslim shrine. The Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest site in Islam, is located just to its south. It is impossible today to destroy the Muslim shrines and build a Jewish temple. The Jews will not have a temple in any other site also. For the last 1900 years, Jews have prayed that God would allow for the rebuilding of the Temple. This prayer is a formal part of the thrice-daily Jewish prayer services.

However, not all Rabbis agree on what would happen in a rebuilt Temple. Though they generally assume that Levitical sacrifices would be re-instituted after the temple is rebuilt, another opinion prevalent among them is that since the temple is destroyed their God is deliberately leading them to prayer than sacrifices. A few, very small, Jewish groups support constructing a Third Temple today, but most Jews oppose this, for a variety of reasons. Most religious Jews feel that the Temple should only be rebuilt in the Messianic era, and that it would be presumptuous of people to force God's hand, as it were. Furthermore, there are many ritual impurity constrictions that are difficult to resolve, making the building's construction a practical impossibility. Because of the hostile reaction from all the Arab and Muslim nations many Jews are against rebuilding the temple.

Orthodox Judaism believes and expects the third temple to be built and sacrifices restored. *Conservative Judaism* call for the restoration of the temple but not the sacrifices. They are of the view that it is not sacrifices but deeds of loving-kindness that atone for sin. *Reformed Judaism* neither calls for rebuilding of the temple nor restoration of sacrifices. But they are also slowly moving towards the option of rebuilding the temple.

Christian views

Many fundamentalist and evangelical Christians, especially those who follow a dispensational theology, believe that the Jews will build the Temple shortly before, or perhaps after, the church is raptured. This would probably happen during the first half of the tribulation period. However, many

evangelicals also believe, that in addition to this Third Temple, there will be the Millennial Temple prophesied by Ezekiel. The Antichrist will either sit in the rebuilt temple or put his image there, the abomination that makes desolate, during the Tribulation (Dan. 9:27, 11:31, 12:11).

The breaking of the covenant

It was mentioned earlier that Antichrist would make a covenant with the Jews for seven years. He will then encourage the Jews to rebuild the temple. How this will happen is still to be seen. The temple mount is now sacred to the Muslims and as we have seen earlier it is almost impossible for a Jewish temple to be built there. The nefarious design of the Antichrist will not be revealed to them. In putting his plan into operation, it is more important for him to build the temple, than it is for the Jews. Anyhow the Jews will be delighted with their newfound friend, the Antichrist.

However, though the majority, ‘many’, will sign the covenant with hell, there will be a minority who will oppose this. Zechariah says: “And it shall come to pass that in all the land, says the Lord, two parts in it shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left in it. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will test them as gold is tested; they shall call on my name, and I will hear them. I will say, it is my people and they shall say, The Lord is my God” (Zech.13.8, 9).

C. Where will be the Church at the time of Tribulation?

A question generally asked is “Will the church go through Tribulation, or will it be saved from it”? The answer is an emphatic “No” the church will not go through Tribulation but will be saved from it. It was already made clear that Tribulation is for the Jews and the Gentiles and not for the Church. In Tribulation the Lord deals with sinners, while in Rapture He deals with the saints. The following confirms the view that the Church will not go through Tribulation.

1. The Lord has promised the Church, “I also will keep thee

from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth (Rev.3.10). Tribulation is a period of time when the wrath of God is poured out on the sinners (Rev.6.16). Church is the Bride of Christ and not the object of his wrath. The Lord has delivered her from the wrath to come (1 Thes.1.10). She is not appointed to wrath but to obtain salvation (1 Thes.5.9).

2. The hope of the Church is to wait for the coming of the Son of God (1 Thes.1.9) and not to be delivered from the wrath.
3. Believers are the ambassadors of Christ and it is in this position they ask the world to be reconciled to God (2 Cor.5.20). Before any war is declared a country recalls its ambassadors. We are the citizens of heaven and will be called back before the Tribulation (Phil.3.20).
4. The man of Lawlessness will not appear till the church is caught up (2 Thes.2.1-11). It is the Spirit of God who indwells the Temple of God, the Church, that restrains the appearance of the man of sin.
5. The marriage of the Lamb will take place in heaven before the battle of Armageddon take place (Rev.17-18).
6. The expectancy of the church is the imminent return of Christ. There are no signs to be fulfilled before the Church is raptured. Whereas, signs precede the Tribulation and the second advent of the Lord.

What does Mathew 24 say?

A question generally asked is “Will the church go through Tribulation, or will it be saved from it”? The answer is an emphatic “No” the church will not go through Tribulation but will be saved from it. Persecution and tribulation has always been the lot of the people of God. The Lord Jesus told His disciples in the upper room discourse, “In this world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world (Jn.16.33). The tribulation for the saints of God is because the Enemy hates the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, he also hates His people. Apostle Paul said, “For unto you it

is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for his sake” (Phil.1.29). The risen Lord in his message to the Church at Smyrna said, “Behold the Devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried: and you shall have tribulation ten days” be thou faithful into death, and I will give thee a crown of life (Rev.2.10). These ‘ten days’ of tribulation already took place in the history of the Church beginning from the last decades of the first century. Fox Book of Martyrs describes in details these ten days (periods) of tribulation.

But this is not the tribulation that we are dealing with here. It is the Great Tribulation, which in the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, “such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matt.24.21).

Then again, in the question that is asked, “Will the Church go through the Great Tribulation?”, another question arises: “Which Church?”. The Church of the Lord is composed of all the believers from the day of Pentecost to the Rapture of the Church. A major portion of this church, composed of the believers in the last twenty centuries is already with the Lord. Therefore the question itself is redundant. Yet, we try to answer this question in the light of the Scriptures.

It was already made clear that the Great Tribulation is for the Jews (Mal.4.5-6) and the Gentiles (Rev.3.10) and not for the Church. In Tribulation the Lord deals with sinners, while in Rapture He deals with the saints. The following confirms the view that the Church will not go through Tribulation. At the same time it should be mentioned that while in the true church of God there are only believers, in the professing Church (the local churches of any particular period of time) there may be believers and unbelievers. While the believers will be caught up in the air to be with the Lord at the Rapture, the others, the mere professors, will be left in the world and may go through the Tribulation.

1. The Great Tribulation is the Seventieth Week of Daniel Nine, which is for “thy people and upon thy holy city” (V.24) i.e. specifically for the Jews. The method of literal interpretation of the Scriptures leaves no room for doubt

in this regard. The nature of the seventieth week is summed up by J. D. Pentecost thus: “There are a number of words used in both the Old and new Testaments to describe the seventieth week period, which, when considered together, give us the essential nature or character of this period: (1) wrath (Rev.6.16-17; 11.18; 14.19; 15.1,7; 16.1,19; 1 Thes.1.9-10; 5.9; Zeph.1.15,18); (2) judgment (Rev.14.7; 15.4; 16.5-7; 19.2); (3) indignation (Isa.26.20-21;34.1-3); (4) punishment (Isa.24.20-21); (5) hour of trial (Rev.3.10); (6) hour of trouble (Jer.30.7); (7) destruction (Joel 1.15); (8) darkness (Joel 2.2; Zeph.1.14-18; Amos 5.18). It must be noted that these references describe the period in its entirety, not just a portion of it, so that the whole period bears this characterization”.

2. The Lord has promised the Church, “I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth (Rev.3.10). Tribulation is a period of time when the wrath of God is poured out on the sinners (Rev.6.16). Church is the Bride of Christ and not the object of his wrath. The Lord has delivered her from the wrath to come (1 Thes.1.10). She is not appointed to wrath but to obtain salvation (1 Thes.5.9).
3. The hope of the Church is to wait for the coming of the Son of God (1 Thes.1.9) and to be delivered from the wrath to come.
4. Believers are the ambassadors of Christ and it is in this position they ask the world to be reconciled to God (2 Cor.5.20). Before any war is declared a country recalls its ambassadors. We are the citizens of heaven and will be called back before the Tribulation (Phil.3.20).
5. The man of Lawlessness will not appear till the church is caught up (2 Thes.2.1-11). It is the Spirit of God who indwells the Temple of God, the Church that restrains the appearance of the man of sin.
6. The marriage of the Lamb will take place in heaven before the battle of Armageddon takes place (Rev.17-18). Therefore the Church has to be in heaven when the

Tribulation takes place on the earth.

7. The expectancy of the church is the imminent return of Christ. There are no signs to be fulfilled before the Church is raptured. Whereas, signs precede the Tribulation and the second advent of the Lord.
8. Those who advocate the view that the Church will go through the Tribulation forget one salient point. Christ is the Head of the Church, which is His body. Therefore the church is not complete without the Head. So, when the question is asked, "Will the church go through Tribulation?" the question itself is preposterous! Jesus Christ going through the Tribulation?
9. Is there the Church in Mathew Twenty-Four? Post-Tribulationists say "Yes" and the Pre-Tribulationists say "No". Here we would briefly survey this chapter. When the disciples wondered about the grandeur of the temple, Jesus Christ foretold the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. Then the disciples posed a three-fold question to the Lord: (1) Tell us when shall these things be?; (2) What shall be the sign of thy coming; and (3) of the end of the world?

These questions are specifically Jewish and the Lord's answer is also in this context. Did the disciples think that all the three events (the destruction of the temple, the return of the Lord and the end of the world) would happen at the same time? It is possible. But without giving the time when these events would occur He gave them the signs that would precede His coming. He spoke of the beginning of sorrows (v.8), the great distress when you see the abomination of desolation (vv.15,21) and immediately after the great distress the appearance of the Son of Man in heaven (29-31).

First he gave signs about the beginning of sorrows (24.8). They are (a) the appearance of false messiahs (v.5); (b) wars and rumors of wars (v.6); (c) natural disasters like famine, pestilence and earthquakes; (d) severe religious persecutions (v.9); (e) betrayal, and hatred (v.10); (f) rising of false prophets who deceive (v.11); (g) diminishing of love (v.12) ;(h) some

enduring and being saved (v.13); and (i) preaching of the gospel of the kingdom. When we see the signs foretold by the Lord one thing to be noticed is that these signs have been there throughout the history of the church and before. But these signs intensify in a pronounced measure right before the end times.

D. Destruction of the Temple:

The prophecy of Jesus regarding the destruction of the temple was graphically fulfilled a few years after he made it. There have been many rebellious uprising of the Jews time and again and Rome grew tired of it. Titus the Roman general marched against Jerusalem in AD 70. The city and the temple were utterly destroyed so that “no stone was left upon another stone”, as predicted by Jesus. Josephus, the Jewish historian, records that a passer by would not have known the place was ever inhabited.

E. Appearance of false messiahs:

There have been many false messiahs who have appeared after Jesus Christ in human history, the pseudo-Christ and the anti-Christ. They are far too many to be named here. Messiah is only One. He is Jesus Christ. Many have appeared on the world scene claiming to deliver the people from their misery and poverty and give them hope. This will continue and increase more and more and finally will culminate in the man of lawlessness, the Antichrist.

F. You will hear of Wars and rumors of war.

But the believers need not be alarmed about this. It must happen and cannot be avoided. They are not ordained of God and willed by Him. Apostle James writes to us: “From whence come wars and fighting among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? You lust and have not: you kill and desire to have, and cannot obtain! You fight and war, yet you have not” (Jas.4.1,2). These are the results of evil passions of man. Whatsoever a man sows he shall reap of it. The Roman historian Tacitus paints a descriptive picture of the violence that gripped the then world

after the Lord Jesus Christ:

“I enter upon a work fertile in vicissitudes, stained with the blood of battles, embroiled with dissensions, horrible even in the intervals of peace. Four princes slain by the sword; three civil wars, more with foreign enemies, and sometimes both at once; prosperity in the East; disasters in the West, Illyricum disturbed; the Gauls ready to revolt; Britain conquered and again lost; Sarmatians and Suevians conspiring against us; the Dacians renowned for defeats given and sustained; the Parthians almost aroused to arms by a counterfeit Nero. Italy afflicted with calamities unheard of, or recurring only after a long interval; cities overwhelmed or swallowed up in the fertile region of Campania. Rome itself laid waste by fire, the most ancient temples destroyed, the very capital burned by its own citizens etc.” (Quoted in the Outline Bible).

G. Earthquakes in diverse places.

Though there have been earthquakes throughout the human history the frequency with which it occurs during these days is very frightening. Even as this Thesis is being written humanity is reeling under the after math of the earthquake that happened in Sumatra under the sea. The countries neighboring the Indian ocean were very severely affected and Sri Lanka, Andaman, and the South India suffer very much. The death toll itself was more than 3,00,000 and the loss is yet to be fully known.

There is a general belief among Bible students that as the coming of the Lord draws nigh the earthquakes will occur with increasing frequency. Bible prophecy teachers are the main cause for this belief. Hal Lindsey, the world’s best-known Bible prophecy teacher and author of 17 books on prophecy, writes in one of his latest books:

“Earthquakes continue to increase in frequency and intensity, just as the Bible predicts for the last days before the return of Christ. History shows that the number of killer quakes remained fairly constant until the 1950s - averaging between two to four per decade. In the 1950s, there were

nine. In the 1960s, there were 13. In the 1970s, there were 51. In the 1980s, there were 86. From 1990 through 1996, there have been more than 150”

But he does not say from where he received this data. Grant R. Jeffrey, another Bible prophecy teacher and author of nine best-selling books, could be the source of Lindsey’s statistics. Two years before Lindsey’s statement was published, Jeffrey wrote:

“However, since A.D. 1900, the growth in major earthquakes has been relentless. From 1900 to 1949 it averaged three major quakes per decade. From 1949 the increase became awesome with 9 killer quakes in the 1950’s; 13 in the 60’s; 56 in the 1970’s and an amazing 74 major quakes in the 1980’s. Finally, in the 1990’s, as [sic] the present rate, we will experience 125 major killer quakes in this decade (Source: U.S. Geological Survey Earthquake Report, Boulder, Colorado)”

But this was found to be not true Research by serious students of the Bible (Unpublished manuscript of January 14, 1999. These authors published a simplified, less technical version of this paper in 1999 under the title “Are Earthquakes Signs of the End Times?: A Geological and Biblical Response to an Urban Legend,” Christian Research Journal, (vol. 21, no. 4, pp. 30-39.) has concluded that the reports by Lindsey and Jeffrey are wrong. Do we have geological evidence that earthquakes are increasing?

“If the popular notion of many prophecy teachers (Lindsey, Missler, Van Impe, Church, Jeffrey, Stearman, Hagee, Lalonde, etc.) is correct, two assertions about twentieth-century earthquakes must be true:

- (1) a noteworthy *deficiency* of big earthquakes existed in the first half of the century, and
- (2) an obvious *increase* in the frequency of big earthquakes occurred since 1950.

These two assertions must be made by prophecy teachers so as to support a notion of the unique “earthquake sign” occurring in the 1990s. Both assertions, we maintain, are

false. Using the best earthquake catalog data and statements of seismologists, we have concluded exactly the opposite:

- (1) a noteworthy *excess* of big earthquakes existed in the first half of the century, and
- (2) an obvious *decrease* in the frequency of big earthquakes occurred since 1950.”

Is there any Biblical evidence that Jesus did predict an increase in earthquakes before the end? Earthquakes and other cataclysmic events often carry theophanic significance in Scripture, demonstrating God’s awesome power. At Mount Sinai the LORD’s presence was indicated by smoke and the shaking of the mountain (Exod. 19:18; cf. 1 Kings 19:11⁵¹ ; Ps. 68:8; Job 9:6; Hab. 3:6). When the New Testament church prayed “the place where they had gathered together was shaken” and the Spirit’s presence was manifested (Acts 4:31). Paul and Silas were freed when God’s power and presence was manifested in an earthquake (Acts 16:26). The most unusual earthquakes were associated with the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. When Christ died on the cross, an earthquake shook the temple and rent the curtain of the temple from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51). No human agency rolled away the stone that sealed Christ’s tomb; it was the angel in the presence of the earthquake (Matt. 28:2).

Yet during the awesome shakedown of heaven and earth, “The LORD will have compassion on Jacob” (Isa. 14:1), and all creation will recognize God’s working (Isa. 14:3-8). When Israel is attacked by the armies of Gog, those armies are demolished at the decree of the LORD by earthquake and cosmic hailstones (Ezek. 38:17-23). Zechariah is even more explicit about the extraordinary geologic upheaval in the Holy Land associated with the Day of the LORD. A final earthquake at the LORD’s return will split the Mount of Olives, uplift Jerusalem on its site, and depress the surrounding Judean Mountains (Zech. 14:1-10).

Earthquakes are also associated with God’s self-revelation in the eschatology of the book of Hebrews (Heb. 12:25-29). The author warns his readers not to refuse to heed the God who speaks as he spoke at Sinai (“And His voice shook the

earth then,” Heb. 12:26; cf. Exod. 19:18). The author then passes through history from Sinai to the promise of a great cosmic upheaval of the end time (“Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven,” Heb. 12:26; cf. Hag. 2:6). God’s ultimate purpose is to give believers “a kingdom which cannot be shaken” (Heb. 12:28) so that the faithful, having perceived his extraordinary power, can “offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe” (Heb. 12:28).

Five earthquakes are described during the Tribulation. These are at the opening of the sixth and seventh seals (6:12; 8:5), just before and after the seventh trumpet (11:13, 19), and during the seventh bowl (16:18). This last earthquake is identified as the greatest ever on earth (16:18), splitting Jerusalem into three parts and destroying the cities of the nations”. These earthquakes occur during the Great Tribulation, not before it. They are not precursors to the Day of the LORD, but evidence of its presence. Our primary concern is with the first part of the Olivet discourse, where Jesus warns against being deceived by false Christs or being alarmed at wars, rumors of wars, famines and earthquakes.

“*Famines*”, is another sign predicted of the Lord Jesus. Scripture did speak of one famine. Prophet Agabus “signified by the Spirit that there should a great dearth through all the world, which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar (Acts 11.28-30). Josephus the Jewish historian described this famine as so terrible that when flour “was brought into the temple....not one of the priests was so hardy as to eat one crumb of it....while so great a distress was upon the land” (Josephus, Ant.3.15.3). He describes another terrible famine:

“It was now a miserable case, and a sight that would justly bring tears into our eyes, how men stood to their food, while the more powerful had more than enough, and the weaker were lamenting (for want of it). Then did the famine widen its progress and devoured the people by whole houses and families; the upper rooms were full of women and children that were dying by famine, and the lanes of the city were full of the dead bodies of the aged; the children also and the young men wandered about the market places, like shadows, all swelled with famine, and fell down dead where-so-ever their

misery seized them” Ibid.5.12.3).

Persecution is another sign predicted by the Lord Jesus. Religious persecution of the Jews comprise of afflictions, killings and hatred. The Jews are the people of God. Right from the first century they have been persecuted beyond measure. Their cry, “let His blood be on us and on our children” have been partially fulfilled in the past, but compared to what is to come that was nothing.

Apostasy Many will turn away from the faith (NIV), betray each other and hate each other. This will be the effect of religious persecution. Only a remnant will stand for their faith. Mere professors of faith will not be able to endure and will fall away. Among the Jews there will be those who wait for their Messiah and those who have already accepted the false messiah. They will hate each other. The counterfeit ones will betray the real ones.

False prophets Many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. There have been many false teachers in the Christian church. They are described by apostle Paul as wolves who will draw disciples away with them (Acts 20.28,29). Ahab had many false prophets, four hundred of them, who prophesied what he wanted to hear (1 Kings 22.6). The tyrants employ such prophets to achieve their own ends.. Many will be deceived by the false prophets. In their frantic search for deliverance such people will not endure and be willing to grasp at almost anyone who appears on the scene. The evil spirits in the mouth of these false prophets will be able to perform lying wonders and God will send a strong delusion to their hearts so they will believe the lie, because they have already rejected the truth (2 Thes.2)

Increase of lawlessness The church has already been raptured and the Holy Spirit has been taken away so that there is none to hinder lawlessness. It will increase more and more and people will be selfish. Their love will wax cold.

Gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations. What exactly is this gospel? John the Baptist, the fore runner, and Jesus Christ preached the same thing: “Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand

(Matt.3.2) Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand, repent you and believe the gospel (Mark 1.14, 15). Even after the power of the king was displayed in the ten miracles performed by Him (Matt8 & 9), the King was morally rejected by the people and the King pronounced the woes upon them. He set aside the Nation of Israel, and started dealing with the people individually (Matt.11.28,29). This continued through the Church age. But now the church is raptured and the King is dealing with the Jews as a Nation. It is this gospel of the Kingdom that is being preached now. God’s forgiveness in the past, present and the future has always been, now is, and ever will be by grace on the basis of he blood of His Son shed on the Cross of Calvary. In this sense the gospel is everlasting (Cf.Rev.14.6-7). The effect of preaching the gospel is seen in Rev.11, where the two witnesses preach for forty two months. They are killed but rise again and ascend into heaven. All these happen during the first half of the tribulation period or the first forty-two months.

In the next section of Mathews Twenty-four 15-28 we have the picture of the last half of the Tribulation. It begins with the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet (Dan.11.31; 12.11; Matt.24.15). Antiochus Epiphanes once desecrated the Temple. The ‘abomination’ an idol was placed in the temple and the daily sacrifice was taken away (Dan.8.11) and the sanctuary was polluted (Dan.11.31). The Lord’s complaint against His people spoken by Jeremiah (7.30) is that they “had set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it”. During the middle of the seventieth-week of Daniel not only Antichrist sit in the temple claiming to be God (2 Thes.2.4) and or he will also cause an image of the beast to be set up and demand worship (Cf. Rev.13.14-15). There will be a terrible time of Great Tribulation beginning from this point.

This abomination will be in the Tribulation temple. Those who see this will naturally be the Jews. They (those who are in Judea) are asked to flee to the mountains. When the Temple was destroyed by the Roman General Titus in AD 70 Christians

were said to have flown and hid themselves in the clefts of Petra. Likewise the Jews will flee to the mountains. But in the mercy of God these days will be shortened and He will place a limit on the Great Tribulation.

False Christs and false prophets will perform wonders and miracles during this time. This is to deceive the people, if possible the very elect. But miracles by themselves do not prove that they are from God. The Lord Jesus while on earth saw a day far off, and told the disciples that “on that day many will say unto me, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in your name? But the Lord will declare unto them, “I never knew you, depart from me, you who practice lawlessness (Matt.7.21-23_). Moses had warned Israel, “If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams and gives you a sign or a wonder and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spoke unto you saying, let us go after other gods, which thou has not known and let us serve them; thou shall not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proves you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deut.13.1-3). There will be many false news about the coming of Christ. Don’t believe it. Because “as the lightning comes from the East and flashes in the West, so also will the coming of the Son of man be Matt.24.28).

From the above it will be clearly see that this chapter describes solely about the Great Tribulation and the Jews in the Tribulation. We do not find the Church in this chapter.



IX. THE GLORIOUS APPEARANCE OF THE LORD

In the fullness of time God sent forth His son made of woman made under the Law (Gal.4.4). He came in the form of a servant. He came to do the will of the Father in heaven. Now the Son of man comes as King of kings. He comes in glory now. We shall briefly survey three passages in this connection: (1) The Prophecy (Zech.14.1-4; (2) The Person (Rev.19.11-16; and (3) The Purpose, (Mt. 24:29-31) in that order.

A. The Prophecy Zech 14.1-4

“Behold the Day of the Lord is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst, For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; The city shall be taken, the houses rifled and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south” (Zech.14.1-4). His coming on the Mount of Olive is in the day of the Lord. Mount of Olives is located at the east of Jerusalem and the Kidron valley. It is a North-South hill about 2700 feet in elevation. The Messiah ascended into heaven from this mount and will come back on this Mount (Acts 1.10,11). The Mount will split by a deep east west valley. What an earth quake it would be! In the days of Uzziah King of Judah there was an earthquake when the people fled from it (v.5). The present earthquake will provide a way of escape for the people to escape. We distinguished earlier between the day of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is a period of blessing to the Church and the Day of the Lord as a period of judgment on the world. Hence is another proof that the Church will not

go through the Tribulation. Though the Day of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Day of the Lord will run concurrently for some time, the former is in heaven and the latter is on earth. Mathew records that it is immediately after the Tribulation this event occurs (Mt.24.29). The nations are brought together at this time to battle against Jerusalem. There is a two-fold purpose here. One is to judge the nations and the other is to judge Israel. This will be a period of severe trial. The enemy will plunder the land and take the spoil, but only for a season. The Lord himself will fight the battle, He is the Warrior (Ex.15.3) and will bring deliverance to His people.. Two thirds of the people will be cut off and die and the remaining one third shall be left in it. These are the remnant, whom the Lord will refine as gold is tested. They will call on the name of the Lord and the Lord will hear them and will say, “This is my people” and each one will say, “The Lord is my God” (Zech.13.8,9).

B. The Person Rev.19.11-16:

“Now I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven clothed in fine linen white and clean followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword that with it he should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written, ‘ KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS’” Apostle John thus described this glorious Person.

The Beast that came from the sea had seven heads, and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns and a blasphemous

name on his head. He was mortally wounded but it was healed. The people worshiped the dragon who gave power to the beast and cried who is like the beast and who is able to make war with him? (Rev. 13.1-4). The Lord mighty in battle comes now. He comes on a white horse. The Antichrist appeared on a white horse (Rev. 6.1,2) and brought in a false peace without fighting a battle. Now the Prince of Peace comes on a white horse to fight. There is no peace to the wicked says my God (Isa. 57.21). There can be no peace without enmity and rebellion is punished. He is called *Faithful and True*. He is the Faithful witness who revealed to us the Father and the heavenly mansions above. Faithfully He finished the work that the Father gave Him to do and glorified Him. Now He comes to keep His promise. Faithful is He that promised and He will do it. He is faithful even in His judgments. His judgments are true too. He does not make war unnecessarily. But now His longsuffering has come to an end. His eyes are like a flame of fire (Rev. 1.14). His knowledge is full and complete. He understands the enemy exactly for who and what he is. *He had a name that no one knew except Himself*. Name reveals character. Many names of Christ are revealed both in the Old and New Testaments and these names reveals his character. But in spite of all these revelation who understands Him fully? The saints of *God* have eternity to understand Him. *He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood*. Once he was clothed with a scarlet robe and mocked by the soldiers. (Matt. 27.28). He was crucified. Now He comes as one who trampled the “winepress of the wrath of God”. His name is the *Word of God*. This is how apostle John first introduced Him to us. He is the same who took upon himself the sinless human nature. It is the same Jesus Christ who comes now. But what a difference! The armies of heaven followed Him on white horses. They are in fine linen white and clean. They are the glorified saints. The Lord Himself is called the King of kings and Lord of Lords. How glorious is

the person pictured before us!

C. The Purpose Matt.24.29-31.

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

The Lord comes in glory immediately after the Tribulation. The period will be marked by monumental cosmic disturbances. Isaiah, Joel, Haggai etc. describe this day (Cf. Isa.13.10; Joel 2.30; Haggai 2.6).. Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. Once the wise men from the East saw the sign of Christ, “His star” and came to Bethlehem to worship Him. Now again there is the sign of Jesus Christ. The heavenly bodies are a sign of the Sovereign (Gen.1.17). What exactly it is no one knows now. But when they appear all will know. Because it is mentioned that all the ‘tribes of the earth will mourn’. Then all the tribes of the earth will mourn. There will be Jews and Gentiles. The Jewish remnant will be expecting Him. The gentiles who helped the Jews in Tribulation will be expecting him (Cf.Matt.25.31`-46). They will repent and mourn for Him. Zechariah describes the scene graphically.. “In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart and their wives apart; the family of Shimeim apart and their wives apart. All the families that remain every family apart and their wives apart” (Zech.12.11-14). This is the result of the repentance granted to them (v.10). Israel will look unto Him whom they have pierced. The King will send His angels to the four corners of the world and gather his elect before Him. They will be re-gathered, restored and regenerated. All Israel who remain and repent will be saved!

X. ARMAGEDDON

A question generally asked by Bible students is whether Armageddon is a single battle or a campaign? The three unclean spirits that come out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophets gather the kings of the earth to the battle (polemos) of that great day of God Almighty into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon (Rev.16.13-16). Bible scholars (including Trench, Thayer, Vincent) are of the view that the word translated 'battle' signifies a campaign and not a single isolated event. The kings of the earth are gathered together by the evil trinity for this battle.

A. The Place of the battle of Armageddon?

Armageddon is the translation of Har Magedon, i.e. the mountain of Megiddo. Josiah fought with Pharaoh Neco in the valley of Megiddo (2 Chr.35,22). The mountain of Megiddo is located about ten miles south of Nazareth. The valley of Megiddo is an extended plain where many battles have been fought. The Canaanites were defeated here by Deborah and Barak (Jud. 4 & 5). Mt. Tabor, to the North, is in plain view of Megiddo. The triumph of Gideon over the Midianites happened in this place (Jud.7). M.R.Vincent in his word studies writes: "Megiddo was in the plain of Esdraelon, which has been a chosen place for encampment in every contest carried on in Palestine from the days of Nebuchednezer, unto the disastrous march of Napoleon Bonaparte from Egypt into Syria. Jews, Gentiles, Saracens, Christian crusaders, and anti Christian Frenchmen; Egyptians, Persians, Druses, Turks and Arabs, warriors of every nation that is under heaven, have pitched their tents on the plains of Esdraelon, and have beheld the banners of their nation wet with the dews of Tabor and Hermon".

Many scholars have pointed out that Armageddon is the mobilization point for the final battle, not necessarily the scene of it. The campaign of Armageddon involves many other locations also. Joel prophesied that the Lord will gather all nations and will bring them down into the valley of

Jehoshaphat and will judge them there (Joel.23.2,12). The prophecy in Ezekiel 38 & 39 is against Gog. The future invasion of Palestine by the Northern confederacy is in picture here. When Israel dwells in safety they come for a quick spoil and the Lord says: "I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the travelers on the east of the sea and it shall stop the noses of the travelers, and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude and they shall call it the Valley of Hamon-gog (Ezk.39.11). Both these valleys are one and the same. The scene of Isaiah 34 and 63 is the Lord coming back from Edom after the judgment. Before the second coming of the Lord, it is said, that the Lord will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle and Jerusalem becomes the center of the conflict (Zech..12.2-11; 14.2). The picture that is clear from the above is this. The campaign of Armageddon extends from the North (the plains of Esdraelon) to Jerusalem and further extends to the valley of Jehoshaphat on the East and to Edom in the South. This is the entire land of Palestine. The book of Revelation says that in the battle, "the blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand six hundred furlongs (Rev.14.20). This is the entire length of Palestine.

B. The Participants of the Battle of Armageddon

There are many participants in the Battle of Armageddon. The Scriptures identifies them as under.

The Head of the Roman Empire. After the Rapture of the Church things happen on the earth with rapid suddenness. We saw earlier that when the first seal is broken (Rev.6.1) things begin to happen on the earth. The rider on the white horse becomes prominent and without a fight he will establish a false peace on the earth. In Daniel's vision we saw the four great world powers beginning with Babylon and followed by Persia, Greece and Rome. It was during the time of the Roman Empire that the Lord Jesus was crucified.

With the rise of Babylon began also the "Times of the Gentiles". The Lord had told the disciples that "Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the gentiles, until the times of the

Gentiles be fulfilled (Lk.21.24). Jerusalem will be under foreign domination till the Messianic rule is established in the millennial kingdom. Though today Israel is accepted as a nation, she is surrounded by the enemies, and every day her existence is questioned. This will continue during the tribulation period also.

The rider on the white horse is the first of the “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse”. He is said to be the Antichrist by many commentators, though some do not accept it. This person without using an arrow will overcome the nations and establish peace on the earth. Since the final form of the world empire is pictured in “legs of iron, its feet part of iron and part of clay” (Dan.2.33), the empire and its ruler will be partly strongly and partly weak. William Kelley in his notes on Daniel writes:

“There will be, before the age closes, the most remarkable union of two apparently contradictory conditions – a universal head of empire, and separate independent kingdoms besides, each of which will have its own king; but that one man will be the emperor over all these kings. Till that time comes, every effort to unite the different kingdoms under one head will be a total failure. Even then it will be not by fusing them together into one kingdom, but each independent kingdom will have its own king, though all subject to one head. God has said they shall be divided. This then is what is shown us here. “They shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.” And if ever there was a portion of the world that has represented this incoherent system of kingdoms, it is modern Europe. As long as the iron predominated, there was one empire; but then came in the clay, or foreign material. In virtue of the iron there will be a universal monarchy, while in virtue of the clay there will be separate kingdoms”.

This kingdom – a mixture of iron and clay - is unnatural. By mutual agreement they come together, but each retains its identity. But this revived Roman Empire will have one head. From the book of Daniel the following could be seen:

“(1) There must be a realignment of the nations to constitute the final form of the fourth world empire. This

empire will be the smitten by the 'stone' (Dan.2.35); will be made up of ten different parts (Dan.2.33; 7.7); will have one head. Who had overthrown three of the existing heads of state in his ascendancy (Dan.7.8). (2) The head of this empire will be a blasphemer (Dan.7.8, 25), a persecutor of the saints (Dan.7.25), who will continue for three and a half years (Dan.7.25) as the special enemy of God and God's program with Israel. (3) The head of this empire will make a covenant with Israel to restore their sovereignty (Dan.9.27), which will be broken (Dan.9.27). (4) This leader will invade Palestine (Dan.11.41) and set up headquarters there (Dan.11.45). (5) He will be judged at the return of the Lord (Dan.7.11, 26). (6) The destruction of this leader and his hosts will redeem Jerusalem from Gentile dominion (Dan.7.18, 22, 27). (7) This deliverance takes place at the second advent of Messiah (Dan.7.13; 2.35)". (J.D. Pentecost).

Scripture gives abundant information concerning the Person of Antichrist. J.D. Pentecost has compiled a synthesis of Ezekiel 28.1-10; Dan.7.7-8, 20-26; 8.23-25; 9.26-27; 11.36-45; 2 Thes.2.3-10; Rev.13.1-10; 17.8-14 to form a picture of the head of the final Roman Empire:

(1) He will appear on the scene in the "latter times" of Israel's history (Dan.8.23). (2) He will not appear until the Day of the Lord has begun (2 Thes.2.2). (3) His manifestation is being hindered by the restrainer (2 Thes.2.6-7). (4) This appearance will be preceded by a departure (2 Thes.2.3), which may be interpreted either as a departure from the faith or a departure of the saints to be with the Lord (2 Thes.2.1). (5) He is a gentile, since he arises from the sea (Rev.13.1) and the since sea depicts the Gentile nations (Rev.17.156), he must be of Gentile origin. (6) He rises from the Roman Empire since he is a ruler of the people who destroyed Jerusalem (Dan.9.26). (7) He is the head of the last form of Gentile world dominion, for he is like a leopard, a bear and a lion (Rev.13.1) (Cf.Dan.7.7-8, 20,24; Rev.17.9-11). As such he is a political leader. The seven heads and ten horns (Rev.13.1; 17.12) are federated under his authority. (8) His influence is world wide, for he rules over all nations (Rev.13.8). This influence comes through the alliance, which he makes with other nations

(Dan.8.24; Rev.17.12). (9) He has eliminated three rulers in his rise to power (Dan.7.8, 24). One of the kingdoms over which he has authority has been revived, for one of the heads representing a kingdom or king (Rev.17.10), has been healed (Rev.13.3). (10) His rise comes through his peace program (Dan.8.25). (11) He personally is marked by his intelligence and persuasiveness (Dan.7.8,20; 8.23) and also by his subtlety and craft (Ezek.28.6), so that his position over the nations is by their own consent (Rev.17.13). (12) He rules over the nations in his federation with absolute authority (Dan.11.36), where he is depicted as doing his own will. This authority is manifested through the change in laws and customs (Dan.7.25). (13) His chief interest is in might and power (Dan.11.38). (14) As the head of the federated empire he makes a seven-year covenant with Israel (Dan.9.27), which is broken after three and one half years (Dan.9.27). (15) He introduces an idolatrous worship (Dan.9.27) in which he sets himself up as god (Dan.11.36-37; 2 Thes.2.4; Rev.13.5). (16) he bears the characterization of a blasphemer because of the assumption of deity (Ezk.28.2; Dan.7.25; Rev.13.1, 5-6). (17) This one is energized by Satan (Ezk.28.9-12; Rev.13.4), receives his authority from him, and is controlled by the pride of the devil (Ezk.28.2; Dan.8.25). (18) He is the head of Satan's lawless system (2 Thes.2.3) and his claim to power and to deity is proved by signs wrought through satanic power (2 Thes.2.9-19). (19) He is received as God and as ruler because of the blindness of the people (2 Thes.2.11). (20) This ruler becomes the great adversary of Israel (Dan.7.21, 25; 8.24; Rev.13.7). (21) There will come an alliance against him (Ezk.28.7; Dan.11.40, 42) which will contest his authority. (22) in the ensuing conflict he will gain control over Palestine and adjacent territory (Dan.11.42) and will make his headquarters in Jerusalem (Dan.11.45). (23) This ruler, at the time of his rise to power, is elevated through the instrumentality of the harlot, the corrupt religious system, which consequently seeks to dominate him (Rev.17.3). (24) This system is destroyed by the ruler so that he may rule unhindered (Rev.17.16-17). (25) He becomes the special adversary of the Prince of princes (Dan.8.25), his program (2

Thes.2.4; Rev.17.14), and His people (Dan.7.21, 25; 8.24; Rev.13.7). (26) While he continues in power for seven years (Dan.9.27) his satanic activity is confined to the last half of the tribulation period (Dan.7.25; 9.27; 11.36; Rev.13.5). (27) His rule will be terminated by a direct judgment from God (Ezk.28.6; Dan.7.22, 26; 8.25; 9.27; 11.45; Rev.19.19-20). This judgment will take place as he is engaged in a military campaign in Palestine (Ezk.28.8-9; Rev.19.19) and he will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev.19.20; Ezk.28.10). (28) This judgment will take place at the second advent of Christ (2 Thes.2.8; Dan.7.22) and will constitute a manifestation His Messianic authority (Rev.11.15). (29) The kingdom over which he rules will pass to the authority of the Messiah and will become the kingdom of the saints (Dan.7.27).

The Northern Confederacy Ezekiel thirty eight and thirty nine describes the invasion of Israel by the Northern Confederacy. Ezk.38.2-6 is very specific (Cf. also Dan.11.40; Joel 2.1-27; Isa.10.12; 30.31-33; 31.8-9). The principal persons are identified as Gog of the Land of Magog, the chief prince (or “the prince of Rosh”) of Meshech and Tubal, and Persia, Cush and Put with them and also Gomar and the house of Togarmah of the North. Though U.S.S.R. has disintegrated, Russia still remains a power. The identification of Rosh as Russia is well authenticated and accepted. Meshech is identified as Moscow (Europe) and Tubal as Tobolsk (Asia), the earliest province of Asiatic Russia. Persia will join Russia and this confederacy. Ethiopia is the next (certain parts of Africa). Louis Bauman adds the following comments: Since Ezekiel says of Gog: “Thou shall come from thy place out of the uttermost parts of the north, thou, and many people with thee (38.15) and since ‘Cush’ is one of the ‘many peoples’ named as coming with Gog from out of “the uttermost parts of the north” it is quite evident that the ‘Cush’ in Ezekiel’s prophecy was not the “Ethiopia” of Africa but a country that was somewhere contiguous to Persia.”

The next ally in the Northern Confederacy is Libya or Put . This may be the Libya of Africa or as some commentators

say Put may be located as adjacent to Persia or Iran.

Gomer is identified as Germany by most commentators and Togarmah as Turkey or Armenia. On the whole the federation seems to be of Russia and the Asiatic people. The Lord says: "Thou shall come up against my people of Israel, like a cloud to cover the land; and it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the nations may know, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes" (Ezk.38.16). The Lord will smite them (vv.17-23).

The Kings of the East When the sixth angel poured out his bowl upon the great river, Euphrates and its water was dried up that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared (Rev.16.12). The river Euphrates has always remained as a natural geographical barrier between the west and the east. The judgment of God removes this barrier and the kings of the east and his armies marches on to Palestine.

The King of the South The willful king of Daniel 11.36 is already identified as Antichrist. He will exalt himself and magnify himself above every god. He will prosper for a time till the indignation be accomplished. He will trust in his might but at the time of the end the king of the south shall push at him (Dan.11.40) and the king of the north shall come at him like a whirlwind. These two kings will ally themselves in this battle against the Roman Empire. The King of the south is identified as Egypt.

C. The Purpose of the Battle of Armageddon

It was pointed out earlier in the chapter on Tribulation that Antichrist (who is the head of the revived Roman Empire and thus very powerful) will enter into a covenant of peace with Israel for seven years. This will be at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. So Israel will dwell in peace. In the middle of the week the covenant will be broken and the Great Tribulation begins for Israel. It is also true that when the attack of the Northern confederacy begins the peace in Israel will be shattered. Therefore, it can be concluded that it is in the middle of the seventieth week or after the attack of the

Northern confederacy begins. Israel will then be dwelling in their own land (Ezk.38.8). The Arab-Israeli conflict would have been resolved by this time by the Antichrist. It is also mentioned that Israel will be dwelling in peace in their land when the invasion begins (Ezk.38.11) There are those who interpret this peace as the millennial peace. There is no attack against Israel during the millennium and therefore it cannot be so. There would definitely be a false peace in Israel because of the covenant with Antichrist. It is then the attack begins. This is the agreement with hell (Isa.28.18).

J.D. Pentecost sums up the campaign in these words: “(1) The movement of the campaign begins when the King of the South moves against the Beast-False Prophet coalition (Dan.11.40), which takes place “at the time of the end”. (2) The King of the South is joined by the northern confederacy, who attacks the Willful King by a great force over land and sea (11.40). Jerusalem is destroyed as a result of this attack (Zech.12.2), and in turn, the armies of the northern confederacy are destroyed (Ezk.39; Zech.12.4). (3) The full armies of the Beast move into Palestine (11.41) and shall conquer all that territory (11.41-42). Edom, Moab and Ammon alone escape. It is evidently at this time that the coalition of Revelation 17.13 is formed. (4) While he is extending his dominion into Egypt, a report that causes alarm is brought to the Beast (11.4). It may be the report of the approach of the Kings of the East (Rev.16.12), who have assembled because of the destruction of the northern confederacy to challenge the authority of the beast. (5) The Beast moves his headquarters into the land of Palestine and assembles his armies there (11.45) (6) It is here that his destruction will come (11.45).”

Therefore we conclude that the purpose of the Battle of Armageddon in the second half of the tribulation is to judge and purify the Nation of Israel and also to judge the gentiles.

D. The Defeat of the Antichrist and his armies

Now the armies of the Kings of the East and the armies of Antichrist oppose each other. At this time a sign appears in

heaven, “the sign of the Son of Man” (Matt.24.30). What this sign is, is not described. Once the wise men saw His Star in the east and came to worship Him. The lights in the firmament in heaven are for “signs”. They are the signs of the Lord. He is the ‘Morning Star’ (Rev.22.16). Some such sign will herald the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev.19.11-16).

The day of the supper of the Great God has come (Rev.19.17). The opposing forces now join together to make war against him that sat on the horse and against his army (19.19). The armies of the beast and the Beast are slain by the Lord (19.21). The beast and the false prophet are cast into the lake of fire (Rev.19.20). The believers are purged and the unbelievers have been removed from Israel. Satan is bound for 1000 years (Rev.20.2). The Lord, at the end of the Tribulation has destroyed every force that is hostile to him. There is no one to challenge His rule as the Messiah.



XI. THE SECOND ADVENT OF JESUS CHRIST

We saw earlier that the return of the Lord Jesus has two stages viz. the Rapture and the Revelation. He comes for the Church and He comes for Israel. Here we consider the Revelation of Jesus Christ. This is His personal and visible return to the earth in glory. Therefore, it is also called His glorious appearance. Once He came and His glory was veiled at this time. When He appears in glory there will not be any doubt, but everyone will recognize Him for who He is. The language used by the Lord and the apostles is so clear that it cannot be understood in any but in its literal and historic sense. The gospel is foolishness to those who do not believe (1 Cor.1.18). There are scoffers who mock at the idea of the second coming of the Lord (2 Pet.3.3-4). But His appearance is one of the great indications of the truth of the Scripture.

A. The words that describe the Return of Christ

There are several words used to describe the return of the Lord. These are

1. Come (epxomai)
2. Revelation (apokalupsis)
3. Manifestation (epiphaneia)
4. Presence (parousia)

The first word ‘come’ is used in the New Testament about 700 times. The Lord Himself told His disciples, “I will come again and receive you unto myself” (Jn.14.3). In speaking to the men of Galilee the angels used the same word, “This same Jesus...shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1.11). In imparting the revelation concerning the Lord’s supper to the Church at Corinth Paul also uses the word, “ you do show the Lord’s death till He come” (1 Cor.11.26).

The next word is, Revelation. This is a compound of two words in Greek “away from”, (apo) and (kalupto) “to cover”.

W.E.Vine explains the use of this word thus: The word “is used in the NT of (a) the drawing away by Christ of the veil of darkness covering the Gentiles, Luke 2.32 Cf.Isa.25.7; (b) ‘the mystery’, the purpose of God in this age, Rom.16.25; Eph.3.3; (c) the communication of the knowledge of God to the soul, Eph.1.17; (d) an expression of the mind of God for the instruction of the Church, 1 Cor.14.6, 26, for the instruction of the Apostle Paul, 2 Cor.12.1,7, Gal.1.12 and for his guidance, Gal.2.2; (e) the Lord Jesus Christ, to the saints at His Parousia, 1 Cor.1.7, RV (KJV ‘coming’) 1 Pet.1.7, RV (KJV ‘appearing’, 13; 4.13; (f) the Lord Jesus Christ when He comes to dispense the judgments of God, 2 Thes.1.7; cf. Rom.2.5; (g) the saints in the creation, in association with Christ in His glorious reign, Rom.8.19, RV ‘revealing’ (KJV, ‘manifestation’; (h) the symbolic forecast of the final judgments of God Rev.1.1 (hence the Greek title of the book, transliterated ‘Apocalypse’ and translated ‘Revelation’).

The third word is ‘manifestation’ (epiphaneia). This word literally means, “to shine upon” or “to bring forth into the light”. Apostle Paul uses this word in speaking of the first coming of Christ. “The grace that is now manifested by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ (2 Tim.1.10). This word is used 10 times in the New Testament, and of these 6 times it refers to the second coming of Christ, as his shining forth.. Epiphaneia is translated as ‘appearing’ (Tit.2.13), ‘brightness’ (2 Thes.2.8), ‘to give light’ (Lk.1.79) and ‘coming; (2 Tim.1.10).

The use of the word ‘epiphaneia’ in the New Testament brings to light the following facts:

1. The epiphany of Christ is used interchangeably with His parousia. Then shall that wicked one be revealed (apokalupto) whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth and shall destroy with the brightness (epiphaenia) of his coming (parousia) (2 Thes.2.8).
2. The epiphany of Christ will bring judgment upon the Antichrist. He will be destroyed (2 Thes.2.8)
3. His epiphany will bring in the kingdom. The lord Jesus Christ shall judge the living and the dead at his appearing (epiphaneia) and his kingdom. (2 Tim.4.1)

4. At His epiphany rewards will be given to believers. There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day and not to me only but unto all them also that love his appearing (epiphaneia) (2 Tim.4.8).
5. His epiphany will close the time of obedience and service for believers on earth. You keep this commandment without spot, un-rebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Tim.6.14).

The last of these four words is Parousia (presence). This is the visible presence of the Lord at His second coming. Of the twenty-four occurrences of this word sixteen refers to the second coming of the Lord. The following facts may be noted:

1. As the lightning comes out of the east and shines even unto the west, so shall also the coming (parousia) of the son of man be (Matt.24.27). His coming will be visible and will not be secret.
2. The coming (parousia) of the Son of Man will be sudden, as the floods came during the days of Noah and took them all away (Matt.24.37-39).
3. Speaking of resurrection, apostle Paul writes, "Every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming (1 Cor.15.23). So, there will be a resurrection at his coming.
4. Writing to the Christians at Thessalonica, Paul says, "what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming (parousia). The parousia of Christ is the hope and joy of the believers.
5. There are a number of verses, which give motivation and encouragement for life and service to believers. When we abide in Him we shall not be ashamed but will have confidence at his coming (1 Jn.2.28). At the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ we will be gathered unto him (1 Thes.2.1). James encourages patience because the coming of the Lord is near (Jas.5.7,8). At the coming of the Lord

Jesus Christ with all his saints he will establish our hearts (1 Thes.3.13).

6. The believers will be caught up at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thes.4.15).

From a brief survey of the above four words, it is clear that the word alone will not help us to understand whether it speaks of the first or second stage of His second coming. The first stage of His second coming is exclusively for the Church, the Rapture; and the second stage is for Israel. It is the context that decides each issue. We have already seen earlier that He will come to receive His church unto himself, and the Rapture will be followed by a seven-year period of Great Tribulation, at the end of which He will come again to establish the Kingdom.

B. The differences between the Rapture and the Second Advent

We should distinguish the things that differ and interpret every portion of scripture in its particular context and also in the light of the whole. Otherwise it will do violence to the Scriptures. We attempt below a brief survey to distinguish the differences between the (a) Rapture and the (b) Second Advent.

1. (a) Christ comes for his own (Jn.14.3; 1 Thes.4.17; 2 Thes.2.1)
(b) Christ comes with his own (1 Thes.3.13; Jude 14; Rev.19.14)
2. (a) Christ comes in the air (1 Thes.4.17)
(b) Christ comes to the earth (Zech.14.4; Acts 1.11)
3. (a) Only His own will see Him (1 Thes.4.13-18)
(b) Every eye shall see Him (Rev.1.7).
4. (a) Rapture is followed by Great Tribulation (2 Thes.1.6-9)
(b) Second advent is followed by Millennium (Rev.20.1-7)
5. (a) Believers are saved from the wrath of God (1 Thes.1.10)

- (b) Unbelievers experience the wrath of God (Rev.6.12-17)
- 6. (a) There are no signs that precede the rapture (1 Thes.5.1-3)
- (b) Signs precede the second advent (Lk.21.11,15).
- 7. (a) The Lord and His church is in focus (1 Thes.4.13-16)
- (b) The Lord and Israel is in focus (Matt.24)

C. The purpose of the Second Advent

When the Lord comes again He will re-gather and restore the nation of Israel to the promised land and judge them there in preparation to enter the Millennial Kingdom; judge the beast and the Antichrist, and the false prophet and the armies of the earth and bind Satan for a thousand years; judge the living Gentiles to decide their place in the Kingdom; set up His kingdom and usher in a reign of peace.

D. The times of the Gentiles

Israel was a witness unto the Lord. But they became blind and deaf (Isa.42.19). When they failed in their witness the Lord handed them over to the Gentiles and the “Times of the Gentiles” began. In the only biblical reference to this the Lord Jesus said: “And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled (Lk.21.24). Though a remnant remained as a witness (Isa.1.9; 6.13) Israel as a nation has been set aside, but not forsaken, in the plan and purpose of God. The times of the Gentiles began with the Babylonian captivity when Jerusalem fell into the hands of the Babylonians. Babylon was followed by Persia. Then came Greece and at the first coming of the Lord, Roman empire was in power. Jerusalem continued to be trodden down by the gentiles. Though Israel today exists as an independent nation, they are surrounded by enemies and when he Lord comes again the gentiles will continue to be in power. The times of the gentiles will terminate only at the second advent of the Lord.

That the Lord will judge the Gentile nations was a matter

of prophecy. The nations, the kings and the rulers plot against the Lord and His anointed. But the Lord's King, His Son, will rule over the nations (Psalms 2). In the day of the Lord's vengeance the Lord will bring judgment upon the nations (Isa.63.1-6). He has also promised to gather all the nations and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat and will judge them there "for my people and for my heritage, Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations and parted my land" (Joel 3.2). He will cast them into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt.25.41).

The Lord has also promised to bless the nations. In calling Abraham the Lord has also told him that in him all the families of the earth be blessed (Gen. 12.3). Speaking about the restored Davidic kingdom Isaiah says, "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, who shall stand for an ensign of the people; to him shall the nations seek and his rest shall be glorious" (11.10). The Servant of the Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ, will bring forth justice to the nations and shall be a light to the nations (42.1,6) and the Servant is promised to be "my salvation unto the end of the earth" (49.6). The times of the gentiles will end with the forty-two months of the second half of the Great Tribulation period (Rev.11.2). Two other expressions occurring in the Scripture concerning the gentiles should be considered without confusion. They are "The Riches of the Gentiles" and "The Fullness of the Gentiles."

Fullness of the Gentiles

Apostle Paul writes: "I would not, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, let you should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom.11.25).

Israel heard but did not understand; they saw but could not perceive (Isa.6.9). As it was in the days of Isaiah, so it was in the days of Jesus Christ. He spoke and they heard but did not understand; he performed miracles but could not perceive the meaning and the importance. Even John the Baptist who once pointed out the "Lamb of God that takes away the sin" was in doubt, and sent his disciples to Jesus,

enquiring, “Are you the One that should come or should we look for another”? Partial blindness has happened to Israel. This mystery has been revealed in the New Testament by apostle Paul. This will continue till the “fullness of the Gentiles” be come in. The fullness of the Gentiles completes the purpose of God in this age; which means calling out a people for the name of Christ, the Church, which is His body (Eph. 1.22-23; Acts 15.14). When the last of the Gentiles, according to the purpose of God, is saved and the Church is raptured, this blindness will be removed.

The Riches of the Gentiles

Again Paul writes: “Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness? (Rom.11.12).

The Gentiles were outside the commonwealth of Israel, and without God and without hope in he world. But Israel as a nation fell. They were to be a witness to the Gentiles. But, they rejected their Messiah and crucified Him. Could the failure of man nullify the grace of God? Never! It went out in its fullness and the Gentiles became the recipients of His grace. They became rich. The diminishing of Israel has resulted in such riches of the world. How much more the fullness of Israel? Israel was scattered through the world, persecuted, and judged. But they will be restored to God’s favour. And what a blessing is in store for the Church?

E. The judgment of the Gentiles

Mention was made earlier that the Lord will gather the gentile nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat to judge them. This judgment will take place when the Nation of Israel is restored to their own land at the Second Advent of Christ but before the Millennium. When the Lord returns to the earth his feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives, and the mount shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west and there shall be a great valley (Zech.14.4). There is no mention anywhere in the scriptures that the dead gentles are raised to stand for judgment here. It is therefore clear that the living gentiles are the subjects of this judgment.

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory and before him shall be gathered all the nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand but the goats on the left (Matt.25.31-33) Those on the right hand are sent to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world and those on the left sent to everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

The basis on which the gentile nations are judged

In Mathew Twenty-Five the basis of this judgment is given (vv.35-41). During the time of the Tribulation the Jews will be persecuted by the Antichrist and the nations. At this time many of the Gentiles will come to their rescue and help – visit them in prison, give them food to eat and water to drink. They do this because of their faith in the coming Messiah. The Jews will refuse to bow down before any idol or Antichrist during the Tribulation because of their faith in their Messiah. This will be their witness before the Gentiles. What they failed to do in their affluence the Jews will do in their adversity. The Lord considered that any help that the Gentiles have rendered to the Jews, His brethren, as help rendered unto Him.

But at the same time it should be remembered that it is the individual gentiles of the different nations that will be judged, and not the nations in total. There will be even then those who will not help but persecute the Jews. Salvation of everyone in every dispensation will be on the basis of individual faith. Even though “all Israel shall be saved” (Rom. 11.26) one day, here again all believing ones in Israel are those that shall be saved.

F. The Judgment of Israel

When the Jews rejected their Messiah and handed him over to the Gentiles to be crucified they said, “His blood be on us, and on our children” (Matt.27.25). In AD 70 when the Roman army plundered Jerusalem the Jews were driven out and they were scattered throughout the earth. They were persecuted and millions perished. From then on the history

of Israel has been marked by blood shed. Their words “His blood be on us and on our children” have been fulfilled many times.

For help received during the World War I from Israeli Scientists, the British Government looked favorably upon the Jews. In 1917 Lord Balfour declared on behalf of the British Government:

“His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country”

With the Balfour Declaration in 1917 a homeland for the Jews became a reality .In 1948 a homeland for the Jews was established amidst bloodshed and during these past many decades the Jews have returned to Israel. During the Tribulation period the Jews will again be persecuted by the Antichrist. This would be not only in their own land but outside also. “They had been scattered because of the anger of Satan (Rev.12.12) and the desolation of the Beast” (Matt.24.15).

G. Re-gathering of Israel

At the close of the Tribulation, there “shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matt.24.30-31)“. Ezekiel’s prophecy declares, “As I live says the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you. I will bring you out from the peoples, and will gather you out of the countries in which you are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm and with fury poured out. And I will bring

you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there will I enter into judgment with you face to face. As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I enter into judgment with you, says the Lord God. And I will cause you to pass under the rod and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. And I will purge out from among the rebels and them that transgress against; I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn and they shall not enter into the land of Israel, and you shall know that I am the Lord (Ezk.20.33-38). Isaiah says that the Lord will gather his people from the north, south, east and west (Isa.43.5,6).

H. Regeneration of Israel

When the Lord restores Israel to the Promised Land and purify them they will experience a conversion. “And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined and will try them as gold is tried; they shall call on my name and I will hear them; I will say, It is my people and they shall say; The Lord is my God (Zech.13.9). When they behold their Messiah they will realize their folly in crucifying Him. They will look unto whom they have pierced and will wail because of Him. They did not believe the prophets. But one day they will confess “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him and with his stripes we are healed (Isa.53.5). The fountain that was opened in Calvary will become a reality “for the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness (Zech.13.1). The picture of the valley of dry bones is very graphic. Can these bones live? “As I prophesied there was a noise and behold, a shaking and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them and the skin covered them above, but there was no breath in them,.....Thus says the Lord, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breath upon these slain that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded and the breath came into them and they lived and stood up upon their feet, an exceedingly great army (Ezk.37.5-10). The regeneration of Israel is beautiful. And in the words of Paul,

“So all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins (Rom.11.26-27).

So all Jews will come back. They will be restored to their land. They will be judged and purified. They will experience regeneration and be ready to enter the Millennial Kingdom.

I. The Beast, The False Prophet and the Dragon

In connection with the Great Tribulation we already saw the appearance of the Antichrist. Three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings, and they that are with him are called and chosen and faithful (Rev.16.14) Satanic activity reaches its zenith. They are gathered together in a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.. They will be defeated by the Lord. The beast was taken and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshiped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth; and all the fowls were filled with their flesh. The dragon, the old serpent, the Devil was bound for a thousand years. (Rev.19.20-20.2).

J. The Order of Resurrections

At the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. Israel is regathered restored and re-generated, the Gentiles are judged and invited to enter the Kingdom. The beast and the false prophet were cast into the lake of fire, and Satan is bound for 1000 years. The Millennium is about to begin. But what about the Old Testaments saints.

Christ arose from the dead as the first fruit. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept (1 Cor.15.20). Leviticus Twenty Three describes

the Feasts of the Lord. .In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD's Passover. This type is fulfilled at the sacrifice of Christ. Paul mentions that Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us (1 Cor.5.7). Fifteenth day of the same month begins the fest of unleavened bread. This is for one week, and speaks to us of our Christian life in this world. When the Jews come to the land of promise and "when they reap the harvest thereof then they shall bring a sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it" (Lev.23.10,11). This type finds its fulfillment in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the first fruits. There have been others who were raised from the dead, like the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7) and Lazarus (John 11). But they died again. But Christ rose again with power and glory never to die again. This is the guarantee that those who are dead in Christ will rise again.

"They that are Christ's at His coming" (1 Cor.15.23). This coming for His church was the hope of Christians for these past many centuries. As Christ rose again conquering death on the third day, the believers also will be raised again. We have already discussed this before. The Church will be raptured at the coming of the Lord. A question that is generally asked is: "When will the Old Testament saints rise again? Will it be at the time of the Rapture?"

K. The Resurrection of the Old Testament saints

The Scriptures teach two types of resurrections. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (Jn.5.28,29). The resurrection to life is also described as the resurrection of the just (Lk.14.13-14) and a better resurrection (Heb.11.35).The second resurrection is of those wicked ones who will stand before the Great White Throne for judgment.

Abraham believed in the resurrection of the body. He

believed that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead (Heb.11.19). Job also believed in the resurrection. He said, “though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God” (Job.19.26). David said, “Thou will not leave my soul in hell, neither will thou permit thy holy One to see corruption (Ps.16.10). Daniel spoke of “many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (Dan.12.2). Daniel himself was promised that he shall stand in his lot at the end of the days. Martha told the Lord Jesus that Lazarus shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.(Jn.11.24).

Though the Old Testament saints had knowledge about the resurrection the light they had was very dim. It was the Lord Jesus Christ who has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Tim.1.10). When will they rise?

- (1) It is taught by many that the resurrection of 1 Thes.4.16 is not only of the Church but also of the Old Testament saints. This is because of the failure to notice the distinction between Israel and the Church and God’s program for both. As it has been mentioned several times, these are two different entities. God has set aside the Nation of Israel and introduced the church age, which is very distinct. The Lord will again start dealing with Israel only after His program for the church is over.
- (2) It has been suggested by some that the twenty- four elders of Rev.4.4 are inclusive of Israel and as they are already in heaven before the Tribulation, the resurrection of the Old Testament saints have already taken place. Who are these elders? (i) These are seated upon their thrones; (ii) they are clothed in white raiment; (iii) they had on their heads crowns (Gk.stephanos) of gold. Since they are associated with the living creatures, they are said to be angels. But this explanation does violence to the literal interpretation of the scriptures. Angels are not crowned with the victor’s crowns nor are they seated on thrones.

However Dr. H.A. Ironside on his *Lectures on Revelation*

(p.82) holds the view that these twenty-four are the Old Testament and New Testament saints. He writes, “The elders in heaven represent the whole heavenly priesthood – that is, all the redeemed who have died in the past, or who shall be living at the Lord’s return....The church of the present age and Old Testament saints alike are included. All are priests. All worship. There are twelve patriarchs in Israel, and twelve apostles introducing the new dispensation. The two together would give the complete four and twenty” Since Israel’s resurrection is only after the Great Tribulation we cannot find OT saints in Revelation Four.

J.D.Pentecost, in his book, *“Things to Come”*(pp.255-258) given seven reasons to support the view that these are the church saints only. A brief summary is attempted here. (i) The number twenty four represents the entire priesthood (1 Chr.24.1-4, 19) Though Israel was to be “kingdom of priests” this was conditional and because of their disobedience they never entered into function. (ii) Their position suggests that they represent the church. They are seated on the throne. This was promised to them (Rev.2.21; Mt.19.28). (iii) Their white raiment suggests that they represent the Church. This is the righteousness of the saints (Cf.Is.61.10). (iv) Their crowns suggest they represent the church. These are victor’s crowns (v) Their worship too suggests that they are the church. They worship because they have been redeemed from every kindred, and tongue and people and nations. (vi) Their intimate knowledge about the program of God suggests that they represent the church (Rev.5.5; 7.13-14). And (vii) Their association with Christ in a priestly ministry suggests that they represent the church (cf. Rev.5.8).

- (3) The resurrection of 1 Thes.4 is of those who are dead “in Christ”. Though salvation of everyone, past, present and future, is based on the redemptive work of Christ, the truth of being “baptized into Christ” (Rom.6.3) and therefore being “in Christ” as a new creation (2 Cor.5.17)

and thus “baptized into one body” (1 Cor.12.13) are true only of New Testament saints, the Church.

- (4) And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which stands for the children of Israel of thy people, and there shall be a time of trouble which as never was since there was a nation even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12.1-2). This verse is very clear that the resurrection of the OT saints is after the Great Tribulation.
- (5) Isaiah 26.19 mentions a promised deliverance of resurrection. This does not come until “the indignation be past” (v.20). It is after the Great Tribulation the OT saints rise again.

For the above reasons Old Testaments Saints are not resurrected at the time of the Rapture, but only after the Great Tribulation

“The order of events in the resurrection program would be: (1) the resurrection of Christ as the beginning of the resurrection program (1 Cor. 15.23); (2) the resurrection of the Church age saints at the Rapture (1 Thes.4.16); (3) The resurrection of the tribulation period saints (Rev.20.3-5), together with (4) the resurrection of Old Testament saints (Dan.12.2; Isa.26.19) at the second advent of Christ to the earth; and finally (5) the final resurrection of the unsaved dead (Rtev.20.5, 11-14) at the end of the millennial age. The first four stages would all be included in the first resurrection or resurrection to life, in as much as all receive eternal life and the last would be second resurrection, or the resurrection unto damnation, in as much as all receive eternal judgment at that time”

The emphasis on resurrection to life is not of the time but of the nature. Church saints are already translated at the Rapture. The living saints from among the Jews and Gentiles are brought into the Millennium. It is at this time the Old Testament Saints are raised and they too enter into the Millennium.

XII. THE MILLENNIUM

The Lord promised Dāvid that He “will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels and I will establish his kingdom; and establish the throne of his kingdom for ever” (2 Sam.7.13,14). Satan will be bound for a thousand years and those who have a part in the first resurrection shall reign with Christ a thousand years (Rev.20.1-6). This scriptural promise has not yet been fulfilled. The promises of God are yes and amen and will be literally fulfilled. Unfortunately the people of God have different views on this millennial reign of Christ. Mainly there are three views:

A. Post-millennialism

This view teaches that the Spirit of God will work through the Church and through its preaching and teaching evil will be routed out and bring improvement in the world system. When thus the world is purged of evil Jesus Christ will come to rule for a thousand years. Though this view was popular in 1600s, today most scholars reject this view. History of humanity teaches otherwise. Instead of improvement, sin is increasing day by day. In the words of Paul, the mystery of iniquity is already working. But until the Spirit is taken away the man of lawlessness cannot appear. It is the hope and prayer of the church that many sinners will be able to walk in the light of the gospel. But as the days go by darkness is increasing. Post-millennialism is neither correct according to the Scriptures nor the history of mankind gives us reason to believe it.

B. A-millennialism:

The holders of this view do not interpret all scriptures literally. Their symbolic interpretation of prophecy holds that the millennium is in progress during the church age. Though there are promises in the Old Testament regarding a kingdom it is only symbolic. Their main problem of interpretation is their failure to see Israel and the Church as two distinct entities. Their spiritualization of Scriptures confuses them. They also hold that on the Cross of Calvary Satan is defeated

and bound and Christ's followers today have the power to bind Satan. It is through their willful ignorance that they fail to distinguish the distinction that apostle Paul has made concerning the Jew, the Gentile and the Church of God (1 Cor.10.32).

C. Pre-millennialism:

Those who hold this view interpret the Scriptures literally. The one thousand years mentioned in Rev.20 are literal. Christ's promises of His rule on the earth is literal and important. The exaltation of Israel as a nation during the millennium in no way negates the position of the Church. The promises made to her are heavenly.

Bible prophecy is very clear that there is going to be a battle of Armageddon and Christ will come down from heaven to protect his people and to defeat Antichrist. Though Israel had once rejected her King, the Lord has not forgotten Israel and has not finished his dealings with her. The rule of the prince of peace is yet future. After this 1000 year rule the Lord will loose Satan again and test mankind finally. He will defeat Satan and cast him into the lake of fire. Christ will then establish his eternal kingdom.

D. Why this millennial kingdom at all?

God created man in His own image to live in fellowship with him. He sinned, the fellowship with God was broken and . the realization of this fellowship was postponed. The indescribable bliss that Adam and Eve enjoyed has been denied to them because of sin. The direct communion and communication between God and man had to be restored. The Son of God came in human flesh and gave his life to redeem mankind. Because of this many have accepted Him as Lord and bow down before Him. As long as sin continues to rule man matters could continue only in the present way. But God will remedy the situation. His Kingdom will come not only in the hearts of some believers but in all the world.

God Himself will be the king and during this theocratic rule man will enjoy righteousness and peace. The utopia that

man is longing for is going to be realized. For man it is an “imaginary political and social system in which relationships between individuals and State are perfectly adjusted. It is ideal but impractical”. An ideal commonwealth - Sir Thomas More in 1516 wrote of such a city. He coined it from two Greek words “ou” (meaning, ‘not’) and “topos” (meaning ‘place’) i.e. “nowhere”. Plato’s “Republic” was the model to many. The legend of Atlantis inspired many utopian myths. Many religious and political reformers in human history attempted to establish utopian communities. But all failed! Sinful man, the progeny of the first Adam, cannot establish this.

The last Adam, Jesus Christ, is the prince of peace and he will establish his kingdom. When He called Abraham from Ur of the Chaldeans and promised him a land flowing with milk and honey, He committed himself to establish this kingdom. “Thy kingdom come”, (Matt. 6.10). is the prayer of the church. Therefore, the millennial kingdom of Christ is the fulfillment of the promises made by him and the answer to all the aspirations of man.

E. The characteristics of the Kingdom.

Man’s rule on the earth has been characterized by unrighteousness, rebellion, hatred and bloodshed. It has been a continuous war and the absence of peace. “The way of peace have they not known” is what the Divine Historian has said (Rom.3.17). The last Adam has changed it all.

By His death on the cross He reconciled man back to God and also effected reconciliation between man and man. Now in the Millennium the Prince of Peace has established perfect peace on the earth.

The King will be righteous

This Priest-King will be of the order of Melchizedek first being, by interpretation, King of Righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of Peace (Heb.7.1,2). Daniel was given the vision of four world empires viz. Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. The Most High God rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomsoever He will (Dan.4.25).

Though there have been many who challenged one another for supremacy only there were four world empires. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever (Dan.2.44).

It was during the fourth empire, Rome, that the King was born. The King was rejected and kingdom promised to Israel was postponed. The fourth Roman empire will be revived again and be under the control of Satan. But the rightful King will return from heaven with a mighty army and defeat and destroy Satan. He will descend on the Mount of Olives (Zech.14.4). He will sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem and rule the world in righteousness. He will reign in righteousness (Isa.32.1); the girdle of his loins will be righteousness (Isa.11.5); He will judge in righteousness (Isa.11.4; Ps.96.10).

Millennium is not the end of everything and the end of Christ's rule on the earth. His kingdom is eternal. Isaiah prophesied that "of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord will perform this" (Isa.9.7). Millennium is only a taste of what is to come.

Righteousness will govern the kingdom.

The principles that govern His kingdom were already said by the King in His sermon on the mount (Matt.5-7). The character of the King will be reflected in the Kingdom (Isa.22.18; 60.17; Ps.72.7). The righteousness of God and the sinfulness of man could not co-exist. The answer was provided by the Lord Himself in the cross. There mercy and truth are met together and righteousness and peace have kissed each other (Ps.85.10). The people could now have peaceable habitations and quiet resting places. This will not be only in Jerusalem but it shall go forth as a brightness, and as a lamp that burns. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness shall be filled (Matt.5.6).

Adam was given the scepter to rule over the creation of God (Gen.1.28). But he rebelled and fell. Now we do not see not yet all things put under him (Heb.2.8). Adam and in him his progeny became sinners. The strength of sin is the law. Satan usurped the power over man because of this sin and as the god of this world (2 Cor.4.4), the whole world lies under the wicked one (1 Jn.5.19). Adam and the whole creation is under the curse now. The creation is waiting and groaning and travailing in pain. But the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God (Rom.8.21,22).

In the kingdom of Christ righteousness and peace will be finally restored. Only those who are purified will enter the kingdom The Lord has promised that He will bring them from the peoples and gather them and will enter into judgment with them. They will pass under the rod of the Lord and the he will bring them into the bond of the covenant. The rebels from among them will be purged out. The rebels shall not enter the kingdom. All of those in the land will serve the Lord and the He will accept them and their offerings and oblations (Ezk.20.33-40). The Lord is the King of Righteousness (Ps.110.4; Heb.7.2). Righteousness and peace will be the main characteristic of the Kingdom.

Isaiah prophesied that a king shall rule in righteousness and princes shall rule in justice (Isa.32.1). Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins and he shall judge the poor in righteousness (Isa.11.4,5). Justice delayed is justice denied. But in the millennial kingdom the King will be swift to bring it (Isa.16.5). The King is the Prince of peace. There will be nothing in the Kingdom to disturb this peace.

Holiness Man was created upright and there was no need for him to sin. His God is Holy and man also should have this holiness to continue fellowship with God. But Adam fell where he should have stood upright. No unholy person will enter the Millennial kingdom. The Jews and the gentiles are purified. The church saints are sanctified. The resurrected Old Testament saints are holy. Therefore all those who are in the Kingdom are holy.

Truth God is Truth. But sinful man changed the truth of God into a lie and served and worshiped the works of his own hands. The father of lies will be bound during these thousand years and will not be able to deceive the subjects of the Kingdom..

Obedience Adam after the Fall and his progeny were always rebellious and disobedient. But the last Adam came to the earth to obey the will of the Father (Heb.10.9). The subjects being forgiven of all their trespasses and given a new heart and the Law being written in their hearts will be able to render perfect obedience to the king (Jer. 31.33).

The conditions that exist in the millennium will be peace, joy, holiness, glory, comfort, justice, freedom, protection, complete knowledge, no curse or sickness, economic prosperity, fullness of the Spirit and proper worship.



XIII. THE FINAL REVOLT

During the millennium Satan was bound for a thousand years “and cast into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season”, And when the thousand years are expired Satan shall be loosed out of his prison. And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went upon the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God and out of heaven, and devoured them (Rev.20.3, 7-9).

Millennium was a period of joy and peace. The kingdom was characterized by justice and righteousness. Those who entered the millennium, both Jews and Gentiles were saved ones. All rebellion has been put down and Satan was bound. There were no external forces to tempt man during the millennium. Though the subjects were saved they were not perfected as the saints in the Church were perfected. Children born to the subjects were born with the same old unregenerate nature of the fallen man. There was no need to rebel. There was no cause for animosity. There were plentiful provisions provided by the King for His subjects. Man tested even in these most favorable circumstances was a failure. Carnal mind has always been and always will be at enmity with God. Minus the grace of God man has always been a failure. The havoc that sin caused upon the progeny of fallen Adam was terrible. J. D. Pentecost in his book “Things to Come” quotes F. C. Jennings, in his “Studies in Revelation” :

“Has human nature changed, at least apart from sovereign grace? Is the carnal mind at last friendship with God? Have a thousand years of absolute power and absolute benevolence, both in unchecked activity, done away with all war forever and forever? These questions must be marked by a practical test. Let Satan be loosed once more from his prison. Let him range once more earth’s smiling fields that he knew of old.

He saw them last soaked with blood and flooded with tears, the evidence and accompaniments of his own reign, he seem them now “laughing with abundance”....

But as he pursues his way further from Jerusalem, the center of this blessedness, these tokens become fainter; until in the far off “corner of the earth,” they cease altogether, for he finds myriads who have instinctively shrunk from close contact with that holy center, and are not unprepared once more to be deceived.”

Satan is loosed out of his prison after thousand years and the final revolt begins. ‘Gog and Magog’ were once gathered against Jerusalem in the campaign of Armageddon and were defeated by the Lord (Ezk.38 & 39). Now the unregenerate of that region again rises up in rebellion under the leadership of Satan. They come against the beloved city, Jerusalem and the camp of the saints, Palestine. They are again satanically motivated. There are many with them, “the number of whom is as the sand of the sea” (Rev.20.8). Fire from God out of heaven comes and devours them. The Devil is finally defeated and cast into the lake of fire and brimstones, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever (Rev.20.10).

After the Fall of Adam, the Lord pronounced judgment upon him and also “cursed is the ground for thy sake” (Gen.3.17). “The earnest expectation of the creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creation was subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who has subjected the same in hope” (Rom.8.20,11)’ The whole creation will be delivered from bondage.



XIV. THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

“And I saw a Great White Throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead, which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead, which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”(Rev.20.11-15).

The Second resurrection takes place before the Great White Throne judgment. After the Tribulation it is mentioned that, “I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God and who had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands, and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years” (Rev.20.4). These are the Tribulation saints who are raised up and who enter into the Millennium with the Lord.

The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. They had no part in the first resurrection. After 1000 years re over, Satan is loosed out of his prison. He goes and gathers the nations and brings them together to battle against the Lord. But fire comes down from God and devours them. The Devil is then cast into the like of fire, where the Antichrist and the false prophet are already sent. That was the final doom of the evil trinity.

Long, long ago there was a day of creation - the birds, the animals, the fishes and finally the man. It was very good. The Creator and the creature. Perfect harmony and perfect peace and fellowship! The first parents had everything they wanted. But they disobeyed the command of their Maker. They sinned.

The sin affected their whole person. It did not surprise the Creator. He had provided a way of escape even before He began the creation. The Creator Himself took the long journey from heaven to earth and visited this globe. This was the journey from the grandeur and glory of heaven to Golgotha. The day the Lord became man. He took upon Himself the sin of man and offered himself a sacrifice to redeem man. He died on the Cross of Calvary. It was the day death died! He did not remain there. He rose on the third day. Fifty days later he undertook the journey back to heaven. The heavens received him. Many did not know this. But He winked at the day of ignorance and commanded everyone to repent and turn to Him. A few believed Him. They suffered and were persecuted, but endured till the end. Then one day suddenly He came back to take His children back to heaven. Then began the day of the Lord. The Lord of heaven began to directly intervene the affairs of men. A period of Great Tribulation began. That also came to an end. The Creator came back as the King of kings and ruled from Jerusalem a thousand years. That too came to an end. Now is the day of retribution.

John saw the throne. This was an emblem of glory. Nobody can sit on this throne. This is the throne of judgment. The Lord Jesus Himself said: The Father has given to the Son the authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man (Jn.5.27). He is the one who was born as a man, lived and suffered as a man, died and rose again as a man, and now sits in heaven as a man. He alone has authority to execute judgment.

It was a white throne. White speaks of purity. It speaks of truth and justice. The throne is unsoiled and untainted. No bribery will influence the throne. It is incorruptible. There have been many one sided judgments in the world. When the judiciary is corrupt justice will not prevail. Towards the end of his ministry Samuel told the people: “Behold., here I am, witness against me before the Lord and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? Or whose ass have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? And I will restore it you” (1 Sm.12.3). The people confessed that

Samuel was clean and there was no unrighteousness in him. The judgment from this white throne is impartial. Spotless perfection is the character of this throne.

It was a Great White Throne. It is great because of the Occupant. He is a great God and greatly to be praised and his greatness is un-searchable (Ps.145.3). He is the Lord of Heaven. Moses told the Israelites “For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lord, a great God, a mighty and terrible, which regards not persons nor takes reward (Dt.10.17). His works are great (Jud.2.7). His works in creation, his works in providence, his works in miracles and His works of salvation are all great. His glory is great (Ps.21.5). He is glorious in holiness. When Isaiah saw this he confessed his sin (Isa.6). When apostle John saw this he fell down at his feet (Rev.1). When God appeared unto Solomon, he confessed, “Thou have showed great mercy unto David my father” (2 Chr.1.8). The Lord is great is mercy. King Josiah was convicted of sin and told his officers to “Go inquire of the Lord for me and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah concerning the words of the books that is found; for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us” (2 Chr.34.11). He is great in His wrath also. Now that Great day of Wrath has come. He is sitting on His great throne. There have been many great thrones in the world. Nebuchednezer, Alexander the Great, Hitler etc. are a few of them. But they were mere men and left everything in the world and went to the grave. The Lord is the One who laid the foundations of the earth and the heavens are the work of his hands. They shall perish but thou shall endure (Ps.102.26)

Earth and heaven fled away from his face and there was found no place for them. God is visiting the wicked with final and eternal judgment. There is no place to hide for anyone. There was a resurrection of the just a thousand years before. Now there is the resurrection of the wicked dead. Jesus Christ had warned of this earlier. The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God. Death is not the end of everything as some have thought. It is appointed for man once to die and after this the judgment. All that are in the grave shall hear his voice and shall come forth, they that have done good unto

the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation (Jn.5.29). One day in the house at Bethany Lazarus was in the grave and Jesus called him out of the grave and he came forth alive. On the day of rapture He called the church, His bride, from the grave and she rose again. Those who were dead in Christ were asleep. They have arisen and have gone to be with the Lord in heaven. Now the wicked comes out of the grave for damnation.

John saw the dead small and great stand before God.

Nobody is excused from this. The heathen who have not heard the gospel will be there because they did not live up to the light they have received.. The infidel who refused to believe will be there. The heretic who corrupted the truth will be there too. The scoffers who mocked about the second coming of the Lord and all the impenitent will stand before the throne. Those who made mere profession also will be there. The Lord Jesus said: "Not everyone who says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom o heaven" (Matt.7.21). They did not know the Lord nor did the Lord know them. Empty profession is meaningless. Death and hell passed away. There were no more atheists. All are face to face with God.

The books were opened. There is nothing hidden. The thoughts of men, the words they uttered and all their actions and the motives behind them were recorded in them. The Lord said: "There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore, whatsoever you have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which you have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops" (Lk.12.2,3). Everything is open and naked before Him with whom we have to do. The judgment was according to truth (Rom.2.2). There are many books compared to the one book of life. Many are called but few are chosen? Many heard the word but refused to believe? But now they stand before the judge. "Will your heart endure, or can thy hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I, the Lord have spoken it and will do it" (Ezk.22.14). The day of retribution is a terrible day.

The judgment was according to works This does not of course mean that anyone can earn salvation by his or her

works. Everyone who was judged before the Great white throne is sent to everlasting damnation. There is only the degree of punishment involved. Everyone who was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death.

There was the spiritual death. This was the position in which all children of Adam were found. They were dead in sins and trespasses. Jesus Christ died for all of them. Some of them trusted Him for their salvation and they were passed from death unto life.

Other did not accept this offer of salvation. They were the ones who were cast into the lake of fire. This the Second death. This is eternal separation from a holy God.



XV. THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH

We saw earlier that in the final revolt of Satan and his army they were devoured by fire from heaven and Satan was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. Apostle Peter describing about the Second coming of the Lord wrote: “The heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (2 Pet.3.7). Today everything holds together by Him (Col.1.17). Today He upholds everything by the word of His power (Heb.1.3). But a day is going to come, when He will let loose the power by which he holds everything together. Then the elements will melt with fervent heat, the heavens will pass away and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up. What God had created in the beginning was very good. Sin of Adam marred the creation. Now all these are purged by fire and He is ready to create the New Heavens and the New Earth.

And 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 (Rev.21.1).

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. It was very good. But sin of the king of the earth, Adam, marred the creation. The redeemed children of Israel had the experience of Marah and the heat and the pain of the wilderness journey. But Elim was a place of refreshment to them (Ex.15). The death of Christ brought salvation and heavenly blessings to man. At times the heavenly atmosphere was created on the earth when believers were gathered together to worship the Lord and the Lord was amidst them. Now man has this glorious perspective. “From the smoke and pain and heat it is a relief to pass into the clear, clean atmosphere of the eternal morning where the breath of heaven is sweet and the vast city of God sparkles like a diamond in the radiance of his presence” (Moffatt).

God has been working throughout all these ages or dispensations and the probationary history of man is now

completed. Before the Great White Throne sinners of all the ages are finally judged and sent to the lake of fire. The first heaven and first earth passed away. The present creation ceased and the eternal state begins. Since the judgment at the Great White Throne was after the time ceased the effect of the judgment will be eternal too.

The Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles spoke of this glorious future.

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create a Jerusalem as a rejoicing, and her people a joy. (Isaiah 65:17-19)

Of old, You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; yes all of them will grow old like a garment, like a cloak. You will change them, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will have no end. (Psalm 102:25-27)

Looking 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 . . . Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:12-13).

A question that is generally asked is what is this new earth? Is it an earth completely purged from sin and its ravages, or is a new earth created out of nothing? Man can neither create nor destroy matter (mass) or energy. Therefore in one sense nothing is really destroyed. When the elements in the earth are completely burned it is converted into gases or purely energy. God could use this energy to create the new earth Henry M. Morris writes: "By the principle of mass/energy conservation, however nothing had been really lost, except the effects and evidences of sin. After terrestrial matter had been converted either into the vapor state, or, more probably into pure energy, God had once again exercised His mighty powers of creation and integration and the new heavens and the new earth had appeared out of the ashes, so to speak of

the old” (Revelation Record p.436).

One significant omission is the statement and “there was no more sea”. The present earth’s surface is 70% water. So when the earth was burnt up the water also was converted into energy. The first earth that was designed for man’s probationary state was no more needed.

The analogy of our glorified body would be helpful in understanding this. When the Lord comes to take us home, “he shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Phil.3.21). Therefore it appears that the new earth is a completely new earth created anew out of energy of the old earth.

For many people heaven is a superstition or a myth. Communists, contemporary philosophers, modern science on the whole with a few exceptions, liberal theologians etc. repudiate the idea of a heaven. Systematic Theologies generally devote more space to hell than heaven. “Shedd, who assigns two pages in his Dogmatic Theology to heaven allots eighty seven pages to Eternal Punishment. The Christian Doctrine of Immortality is a standard work on the subject. It has an index extending to eight hundred subjects, but Heaven does not appear. Another exhaustive work is Dr.Reinhold Niebuhr’s “The Nature and Destiny of Man”. There is no treatment of heaven in this book, “and the only reference appears in a single sentence which in itself many will think a regrettable statement: “It is unwise for Christians to claim any knowledge of either the furniture of heaven or the temperature of hell”. The birth of the space age quickened the thinking of many regarding the celestial heavens.

A great majority of the word ‘heaven’ is translated from the Hebrew *shamayim* and Greek *ouranos*. The word in Hebrew means literally “the heights” and in Greek means, “that which is raised up”. By heaven, we mean “The heaven above”. What is meant by heaven?

The Atmospheric Heavens. This is the atmosphere that

surrounds the globe. The air we breathe is from this atmosphere. This is the *troposphere*, which does not extend more than thirty-two kilometers above the earth. “All normal clouds are within a distance of seven miles above the earth. From twenty to thirty miles beyond the space is known as the *stratosphere*, while space from thirty to fifty miles high is known as the *mesosphere*. The *ionosphere* ranges from fifty up to three hundred miles. The *exosphere* beginning at two hundred or three hundred miles can be argued as extending anywhere from eight hundred to twenty thousand miles” (quoted by Wilbur M. Smith).

All the phenomena referred to in the Scriptures as occurring within the atmospheric heavens are said to be confined to within an area of not more than ten miles above sea level.

The Celestial Heavens The Sun, Moon and the stars appear in a sphere called the celestial heavens. The children of Israel were forbidden to worship any of the stellar bodies. They were condemned for offering sacrifices and gifts to the Queen of Heaven (Jer.7.18; 44.17-25). They were also forbidden to consult these heavenly bodies to know the future.

Heaven as the abode of God The heaven of heavens cannot contain God (1 King 8.27; 2 Chr.2.6). Yet, He is everywhere, in the heaven above and in the earth beneath. Yet it is true that He dwells in heaven, a place often regarded as the habitation of God. “For thus says the High and Lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite (Isa.57.15). He is the possessor of heaven and earth (Gen.14.18).

But what is this “New Heaven”? Is it where God is enthroned? We saw that the Bible uses the word *heaven* in three senses. The *first heaven* is the earth’s atmosphere, the “blue sky.” The *second heaven* is outer space, the “night sky.” The *third heaven* is the place where God lives in glory. When the Scriptures speak of a New heaven, they mean a new “blue sky” and a new “night sky,” not a new heaven where God

dwells.

The ancient Greek word translated ‘new’ here (*kaine*) means “new in character, ‘fresh’ new in quality”. It doesn’t mean “recent” or “new in time.” This isn’t just the *next* heaven and the *next* earth; this is the *better* heaven and *better* earth replacing the old. Though some disagree, such as J. A. Seiss, who argues passionately that this earth will *never* be destroyed - we should also understand that this is truly a New Heaven and a New Earth not merely a “remade” heaven and earth. We know this because Jesus said that heaven and earth *shall* pass away, but His word would live forever (Luke 21:33). Also as we saw earlier, in Isaiah 65:17 God says prophetically that He will create a new heaven and a new earth, and the ancient Hebrew word for “create” (*bara*) means to “create out of nothing,” instead of re-fashioning existing material.

Is this the millennial earth?

This is also not the millennial earth. During the millennium Satan is bound. Only those who are cleansed will enter the millennium As Donald Grey Barnhouse writes, “In this chapter we see that the history of time is finished; the history of eternity is about to begin.” John F. Walvoord, writes that “The eternal state is clearly indicated in the absence of sea, for frequent mention of bodies of water occur in millennial passages (cf. Psalm 72:8; Isaiah 11:9, 11; Ezekiel 47:10, 15, 17, 18, 20; 48:28; Zechariah 9:10; 14:8). The evidence of Revelation 21:1 is so specific that most commentators do not question that the eternal state is in view.”

It is from the sea that the Satanic beast comes (Rev.13.1). The Sea gave up the dead that were in it (Rev.20.13). The wicked are compared in scripture to a troubled sea (Isa.57.20). The Lord rules the raging of the sea (Ps.89.9).

The eternal state need not be confused with the millennial kingdom. In this kingdom though the subjects are purified and Satan is bound, sin, death and corruption still remained. “There shall be no more there an infant of days, nor an old man that has not filled his days; for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years

old shall be accursed. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh” (Isa.65,2; 66.24). Man was finally tested in the millennial age and then only the eternal state is introduced. New Testament also testifies to this truth. When the Son delivers the Kingdom to His father, all rule and power and authority is put to an end, all enemies are under his feet, and the last enemy, death, is also destroyed (1 Cor.15.24-26).

The Sea also was no more. Water had an important role to play in the ecology as also the physiology of man and animal in the present earth. The hydrological cycle that was prevalent in the old earth is removed. 70% of the present earth’s surface was supposed to be water and this was true even in the millennial age (Cf.Ps.72.8; Isa.11.9,11; Ezk.47.10-20; 48.28 etc.) While the Lord predicted the original earth and heaven will pass away (Mt.24.35) this new heaven and new earth will remain before the Lord. Isa.66.22).

Henry M.Morris (Revelation Record p.437) argues that since the men and women who lives in the new heaven and new earth are in glorified bodies, which have only flesh and bones and no blood, there is no need of water.

This of course does not mean absence of water. “The river of water of life” flows from the throne (Rev.22.1) This would be source to irrigate the new earth.

The New City is coming down from heaven and is not heaven itself. We need not spiritualize this as some do. It is a literal city. The Lord Saint in my Father’s house are many mansions. This city is a real place prepared by the Lord in the heaven above and now brought with Him. It will be set up somewhere in the atmospheric heaven in a stationary orbit. With the present day space ships and technological advancement it is not difficult for us to believe this. This will be the abode of the resurrected saints.

Is this not the city “which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God? (Heb.11.10). It is the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem where one day “the general

assembly and church of the first born” will gather (Heb.12.22-23). In the glorified bodies the saints will have no difficulty of access between the city and the earth down. There is no light and temple in this city. The Lord himself will be the temple and the light. And the kings of the earth shall walk in the light of the city and they shall bring their glory and honour into it (Rev.21.24) Though these are down below in the earth they also will have perfect access into this city.

The New Earth

Before the New City is discussed a few words need to be mentioned about the New Earth. It was said before that the Son hands over the Kingdom to the Father....and God my be all in all (1 Cor.15.24, 28). The Kingdom of Peace seems to have a double aspect. There is the Kingdom of the Son and he Kingdom of the Father. The Father has put all things under his feet One day the Son himself is going to be subject to the Father so that God may be all in all. The Kingdom was given to Adam. He lost it. The last Adam (Jesus Christ) came as the King of the Jews. They rejected and crucified Him. He rose and now He comes back as the King of kings. He rules from Jerusalem for a thousand years. And now He hands over the Kingdom to the Father. In this sense, though the Son is King of all the Universe, his sphere seems to be the earth. There is the earthly Jerusalem and the Heavenly Jerusalem. There will be glorified earthly people and a glorified heavenly people. Israel is the earthly people, who will then be converted (Deut.30.1-9; Rom.11) restored and unified (Jer.3.18; 50.4-5; Ezk.37). The heavenly people are the glorified Church, who will reign with Christ (2 Tim.2.12; Rev.20.6)

There is another opinion about the nature and condition of the earthly people who will remain after the revolt of Satan who will be loosed at the end of the millennium. It is taught that they will enter the eternal state with a kind of perfected but not glorified bodies. Those who teach this argue that the original plan and purpose of creation of man was that, if man had gone through the probationary period satisfactorily, God would have given him a perfected body which is sinless. There are scholars who believe that this would not have been a

glorified body, because there is no record of death at the end of the millennium.. There is also no record of the transformation of the living saints at the end of the millennium as at the time of rapture. There is of course no scriptural evidence for this conclusion. (see Appendix A)

“For behold I create new heavens and a new earth and former shall not be remembered nor come into mind” (Isa.65.17) This verse looks beyond the kingdom-age to the new heavens and the new earth. But the following verses 18-25 describe the kingdom age itself. Jerusalem of the kingdom age is a place of rejoicing and her people a joy. The joy that Israel enjoys in the millennial kingdom is great, the longevity is restored then, but compared to the New Earth, it will not be remembered. The New creation of God is eternal.

Apostle Peter said: (2 Peter 3) “the heavens shall pass away with a great noise”....”the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up”. A question generally asked is: “what will happen to the saints?” But the saints “according to his promise look for new heaven and a new earth” (vv.10,13).. It is only the heavens and the earth shall pass away and burned up, and not the glorified saints. The church saints already transformed and caught up to be with the Lord in their glorified bodies, look for the new heavens and Israel and others in their glorified bodies, which will not see corruption because it has already put on incorruption, look for the new earth. Both of these saints will enter the eternal state.

Chapters 21 and 22 of Revelation describes seven new things, which may be noted:

1. The New Heaven and
2. The New Earth 21.1-2
3. The New peoples 21.3-8
4. The New Jerusalem (The Lamb’s wife) 21.9-21
5. The New Temple 21.22
6. The New Light 21.23
7. The New Paradise 22.1=7

The New Jerusalem descends out of heaven.

“ (Rev.21.2-4). Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people. God himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away”

This is the Heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the Living God (Hebrews 12:22); this is the Jerusalem from above (Galatians 4:26); and this is the place of our real citizenship (Philippians 3:20). This is the holy City (Rev.21.2; 21.19) and therefore it is different from any earthly city. Yet the name of the city is Jerusalem, which gives it continuity with earth, especially with the place of our redemption. It is the city of my God (Rev.3.12) and a Great city (Rev.21.10). This is the city that our Lord Jesus Christ has been preparing for His bride after His return to heaven. This is the city, which has foundation whose builder, and maker is our God (Heb.11.10).

Cities are places where there are many people, and people interact with each other. This isn't isolation, but a perfect *community* of the people of God, which is innumerable, and also there is innumerable company of angels there.

Hindus await, after endless cycles of rebirth, their *moksha*, which is liberation from rebirth. Muslims after all their works to earn salvation await the bridge of less than a hair's breadth to cross over. They are not sure of their end.. The Jews are still waiting for their Messiah, who had already come and gone. They had rejected and crucified Him. The Christian concept of heaven as a city, a place of life, activity, interest, and people is very different from all these. They are sure of the heavenly Jerusalem! Adam and Eve enjoyed a few days of bliss. But their Fall denied paradise not only to them but for every man and woman afterwards. But here in the New

Jerusalem we have a clean, pure city wherein dwells righteousness. The gift of God surpasses all imaginations of man.

This city is compared to one prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. The Son of God came to this sin stricken world to take a bride for Himself. She was sinful, ugly, a slave of Satan and unable to save herself. He died for her and purchased her with His own blood. He washed her and cleansed her and beautified her. Now she is without spot or wrinkle and beautified. Every bridegroom in the past has looked upon his bride coming down the isle for the wedding. But this surpasses every imagination of the heart of man.

The Tabernacle of God is with men. God's visible presence is in this city. God created man in His own image so that He could have fellowship with man. The sin of Adam caused God to drive him out of the garden. When God redeemed Israel out of their house of bondage he commanded them to build a tabernacle so that He could dwell in their midst. The glory of God filled the Tabernacle. Later in the Promised Land God dwelt in the Temple that Solomon built. Again, sin of the people of God caused the glory of God to depart from the temple reluctantly (Ezk.8-11) That glory has never returned to the temple again. In the fullness of time the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us. After his death, resurrection and ascension the promise of the Father was sent down, and He the Spirit of God now dwells in the Temple of God the Church. Finally, God himself dwells amidst the people of God in the city of God, the New Jerusalem. God's desire is fulfilled so also the purpose for which man was created.

The New Jerusalem is distinguished by what it does *not* have. And they are many. There will be no tears here. God will wipe all tears from their eyes. The life down here on earth was characterized by many type of tears. 'Every tear,' for they be many; - tears of bereaved affection, such as Mary, and Martha, and the widow of Nain wept; - tears of sympathy and mercy, such as Jeremiah and Jesus wept over the sins and the calamities of Jerusalem; - tears of persecuted innocence, tears of contrition and penitence for faults and crimes against the goodness and majesty of heaven; - tears of disappointment

and neglect; - tears of yearning for what cannot now be ours; - these, and whatever others ever course the cheeks of mortals, shall then be dried forever.” (Seiss). But the idea of “tears in heaven” should never be used as some kind of guilt-manipulation on this earth. “There is no just ground for imagining from this text that the saints will shed tears in heaven concerning the failures of their former life on earth. The emphasis here is on the comfort of God, not on the remorse of the saints.” (Walvoord). “Man comes into the world with a cry; and goes out of it with a groan, and all between is more or less intoned with helpless wailing . . . But the Halleluias of the renewed world will drown out the voice of woe forever.” (Seiss) There will be no sorrow in heaven.

There will be no more sin, pain or death. “On the day thou shall eat of it, you may surely die”. Those were the words of judgment. By one man sin entered the world, and death by sin. The reign of death is graphically pictured in Genesis Five. ‘He died, He died’ is the chorus of this chapter. Finally, as children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also likewise partook of the same, and by His death destroyed him that had the power of death, the Devil. The Living Saviour destroyed death. Now finally, the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory’ has come to pass in the fullest sense of the word. The cause for death itself is taken away.

There is no temple in the new City. God spoke to the Jews: “I am the Lord, thy God, who have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shall have no other gods before me. Thou shall not make unto thee any carved image, or any likeness of anything that in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shall not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them;” (Ex.20.2-5). But the Jews became idol worshippers. God gave them a tabernacle and a temple. The gentiles changed the glory of the incorruptible God into corruptible images and worshipped them. Man felt that he always needed a visible object of worship. Even Christendom has felt the need of idols and made and worship them, Now there is no temple. God and the Lamb is its temple. God is everywhere in the City, therefore the temple is everywhere in

His person. There is no sacrifice, because there was no need of it. The one sacrifice of Calvary was sufficient to atone for every sin of man. There is nothing now to hinder the fellowship of man with God.

There is no sun, moon, or darkness in the city. In the original creation God made two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night (Gen. 1.16). Now that is not needed. There is one great brilliance everywhere. God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all. There is no abomination. Satan was finally cast into the lake of fire. There is nothing or no one to defile the city.

In the earlier chapters of Revelation we heard a warning from God – a warning of Judgment. Now we hear the message of hope and glory. The New Jerusalem!

The Seven-fold description of the City (21.11-23)

a. The glory of the city is the glory of God.

The city shines with the glory of God and the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ (v.11., 23). When Jesus Christ came to this world, He was the brightness of the glory of God. But this glory was veiled in the flesh. Recalling the event on the mount of transfiguration, apostle Peter writes that “there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory”. But now there is no necessity to veil that glory.

b. The City has walls (v.12).

Walls are a symbol of protection and security. The saints in the city enjoys perfect protection.

c. The city has twelve gates (vv.12-13).

These twelve gates have the names of the twelve tribes of Israel upon them. This symbolizes that the entrance to the city is through the Jewish Messiah. Only those who have accepted the salvation in Christ can enter the city. The gates are guarded by twelve angels. Though the gates to the city are never closed they are always guarded by the angels. These twelve are on the four sides of the square city, three on each side. There is equal opportunity for everyone from East, West, South and North to enter the city.

d. The city has twelve foundations (v.14).

The names of the twelve apostles are inscribed upon them. They are the apostles of the Lamb. The Church of God is built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets. They are those who laid the foundation, which is Christ himself. John wrote: “that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life” declare unto you. It is the testimony of the apostles concerning Jesus Christ. This is the foundation of the city, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

e. The shape of the city (21.15-17).

It is square facing every direction. The city is enormous. It is not like any other city which we have heard or seen. The length, the breadth and the height are equal – 12000 furlongs each. (1500 miles or 2400 kilometers). 2,250,000 sq. miles or 3,375,000,000 cubic miles. The thickness of its wall and gates is 216 feet.

If the dimensions and descriptions seem confusing or impossible, there are two main principles to keep in mind. First, we must understand the *ideas* communicated in the details (glory, beauty, splendor, and so forth). Second, we must understand that this is the city *whose architect and maker is God* (Hebrews 11:10). We should expect it to be beyond our comprehension.

“A city of this size is too large for the imagination to take in. John is certainly conveying the idea of splendor. And, more importantly, that of room for all.” (Leon Morris)

Henry Morris, guessing that there will have been 100 billion people in the human race, and that 20% of them will be saved, calculates that each person would have a “block” with about 75 acres on each face to “call their own.”

f. The materials with which the city is built.

When we read of jasper and pure gold and all kinds of precious stones, we should take these as literal representations; yet they express realities of another world. We can gain a brief glimpse of what John saw, but we can't

even begin to see it in fullness until we see it with our own eyes.

John's use of material riches to describe the city "is his way of bringing out the very great value of what God has for His people." (Morris)

Though the precise identification of these gemstones in modern terms is difficult, but the impression is of unending, staggering beauty. "The symbolism is not meant to give the impression of wealth and luxury, but to point to the glory and holiness of God." (Johnson)

"The constant mention of transparency indicates that the city is designed to transmit the glory of God in the form of light without hindrance." (Walvoord)

The stones mentioned may not be the exact stones as we know them today. The walls are made of Jasper. Webster's dictionary describes this stone as: 'an opaque variety of reddish, brown, green or yellow quartz, used as an ornamental stone'. When the brilliance of the light of God shines on it what a glorious sight it would be! Unimaginable! The city itself is made of pure gold, which is as clear as glass. The world till today has not seen such gold. The foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. On the earth that we live, the foundations are not seen. It is covered and is under the earth. But not so the New City. Its foundations can be seen! The first of those stones is Jasper. The second is *sapphire*. This is a precious stone of transparent blue corundum, whose colour is due to traces of cobalt. The third stone is *chalcedony*. This is a semi precious blue gray variety of quartz composed of very small crystals packed together with a fibrous waxy appearance. *Emerald* is a green precious stone. It is the greenest of all greens. The next is *sardonyx* This is a variety of onyx in which there are layers of orange-red sard and of a white chalcedony. William Barclay describes it as "stone that has different shades of colour, basically white with layers of red and brown breaking the white background.. The sixth foundation is of a *carnelian(sardius)*. This is one of the gems worn by a Jewish high priest.. This is said to be a blood red stone. The Seventh

is *chrysolite*. A shining stone with a gold radiance. Any of the magnesium iron silicates of an olive-green or yellow colour. Beryl, which is the eighth, is a sea-blue or sea-green stone. The ninth is *topaz*. This is a greenish-gold stone which is transparent. The tenth foundation is of *chrysoprasus*. This is an apple-green variety of chalcedony. The eleventh is of *jacinth* a violet bluish-purple stone. The twelfth foundation is of *amethyst*. This is a violet bluish-purple stone, but more brilliant than jacinth. No mind can conceive the beauty and the glory of this city. (indebted to dictionaries encyclopedias)

g. The twelve gates are twelve huge pearls.

We have small and big gates in the world. Some of them will be beautiful also. But these are city gates. Twelve of them. Each one is made up of one huge pearl. It is beyond our comprehension. But it is true and we shall see it.

h. The streets are made of pure gold, transparent as glass.

This again defies imaginations. The glory of the Lord shining and the reflected light in the streets would make it a wonderful sight.

When we think of such a city, which is going to be our permanent dwelling place, the glories of this world, is nothing. It is dust and ashes. And of course this present earth is reserved for judgment with fire.

Who are the inhabitants of this city? (Rev.21.24-27)

All those who are saved from all the nations of the world will be there. And only saved ones will be there! The God of this city is the God of all. God of all creation! God of redemption! He is no respecter of persons. Today man has made many gods. There is the god of Babylon; the god of Muslims; the gods of Hindus etc. But there is one God. The God of the Bible! The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, The Trinity in unity. He has provided only one way of salvation for all. The gospel is the power of salvation to every one that believes.

They walk in the light of the city. The Lamb is the light of the city. Therefore they shall walk in the glory of God. They

would know God fully and walk in the knowledge of God. Abraham, the father of the faithful, was asked to be perfect and walk before God. Today in this City the aspirations of Abraham, Job, Paul and the millions who followed after them will be fully realized. The citizens of this city are perfect ones. The New Creation has been perfected. They are righteous and pure.

The kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honor into it. The citizens of this city are a kingdom of priests to their God. As holy priesthood they worshiped their Lord while on earth. Now as royal priesthood, they reign with their Lord. What a privilege and what an honor. While on the earth, they were ridiculed, persecuted, martyred but now they are Royalty. They suffered for a little while on the earth and now they reign eternally.

The gates of the city are never closed. A garden enclosed was the church on the earth. The true ones were under the protection of their Lord and Master. It was the good Shepherd who opened the door for them into the fold. Now in the New City, though it has gates, the gates are never closed. Their access into the city was instantaneous, complete and constant. There is nothing, no enemy to hinder the fellowship with God. Yet only the pure and righteous shall enter the city. It is mentioned that nothing that defiles shall enter the city. He that works abomination shall not enter here. Once the enemy said: "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north, I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High!". But now he is cast into the like of fire, into the abyss. He shall no more enter into the New City. The Lie will have no place in this True city. The liar and the father of it, once deceived our parents in the Garden of Eden. But no Lie will enter into this New City.

There shall be no night there. In the original creation there was the evening and morning to separate each day. There was a time to work and a time to rest and sleep. Now all that has been changed. It is all one glorious never-ending day!

The abundant provisions in the New City (Rev.22)

A pure river of the water of life is the first provision. There was the river that went out of Eden to water the garden, which parted and became four heads. But our first parents were driven out of the Garden of Eden (Gen.2.10). From then on it was a struggle to maintain life. On the last day of the feast Jesus stood up and said: He that is thirsty, let him come to me and drink, out of his belly shall flow rivers of water” (Jn.7.37). Some believed him and eternal life became a reality in their lives. In the millennial kingdom, waters flowed from the threshold of the house (Ezk.47.1ff). from the altar, unto the ankles, unto the knees and waters to swim. These were waters for healing and life. In the New City the water of life flow from the throne of God and of the Lamb. This water is the source of life in the city. Are these waters symbolic or real?

There was no more sea (Rev.21.1). In the present hydrologic cycle of the earth the waters of the sea are raised by the sun and falls back into the earth as rainfall and thus the rivers get their flow. But in the New City the water of the river of life flows from the throne of God and the Lamb. This is a never-ending flow created by the Lord for the benefit of the inhabitants, for their life and beauty. But the water is clear as crystal. There is absolutely no impurity in it. The inhabitants of the city are those who have already drunk of the water of life given by the Lord. They will never thirst (Jn.4.14). They are completely satisfied. They are complete in the Lord (Col.2.10). They have eternal life and the river of water of life will be a constant reminder to them of what the Lord had done in their life. In this sense it will be symbolic to them.

The Tree of Life

The tree of life is in the midst of the street and on either side of the river. There is only one tree, yet it appears in the midst of the tree and on either side of the river. The picture seems to be that the Tree is everywhere. The tree of life was planted in the Garden of Eden for Adam, the first man. But

he first partook of the tree of knowledge of good and evil in disobedience to the command of God and became a sinner. God drove him out of the Garden. The tree of life was barred to him. Now grace has provided for him the tree of life. It bears twelve crops of fruit, one for each month. The tree has fruits all the year round. There is the continuous supply. This also symbolizes continuous and eternal life for the inhabitants of the city. The leaves of the tree are for the healing for the nations. The life here is perfect. There is no sickness and no disease. Whatever the Lord gives is perfect, and pure.

There shall be no more curse

The first man Adam brought the curse upon him, and his kingdom – both animal and vegetable – by his disobedience. The second Man, the Lord from heaven, became a curse for us, because it is written: cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree, and thus redeemed us from the curse of the Law. The curse has been removed and the blessings have been restored. The Devil cannot tempt again. He cannot enter the New City. There is nothing to disturb the bliss the Lord has provided.

The Throne of God and the Lamb is in the City

At the dedication of the temple he built Solomon knew that the heaven of heavens cannot contain God and how much less the temple he has built. Therefore he pleaded that when he prayed in the temple, the Lord may hear in heaven, the dwelling place of God (1 king 8.27-30). Now that is all changed and the Monarch and the subjects are in the same place. The New Jerusalem is the capital of the universe. His servants shall serve Him – worshipful service! We will receive the orders from Him direct and will report to Him direct. We will see him face to face. Adam hid from the Lord. Cain's face was down. But now? Face to face with our Maker, Redeemer, Lord and Master! What satisfaction!

His name shall be in their foreheads

Once we were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. This

was the earnest of our inheritance. But now redemption is complete and His name will be on our foreheads. Aaron was the first high priest. On his forehead was a plate of gold engraved upon it, like the engravings of a signet, 'Holiness unto the Lord'. It shall always be upon Aaron's forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord (Ex.2836, 38).. We are a kingdom of priests unto the Lord. As Royal priesthood we witnessed him on the earth and now in the New Jerusalem we serve Him. His name is on our foreheads. We are His! We are protected by Him.

There shall be no night there. He is the light of the world, the light of the universe. Darkness has been completely dispelled. There was no need for the sun. Sun, the greater light, was created by God to rule during the day. There is no need for a lamp. Man need not light a lamp to dispel darkness. But the Lamb Himself will be the lamp. He will give light. The uncreated light! He shall be the King of king and his subjects shall reign with him forever and ever.

The glorious prospect of the believers is so marvelous that one longs to go there even now. But we need to await the coming of the Lord. Amen Lord Jesus come!



XVI.HOW DOES IT AFFECT OUR EVERYDAY LIFE

It was mentioned in the beginning that this Thesis was originally written as “A Chronological Statement Regarding the Second Coming of Christ”. We saw exactly that in the foregoing pages of this book.

Yet, the fundamental purpose of the doctrine of eschatology entails more than a systematic presentation of the chronology. Biblical eschatology has a deeper intention. It communicates a message to us that requires our total submission to it.

The God of the Bible inaugurated his activity in creation and he is going to consummate it. We live in the present. Peter, looking forward and seeing the consummation of all things, the heavens shall pass away and the earth shall be burned up, and God will create a new Heavens and a New Earth, challenges us by posing a question before us: “What manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness”? He exhorts us to be “diligent that we may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless”. He also warns us to “beware lest you also being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness” (2 Pet.3.10-18)..

Eschatology is not a doctrine to be wondered at but a stimulant to order our present life aright. We heard the gospel call. We marvelled at the wondrous grace of God. We enjoyed the richness of His mercy.. He declared us just. He sanctified us. He joined us to the company of His people. Every moment of our present life we enjoy the love and provision of God. Is that the end of our salvation?

A call to holiness

Eschatology is God’s call to holiness to us in our present life.” Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent; the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armour of

light. Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness not in chambering and wantonness; not in strife and envying, But put on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom.13.11-14)

A call to face the reality of your death

Our life is not in our hands It is in His hands. He may shorten it or lengthen it. We should always be prepared for death. Can we face death with boldness of assurance that our sins are forgiven and our life is hid with Christ in God and say Oh, death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? If we are forgiven and we are children are of God do we have the assurance that we can stand before our Maker with a clear conscience?

A call to be ready for judgment

There is a judgment to come. God will judge every man. Do you have the assurance that your judgment as a sinner is past, that you have believed the death of Christ on your behalf? If you are a believer, do you realize that you will stand *before* the judgment seat of Christ to receive rewards?

A call to evangelism

The Lord’s great commission is that “Go and make disciples of all the nations” (Matt.28.18-20). Evangelism is the responsibility of every believer. Without Christ every soul will go to an eternity of hellfire. Woe unto me if I preach not the gospel. Necessity is laid upon me. The day is at hand. Let us labour for the Master.

Apostle Paul exhorts believers to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called” (Eph.4.1) The believers are the only exponents of Christianity in the world. Therefore their life ought to be “as it becomes the gospel, of Christ” (Phil.1.27). Our lifestyle has to change. There is no time to be lost.

Israel was besieged by the Syrians and there was great famine in the land. Four lepers decided that it is better to go to the camp of the Syrians to get some food than to die in the

land. When they went to the camp they found it deserted and there was plenty of food and clothing. They ate and were satisfied. Then they said one to another: "We do not well; this day is a day of good tidings and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light some mischief will come upon us; now therefore come, that we may go and tell the King's household (2 Kings 7.9)..Evangelism is what one beggar who has eaten and satisfied and telling another beggar where food is available.

A call to receive the gospel invitation

A time is going to come when there will be no more opportunity for salvation. The wickedness was great in the land in the days of Noah. But Noah found grace before the Lord. The Lord told Noah that judgment was going to come upon the land. Noah made an ark according to the commandment of God. Noah was a preacher of righteousness. During the days he was making the ark he preached that people should repent of their sin and turn to God. But they scoffed at the idea of flood and judgment. What happened was worst than Sunami. The killer waves of the sea affected only certain areas; and some of those affected even ran and escaped the floods. But, the flood of Noah's days was terrible .”Every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven’ and they were destroyed from the earth and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark” (Gen.7.23). The people lost the opportunity offered them.

We should give earnest heed to the things, which we have heard. The writer to the Hebrews says: “For if the word spoken by the angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of rewards, how shall we escape, if we reject so great salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that hard him; God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?” (Heb.2.2-4).

The Lord told the parable of the 10 virgins. Five of them

were wise and five foolish. All were waiting for the coming of the Bridegroom. But five had oil in the lamps and were ready and they went to meet the Bridegroom. The other five were not ready. They knocked on the door but it was already shut and it was not opened unto them. They were so near but were lost for ever.

Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross and two malefactors on either side of Him. Both of them mocked the Lord Jesus. Later one turned to him and said: "Lord remember me when thou comes into thy kingdom" The Lord answered him, "Today thou shall be with me in paradise. He was saved. But lost the opportunity of service. The unrepentant thief saw Jesus, heard him and was so near to the door of heaven. But he lost eternal life because of unbelief..

Jesus Christ died and was buried. "Upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre bringing the spices which they had prepared, and had certain others with them" (Lk.24.1). They wanted to anoint the Lord. But the Lord had risen already. They lost the opportunity to anoint him. The unused spices tell us their own story of disappointment. History of man is full of such instances. Many of them who heard the gospel were so near. They knew Jesus Christ, heard the gospel, knew they were sinners, they knew that Jesus could save them; yet they lost everything. Now is the accepted time, both for salvation and service. Are you ready?

Child of God, listen: "Only one life, It will soon be passed. Only what is done for Christ wil Last".



APPENDIX A

The New Heavens and the New Earth introduces us to the state of eternity. Though the New Jerusalem is described, only little information is given as to where the City will be or who are the people who inhabit the city and the earth. Therefore, there have been much speculation about it. We should be satisfied with the information given to us and leave the rest to our Lord. These few lines below only describe the possibilities and are not any dogmatic statements.

The Place of the City

Many commentators are of the view that the city will be placed on the earth. But what says the Scripture? “And I John saw the Holy City, new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev.21.2).

The Lord’s promise to the Church was: “In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself that where I am there you may be also” (Jn.14.2,3). This has been the hope of the Church for these many centuries. Apostle Paul wrote to the Church at Philippi: “our citizenship is in heaven”. Though we are in the world, we are not of the world. While the blessings that the Lord has promised to Israel is of the earth, the church is blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ in the heaven.

It is true that John saw the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven. But he did not say that it has come down to the earth. Concerning the rapture of the Church, apostle Paul writes, “the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven” (1 Thes.4.16). But He does not come to the earth, but we will be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Like-wise though New Jerusalem comes down from heaven, the city does not come to the earth, but will be in the atmospheric heaven (in a stationary orbit). This will be clearer when we discuss the earth below.

The people in the city

While the city is being described apostle John writes: “And (it) had a wall great and high and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel” (Rev.21.12). And again: “And the wall of the city had twelve foundations and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lord” (v.14).

It goes without saying that since the city is described as “a bride adorned for her husband” the Church is described here. Therefore, all the Church saints from the day of Pentecost to the day of Rapture will be in the city. But nothing prevents the Old Testament resurrected saints, the friends of the Bridegroom, to be in the city. The names of the twelve tribes of Israel on the walls also suggest this. Therefore, we can reasonably conclude that the Church and the Old Testament saints comprise the people of the city.

The Nations of the earth

The present earth is reserved for judgment with fire. Apostle Peter is very emphatic that the elements of the earth will be dissolved (unloosed) and will burn with fervent heat. As it was discussed earlier the burning will result the earth being turned into gases or most probably into purely energy, since mass cannot be destroyed or annihilated completely. It is also quite possible that the new earth is made out of this energy.

But what happens to the people of the earth? Since there are nations of the earth in the New Earth who are these people and where did they come from? Only those who were purified, both Jews and Gentiles entered the millennium. Those who were born in the millennium were born with the sinful nature. They were those who joined the rebellion in the final revolt of the Enemy. And they too were destroyed.

Millennial saints remained. Is it possible that the Lord in some miraculous way must have preserved them to populate the new Earth? If they are in the glorified bodies, as resurrected and transformed saints, they would be on the New Earth.

But as the Lord told the Sadducees, “in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as angels of God in heaven” (Matt. 22.30). But if they are the millennial saints carried forward to the New Earth, and now in their perfected bodies they could multiply and replenish the earth. But as transformed saints, freed from sin, they could continue through out eternity.

The Nations of them, which are saved, shall walk in the light of it (the city) and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it (Rev.21.24). The City that has come out of heaven will be in a stationary orbit. It has no temple and no lamp, but the Lamb will be the light of it. The uncreated light of God will shine in the city above and the nations down on the earth will walk in this light. We hope that the earth will be round as it is now and will be on its orbit. There may be day and night on the earth, though there is no night in the city, and the nations will walk in its light.

There will be gates in the city and angels on every gate, but it is not shut. There will also be perfect and instant access for the kings of the earth to enter the city, so that they bring their glory and honour into it. Yet as the gates are for access, and the names of the twelve tribes of Israel are on it, is it possible that they have supervision of the gates?

