Revelation and Bible Prophecy—
A Comparison of Eschatological Views:
Classical Dispensationalism and Preterism

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References: See the Selected Bibliography at the end of this document.

This document is about the fascinating debate going on in evangelical Christian circles regarding the book of Revelation (and other books of the Bible that have eschatological themes). Is Revelation to be taken literally? Is Revelation mostly historical? Or is it mostly about the future? Is the Antichrist a real human being who will appear on the world stage prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ? Could Christ return at any time? Will there be a pre-tribulational “rapture” (disappearance of Christians from Earth)? (For a lengthy discussion of the Rapture, see the Section further below entitled “When will the Rapture occur?”)

See the section below, entitled “The Four Major Views of Revelation”, for a summary of the definitions used. The four major views are: futurist (of which the most popular position is classical dispensationalist), historicist, idealist, and preterist. This document is primarily a summary of the two most popular positions in Biblical prophecy: classical dispensationalism and preterism. Dispensationalists believe that history is broken into dispensations or eras:

1. Innocence (Creation to Adam & Eve’s Fall, Genesis 1:1-3:7)
2. Conscience (Fall of Man to Noah’s Flood, Genesis 3:8-8:22)
5. Law (Moses to Pentecost, Exodus 20-Acts 2:4)
6. Grace (Pentecost to Christ’s Second Coming, Acts 2:4-Revelation 20:3)—some people subtract the 7-year Tribulation (still future) from this era and add it to the dispensation of Law (because it applies to the Jews, rather than to the Church)
7. Kingdom (Second Coming to the End of the Millennium, Revelation 20:4-20:6)

... followed by a new heavens and new earth (Revelation 20:6-22:21) for all eternity. Some authors combine (4) and (5), and make the Tribulation a dispensation of its own.

Since the Day of Pentecost (50 days after Christ’s resurrection, i.e., 50 days after the Feast of Firstfruits), we’re currently living in the dispensation of grace (as opposed to the dispensation of law (given to us by God, via Moses, at Mount Sinai).
In fact, one may summarize the Bible as a drama in four acts—creation, fall, redemption, and restoration [Keller, 2008].

“The purpose of Jesus’s coming is to put the whole world right, to renew and restore the creation, not to escape it. It is not just to bring personal forgiveness and peace, but also justice and shalom to the world. God created both body and soul, and the resurrection of Jesus shows that he is going to redeem both body and soul. The work of the Spirit of God is not only to save souls but also to care and cultivate the face of the earth, the material world.

“It is hard to overemphasize the uniqueness of this vision. Outside of the Bible, no other major religious faith holds out any hope or even interest in the restoration of perfect shalom, justice, and wholeness in this material world.” [Keller, 2008]

I will try to update this document when corrections or revisions are in order. I believe that certain aspects of both of the major views (classical dispensationalism and partial preterism) are correct; however, in my opinion, the classical dispensationalist position fits best with the Scriptures (i.e., books of the Bible) by far. Prophecy often has a double fulfillment: near term and far term. There are just too many “coincidences” to think otherwise. Thus, Revelation is relevant to every age, and especially to today. Where I differ from partial preterists is that I believe that much of Revelation is still future, and that much of Revelation is to be taken literally; however, the metaphors and symbolic language are also indicative of various past events. God is a genius: I believe these “complications” (e.g., evidence suggestive of both dispensationalism and preterism) are intentionally put there by God because He wants us to actively study and debate prophecy, without giving everything away, and without having people influence the fulfillment of prophecy (which, these days, could have disastrous global consequences).

By studying various books and listening to various speakers, we learn a lot about the Bible, and are strengthened with the blessed hope of Christ’s imminent return. Hank Hanegraaff often says that “iron sharpens iron”, that is, we can learn from each other: we can agree to disagree on non-essential parts of Christianity, vigorously debate them, but hold to the essential doctrines of Christianity. Such doctrines include original sin (Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden), Noah’s worldwide flood, God taking on human form (i.e., Jesus Christ), Christ being born of a virgin, Christ’s sinless life, Christ paying the full penalty for our sins through His death on the cross (i.e., God Himself dying for his creation), Christ’s resurrection on the third day, the future personal appearance of Christ (“the Second Coming”), the future judgment of all people who have ever lived, the existence of Heaven and Hell, the restoration of the Earth and the rest of creation, etc.

In my opinion, there appears to be more circumstantial evidence for an early rapture (i.e., a rapture that takes place considerably earlier than a simultaneous event on judgment day). Although some aspects of prophecy have both a near-term and a far-term fulfillment, the majority of the prophecies found in Revelation still refer to the future.
All Scripture is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16-17), and is inerrant in the original manuscripts. In his book *Judgment Day!,* Dave Hunt remarks that nearly 30% of the Bible is about prophecy. The Bible was written by 40 authors, supernaturally inspired by God, over a period of 1600 years (approximately 1500 BC to 100 AD). These prophecies can be used to confirm that the God of the Bible is the one true God.

In conclusion, many Christians have different views on eschatology. Most such individuals truly love the Lord, genuinely seek the truth, and try to put Christ first in their lives. Perhaps the Lord has cleverly designed Scripture in the way He did to make us excited about prophecy, to continue studying it, to debate it, and to avoid having us “cause” Scripture to be fulfilled in a particular way through our own actions. God knows the future, but that does not mean He *causes* it.

**The Four Major Views of Revelation:**

1. **Futurist**

Futurists believe that Revelation is primarily still future. The futurist view includes dispensationalism, which in turn includes the pre-tribulational view (most common), mid-tribulational view, pre-wrath view, and the post-tribulational view.

2. **Historicist**

Historicists believe that all the events in Revelation are historical. They equate the present church age to the Tribulation period. A common historicist view is that the Tribulation began with Constantine in the latter years of the Roman Empire (circa 313 AD) [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007]. They also believe that since that time, most of the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments of Revelation have occurred, but Armageddon and the Second Coming are yet to come. Thomas Ice remarks that “the historicist system is largely dead, except for advocacy by some cults” [Ice, 2009c].

3. **Idealist**

Idealists don’t believe that Revelation is past or future, but rather they believe that Revelation describes an ongoing, timeless conflict between good and evil (between God and Satan). Thus, by definition, the idealist camp doesn’t pay attention to timing issues.

4. **Preterist**

The word “preterist” in Latin means “past”. Preterists believe that most of, or all of, Revelation is in the past, with most preterists applying the fulfillment to 65-70 AD (and perhaps some fulfillment with the fall of Rome in the 6th century).
Full preterists (sometimes called hyper-preterists) believe that all prophecy in Revelation—including the Second Coming of Christ—was fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Furthermore, the Second Coming of Christ was spiritual, not physical. This model is inconsistent with the Bible because resurrection truly is physical, and it’s in the future. Thus, full preterism is a heretical position.

Partial preterists understand some passages of Revelation to be in the future, but most passages have already been fulfilled (i.e., in the Apostle John’s time, circa 70 AD). They believe that the resurrection from the dead is still to take place (i.e., at judgment time), and that the Second Coming of Christ is still future; but, the seven seal, trumpet, and vial (bowl) judgments have already occurred. The judgments were prophetic at the time of their writing, but have since been fulfilled. Partial preterists believe that much of the language of Revelation is written in Old Testament style (with connections to Old Testament writings). For example, Christ “coming on the clouds” does not necessarily imply a literal event about Christ “riding” on a cloud in the sky. Rather, the term “coming” is symbolic of “judgment”: it refers to Christ exercising judgment on Jerusalem in 70 AD. Christ gave this metaphor to the high priest Caiaphas (who condemned Him to death): “You will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds and sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One.” This metaphor implies that the high priest and those who were to kill Christ would see judgment coming upon them (in 70 AD with the fulfillment of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple).

The term “preterist” originally meant partial preterist; full preterism or hyper-preterism did not appear until the nineteenth century [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007]. A key difference between preterists and classical dispensationalists is the notion of the Rapture: partial preterists believe that 

\textit{rapture and resurrection are the same event} (and they both occur simultaneously upon Christ’s return—not seven or more years earlier as suggested by classical dispensationalists). Hanegraaff, for example, argues that a simultaneous rapture and resurrection had been the belief of the church until Darby (in the 1800’s) came up with the notion of a pre-tribulational rapture. Until about 1827, the dispensationalist view was not held by the majority of Protestants.

In summary, here are some of the views of \textit{preterists} [LaHaye & Ice, 2003]:

- \textit{The Great Tribulation} “took place in the Fall of Israel. It will not be repeated and thus is not a future event.”

- \textit{The Last Days} “is a Biblical expression for the period between Christ’s Advent [birth] and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70; the ‘last days’ of Israel.”

- \textit{The Rapture} is “the ‘catching up’ of the living saints ‘to meet the Lord in the air.’ The Bible does not teach any separation between the Second Coming and the Rapture; they are simply different aspects of the Last Day.” (Note: In the Bible, all true believers are called “saints” [Morris, 1983].)

- \textit{The Second Coming} “coinciding with the Rapture and the Resurrection, will take place \textit{at the end of} the Millennium, when history is sealed at the Judgment.”

- \textit{The Beast} “of Revelation was a symbol of both Nero in particular and the Roman Empire in general.”
• *The False Prophet* “of Revelation was none other than the leadership of apostate Israel, who rejected Christ and worshiped the Beast.”

• *The Great Harlot* of Revelation was “Jerusalem which had always been ... falling into apostasy and persecuting the prophets ... which had ceased to be the City of God.”

• *The Millennium* “is the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, which He established at His First Advent ... the period between the First and Second Advents of Christ; the Millennium is going on now, with Christians reigning as kings on earth”.

• *The First Resurrection* of Revelation 20:5 is a “spiritual resurrection: our justification and regeneration in Christ.”

• *The Thousand Years* of Revelation 20:2-7 is a “large, rounded-off number ... the number ten contains the idea of a fullness of quantity ...”

• *The New Creation* “has already begun: The Bible describes our salvation in Christ, both now and in eternity, as ‘a new heaven and a new earth.’”

• *Israel*: In contrast to the eventual faithfulness and empowerment by the Holy Spirit of the church, “ethnic Israel was excommunicated for its apostasy and will never again be God’s Kingdom.” Thus, “the Bible does not tell of any future plan for Israel as a special nation.” It is said that the church is now that new nation (Matthew 21:43) ...

• *The New Jerusalem*: “the City of God, is the Church, now and forever.”

• *Armageddon* ... a symbol of defeat and desolation ... *There never was or will be a literal ‘Battle of Armageddon,’ for there is no such place.”

**Some Popular Partial Preterists**: (in alphabetical order)

- David Chilton
- Gary DeMar
- Ken Gentry
- Steve Gregg (who also subscribes to some Idealist views)
- Hank Hanegraaff. For classification into one of the four major categories above, I am placing him in the partial preterist camp. He believes that most events in Revelation have been fulfilled in the period 65-70 AD. Hank probably falls somewhere between the category of partial preterist and idealist. He is amillennial and does not hold to the literal interpretation of Revelation. He stresses the notion of *exegetical eschatology*, that is, the use of proper principles of hermeneutics (the art and science of Biblical interpretation), especially the use of references from other parts of Scripture to extract the meaning of passages in Revelation, and thus he is hesitant to commit to any of the four categories listed above. Hank is not a full preterist because he notes that some events (e.g., the Second Coming, the simultaneous rapture and resurrection, the renewed universe) are in the future. Hank is definitely not a classical dispensationalist.
- Gary North
- R.C. Sproul
Classical Dispensationalism (i.e., Pre-Trib Futurism)

The notion of a pre-tribulational rapture that takes place at least 7 years before the physical return of Jesus Christ is not agreed upon by all futurists, but it is the most popular version of the Rapture (see below for more comments about the Rapture). Aside from the timing of the Rapture, the classical dispensationalist position is that most of Revelation has not been fulfilled yet. Some short-term prophecies were fulfilled in the years between Christ’s ascension and the years leading up to and including 70 AD; however, these fulfillments are only a small part of what the ultimate fulfillment of Revelation (and related Scriptures) are to be. In other words, in Bible prophecy, there can be both a near term and a far term fulfillment of a given prophecy. The near term fulfillment is usually a small, partial fulfillment of what the intended outcome is to be. Classical dispensationalists believe that most of Revelation will be fulfilled in the future, perhaps the near future.

Dispensationalism says that there are two distinct people groups that God deals with separately in the end times: one is the Christian Church (the “Gentiles”), and the other is the Jewish people. Ultimately, both groups are saved by faith in Christ, but the prophecies of the Bible seem to suggest different events for Jews and Gentiles during different stages of the end times.

After the Babylonian exile, the terms “Jew” and “Israelite” appear to be used interchangeably in Scripture [Missler, 2005]. For example, Ezra called the returning remnant “Jews” 8 times and “Israel” 40 times. Nehemiah used the term “Jews” 11 times and “Israel” 22 times. The New Testament uses the term “Jew” 174 times and “Israel” 75 times. Paul called himself both a “Jew” and an “Israelite”.

Dispensationalists divide history into seven dispensations, that is, time periods when God dispensed grace and “salvation” in different ways (see above). Ultimately, there is only one way of being saved, and this is through Jesus Christ. The Old Testament believers indirectly looked forward to Christ’s atoning sacrifice on the cross.

Classical dispensationalists believe in two phases of the literal return of Jesus Christ: (1) in the air (i.e., Christ does not set foot on the Earth yet) but at this time Christians are raptured (i.e., removed from Earth) to go with Christ to Heaven for a short period of time (e.g., 7+ years), and then (2) return with Christ to the Earth at the Battle of Armageddon. It is important to draw the distinction between these two aspects of Christ’s Second Coming: first, the Rapture; and second, the “Glorious Appearing” when Christ actually sets foot on the Earth. Tim LaHaye uses the term “Glorious Appearing” to be the time when Christ reveals Himself to the whole world at/following the Battle of Armageddon. Because there are many events that must occur before the Glorious Appearing, this aspect of Christ’s Second Coming is not imminent; however, the Rapture is imminent, that is, it could occur at any time—even today.
The Battle of Armageddon is followed by numerous events, including a 1000-year period of time called the Millennium, during which raptured believers (i.e., Christians, including those Christians who have died) will rule and reign (the remaining Earth dwellers) with Christ, on the Earth, for a period of 1000 years. Before the start of the Millennium, the Antichrist and the False Prophet will be the first two occupants of the Lake of Fire (“hell”). Sin will be greatly restricted during the Millennium due to the binding of Satan and his angels (demons). At the end of the Millennium, Satan is released for a “brief” time, and he attempts to deceive the nations one last time. Although he gets some followers, fire comes down from Heaven to devour the rebels, and Satan himself is thrown into the Lake of Fire for eternity. At this point, the Heavens and the Earth are purged of evil, and a renewed Heavens and Earth are created in which there is no sin, and where time will never end. Prior to this time, of course, all believers from all ages are physically resurrected with imperishable/eternal bodies.

The saved include: the Old Testament believers (i.e., the believers before Christ’s incarnation), the believers since Christ, and those after the Rapture who will become believers.

Not all futurists believe in a pre-tribulational rapture; some believe in a mid-tribulational rapture, or even a post-tribulational rapture—and some futurists, such as Walid Shoebat, take no particular position on the timing of the Rapture. Belief in the timing of the Rapture has nothing to do with one’s salvation. Premillennialism is the belief that Jesus Christ will literally and physically return at the Battle of Armageddon, and set up a 1000-year Millennium—a period of time filled with peace, prosperity, and righteousness during which all of God’s covenants to Israel will be fulfilled, and during which Christ will rule from Jerusalem. Not all futurists believe in the premillennial return of Christ; some believe in a postmillennial return of Christ. Postmillennialism is partially literal, and teaches that Christ’s reign will be spiritual, accomplished through His Church by winning the world to Him through evangelism [Morris, 1983]. Lastly, amillennialism does not take Revelation literally, and equates the Millennium with the current Church age.

In summary, the classical dispensationalist view is that of a pre-tribulational rapture and a premillennial return of Christ.

Tim LaHaye claims that 85% of Christians hold the Dispensational view of eschatology; Timothy Weber thinks it’s closer to 33% [Weber, 2004].

Some Popular Classical Dispensationalists: (in alphabetical order)

- M.R. DeHaan
- Jerry Falwell
- Arnold Fruchtenbaum
- Billy Graham
- John Hagee
- Ed Hindson
A Table of Comparisons between Dispensationalism and Preterism

Note: Throughout this document, Scripture words that are in bold font, or that are underlined, are my emphasis (i.e., they are not highlighted in the original text). Similarly, any words in [square brackets] found within Scripture verses are my own words that are used for clarification. Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture verses are taken from the New International Version (NIV) of the Holy Bible. The NIV Bible that I use is [Zondervan, 2002], which also includes numerous study notes. Keep in mind that there are many other acceptable translations of the Holy Bible, and such works are all based on original manuscripts written in Hebrew (i.e., all of the Old Testament except for a little Aramaic in the book of Daniel) and Greek (i.e., all of the New Testament).

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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Should Revelation be taken literally?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>Revelation should be taken literally except where the context is clearly meant to be taken symbolically, or where there is prior reference to a symbol/metaphor. For a good treatment of the literal interpretation of Revelation, see the book/commentary The Revelation Record by Henry Morris [Morris, 1983]. Much of Revelation is explained as being literal, and it makes sense to take most of it literally. There were hundreds of prophecies that were literally fulfilled at Christ's first coming, so why not take a literal</td>
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approach towards the events surrounding His Second Coming? We should take a passage at its face value unless there is a clear symbolic inference.

Similarly, Genesis is literal. There was a real Adam and Eve. There really was a Tower of Babel. There really was a worldwide flood. And so on.

The *literal* interpretation of Scripture is generally synonymous with the *grammatical-historical* approach, and stands in contrast to the *allegorical* approach. 

“An *allegory* is a story intended by an author to convey a hidden meaning”, and “to *allegorize* is to impose on a story hidden meanings which the original author didn’t intend and to treat as allegory that which was not intended as allegory” [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, January 7, 2009].

The literal method of interpretation is that method that gives to each word the same exact basic meaning it would have in normal, ordinary, customary usage, whether employed in writing, speaking or thinking. It is called the grammatical-historical method to emphasize the fact that the meaning is to be determined by both grammatical and historical considerations. [Pentecost, 1958, p. 9]

Bible teacher and author David L. Cooper gives a classic statement of this hermeneutical principle in his “Golden Rule of Interpretation”: “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.” [Ice, 2003c, p. 73]

Besides (1) *The Golden Rule of Interpretation*, Cooper proposed three other laws for Bible Study, including the interpretation of prophetic passages [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]: (2) *The Law of Double Reference*, whereby two separate events are combined into one passage without there being an indicator of a separation of time between them. For example, consider Zechariah 9:9-10: verse 9 speaks of Christ’s first coming, and verse 10 speaks of His Second Coming. (3) *The Law of Recurrence*, whereby a single passage of Scripture contains two related, shorter blocks: the first block describes an event (often in chronological sequence), and the second block describes it in greater detail. For example, consider the Magog invasion in Ezekiel 38-39: Ezekiel 38 describes the whole event, but Ezekiel 39 also describes the whole event, but provides further details. Genesis 1:1-2:3 and
Genesis 2:4-25 follow a similar pattern for Creation week. (4) The Law of the Context which basically states that a passage cannot be taken out of context. For example, consider Zechariah 13:6, which is often used as a passage about the Messiah. Since Zechariah 13:2-5 speaks of false prophets, some authors believe that verse 6 cannot be about the Messiah [Fruchtenbaum, 2004], and instead refers to the wounds (possibly self-inflicted) on a false prophets.

Hitchcock and Ice urge their readers to embrace Charles Ryrie’s explanation of the grammatical-historical interpretation of Scripture:

It is sometimes called the principle of grammatical-historical interpretation since the meaning of each word is determined by grammatical and historical considerations. The principle might also be called normal interpretation since the literal meaning of words is the normal approach to their understanding in all languages. It might also be designated plain interpretation so that no one receives the mistaken notion that the literal principle rules out figures of speech. [Charles Ryrie, in [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007, p. 73]]

A major contribution by Luther and Calvin to Protestantism and the Reformation was a return to literal interpretation [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007; Pentecost, 1958]. Charles Feinberg notes that since the prophecies of the suffering Messiah were literally fulfilled at Christ’s first coming, we can expect future prophecies to be fulfilled literally, including those of the reigning Messiah on Earth [Pentecost, 1958].

**Preterist Position**

Scripture should be “interpreted in the sense in which it is intended rather than in a literalistic sense. If I tell you that it is raining cats and dogs, my intent is to convey that it is raining hard—not that cats and dogs are literally falling from the sky.” [Hanegraaff, 2007]

Therefore, we should take (most of) Revelation symbolically and historically, with little future fulfillment. The Preterist view claims that most of Revelation was fulfilled by 70 AD.

Revelation is deeply rooted in Old Testament history. It is important to remember this because so much of the symbolism requires Biblical literacy to interpret and understand the message. For example, what does “coming on the clouds” mean in the Old Testament? It does not mean a literal coming in the clouds. (Search elsewhere in this document for “clouds”.) As a second example, “blood to the [height of a] horse’s bridle” can’t possibly mean a river of blood that’s 5 feet high and 180 miles long—is there even this much blood in every human in the world? As a third example, Jesus is not a lamb with 7 eyes and 7 horns.

Hank Hanegraaff argues that we need to learn how to read the Bible
by having a grasp of the language used by the Old Testament prophets. For a modern comparison, if we say, “It’s raining cats and dogs”, or “I’ve got a frog in my throat”, this isn’t to be taken literally.

The city in Revelation has “streets of gold”. Is this to be taken literally? No, it’s symbolic. For example, if we say that someone has a “heart of gold”, this means that the person is kind and caring.

John is using a “judgment language” that’s used with respect to a near future event, by taking a long-term event and applying it to the near term. Similarly, the language in passages such as Zechariah 13 or 14 is not to be taken literally. One danger in taking such passages literally is the expectation of a Jewish holocaust of greater proportions than that during WW II (e.g., Zechariah 13:8-9). Hanegraaff states that the Jews will not be gathered back to Israel to set them up for another holocaust. “These ideas have huge consequences ... for how we view the situation in the Middle East, how we view the Jews”.

Hank adds that there’s no reason for us to believe that there was actually a “talking snake” in the Garden of Eden. Again, this is symbolic language—which Moses used hundreds of years after the fact, when he wrote Genesis. The snake is a symbol used to indicate cunningness or evil. Today, Satan doesn’t come around to us in the form of a person whispering things into our ear, or writing messages on a fogged-up bathroom mirror; rather, he talks inaudibly to people, via their minds. Eve was deceived in the same way that we can be deceived. Remember, Satan is a non-caporal being: he doesn’t have a body. How did Christ crush the serpent? Christ triumphed over Satan, on the cross.

Christ is called both a lion and a lamb, in Scripture. Clearly, these are metaphors.

Another case of symbolism: The cherubim (angels) who used flaming swords to prevent Adam and Eve from gaining access to the Tree of Life can be contrasted with Jesus Christ who provided a way for us to access the true “Tree of Life”. The Tree of Life is a symbol, argues Hank; it is a symbol of having eternal life with God. There is no real “fruit” to be eaten; partaking of the Tree of Life is a symbol of us being with Christ. However, in Heaven, we will be part of a real universe, with real bodies.

Hank Hanegraaff writes:

Revelation is not a mere book of riddles originating from a shallow post-Christian mind; it is a book of symbols deeply
rooted in Old Testament history. We mistake their meanings when we fail to hear the background music of the Old Testament. The *tree of life* referred to in Jesus’s letter to the church in Ephesus first appears in Genesis; the *ten days of testing* in Smyrna find their referent in Daniel; the *heavenly manna* promised to the church of Pergamum first fell from heaven in Exodus; the *Jezebel* who promoted sexual immorality in Thyatira is the mirror image of the idolatrous Jezebel in Kings; the *seven spirits* of the letter to the church in Sardis hark back to the Spirit as described by Zechariah; the *key of David* referenced in the letter to Philadelphia echoes the words of Isaiah; and Christ’s rebuke to the church in Laodicea alludes to the words of Proverbs, ‘My son, do not despise the LORD’s discipline and do not resent his rebuke’ (3:11). Furthermore, as the letters of Christ to his *persecuted bride* utilize images deeply embedded in language of the Bible, so too the judgment of Christ against a *prostituted bride*—written on a seven-sealed scroll, announced with seven trumpets, and depicted by seven plagues—find their referent in the history of the Old Testament Scriptures. The pattern of sevenfold judgment against unfaithfulness on the part of Israel is spelled out in dreadful detail in Leviticus. Four times God tells his covenant people, ‘I will punish you for your sins seven times over.’ In like fashion, the imagery of sevenfold judgment against apostate Israel is unveiled on four occasions in Revelation. The pronouncement of judgment for unfaithfulness in the seven churches is followed by the judgments of the seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 117-118]

Preterists argue that dispensationalists selectively choose what to take literally in Revelation; therefore, dispensationalists are less *consistent* than Preterists.

The church of Smyrna was a real church that existed in the first century AD.

With respect to the dispensationalist model of Christ coming to rescue the Jews following the Battle of Armageddon, Gary DeMar notes that Zechariah 13:8-9, if taken in the dispensationalist sense where two-thirds of the Israelites will be destroyed, is hardly a “rescue” at all.

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<th>Who is the Antichrist? Is he a real person? If not, what is meant by the term “Antichrist”?</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 John 2:18</td>
<td>Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 John 2:22</td>
<td>Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is</td>
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the antichrist—he denies the Father and the Son.

1 John 4:2-3 This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

2 John 1:7 Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.

2 Thessalonians 2:4 He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

Revelation 13:6-7 He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.

| Dispensationalist Position | “The” Antichrist is an actual person that will come about in the end times, but the name Antichrist is also used metaphorically or abstractly to refer to a political or religious system (see the preterist comments below) that denies that the God of the Bible is the one true God, and that Jesus is the Christ (i.e., Messiah, Anointed One, Redeemer, Saviour).

The Antichrist is the personification of Satan. He tries to deceive the whole world, leading the world to the hatred of Jews and Christians, and then leading the world to Armageddon.

Some of the characteristics of the Antichrist are as follows [Hibbs, 2008b]:

- False teacher; master deceiver
- Blasphemer; denies the Trinity
- Global leader; heads 10 political regions
- Somewhat of an unsung hero until he uproots 3 of the leaders (of the 10 political regions)
- Brings peace to the Middle East
- Brings prosperity to the world
- Anti-Semitic; brings persecution to the Jews
- May be involved in another “Carmel experience” (recall the story of Elijah vs. the prophets of Baal)
- Promotes beheading |
| **Topic/Question** | Will there be a future 7-year Tribulation period (or 3½-year Great Tribulation period), that is, “a time of great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now, and never to be equaled again” [Matthew 24:21-22]?  
Or, has the above passage (and all of Matthew 24, for that matter) been fulfilled on or before 70 AD? |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Dispensationalist Position** | First, there will be a 7-year Tribulation. The latter half of the Tribulation will be the “Great Tribulation” (3½ years). Second, the revealing of Antichrist is still to come, but he is likely alive today. Correct answers to the relative time of the Tribulation and the identification of the Antichrist will put much of Revelation in proper perspective.  
The following sets of scripture verses are related, and refer to the Tribulation, also known as the time of Jacob’s trouble, or the 70th week of Daniel (see elsewhere in this document):  
Jeremiah 30:3–9 The days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will bring my people Israel and Judah back from captivity and restore them to the land I gave their forefathers to |
possess,' says the LORD." These are the words the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah: "This is what the LORD says: "'Cries of fear are heard--terror, not peace. Ask and see: Can a man bear children? Then why do I see every strong man with his hands on his stomach like a woman in labor, every face turned deathly pale? How awful that day will be! None will be like it. It will be a time of trouble for Jacob, but he will be saved out of it. "'In that day,' declares the LORD Almighty, 'I will break the yoke off their necks and will tear off their bonds; no longer will foreigners enslave them. Instead, they will serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.

Matthew 24:21-22  For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now--and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.

Daniel 9:27  He [Antichrist] will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him."

Daniel 12:1  "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people--everyone whose name is found written in the book--will be delivered.

It’s hard to assume that Matthew 24:21-22 refers to the period between 65 and 70 AD, as suggested by preterists. It is more realistic to assume that the above scriptures, plus Revelation, are still future. For example, since the 1940s, there are weapons of mass destruction, and we’re starting to see the possibility of a cashless society (e.g., microchip implants, electronic commerce). Today, we have the technology to make some of the events of Revelation manifest. This was unlikely in prior centuries.

Furthermore, the events of Revelation don’t seem to describe a series of localized terror (e.g., Romans versus Jews around 60-70 AD). Rather, it appears to describe worldwide terror. It is the final call of a gracious God to encourage everyone to repent and come to Christ.

The book of Revelation was written around 90 AD by the Apostle John, the last living disciple of Jesus Christ. (John also wrote four other New Testament books: John, 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John.) Tim
LaHaye calls the dating of Revelation to prior to 70 AD “historically ridiculous”. If Revelation were indeed written in 90 AD—or for that matter anytime after about 68-70 AD—then it certainly couldn’t have applied to Nero, or to the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD. However, even if Revelation were written before 90 AD, or even before 70 AD, it doesn’t negate the fact that most of Revelation is still future. For example, if the Second Temple were still standing (i.e., prior to 70 AD), and if God’s message about the Temple applied to the far future, say 1900-2000 years later, then it doesn’t negate the fact that there will be a third temple.

The greatest tribulation “ever” is still future. One cannot say that the Jews’ tribulation of 70 AD was the greatest tribulation ever, since far more Jews were killed by Hitler in the Holocaust in the 1940s. Preterists might argue that the events of 70 AD occurred in Israel. But, in Matthew 24:21-22, the events are not confined to Israel. Christ said that “if those days had not been cut short, no one would survive”. The extinguishing of all flesh was not a threat in 70 AD (with the primitive weapons at the time); but today it could happen (because of nuclear weapons in the hands of many countries, including politically unstable countries). It is reasonable to assume that the Great Tribulation did not occur in the first century.

Christ said that His Coming would be “like a thief in the night”, when no one expected it; however, there was plenty of warning about the Roman invasion of 70 AD. There was a lengthy revolution, and a long build-up. The Roman invasion took months. There were no events like: Christ coming in the clouds of Heaven, days of peace and prosperity “as in the days of Noah”, two sleeping in one bed (with one person taken), and two grinding at the mill (with one taken). The term “as in the days of Noah” doesn’t necessarily highlight the evil nature of those days, but rather the unpreparedness of the people of that day [Pentecost, 1958]. The people were focused on themselves, their pleasures, their day to day lives, and didn’t acknowledge God. This is certainly a message for our generation.

One might argue that Noah’s Flood was a time when much of the world perished (all except 8 people, the animals in the ark, and marine creatures). David Levy reminds us that:

...all flesh outside of the ark died, but the vegetation survived, [and] the earth was not completely destroyed. The Great Tribulation will be greater in its effect on all of creation, especially in the duration of pain and suffering which man will undergo. In fact, Jesus said, “And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened [cut off]” (Matthew 24:22). He was saying, If the Tribulation were any longer than seven years,
nothing would live—man, animal or vegetation. [Levy, 1987, p. 20]

Full preterist Ed Stevens is among those who recognize a lack of support for the preterist viewpoint’s presence in the early church. He asks, “How could it be that some of the apostles and their traveling companions lived through the events of A.D. 70 without recognizing the significance of it and saying something about it? This is the single most significant factor shaping the history of eschatological study that I am aware of.” In other words, if the preterist contention that the prophecies of the Olivet Discourse and Revelation were fulfilled in the first century is true, then why is there no evidence that the early church understood these prophecies in this way?” [Ice, 2003b, p. 39]

Ron Rhodes writes:

Scripture is graphically clear that this period will be characterized by wrath (Zephaniah 1:15,18), judgment (Revelation 14:7), indignation (Isaiah 26:20-21), trial (Revelation 3:10), trouble (Jeremiah 30:7), destruction (Joel 1:15), darkness (Amos 5:18), desolation (Daniel 9:27), overturning (Isaiah 24:1-4), and punishment (Isaiah 24:20-21) ...

The tribulation is the focus of Revelation 4-18, where we read about the seal judgments, the trumpet judgments, and the bowl judgments that will be poured out on human kind in steadily increasing intensity. The suffering will be immense; the death toll immeasurable. [Rhodes, 2008, p. 17]

Zechariah 14:2-4 I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city. Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.

Thomas Ice writes:

The text in Zechariah 14:3 makes it clear the Lord is not only defending His people, but that “the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle.” When did the Lord fight against and defeat the Roman army in A.D. 70? Preterists teach rightly that the A.D. 70 event was a time when God used the Romans, as He had done previously with the Babylonians, to bring judgment upon national Israel. However, Gentry’s tortured interpretation of Zechariah 14:1-2, does not fit the broad features of the passage, let alone the details.

... When in A.D. 70 did the Romans have their flesh rot while
they stood on their feet, and their eyes rot in their sockets, and
their tongue rot in their mouth? Did Josephus describe such an
event?” When, as a result of the siege in A.D. 70, did the wealth
of all the surrounding nations stream into Jerusalem in great
abundance? Of course, the obvious answer is that it did not
happen. [Ice, 2003g, p. 415]

Isaiah 24:1-27:13 has been called the Little Apocalypse of Isaiah
[Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. For example:

Isaiah 24:1-3  See, the LORD is going to lay
waste the earth and devastate it; he will ruin
its face and scatter its inhabitants-- it will
be the same for priest as for people, for master
as for servant, for mistress as for maid, for
seller as for buyer, for borrower as for lender,
for debtor as for creditor. The earth will be
completely laid waste and totally plundered.
The LORD has spoken this word.

Isaiah 26:20-21  Go, my people, enter your rooms
and shut the doors behind you; hide yourselves
for a little while until his wrath has passed
by. See, the LORD is coming out of his dwelling
to punish the people of the earth for their
sins. The earth will disclose the blood shed
upon her; she will conceal her slain no longer.

Preterist Position

There is no such thing as a 7-year tribulation, at least as far as leading
up to some kind of rapture. There are no Scripture verses that
explicitly mention a pre-tribulational rapture or a 7-year tribulation
period. Gap theology, such as placing a 2,000-year gap into Daniel
9:24-27, is wrong. It’s reading into the Scripture something that’s not
there, claims Hank Hanegraaff.

The Tribulation, or Great Tribulation, occurred within 40 years of
Christ’s ministry, and refers to the persecution of Christians by the
“Beast” (Nero) in 64 AD and beyond. “It began shortly after the
Great Fire, when Nero laid the blame for it on the Christians, and
continues with their horrible public executions.” [Brouwer &
Hanegraaff, 2004, p. 340]

Josephus and some other historians claim that the beginning of the
“Tribulation” occurred (by our calendar) in November 65 AD, shortly
after the Great Fire of Rome.

The idea of a “time of great distress”, etc. is simply a hyperbole.
Ancient writing is full of hyperbole. Similarly, Jesus indicated that
the “stars would fall” from the sky to the Earth. This phrase was also
used in the Old Testament to describe the Medes’ conquest of
Babylon.
Jesus’ comment about a tribulation that is so great that nothing can parallel it (i.e., “never to be equaled again”) is a hyperbole. The destruction of Jerusalem in 586 or 587 BC (at the time of the Babylonian exile) was described in the Ezekiel 5:8-9 as the greatest tribulation to date and in the future. So, how could there be another greatest tribulation? Second, Exodus 10 talks about the locust plague that came on Egypt (that didn’t occur before, and never will occur again) but many years later, a similar locust plague is described in the same terms, in Joel 2. Apparently, these were 2 different locust plagues. Third, Solomon was to be the richest and wisest man ever … but today there appear to be people who are richer. Furthermore, Christ was wiser! The point here is that such hyperboles are figures of speech. We need to understand the language of the Bible—in the way it was intended.

Surely Noah’s Flood was a time of “great distress”, and even the horror of Armageddon will leave more survivors than the time of Noah’s Flood, when there were only 8 survivors! Rather, the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple would severely impact the Jewish people.

Kenneth Gentry, quoted in [Ice, 2003a, p. 30] writes:

1,100,000 Jews perished in the siege of Jerusalem ... ‘through the whole history of the human race, we meet with but few, if any instances of slaughter and devastation at all to be compared with this.’ ... as awful as the Jewish loss of life was, the utter devastation of Jerusalem, the final destruction of the temple, and the conclusive cessation of the sacrificial system were lamented even more. The covenantal significance of the loss of the temple stands as the most dramatic outcome of the War. Hence, any Jewish calamity after A.D. 70 would pale in comparison to the redemptive-historical significance of the loss of the temple”.

Hank Hanegraaff frequently refers to the importance of proper interpretation of Scripture, in the context of its original language, culture, and time. Hermeneutics is the art and science of proper Biblical interpretation. In dealing with prophecy, especially Revelation, Hank coined the phrase exegetical eschatology. Exegesis means getting meaning out of Scripture, as opposed to eisegesis, which means reading something into the text (i.e., something that’s not in the text, to begin with). “Learn to read Scripture for all it’s worth,” says Hank. “All of the Bible was written for us; but remember, not all of the Bible was written to us.” [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man]

Gary DeMar adds that God used the Babylonians and Romans to execute judgment on His behalf. God said that “this” generation
would not pass away before His coming in judgment. The hearers of Christ’s statement surely believed that they would be the people alive at that time of judgment.

The “world” mentioned in Matthew 24 refers to the Roman Empire. For example, at the time of Christ’s birth, the “whole world” was to take part in a census. This meant the Roman Empire. Matthew 24 mentions Judea and “the land”—not the whole world. The audience of Matthew 24 is “those who are in Judea” because they would see the abomination that causes desolation—so they’d have to be near by. Furthermore, if it meant the “whole world” at some distant/future point of time, then what would be the point of fleeing to the mountains, if the whole world were to be in tribulation?

All the covenant promises have been fulfilled by the Church, which began with Jewish people. “Church” means “congregation of God”—which at the time meant the Jews. The book of Romans talks of certain branches being broken off the “olive tree” (the tree is a symbol of all believers in God).

Revelation 12 contains symbolic language: the woman with the stars, sun, and moon. Judgment upon Babylon occurs when the sun, stars, and moon “fall”. Thus, this kind of symbolic language is not “allegorizing” or “spiritualizing” away the words of Revelation; rather, this is the way the Old Testament was written. It is apocalyptic language. We need to understand how the Old Testament was written, and then apply it to Revelation.

Matthew 16:27-28 talks about the Son of Man coming in glory. In verse 28, Jesus says, “I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.” Surely this meant that the event would take place in the not too distant future—distant enough that not everyone there might be alive—but rather that some people would still be alive. This suggests a first century fulfillment.

Matthew 10:23 When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is amillennialism? Will there be a literal 1000-year reign of Christ on Earth prior to the beginning of the new heavens and the new earth?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist</td>
<td>Amillennialism claims that there will be no future Millennial period</td>
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<tr>
<td>Position</td>
<td>(of 1000 years) when Christ literally rules and reigns on planet Earth, after his bodily return to Earth.</td>
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<td>Amillennialism, a spiritualized view, teaches that when Christ comes, eternity will begin with no prior literal 1000-year (millennial) reign on earth. Amillenialists generally interpret the 1000-year reign of Christ metaphorically as Christ’s present (spiritual) rule from heaven.</td>
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<td>I see no reason to spiritualize Bible prophecies about the millennium. The Bible plainly teaches a literal 1000-year kingdom over which Christ will rule on the earth (Revelation 20:4,6). [Rhodes, 2008, p. 20]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preterist Position</td>
<td>Most preterists believe the “Millennium” is going on right now, and there will be no special, future period of 1000 years of Christ’s literal, physical reign on Earth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Topic/Question</td>
<td>In light of the teachings in Revelation, how are we to live? For example, does imminence (i.e., the possibility of Christ’s return at any moment) imply a motivating factor (e.g., passion, zeal) for evangelism ... or does it suggest the opposite?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>We are to live in society as salt and light, seeking and promoting peace, except where peace contradicts the Word of God. For example, it would be wrong to “divide the land” of Israel, or to disobey the commands of Scripture. We are to be looking forward to the imminent return of Jesus Christ, and to find comfort in escaping the “wrath to come” or “hour of trial” (1 Thessalonians 1:10; Luke 21:36; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-10; Revelation 3:10) via the pre-tribulational Rapture.</td>
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<td>Dispensationalists have been very evangelistic, and well-motivated, in preaching the message of Christ’s imminent return. They have given large sums of money to organizations that have been helping millions of people come to Christ—and to improve their living conditions. By recognizing that the Rapture could occur at any time, many such Christians live in a way that they try to make the best of the time at hand, because they know that time is short. People who are not expecting the imminent return of Christ are more likely to do nothing, thinking that there’s plenty of time to fix things, so why the rush? By considering imminence, pre-tribulationists are among the Christians who are more likely to preach the gospel and to live each day for Christ. For example, the LaHaye/Jenkins’ “Left Behind” series of books is quite evangelistic, and people have come to Christ by reading these novels.</td>
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<td>Tim LaHaye writes:</td>
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Robert G. Clouse wrote, ‘The early church holding this premillennial view looked for the imminent return of Christ as witnessed by the writings of Papias, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Methodus, Commodianus, and Lactantius.’

J.L. Neve declared, ‘The time of the apostolic Fathers, like that of primitive Christianity, was thoroughly eschatological in tendency. Men had the consciousness that they were living in the last times. The immediate return of Jesus was anticipated. It was this expectation which held the congregations together.’

The Church from A.D. 325 to the Reformation

Belief in the imminent coming of Christ began to be questioned by some church leaders at the end of the second century. When persecution against the Christians stopped and the union of church and state occurred after A.D. 300, ‘the hope of the church underwent a radical transformation.’ As a result, belief in the imminent coming of Christ ‘had ceased to be of any great influence by the fourth century.’

It continued to have little influence in the major part of organized Christendom throughout medieval times and the Renaissance until the Reformation. We are all familiar with the history of the Roman Catholic church from A.D. 325 to the Reformation. After Augustine corrupted that church by teaching them to adopt the pagan Greek philosophy of interpreting all written literature allegorically, the world went through “the dark ages” for over eleven hundred years. Except for some godly saints within the Roman Church and the many who were branded “heretics” by that church, which is what we would call the evangelical church today, the Roman Catholic doctrine of amillennialism reigned supreme. Consequently, the message of imminency was dead to them. … Fortunately, the imminent hope of His coming was kept alive among those evangelicals who took the Bible literally and had pastor shepherds who faithfully taught it to them.

… The interesting thing is that when the common people read the Bible, they tend to take it literally … They naturally then progress to expecting the Lord to return literally to this earth and set up His kingdom.

… That [mid-trib or post-trib] idea of looking for the Antichrist before Jesus comes to rapture His church has to have a deadening influence on the life of any Christian.

… It is a well known fact of history that whenever the imminent return of Christ for His church has had a prominent place in the heart of the Christians, as it did in the first three centuries and during the last two, it has produced three significant effects on believers:

1) A desire for holy living in an unholy age
2) Greater soul winning and evangelistic zeal  
3) A vision and passion for world missions and the fulfilling of the great commission. [LaHaye, 2001]

In summary:

... the Rapture is imminent; He could come at any moment. Only if the Rapture comes before the Tribulation can this be true. In Midtribulationism, the Rapture is always at least 3½ years away. In Posttribulationism it is at least seven years away. It is never imminent. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 154-155]

| Preterist Position | In Bible times, no one would have been able to paint the whole scenario of end times. On the same basis today, no one—however intelligent—can work out what is going to happen in the “end times”. Instead, Christians are to be salt and light to our society, seeking peace, justice, and righteousness, in accordance with the Sermon on the Mount.  
Some dispensationalists are guilty of letting the world degenerate, saying “Look at how bad things are getting!”, and then doing nothing about it. This is inappropriate. There is no pre-tribulational Rapture, so it’s a mistake to give up on this world. We need to make efforts to improve the world. Unless you have a long term perspective, says Gary DeMar, you’re just going to sit back and do nothing. Instead, we need to be proactive. For example, the public school system has degenerated somewhat in recent decades, but look at the growth in the quality of education in the 1990s due to Christian schools and homeschooling.  
The pre-tribulational Rapture model fails to inspire people to witness to unbelievers because the time is not urgent or imminent. For example, people who believe in the pre-trib Rapture often are unconcerned with trying to improve the world and win souls to Christ since they’re often waiting for Christ to simply take them out of the world to escape the coming Tribulation. We should not be saying “See you later” to Israel, that is, giving Jewish people (and Christians) the impression that Israel will be left on its own to face the Tribulation. David Pawson argues that we should tell Israel that it will not be left alone to face the coming persecution (Tribulation).  
In various places in Scripture, the Church faced persecution, and will continue to do so. It is an insult to many persecuted Christians throughout the world to say that the Church in the western world will not have to face serious opposition. |

| Topic/Question | Consider the seven churches of Revelation 2-3. Is this portion of |
Revelation directed to actual churches that were contemporary to John when writing the book of Revelation, or is it directed to future churches, say today and beyond?

**Dispensationalist Position**

Both. The message Christ gave in Revelation 2-3 applied to seven *specific* churches contemporary to John (but not necessarily prior to 70 AD—see below); however, they also apply to the *kinds* of churches (or church ages) between then and now. The letters serve as commendations in some cases, and warnings in other cases. Note the plural word “churches” in the following Scripture, that is found seven times in Revelation 2-3 (once for each church), implying that the reader/listener should listen to the message given to *all* the churches:

> Revelation 2:29  He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

The following table is due to Chuck Missler [Missler, 2006]:

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<td>Promise Given to Overcomer?</td>
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Chuck notes that the promises to the overcomer are a postscript for the first three churches, but in the body of the text for the last four churches. Might this be related somehow to the Rapture? The last four churches have references to the Second Coming. Perhaps the participants of the first three churches will be resurrected after the believers in the latter four churches (i.e., due to the Rapture). There seems to be some evidence that these latter four kinds of churches carry on until the end times.

J. Dwight Pentecost notes that there may be three purposes or applications of the letters to the seven churches, in Revelation [Pentecost, 1958]:

- Application to the seven specific congregations to which the letters were initially addressed and circulated
- Application to the various kinds of churches and individuals throughout the following centuries, including modern times,
during which all of these kinds of churches and individuals exist concurrently

- Application to the characteristic sequential phases that the Church was to pass, from the time of John to modern times. Thus, while the seven kinds of churches exist concurrently in any given period of time, one of the churches dominates a given period.

M.R. DeHaan comments on the church ages [DeHaan, 1946, p. 21]:

- “Ephesus was the Church of the first century.
- Smyrna was the persecuted Church of the second and third centuries.
- Pergamos [also written as Pergamum] was the church from about 312 A.D. to 500 A.D.
- Thyatira represents the Church of the Dark Ages, to the sixteenth century.
- Sardis is the Church of the Renaissance and the Reformation.
- Philadelphia is the Church of the Revival of the nineteenth century.
- Laodicea is the end-time Church of apostasy.”

Ephesus means “desirable one”. Smyrna means “myrrh”—a fragrant spice that was crushed or beaten to fully release its fragrance. Pergamos means “married”, and this church age reflects an unholy union with the world, when the church became wealthy and worldly; it was a time of compromise. “Thyatira” means “a continual sacrifice” and this time describes the condition where “the finished work of Christ was denied, and to it were added works, ceremonies, ritual and sacrifices” [DeHaan, 1946]. The word “Sardis” means “remnant or that which remained”. During this time, the printing press was discovered, America was discovered, and the Reformation took course (e.g., Martin Luther, a rebellion against ecclesiastical hierarchies), but still, there wasn’t much spiritual growth. Philadelphia means “brotherly love”. This church age was a time of missionary movement. Broadcasting was introduced as a technology. Lastly, Laodicea is marked by lukewarmness or indifference, and Christ appears to be shut out (“I stand at the door, and knock”).

It is not clear that the churches mentioned in Revelation existed prior to 70 AD; therefore, the events of 70 AD do not appear to be a fulfillment of the prophecies given to these seven churches. For example, Polycarp was the bishop at Smyrna, and in his letter to the Philippians (circa 110 AD), Polycarp claims that the residents of Smyrna did not know the Lord during this time [LaHaye & Ice, 2003]. As a second example, Christ commended the church at
Ephesus in Revelation; however, the church described does not appear to characterize Ephesus in Paul’s day (pre-70 AD).

Who are the Nicolaitans? The Greek name means “rulers of the people”. There is no mention of this group in church history. Arnold Fruchtenbaum conjectures that this implies an unnatural division of the clergy and the lay people, and perhaps interference of the clergy in the personal lives of the members [Fruchtenbaum, 2004].

With respect to the “ten days” of persecution associated with the church of Smyrna, there is also no confirmation of this in church history, but it may well have been ten literal days of persecution.

Constantine made Christianity the official state religion in the Roman Empire in 313 AD (Pergamos era); thus, the church was “married” to the state. Christ mentions that Pergamos is where Satan’s throne is, where Satan dwells, and where the teachings of Balaam hold.

Balaam, in Numbers 22-24, was a seer of Mesopotamia. He was hired by Balak, the king of Moab, in league with the Midianites, to pronounce a prophetic curse on Israel. Although on four different occasions he tried to curse the Jews, God took control of the seer so that on all four occasions he pronounced a blessing on the Jews instead. With the failure of pronouncing a prophetic curse on Israel, Balaam used a different tactic to have Israel cursed by God. At his recommendation, the females of Moab and Midian were sent out to entice the Jewish men sexually. Part of the enticement included the worship of the gods of Moab and Midian. The plot worked, Israel was cursed, and many died in a plague. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 55]

Overcomers in Pergamum are promised a white stone and a new name. Sometimes in Scripture a new name was given to a person after spiritual victories (e.g., Jacob became Israel, Abram became Abraham):

In the ancient world there were two ways that one received a white stone. One way was when a person was found innocent in a trial; he was given a white stone as a symbol of acquittal. Another way was when a person was to be received into the membership of a private club; he would be given a white stone which was a symbol of his acceptance. ... Third, the promise is that he will be given a new name written on the stone which only he will know. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 56-57]

Christ’s comments to the church of Thyatira included anger over practices due to Queen Jezebel. She introduced Baal worship (idolatry and spiritual fornication) into Israel in Old Testament times. Arnold Fruchtenbaum argues that such practices laid the foundation for some of the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church during the
Dark Ages. He argues that the Roman Catholic Church will go through the Tribulation period (Revelation 2:22), and may actually play a role during the Tribulation:

It was during this period [Thyatira] that ten false doctrines were introduced into the church:

1. Justification by works—Not simply by grace through faith;
2. Baptismal regeneration—That a person is saved by baptism;
3. Worship of images;
4. Celibacy—Forbidding priests to marry, a further distinction between clergy and laity;
5. Confessionalism—Where sins are confessed to a priest who then declares absolution of those sins;
6. Purgatory—A place of confinement which is neither Heaven nor Hell, but a place where one has to be refined before going into Heaven, and so sanctification was not complete at death;
7. Transubstantiation—The concept of the continual and perpetual sacrifice of Jesus;
8. Indulgences—Where through the giving of money, a person’s time in purgatory could be reduced;
9. Penance—Involving the torment of one’s body in order to reduce time in purgatory; and
10. Mariolatry—The worship of the virgin Mary, her elevation as the mother of God, and the declaration of her deity. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 59-60] 

The church of Sardis is associated with the Reformation period, whereby many churches broke away from the Roman Catholic Church. However, many of them remained state churches (e.g., Lutheran churches in Germany and Scandinavia, Anglican churches in England, Presbyterian churches in Scotland).

In Revelation 3:10, Christ tells the church of Philadelphia that he will keep them “from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth”. John uses the Greek words *tereo* and *ek*. When the former verb is used with the word *en*, it means “to cause one to persevere or stand firm in a thing”; however, when it is accompanied by *ek* instead, it means “by guarding to cause one to escape in safety out of” [Pentecost, 1958]. Pentecost adds that since the presence of one righteous man in Sodom prevented judgment on Sodom, the Lord will remove the church prior to outpouring of judgment on the earth during the Tribulation. Since the time of the original Philadelphia church has passed, and since the age in which the Philadelphia church dominated has passed, this suggests that characteristics of all seven churches will be present up to the time of the Rapture.

Some scholars believe that Christians today are living in the age of the Laodicean church (the seventh church listed in Revelation): a
kind of church that is not “suffering” to the extent of the earlier churches, but rather a church that appears to be indifferent, and not recognizing that it itself is in need. In this age of apostasy, there have been many church splits (i.e., one new church, one remaining church) due to differences in teachings when preachers deviate from Scripture. In some cases, these splits have occurred over disputable, but non-essential, issues, in which case the members can respectfully disagree with one another, but not divide over [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*].

Isaiah 8:20 To the law and to the testimony: if they speak **not according to this word**, it is because there is no light in them.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 **All Scripture** is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be **thoroughly equipped** for every good work.

Acts 17:11 Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and **examined the Scriptures** every day to see if what Paul said was true.

Recall that Christ validated most of the Old Testament authors by quoting scripture verses from them. The “law and the testimony” refer to Moses and the prophets, and “this word” refers to Scripture.

The “angels of the seven churches” seems to suggest that individual angels are assigned to guide or watch out for individual churches [Morris, 1983]. Had John meant “pastors” instead of “angels”, he would have said so.

Since the last four churches (Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea) appear to survive until the return of Christ, that would imply that the churches represent **stages** of church development over the ages. A rough correlation between periods in church history is given in the following table from [Morris, 1983, p. 66]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church</th>
<th>Period in Church History</th>
<th>When?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ephesus</td>
<td>Apostolic age</td>
<td>Before 100 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smyrna</td>
<td>Age of persecution</td>
<td>100-313 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pergamos</td>
<td>Imperial church age</td>
<td>313-590 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thyatira</td>
<td>Age of papacy</td>
<td>590-1517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sardis</td>
<td>Reformation</td>
<td>1517-1730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>Missionary age</td>
<td>1730-1900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Laodicea    | Age of apostasy          | 1900-
| Preterist Position | This has a first-century context and fulfillment. It is not a twenty-first century application; it has nothing to do with the Second Coming or the Rapture. Furthermore, Christ would not be making a promise to a church (in Philadelphia, in Asia Minor) about a 21st-century fulfillment.

Jesus was obviously speaking of a fore-future event when he encouraged the church in Smyrna with the words, ‘Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life’ (Revelation 2:10). ... Make no mistake: while our Lord’s words apply to us, they were written to a first-century church about to face the mother of all tribulations.

As with the church at Smyrna, Jesus says to the church of Philadelphia, ‘I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth’ (Revelation 3:10). It is incredible to suppose that Jesus is telling this first-century church that he is going to protect them from an hour of trial that is going to take place sometime between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. Yet this is precisely what LaHaye would have us believe. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 91-92]

There were actually seven churches in Asia Minor (also known as the Province of Asia) that were the recipients of John’s letter (Revelation). The seven churches were being warned and encouraged with the message of Revelation, and the ultimate future plans that God has for all believers who stand firm in the faith. Since this was written before 70 AD, it would give them information and strength about a near-future calamity and judgment upon Jerusalem. The Old Testament language and imagery would be familiar to them.

| Topic/Question | When was Revelation written?
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------
| Dispensationalist Position | The book of Revelation was written well after 70 AD—likely between 90-96 AD; 95 AD is frequently cited. For example, Mark Hitchcock’s PhD thesis was a defense of the 95 AD writing of Revelation.

An argument from the preterist camp is that Revelation couldn’t have been written this late; otherwise, the destruction of the Second Temple (in 70 AD) would surely be explicitly mentioned. But perhaps it was common knowledge to all, and perhaps the mention of a Temple in John’s writing of Revelation was clearly understood to mean a future Temple (since the Second Temple had been destroyed 20-26 years prior to its writing). Furthermore, there is not much |
fulfilled prophecy that is explicitly mentioned in Revelation; so, there is a precedent here. Note also that Revelation was written primarily to a Gentile audience a long way from Jerusalem [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007].

Besides not explicitly mention the destruction of the Temple (and the fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecies), Revelation does not directly quote Old Testament passages either.

Hanegraaff says that “New Testament writers were quick to highlight fulfilled prophecies.” However, it is generally agreed among scholars that the book of Revelation never directly quotes any previous prophecies. According to most counts, there are at least 278 allusions to the Old Testament in the 404 verses of Revelation. [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007, p. 200]

With respect to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, Christ’s prophecy about “not one stone standing on another” was literally fulfilled when the Romans burned the Temple, because the heat of the fire melted the gold on the walls in the Temple. Later, the Roman soldiers pried the rocks apart to get at the gold. Thus, Christ’s prophecy was fulfilled. There is no problem with this fulfillment and the dispensationalist model of eschatology because the Temple mentioned in Revelation is a rebuilt Temple. It will be rebuilt around the time of the 70th week of Daniel (i.e., just before the 7-year Tribulation). Note also that there was no temple when Ezekiel prophesied about the temple (Ezekiel 40-48), and there was no temple when Daniel gave his prophecies.

While it is true that many scholars do hold to a pre-70 date for Revelation, it is crucial to observe that the preterist position requires more than just a pre-70 date. According to Gentry, Revelation anticipates the destruction of Jerusalem (August A.D. 70), the death of Nero (June A.D. 68), and the formal imperial engagement of the Jewish War (spring A.D. 67). Therefore, for preterists, the earliest Revelation could have been written (the terminus a quo) is the beginning of the Neronic persecution in November A.D. 64, and the latest possible date (the terminus ad quem) is spring A.D. 67. The date Gentry favors is A.D. 65. [Hitchcock, 2003, p. 125]

Their book gives additional documentation on how some of the early Church fathers adhered to a late date. For example, Irenaeus (A.D. 120-202) wrote that Revelation was written “towards the end of Domitian’s reign”. Eusebius (A.D. 260-340), “the father of church history”, wrote in his classic work Ecclesiastical History that the book of Revelation was written in the reign of Domitian. Jerome (A.D. 340-419) wrote: “In the fourteenth year then after Nero, Domitian having raised a second persecution, he [John] was banished
to the island of Patmos, and wrote the Apocalypse, on which Justin Martyr and Irenaeus afterwards wrote commentaries.” (Jerome quoted in [Hitchcock, 2003, p. 135])

Furthermore, the authors summarize that the Domitianic date is supported by: Irenaeus (180 AD), Victorinus (c. 300 AD), Eusebius (c. 300 AD), Jerome (c. 400 AD), Sulpicius Severus (c. 400 AD), The Acts of John (c. 650 AD), Primasius (c. 540 AD), Orosius (c. 600 AD), Andreas (c. 600 AD), and Venerable Bede (700 AD). The Neronic date is supported by the Syriac version of the New Testament (550 AD), Arethas (c. 900 AD), and Theophylact (d. 1107 AD).

Further support of a late writing of Revelation is given by the condition of the seven churches:

Jesus’ statement to the church of Ephesus in Revelation 2:2 that it had guarded itself well against error does not fit what we know of this church in Nero’s day (Acts 20:29-30; 1 Tim. 1:3-7; 2 Tim. 2:17-18).

Moreover, Revelation 2:1-7 makes no mention of the great missionary work of Paul in Asia Minor. On this third missionary journey Paul headquartered in Ephesus for three years and had a profound ministry there. If John wrote Revelation in AD 65 then the omission of any mention of Paul in the letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor is inexplicable. However, if John wrote thirty years later to the second generation in the churches, then the omission is easily understood.

... Apparently, the church of Smyrna did not even exist during the ministry of Paul. Polycarp was the bishop of Smyrna. In his letter to the Philippians (11:3), written in about AD 110, Polycarp says that the Smyrneans did not know the Lord during the time Paul was ministering.

... The church of Laodicea is the only one of the seven churches (and possibly Sardis) that does not have one thing to commend. In his letter to the Colossians, probably written in AD 60-62, Paul indicates that the church was an active group (Colossians 4:13). He mentions the church there three times in his Colossian letter (2:2; 4:13,16). It would certainly take more than three to five years for the church to depart so completely from its earlier acceptable status that absolutely nothing good could be said about it.

... Revelation 2:13 mentions the martyrdom of a man named Antipas in the city of Pergamum. According [to] church history, Antipas was martyred during the reign of Domitian in either AD 83 or 92. Since the martyrdom of Antipas is in the past when Revelation was written, Revelation could not have been written before the reign of Domitian began in AD 81. [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007, pp. 201-208]
| **Preterist Position** | Revelation was likely written in the mid-60s AD, but definitely not later than 70 AD. Why? If the Temple had been destroyed by the time of writing, then surely John would have mentioned it. For example, John would likely have said that, “this was to fulfill what was written by the prophet…” or “this was to fulfill the prophecy given by Jesus Christ”. Other books of the Bible often state words to that effect. Hank Hanegraaff calls the destruction of the Temple “the mother of all prophecies”. Thus, the Temple may well have existed at that point, making the necessity of a third temple (i.e., a future Temple) irrelevant. Furthermore, there appears to be no historical evidence of a late writing.

Nero, a possible Antichrist, died in 68 AD, so this means that parts of Revelation were fulfilled during the time of Nero. The words of Revelation, therefore, would have had direct applicability to the people of that day.

Jesus makes an important prophecy about the destruction of the Temple (in 70 AD): not one stone would be left upon another. The Temple was an important focus of Christ’s Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21). The Olivet Discourse is a key to Bible prophecy. The readers of Revelation prior to 70 AD would recognize the destruction of the Second Temple as being a future event—which then would have been fulfilled in their day, thus further making Revelation all the more relevant to them. Some of what Christ was saying was directed to inhabitants of Jerusalem in and before 70 AD—to warn them to flee the city (e.g., “Let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains”). David Chilton, for example, believes that the Olivet Discourse is about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Norm Geisler concurs. Had Revelation (or other books of the Bible) been written after 70 AD, the author would have explicitly written about the destruction of the Temple. Many of the other prophets in the Bible specifically indicated the case where a prophecy came true, so why wouldn’t John do the same? If John didn’t write Revelation until 90 AD, then he could have easily confirmed the fulfillment of the destruction of the Second Temple (as per the Olivet Discourse), but he didn’t—probably because the Second Temple was still standing! In other words, the year of writing Revelation was before 70 AD. Remember, John was a close follower of Christ, and he and... |
the early Christians would likely have made explicit mention of such fulfilled prophecies. In Chapter 11, John was told to measure the Temple, so this portion of Scripture would have been a great place to comment on the destruction of the Second Temple, had that been the case.

Consider an analogy of America in the early 21st century. Suppose someone writing an important article about terrorism in America avoided mentioning the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York City.

Consider another parallel. Imagine that you are reading a history concerning Jewish struggles in Nazi Germany and find no mention whatsoever of the Holocaust. Would it be ‘historically ridiculous,’ rather than ‘historically reasonable,’ to suppose this history was written prior to the outbreak of World War II? [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 153-154]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Should we assume that there are double fulfillments (i.e., double references) in Revelation? For example, might there be a short-term fulfillment in 65-70 AD, and then a long-term fulfillment in the 21st century or later?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>Most of Revelation is still in the future, but some of the events mentioned in Revelation could have had some parallel in 65-70 AD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preterist Position</td>
<td>Most of Revelation is historical. No second fulfillment is needed or expected (e.g., other than Heaven, and the single rapture that occurs when Christ returns).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealist Position</td>
<td>Most of Revelation is about the symbolic struggle of good versus evil. Specific historical or future events aren’t the goal of the writer of Revelation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is meant by the term “the last days”?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Dispensationalist Position | The last days began with the advent (arrival) of Jesus Christ, and will end at His Second Coming. The book of Hebrews was written around 64-68 AD, and states: 

Hebrews 1:2  but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

Some scholars think that we are living in the “last of the last days”. |
| Preterist Position | John was one of the last apostles to die. That timeframe is part of the last days—and it extends to today. |
The book of Joel seems to have a lot of eschatological themes. Is the book historical, spiritual, or does it portray a future time (e.g., Armageddon)? What is meant by the term “the Day of the Lord”, which is used often in the book of Joel? Is it the same as “the Day of Christ” and “the Day of God”?

Joel describes the Armageddon scenario. Clues about the time of its fulfillment are as follows. It will take place in the last days (Joel 3:1-3); after the defeat of the northern army (Joel 2:20); after the land becomes fruitful and the Spirit is poured out upon all flesh (Joel 2:28—note that its fulfillment started in Acts 2:16-18); it will be accompanied by fire, blood, and smoke (Joel 2:30); and, finally, the sun will be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood (Joel 2:31).

“The fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy began at Pentecost, was interrupted until after the Church is gone and Israel owns her Messiah, and then at the Second Coming of the Spirit, all will be fulfilled.” [DeHaan, 1964]

Acts 2:20-21  The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3  Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.

There are various viewpoints as to what, exactly, constitutes the Day of the Lord [Pentecost, 1958]. The Old Testament (KJV) uses the three terms: “that day”, “the day”, and “the great day” more than 75 times. Almost all authors say that the Day of the Lord is not a 24-hour period. Some believe that the Day of the Lord refers specifically to the seven-year Tribulation. Some believe that it refers to the latter half of the Tribulation (i.e., the Great Tribulation), leading up to the Second Coming.

John Walvoord says that the Day of the Lord begins with the Rapture, and ends with the Great White Throne Judgment at the end of the Millennium [Walvoord, 1990].

Arnold Fruchtenbaum writes:
In every passage of the Scriptures that the term the Day of Jehovah or the Day of the Lord is found, it is always and without exception a reference to the Tribulation period. ... While the phrase that day is used both negatively and positively and therefore many times it does apply to the Millennium, the phrase Day of Jehovah or Day of the Lord is always used negatively and never included the Millennial Kingdom. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 173]

He adds that Scripture uses the following synonyms to describe the Tribulation: the Time of Jacob’s Trouble, the 70th Week of Daniel, Jehovah’s Strange Work, Jehovah’s Strange Act, the Day of Israel’s Calamity, the Indignation, the Overflowing Scourge, the Day of Vengeance, the Year of Recompense, the Time of Trouble, the Day of Wrath, the Day of Distress, the Day of Wasteness, the Day of Desolation, the Day of Darkness, the Day of Gloominess, the Day of Clouds, the Day of Thick Darkness, the Day of the Trumpet, the Day of Alarm, the Day of the Lord, the Wrath of God, the Hour of Trial, the Great Day of the Wrath of the Lamb of God, the Wrath to Come, the Wrath, the Great Tribulation, and the Hour of Judgment [Fruchtenbaum, 2004].

David Levy writes:

“The phrase day of the Lord is used some five times in Joel … Although it has reference to the local judgment God would bring on Judah through this plague, it speaks of a future day when God will intervene in judgment upon the world. For example, Joel 2:31 must be speaking of a future day of judgment, because the sun was not darkened, nor the moon turned into blood during Joel’s day.” [Levy, 1987, p. 12]

Levy gives the following definitions:

- Man’s Day = The day which now is, when men have control over human government.

- The Day of Christ = The day when Christ comes to rapture the Church out of the Earth.

- The Day of the Lord = The day when God takes direct control in the affairs of men extending from the Rapture of the Church to the Great White Throne Judgment.

- The Day of God = The day when the heavens pass away and the earth is renovated by fire, and a new heaven and earth usher in the eternal state. [Levy, 1987, p. 17]

Dave Hunt and J. Dwight Pentecost, however, state that the Day of the Lord refers to the period beginning with the Rapture, includes the Great Tribulation and the Millennial reign of Christ, and goes on for
eternity. This appears to be the best explanation. A convincing verse for including the new heavens and the new earth (that occur after the Millennium) is found in Peter’s epistle (letter):

2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

The locusts in Joel 1 are symbolic of those invading nations who will come upon Judah destroying the land. Are the raptured saints involved in this battle? Walid Shoebat and Joel Richardson think so [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008]. Consider Joel 2:

Joel 2:1-11 Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming. It is close at hand—a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes, such as never was of old nor ever will be in ages to come. Before them fire devours, behind them a flame blazes. Before them the land is like the garden of Eden, behind them, a desert waste—nothing escapes them. They have the appearance of horses; they gallop along like cavalry. With a noise like that of chariots they leap over the mountaintops, like a crackling fire consuming stubble, like a mighty army drawn up for battle. At the sight of them, nations are in anguish; every face turns pale. They charge like warriors; they scale walls like soldiers. They all march in line, not swerving from their course. They do not jostle each other; each marches straight ahead. They plunge through defenses without breaking ranks. They rush upon the city; they run along the wall. They climb into the houses; like thieves they enter through the windows. Before them the earth shakes, the sky trembles, the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine. The LORD thunders at the head of his army; his forces are beyond number, and mighty are those who obey his command. The day of the LORD is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?

Revelation 19:6-21 Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) ... I saw heaven standing open and
there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. ... The armies of heaven were following him ... Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. ... The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.

Revelation 7:9,13-14 After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ... Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes--who are they, and where did they come from?" I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

The passages above (Joel 2, Revelation 19, and Revelation 7) appear to be in the context of the Battle of Armageddon, because of the linkage to “the Day of the Lord”. Furthermore, the fact that God leads an army, and that this army appears to be unaffected by human armies, suggests a supernatural force. Is it angelic? Possibly, but note that Revelation 7 and 19 speak of the Lord returning with an army of saints.

Other Scripture passages that seem to draw a parallel to the above verses include:

Isaiah 13:1-6 An oracle concerning Babylon that Isaiah son of Amoz saw: Raise a banner on a bare hilltop, shout to them; beckon to them to enter the gates of the nobles. I have commanded my holy ones; I have summoned my warriors to carry out my wrath--those who rejoice in my triumph. Listen, a noise on the mountains, like that of a great multitude! Listen, an uproar among the kingdoms, like nations massing together! The LORD Almighty is mustering an army for war. They come from faraway lands, from the ends of the heavens--the LORD and the weapons of his wrath--to destroy the whole country. Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty.

Zechariah 14:1-5 A day of the LORD is coming ... I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem
Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.

Jude 14-15 Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

Daniel 7:10 A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
<th>Joel is written in Old Testament symbolic language which refers to the judgment of God. The Scriptures in Joel were fulfilled on or before 70 AD.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic/Question</td>
<td>Consider the notion of “signs in the heavens”, that is, the sun being darkened, the moon not giving its light, and the stars falling from the sky. Revelation 6:13 speaks of stars falling to the earth. Is this literal?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>The word “star” (aster in the Greek) is used to refer to any celestial body other than the sun or moon [Morris, 1983]. The darkening of the sun, and the moon not giving its light, can be interpreted literally. For example, it might be that thick smoke in the air (similar to oil and gas fires in Kuwait and Iraq in the 1990s) is the cause. Stars falling from the sky might be meteor showers. As a general rule, events that don’t seem to make any sense could well be symbolic. All other things should be considered to be literal, unless there is a clear reason not to do so—perhaps due to an earlier reference in Scripture. Be aware that there may be both a symbolic and a literal interpretation that is valid for the same event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preterist Position</td>
<td>It is not literal. Stars being flung to Earth make no sense since a single star could swallow up the earth. In the Old Testament, figures of speech were used that were not</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
meant to be taken literally. For example, in Isaiah 13:10, the fall of Babylon (to the Medes) is described: “the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall”. This language is similar to the judgment language used by Jesus. Similar language is used in Isaiah 34 or Ezekiel 32 regarding the fall of Edom or Egypt. So, it might mean that an empire that appears to be as solid as the stars in the sky, would fall. Or in another context involving young men, the sun being darkened might suggest that their eyes will dim as they grow older.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Revelation 6:14 mentions that every mountain and island were moved out of their places. Is this literal?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>This is a more difficult passage to interpret than the one about possible meteors striking the earth (Revelation 6:13). It may literally be a massive natural catastrophe. The effect of earthquakes and continental drift (of significant magnitude) could satisfy the prophecy of verse 14 [Morris, 1983]. Note that islands are partially submerged mountains. But then, amazingly, even this would pass. After these few terrifying days, the stars stopped falling and the terrible shakings ceased. The survivors emerged from their shelters and began again to rationalize their resistance to God. After all, these awful calamities could be explained scientifically, so perhaps they had been too quick to attribute them to God’s wrath. They quickly set about rebuilding their damaged structures and became more resolute than ever in their opposition to the gospel of Christ. [Morris, 1983, p. 124]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preterist Position</td>
<td>It is not literal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Topic/Question</td>
<td>What are the major covenants in the Bible?</td>
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**Dispensationalist Position**

There are five major covenants: Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic, New Covenant, and Mosaic. The first four covenants are eternal; the latter covenant is temporal.

There are two types of covenants: conditional (Mosaic) and unconditional (the other four). In the conditional covenant, Israel was to obey God in order to get certain blessings; otherwise, there would be curses. In an unconditional covenant, it doesn’t matter what Israel does; God has promised that He will fulfill the promises He made.

1. The Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3)

The covenant made with Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, and confirmed and enlarged to him in Genesis 12:6-7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-14; 22:15-18, entitled certain basic promises. These have been summarized [by G.N.H. Peters in *The Theocratic Kingdom*, Volume 1, pp. 293-294]:

   The things promised by God are the following: 1. That Abraham’s name shall be great. 2. That a great nation should come from him. 3. He should be a blessing so great that in him shall all families of the earth be blessed. 4. To him personally (“to thee”) and to his seed should be given Palestine forever to inherit. 5. The multitude of his seed should be as the dust of the earth. 6. That whoever blessed him should be blessed, and whosoever cursed him should be cursed. 7. He should be the father of many nations. 8. Kings should proceed from him. 9. The covenant shall be perpetual, “an everlasting covenant.” 10. The land of Canaan shall be “an everlasting possession.” 11. God will be a God to him and to his seed. 12. His seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. 13. In his seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

In order to reaffirm the covenant to Abraham concerning the seed and the land (Gen. 15:18) Abraham is told by God to prepare animals of sacrifice that together they might enter into a blood covenant. ... When the sacrifice was prepared Abraham must have expected to walk with God through the divided animals, for custom demanded that the two who entered into a blood covenant should walk together between the parts of the sacrifice. He would recognize the solemnity of the occasion, for the ritual meant that the two who were entering into the covenant were bound by blood to fulfill that covenanted or the one breaking the covenant would be required to pour out his blood in forfeit, as the blood of the animals that bound them had been poured out. However, when the covenant was to be entered into, Abraham was put to sleep so that he could not be a participant in the covenant, but could only be a recipient of a covenant to which he brought nothing in the way of obligations. [Pentecost, 1958, pp. 72, 78]
In summary, in Genesis 15:7-21 we learn that God passed through the animal parts while Abraham was asleep; thus, it is an unconditional covenant.

2. The Palestinian Covenant (Deuteronomy 30:1-10)

An analysis of this passage will show that there are seven main features in the program there unfolded: (1) The nation will be plucked off the land for its unfaithfulness (Deut. 28:63-68; 30:1-3); (2) there will be a future repentance of Israel (Deut. 28:63-68; 30:1-3); (3) their Messiah will return (Deut. 30:3-6); (4) Israel will be restored to the land (Deut. 30:5); (5) Israel will be converted as a nation (Deut 30:4-8; cf. Rom. 11:26-17); (6) Israel’s enemies will be judged (Deut. 30:7); (7) the nation will then receive her full blessing (Deut. 30:9). [Pentecost, 1958, p. 97]

3. The Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7:10-16)

The provisions of the Davidic covenant include, then, the following items: (1) David is to have a child, yet to be born, who shall succeed him and establish his kingdom. (2) This son (Solomon) shall build the temple instead of David. (3) The throne of his kingdom shall be established forever. (4) The throne will not be taken away from him (Solomon) even though his sins justify chastisement. (5) David’s house, throne, and kingdom shall be established forever. [John F. Walvoord, in [Pentecost, 1958, pp. 101-102]]

The inference is plain that Christ is seated on the Father’s throne, but that this is not at all the same as being seated on the throne of David. [John F. Walvoord, in [Pentecost, 1958, p. 109]]

4. The New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-40)

(1) Israel is to be regathered; (2) Israel to be one nation, ruled by one king; (3) Israel no longer to be idolatrous, to be cleansed, forgiven; (4) Israel to dwell ‘forever’ in the land after regathering; (5) the covenant of peace with them to be everlasting; (6) God’s tabernacle to be with them, i.e., He will be present with them in a visible way; (7) Israel to be known among Gentiles as a nation blessed of God. All of these promises are implicit in the basic passage of Jeremiah, but they confirm, enrich, and enlarge the covenant. [John F. Walvoord, in [Pentecost, 1958, p. 118]

The “taking out of a people” thus constitutes God’s present-age program. This people constitutes the church, the body of which
He is the head (Eph. 1:22-23), the bride of which He is the bridegroom (Eph. 5:25-27,32), the branch of which He is the supporting vine (John 15:1), the flock of which He is the Shepherd (John 10:7-27), the temple of which He is the cornerstone (Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:5), the ministering priests of which He is the high priest (1 Pet. 2:5-9), the new creation of which He is the head and the first fruits (1 Cor. 15:45). [Pentecost, 1958, p. 133]

5. The Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 19:5ff, Deuteronomy 28:1-68)

The covenants are fulfilled in the Millennial age following the Second Coming of Jesus Christ [Pentecost, 1958], an age characterized by peace and righteousness:

- The promises in the Abrahamic covenant concerning the land and the blessings are fulfilled.
- The promises in the Davidic covenant concerning the king, the throne, and the royal house are fulfilled by the Messiah.
- The promises in the Palestinian covenant concerning the land are fulfilled.
- The promises of the New Covenant are fulfilled: a new heart, the forgiveness of sin, and the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Preterist Position

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is the “covenant with death” described in Isaiah 28:18?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Isaiah 28:10 Your covenant with death will be annulled; your agreement with the grave will not stand. When the overwhelming scourge sweeps by, you will be beaten down by it.</td>
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</table>

Dispensationalist Position

This is likely the seven-year peace treaty (or the strengthening of an existing agreement, possibly between Israel and its neighbours), that is made by the Antichrist with the Jews in the seven years leading up to Armageddon. In other words, it likely refers to the 7-year covenant in Daniel 9:27, that is, the covenant engineered by the Antichrist.

It is obvious that the leaders of Israel will go into this covenant in order to obtain some measure of security and to escape the overflowing scourge. The figure of a flood, when used symbolically, is always a symbol of a military invasion. Hence, the leaders of Israel will believe that by entering the covenant, they will be free from any further military invasions. However, God declares that this is not a covenant of life, but a covenant of
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<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has Israel ever possessed the full extent of the Promised Land in its history?</td>
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<td>On a possibly related issue, what is meant by the term “dividing up the land”? (This phrase is used in Joel 3:2 where God says that He will judge the nations because they “divided up My land”.)</td>
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<td><strong>Joel 3:2</strong> I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will enter into judgment against them concerning my inheritance, my people Israel, for they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land.</td>
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<td><strong>God owns the land, but He gave it to Israel to manage.</strong> Pamela Thomas writes:</td>
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<td>When God made [the] covenant with Abraham, He gave the land of Canaan to Abraham’s descendants as an everlasting possession. ...</td>
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<td>God promised to bless Isaac according to the oath or covenant He made with Abraham: “Dwell in this Land and I will be with you and bless you: for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your Father” (Gen. 26:3-5). Then the covenant promise was repeated to the next generation when God spoke to Jacob at Bethel and told him that He would bring him back to the Land and would not leave him until He had fulfilled His covenant to him (Gen. 28:13-15). Throughout the prophetic Scriptures, God promised a regathering of the Jewish people to their Land in the latter days from which they would never again be uprooted ( Isa. 11:11-14; Jer. 16:14-16; 30:3; Amos 9:14-15).</td>
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<td><strong>The Land of Israel, however, clearly belongs to God. Leviticus 25:23 says, “The land is Mine and you are strangers and sojourners with Me.”</strong> We are reminded here that the Land shall not be sold permanently, because it belongs to God. God acknowledges the unique character of this territory by referring to it as “My land” (Ezek. 36:5,20; 38:16; Joel 3:2) and as the Jewish people’s “own land” (Ezek. 36:17, 24; 37:21). ...</td>
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<td>If the Israelites obeyed God fully and kept His covenant, then they would be His treasured possession out of all nations, and He...</td>
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would do wonders amongst them previously never seen in any nation (Exod. 34:10). But, in Deuteronomy 28-30, God said if they did not obey Him, He would uproot them from the Land. However, when they repented and turned back to the Lord, He would bring them back. The Land would still remain theirs.

However, history shows that the Jewish people never actually possessed their full inheritance, even during the great leadership of Joshua and Caleb when they took the fertile plains bordering the Mediterranean and the River Jordan. The promised territory extended from the River Euphrates to Egypt...

History records that the descendants of Abraham, under the leadership of Joshua, entered the Promised Land in about 1422 BC. The Land was then divided among the 12 tribes. God later renewed His covenant with David, Israel’s greatest king, who first reigned over the territory of Judah and finally over the entire nation of Israel. The Scriptures record that the reign of David lasted some 40 years, between [approximately] 1011 BC and 971 BC. God made a covenant with David that promised 3 things: a land forever ..., an unending dynasty ..., and an everlasting kingdom. ‘At this point in Israel’s history, we see a very rare period where God is obeyed, loved, worshipped and appreciated for who He is. As a consequence, David is exalted, Israel is delivered from all its enemies, all its territory is restored, and Israel becomes the great power of the region’ [Thomas, 2006]

By definition, the unconditional promises of God are not dependent on Israel’s faithfulness. Furthermore, as per Joel 3:2, God will execute judgment/punishment upon those who “divided up my land”.

William Koenig wrote a book discussing the consequences of attempting to divide Israel [Koenig, 2008]. With respect to Israel’s key ally (the United States), he points out that the ten most expensive insurance claims, the twelve most expensive hurricanes, three of the four largest tornados, and the two largest terrorism events in US history occurred on the same day, or within 24 hours, of events such as the United States: (a) applying pressure to Israel to trade land for peace, (b) supporting or sponsoring meetings to consider doing the same, and (c) calling for a Palestinian state. Koenig asks if these correlated events are God’s warning signs, or if they are just coincidences.

The Valley of Jehoshaphat, sometimes called the Kidron Valley, is in Jerusalem. In particular, it separates the Mount of Olives from the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. It is believed that this is where Christ will judge people after He returns, and the location is likely to be where part of the Battle of Armageddon takes place. Jehoshaphat means “Yahweh judges” (i.e., God/Jehovah judges). This refers to the time when God will judge the Gentile nations who have survived the Great Tribulation, and this judgment will take place on the Earth.
after the second coming of Christ.

What is meant by judgment of the nations? The word “nation” (Greek: ethnos) refers to the judgment of individual Gentiles within the country, not the judgment of whole nations. The following reasons bear this out. First, the message of salvation presented in the Tribulation calls for an individual acceptance, not a national one. Second, there is no record in Scripture that whole Gentile nations will accept the preaching of the 144,000 Jewish witnesses. Third, in all the judgments presented in Scripture, it is the individual, not the nation, who is judged. Fourth, the parables on judgment presented by Christ (Matthew 13:30, 47-50) are on individuals. Fifth, the term nation is used in other portions of the New Testament with reference to individuals (Matthew 6:31-32; 12:21; 20:19; 28:19; Acts 11:18; 15:3; 26:20). [Levy, 1987].

Scripture in Joel 3 is similar to the Battle of Armageddon described in Revelation:

Joel 3:9-20  Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare for war! Rouse the warriors! let all the fighting men draw near and attack. Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears. Let the weakling say, 'I am strong!' Come quickly, all you nations from every side, and assemble there. Bring down your warriors, O LORD! 'Let the nations be roused; let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side. ... Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine. The LORD will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem; the earth and the sky will tremble. But the LORD will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel. ... But Egypt will be desolate, Edom [Jordan] a desert waste, because of violence done to the people of Judah, in whose land they shed innocent blood. Judah will be inhabited forever and Jerusalem through all generations.

Was Joel’s prophecy fulfilled at Pentecost?

Joel said that God would pour His Spirit out on [all flesh] ... At Pentecost God did not pour out His Spirit on all flesh, but on a select group of people, and likewise today. God will not pour out His Spirit on all flesh until the Kingdom Age.

Another reason why Joel’s prophecy was not fulfilled on the day of Pentecost is clearly seen in Acts 2:17-21. Peter went on to quote, “And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in earth beneath: blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come” (Acts 2:19-20; cp. Joel
2:30-31) … Scripture very distinctly presents that these prophecies are to be fulfilled in “the great and the terrible day of the Lord” (verse 31) at the end of the Tribulation period. [Levy, 1987, p. 54]

We also note the mention of “beating swords into plowshares” (in Joel’s passage above), but also in Isaiah 2:4 and Micah 4:3:

Isaiah 2:4  He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

Dave Hunt states that the United Nations effectively partitioned the land—God’s land—before giving Israel the remainder; therefore, all nations are indirectly responsible. Dave adds: “The God of the Bible has promised to protect Israel, while Allah of the Qur’an and Islam has sworn to put an end to her. The real battle is not between Arabs and Jews but between Allah and Yahweh [the God of the Bible].” [Hunt, 2006]

May 14, 1948 represents the return of Jews to the land (and more specifically, Israel’s independence), after an absence from the land (due to exile, Roman rule, and low inhabitation of the land) of a period spanning 2520 years (i.e., since about 606 BC ... when using 360 days as 1 Biblical year).

The promised land was not geographically fulfilled in the time of Joshua or elsewhere in the Old Testament. In fact, its fulfillment may have to wait until the Millennium.

Many dispensationalists encourage Jews to return to Israel to encourage the soon return of Christ, and to fulfill prophecy.

The reality is that God will punish the nations for their unjust treatment of Israel—namely persecution that has overstepped the boundaries that God had set forth when He used the nations to bring judgment against Israel for her rebellion, and for her rejection of God.

Ludwig Schneider writes:

“The nations often believed that their intention to wipe out the Jews was making a contribution to world peace. Even churches believed that they were carrying out God’s commandments by persecuting the Jews. Today, Israel is viewed once again as ‘the obstacle to world peace.’” [Schneider, 2006]
Dave Hunt says that it is only because of the magnitude of the Holocaust during World War II that the United Nations gave Israel a homeland in the Middle East. Had it not been for the Holocaust, it is doubtful that Israel would have received the favour (pity) of the world (i.e., it is doubtful that the U.N. would have voted to give Israel its ancient homeland). Even so, Hunt points out that the amount of land that Israel received is only a small fraction of the land that it held around 1000 BC.

Genesis 26:2-5  The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because Abraham obeyed me and kept my requirements, my commands, my decrees and my laws."

Genesis 28:10-15  Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

Concerning Israel, David Hocking says: 31 times it’s called the Land of Israel, and 66 times it’s called Canaan. Furthermore, the land was clearly given to the children of Israel by God Himself. The Old Testament states that Israel’s borders will some day encompass half of modern-day Iraq, and stretch all the way to the river of Egypt.

Ron Rhodes writes:

First, Joshua 21:43-45 is absolutely true regarding God fulfilling
His part in giving the Israelites the promised land. Israel, however, failed to take full possession of what was promised to the nation by God, and they failed to dispossess all the Canaanites. The land was there for the taking. God had faithfully done for Israel what he promised. Israel, by contrast, was not faithful. As prophecy expert John F. Walvoord put it, “The Lord had not failed to keep His promise even though Israel had failed by faith to conquer all the land.” [Rhodes, 2008, p. 74]

Preterist Position

The “Promised Land” is fulfilled in Christ, in a typological sense: By believing in Jesus Christ, you will have access to much more land (physical land, following the resurrection). In other words, Christ’s promises surpass anything temporary. When we hear of the “Promised Land”, our emphasis should not be on Palestine, but on paradise (Eden) restored—the ultimate fulfillment.

An argument against dispensationalism is that dispensationalists don’t try to promote peace in the Middle East because they feel that peace is not in line with end time prophecies, so why even try for peace? This is a depressing prospect.

There is a window of opportunity for both parties to agree to peace, and redraw the map of the Middle East (i.e., Israel being partitioned further). The unconditional promise is that of the land of Israel [and the Israeli people] being a blessing for all people of the Earth. However, continued possession of the land is conditional: God warned the Israelites that He would kick them out of the land if they were disobedient (God will “vomit” you out, like He did to the previous occupants). God says that “the land is Mine” (Leviticus 25), and He used the word “if” often enough, so even if He left out the “if” clause for certain cases, it is axiomatic. In other words, the situation is revocable. Dispensationalists often claim that the Abrahamic covenant is unconditional. Steve Gregg, for example, believes that there are no unconditional promises in the Bible.

Jesus is the “new” Joshua, that is, Christ Himself fulfilled the notion of the Promised Land. The anniversary date of Israel’s independence is May 14th, but it is not to be interpreted as being special. Throwing non-Israelis out of the land is not ethical; it is an injustice. Remember, God is a God of justice. We must read everything in the Old Testament through the eyes of Jesus.

The return to the land (the new “return from exile”) refers to the “rest” we have in Jesus—as per the book of Hebrews. Every believer has entered the rest of the “promised land”. This is the typological fulfillment. The Old Testament specifically referred to the land; but the New Testament did not. Jesus was not referring to a specific border when talking about his kingdom. Recall that the people
wanted to make him king, by force. It was typological of a greater scope, where Paradise Lost will become Paradise Restored, says Hank Hanegraaff. “The meek will inherit the Earth”.

Accepting the state of Israel need not have a Biblical or eschatological reason.

The promises made to Israel were fulfilled. “Not one promise” failed to be kept (Joshua 21:43-45). The Lord gave the Israelites all the land (Joshua 11). This included what are now Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and parts of Egypt and Iraq.

Some scholars, such as Stephen Sizer, argue that the “river of Egypt” is not the Nile, but a river south of Gaza. Furthermore, Joshua never made it to the Euphrates River; therefore, the vast land that dispensationalists claim was part of the Promised Land, is not really part of the Promised Land.

The boundaries of the Promised Land are described in different ways (not necessarily the same as those given to Joshua). For example, the promise to Abraham was restated to Isaac in a different form. Also, compare Exodus 23, Deuteronomy 11, and Joshua 1. Some dispensationalists expect Israel to increase its land holdings to at least 30 times what it is today. For example, some Zionists claim that Israel needs to capture and control all of the West Bank, Gaza, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, two-thirds of Jordan, and the northwestern part of Saudi Arabia. Hank Hanegraaff argues that such people simply don’t understand the Scriptures. He says that Christ is neither a racist nor a real estate broker. Instead, we are looking forward to a city with foundations whose architect and builder is God (Hebrews 11:10). Jesus was the Temple not built by human hands. He is the substance that fulfills the symbols in the Old Testament. We should not go back to issues of land or temples. The Lord is the “land”. Jesus is “Jerusalem”. In Christ, there is no Jew or Gentile (Romans 10:12). God has always only had one people, and they were from every tongue and tribe—not just Israel!

Why have the Jews had possession of their land for such a small portion of time? Note that there were other people living in there at the time.

As with the Levitical law, the promises concerning the land find ultimate fulfillment in the Lord. There is no biblical precedent for supposing that God favors Jews over Palestinians or vice versa. At the end of the day, our heavenly Father is not pro-Jew—he is pro-justice; he is not pro-Palestinian, he is pro-peace.”

... This is made explicit through a vision of unclean food that
Peter experienced in Joppa. Only after he encountered the gentle centurion Cornelius did Peter fully comprehend the import of the vision. ‘I now realize how true it is’ said Peter, ‘that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 181-182]

God does not want any kind of “ethnic cleansing”. There are many Palestinian Christians, for example, who are undergoing tremendous pressure and difficult treatment from the Israelis, and the Palestinian Christians long for peaceful two-state solution, with Israelis and Palestinians having equal rights, living peacefully together in the land. Christian Zionists, on the other hand, are opposed to Israel giving up any part of the land—saying that anyone who attempts to force or encourage Israel to do so, can expect God’s judgment.

In fact, when Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon began dismantling Israeli settlements in Gaza as a step toward peace, he was savagely denounced by Christian Zionists. Pat Robertson went as far as to suggest that the establishment of a Palestinian state was a direct violation of ‘God’s plan.’ His immediate reaction was to attribute the stroke Sharon suffered on January 4, 2006, as divine retribution for dividing God’s land. ‘Woe unto any prime minister of Israel who takes a similar course to appease the United Nations or the United States of America,’ he warned. Robertson went on to link Sharon’s stroke to the 1995 assassination of Israeli leader Yitzhak Rabin who similarly suffered the wrath of God Almighty for signing the Oslo Peace Accords granting limited self-rule to Palestinians.

... When President George W. Bush demanded that ‘Israel should freeze settlement construction, dismantle unauthorized outposts, end the daily humiliation of the Palestinian people, and not prejudice final negotiations with the placements of walls and fences,’ he declared Bush to be under a curse. According to [Christian Zionist Michael] Evans, ‘If America divides Jerusalem, there will be no forgiveness. America will tragically end up on the ash heap of history.’ John Hagee agrees. ‘Any nation, America included, that forces Israel to give up land for peace is going to experience the wrath and the judgment of God,’ says Hagee... [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 168]

Hank reminds us that the Canaanite prostitute Rahab is in the lineage of Christ; and so is the Moabitess Ruth. Thus, a totally Jewish/Israeli lineage is already out of the question. Boaz (father of Jesse, who in turn was the father of David) married Rahab.

The cleansing that took place in the Old Testament is not ethnic cleansing because the nations inhabiting the lands of Canaan were responsible for wicked acts (e.g., sacrificing children in the fire, to idols). God gave the order to destroy them, their idols, and their other possessions totally. So the inhabitants of Canaan were an exceptional
Deuteronomy 7:1-8  When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you—and when the LORD your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD’s anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you. This is what you are to do to them: Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles and burn their idols in the fire. For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Later in Scripture, God makes it clear that He wants the Israelites to treat the aliens living among them with justice and mercy, and this is the model to be followed today. Consider Ninevah—a wicked and unbelieving nation/city in the time of Jonah (circa. 750-800 BC). For hundreds of years, God warned the Ninevites to repent, which they finally did, in the time of Jonah; thus, God withheld judgment from the city for many years. Ninevah finally fell around 612 BC to a Babylon-Media alliance. Furthermore, God warns the Israelites, through Joshua, that He will deal with them in a similar manner (e.g., throw them out of the land), if they do not treat people with justice and mercy. This happened, and God used both Babylon and Rome as instruments of judgment on Israel. The bottom line is that Israel does not have the green light for a “racially exclusive state in the Middle East”, says Hank.

It is interesting to note that the early dispensationalists did not believe that Israel would be blessed by returning to the land in unbelief; thus, Christian Zionism is wrong. Stephen Sizer writes:

The land itself, further, never unconditionally belongs to Israel, but to God. God insists that the land cannot be bought or sold permanently or even given away permanently, let alone annexed
and colonized as has occurred since 1967. The land is never at
Israel’s disposal for its national purposes; rather, it is Israel who
is at God’s disposal. God’s people at best ultimately remain
tenants in God’s land (see Lev. 25:23).

... The right of Israel to exist as a nation is not in dispute and must
be protected; however, it is clear that the promises made to
Abraham were given in the context of a covenant relationship that
was intended to bless all peoples of the world. To insist,
therefore, on an interpretation of those promises that now gives
people of Jewish origin born in other parts of the world an
exclusive title deed to much of the Middle East in perpetuity, at
the expense of the Palestinians born in the land, many of whom
are Christians, appears to run as contrary to their Old Testament
context as to their New Testament fulfillment.

... The assertion, therefore, that the founding of the State of Israel
in 1948 and the capture of Jerusalem in 1967 indicate that God is
once again blessing the Jewish people is without foundation in
Scripture. [Sizer, 2006, pp. 37-38]

| Topic/Question | Has the Church “replaced” Israel (i.e., has God rejected the Jews and moved to the Gentiles)? Are Israel and the Church distinct? What is “replacement theology”? Will all Jews, or all Israel, be saved at some point in the future?
| Romans 11:25-26 | I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.

In light of Romans 9-11, just who is “Israel” today? Is it geographic Israel? Is it the Old Testament-believing (God-fearing) Jew?

| Dispensationalist Position | All Jews alive when Christ returns, who are waiting for their Messiah, will be saved. This has a mild parallel in the story of the reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers (in Egypt). Hundreds of years later, their descendants left Egypt, and traveled to the Promised Land. Because of their unbelief, most of them did not enter the Promised Land at that time.

Replacement theologians, particularly amillennialists, believe that God turned from the Jews (after they rejected Christ), and transferred His covenant promises from Israel to the Church. In other words, any Old Testament promises made to Israel now belong to the “true Israel”: the Church. Jews who accept Jesus Christ become part of “true Israel” which does not discriminate between Jews and Gentiles,
male and female, etc. Scholars embracing replacement theology sometimes emphasize that God is not “a racist” or “sexist”, when defending their position. Thus, the nation Israel is not given “special treatment” by God, and there is no final restoration of (physical) Israel in the Middle East.

The classical dispensationalist position, however, is that God did not abandon his covenant with the Jews. In other words, He did not reject them permanently. Romans 11:25-26 refers to a future event. Romans 9 and 10 may suggest that God has replaced Israel with the Church, but Romans 11 argues that Israel—i.e., physical Israel and the Jews—is still in God’s plan for the future. After all, if God could break His covenant with the Jews, wouldn’t that mean that He could do so with Christians, too?

God has made many declarations about his unconditional promises to Israel. Dave Hunt argues that preterism makes God a covenant-breaking liar. God has not (permanently) rejected Israel. Even Israel’s rejection of Christ could not break the “everlasting covenant” that God made with Israel, because it was an unconditional covenant; therefore, there were no conditions that Israel had to fulfill. In the August 2006 issue of *The Berean Call*, Hunt writes: “Indeed, at the same time that God promises eternal blessings to Israel in a full restoration in the last days, He also recites here unfaithfulness to Him without a hint that the many sins of Israel and the Jewish people would be any deterrent to His fulfilling all of His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob”. He adds, “The battle right now is between Islam (which says Israel must be destroyed) and the God of the Bible (who promises to preserve the nation of Israel forever).”

Although David Pawson does not believe in a pre-tribulational rapture, he notes that Romans 9-11 was written to Gentile believers—not to Jewish believers. It is important to know the target audience. For example, Luke was written for young believers; thus, in the parable of the lost sheep, the lost sheep is a lost sinner. Matthew, however, was written for older believers, and in that book, the lost sheep is a backsliding saint. Graham Scrooge, quoted in [Pentecost, 1958, p. 140] writes:

> More than any other of the Gospels, Matthew’s is allied with the Hebrew Scriptures in theme and tone; their subjects are its subjects, the Messiah, Israel, the Law, the Kingdom, the Prophecy. Jewish ideas and terms characterize the whole record. Its witness would not have impressed either the Roman, for whom Mark wrote, or the Greek, for whom Luke wrote, but to Jews its significance would be inescapable.

Why did Paul write this long letter (the book of Romans)? The
church in Rome in the 50s AD initiated “replacement theology”: the false assumption that the church replaced Israel (with respect to the benefits, but some people conveniently leave out the curses). Paul wrote to dispel this myth.

Pawson argues that Romans 9 could be titled: “In the past, Israel has been selected”, and that Romans 10 could be titled: “In the present, Israel is being stubborn”, and that Romans 11 could be titled: “In the future, Israel will be saved”. He adds that not all Jews are God’s “Israel”, implying the distinction between spiritual and physical/geographical Israel.

Calvinists tend to ignore chapters 10 and 11, and claim that God saves those whom He wants to save, and that people have little choice in the matter (and that some people cannot be saved no matter what their intentions).

Replacement theologians tend to ignore chapters 9 and 11, and claim that Israel has had its chance, and now it’s time to move on.

Zionists tend to ignore chapters 9 and 10. They claim that all Jews are God’s “Israel”. In chapter 10, Paul desperately wants to evangelize Jews.

In summary, the church has not replaced Israel. God’s promises to the Jews are unconditional, as per Romans 9-11. In particular, Jesus is the “vine”. Some, but not all, of Israel (the “branches”) have been pruned. Paul writes that the Gentile believers (i.e., the Christian church) represent wild olive branches that have been grafted into the natural olive tree (spiritual Israel):

Romans 11:1 I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! ...

Romans 11:11-12 Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!

Romans 11:17-26 If some of the branches [Jews] have been broken off, and you [Gentile believers], though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others [Jewish believers] and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root [Christ], do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, "Branches were broken off so
that I could be grafted in." Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches [Jewish persons], be grafted into their own olive tree! I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.

David Pawson notes that the branches which were cut out from the vine/tree are those Jews that drifted into unbelief after being redeemed from Egypt. Gentiles were grafted in—in their place—but among the others [Jewish branches]. There has only been a partial replacement, and it’s only of the branches. The tree trunk is still there, the root is still there, and some of the branches are still there. It is not a new tree. In other words, Gentiles have replaced some of the Jews, but the Gentiles have not replaced the Jews entirely. Furthermore, Gentile branches can be cut out again. (Pawson doesn’t believe in the phrase “once saved, always saved” that is common in many Christian circles; therefore, Christians should be careful not to turn their backs on God.)

Note these phrases in Romans 11:25-26: (a) “Israel has been hardened in part”—Israel is clearly not the Church because the Church couldn’t be hardened, (b) “until the full number of the Gentiles has come in”—which strongly suggests a distinction between Israel and the saved Gentiles (Christian church), and (c) “And so all Israel will be saved”—again, Israel cannot be the Church because an individual who is part of the Church is already saved. (The Church is also known as the body of Christ—which, since the time of Christ, consists of both Jews and Gentiles, i.e., the saved Jewish remnant and the elect Gentiles. Note that Old Testament believers (i.e., those before Christ’s ministry) are also saved; they implicitly looked forward to a redeemer (Jesus Christ). At some point in the future, all Israel will be saved. Pawson believes it is heresy to say that the Church is the new Israel; rather, we have been grafted into an existing olive tree (the old Israel).
David Hocking notes that it is unnatural for wild olive shoots to be grafted into a natural olive tree, and actually produce fruit. However, if God can do this miracle with the Gentiles (i.e., enable them to produce bountiful fruit for the kingdom of God), imagine what will happen when the natural branches will be grafted back into their own olive tree!

The bottom line is that Christians have been adopted as full members into the family of God—the family that God had planned throughout the ages, and revealed throughout the Old Testament.

Malcolm Hedding writes:

“Jesus never denied that the physical kingdom would be restored to Israel.”

Acts 1:6-7  So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.

“If the [Abrahamic] Covenant has been abolished, then what Paul says is wrong! Moreover the writer of the Book of Hebrews states that we can trust God to be faithful to the New Covenant because He has always been faithful to the Abrahamic Covenant (Hebrews 6:13-20). … if the Abrahamic Covenant has been abolished, then God is a liar and indeed is not faithful, though the writer of Hebrews affirms that he is!” …

“Israel has always been God’s vehicle of world redemption (Romans 9:1-5). In a way, she is God’s microphone, the means by which He speaks to a lost world. Moreover, she has birthed all God’s covenants into the world and has now come back to her ancient homeland, by the promise of the Abrahamic Covenant, to birth the final great covenant of history, the Davidic Covenant. Herein lies the ultimate purpose of her modern-day restoration. Jesus will return to Zion as the root and offspring of David (Revelation 22:1-6; Psalm 2:1-12; Psalm 72:5-11). [Hedding, 2006]

A lot of teachers today believe the church has replaced Israel. Is Israel the Church? Is the Church Israel? David Hocking states that there is some truth to saying “yes” to these questions, that is, in terms of faith and belief; but, the believers of the Old Testament are not equal to the Church. God is not through with Israel at all.

Hocking adds that Benjamin Netanyahu, former Prime Minister of Israel, stated in a speech to the Knesset in 2007 that the only [best?] true friends of Israel are evangelicals in North America who believe
what the Bible says about Israel.

Thomas Ice comments on the phrase in Romans 11:26: “And so all Israel will be saved”:

Toward the end of the Tribulation the Antichrist will gather the armies of the world against Jerusalem in an effort to destroy the Jews. This will lead to the conversion of all Israel to Jesus as their messiah. Once converted, the Jews will plead for their Savior to rescue them from them from sure destruction. Jesus will hear their plea and return from heaven to earth with His entourage of angels [sic] and saints to rescue now-submissive Israel. Upon His return, Jesus will prepare the world for His 1,000-year reign on earth from Jerusalem. [Ice, 2003g]

Is there a future for national Israel? Thomas Ice writes:

Preterists advocate the replacement of Old Testament Israel with the church often called the “New Israel.” This system [sic] of theology is known as replacement theology. Preterists believe Israel does not have a future different than that of any other nation. “Although Israel will someday be restored to the true faith, the Bible does not tell of any future plan for Israel as a special nation,” insists [David] Chilton.

... [Robert] Gentry also follows lockstep in the preterist chant that Israel has no national future. In fact, Gentry teaches that the seven-sealed scroll of Revelation 6 “Is God’s divorce decree against his Old Testament wife for her spiritual adultery.” Gentry clearly teaches replacement theology when he says, “In his divorce of Israel God disestablishes her.” [Ice, 2003h, p. 427]

God called the Israelites, collectively, his wife; however, they forsook God. He anxiously awaits their return:

Hosea 2:7 She [Israel] will chase after her lovers but not catch them; she will look for them but not find them. Then she will say, 'I will go back to my husband [God] as at first, for then I was better off than now.'

Preterist Position | Replacement theology is sometimes used as a pejorative term to push the dispensationalist viewpoint that God has two distinct groups of people. God has only ever had one people. The Church is part of “true Israel”. There is no distinction between Israel and the Church, that is, between Jew and Gentile. All can come to Christ, and when they do so, there is no difference in the body of believers.

Romans 10:12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him,
Instead of the term “replacement theology”, it’s more accurate to use the term “fulfillment theology”. Those who are in Christ are the true Israel. It is what the Old Testament pointed to: one body of believers.

Hank Hanegraaff believes that “all Israel” implies all believers worldwide, not necessarily Israelis. We’re talking about true Israel. It is not the natural children of Abraham, but the children of the promise. God does not differentiate us by race, but rather by our relationship to God. True Israel is not determined by nationality, but rather by spirituality. Therefore, true Israel refers to all believers. God created a new “Israel”—an Israel by faith in Jesus—after the Jews rejected Christ.

A question that continues to be asked and debated—even within Judaism—is: Does one have to be a believer [in God, not necessarily Jesus Christ] to be a Jew? Is Judaism a religion, or an ethnic group?

Hank argues that dispensationalism is a form of racism since it suggests that an entire race of people (the Jews) has special privileges and can be saved without believing in Christ. Hank warns people that John Hagee, for example, is incorrect in his teaching. Hagee believes that Jews can be saved without coming to Christ. He also believes that being an amillennialist is heretical. Furthermore, Hagee says that Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah to the Jews; therefore, the Jews did not actually reject Jesus as Messiah, but rather Jesus refused to be the Messiah to them.

John the Baptist said that God could raise up stones and turn them into children of Abraham; therefore, those Jews who claim that they belong to God merely because they are descendants of Abraham—are mistaken.

Will there be a time in the future when the Jews (many/all of them) will come to Christ? The position that Gary DeMar holds is that there will be a time in the future when the Jews will come to Christ, but so will many other people groups.

According to Romans 9-11, every believer has been “grafted into” Israel. The promises were not made to an ethnic group but were fulfilled for all believers in “the seed” (Jesus). In other words, it’s not based on nationality, but on spirituality. The Bible refers to “seed” (singular, and that’s emphasized in the text). If you belong to Abraham’s seed, then you are an heir to the promise. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile … and we are heirs to the promise.
The olive tree’s branches that are broken off are Jews who do not believe in Christ. The nourishing sap refers to Jesus Christ. The olive tree is not a national symbol; it is a spiritual symbol. Abraham was to be the Father of many nations: if you are in Christ, then you are an heir of the promise (i.e., part of the cultivated olive tree mentioned in Romans 11).

Rather than the Church being viewed in terms of replacement theology, it would probably be better to view it in terms of fulfillment theology.

... far from communicating that God has two distinct peoples, the Scriptures from beginning to end reveal only one chosen people purchased ‘from every tribe and tongue and language and nation’ (Revelation 5:9). As Paul explains, the ‘mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus’ (Ephesians 3:6).

As Paul goes on to explain, ‘If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise’ (Galatians 3:29).

Finally, the one chosen people, who form one covenant community, are beautifully symbolized in the book of Romans as one cultivated olive tree (see Romans 11:11-24). The tree symbolizes national Israel, its branches symbolize those who believe, and its root symbolizes Jesus—‘the Root and the Offspring of David’ (Revelation 22:16). Natural branches broken off represent Jews who reject Jesus. Wild branches grafted in represent Gentiles who receive Jesus. Thus, says Paul, ‘Not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham’s children. ... In other words, it is not the natural children who are God’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring’ (Romans 9:6-8). [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 49-50]

Ironically, the only portion of the Promised Land Abraham ever took possession of was a cave in Hebron where he buried his wife Sarah. And even then he did not assume it by virtue of the promise but through payment of the value. When Ephraim the Hittite offered the land to Abraham as a gift, he responded, ‘Listen to me, if you will. I will pay the price of the field. Accept it from me so I can bury my dead there’ (Genesis 23:13). In the end, for the sum of four hundred shekels of silver, ‘the field and the cave in it were deeded to Abraham by the Hittites as a burial site’ (v. 20). [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 176]

Hank continues:

Christian Zionists are convinced that these promises God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob with respect to the land are
unconditional and yet unfulfilled. ... Israel must own all of the land from the river of Egypt in the north to the river Euphrates in the South. ...

These Zionists are convinced that Israel will soon control not only the West Bank, Gaza, and Golan, but Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon. Says John Hagee, 'The Royal Land Grant that God, the original owner, gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their seed forever, includes the following territory which is presently occupied by Israel, the West Bank, all of Lebanon, one half of Syria, two-thirds of Jordan, all of Iraq, and the northern part of Saudi Arabia.' ... Israel must yet control an area of land roughly thirty times its present size. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 177-178]

Hank adds:

Even as the life ebbed from his body, Joshua reminded the children of Israel that the Lord had been faithful to his promises. ‘You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the LORD your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed’ (Joshua 23:14).

Solomon, during whose reign the glorious temple was constructed, was equally unambiguous. ‘Not one word has failed of all the good promises [the LORD] gave through his servant Moses’ (1 Kings 8:56). In fact, at the height of the Solomonic kingdom, ‘the people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate, they drank and they were happy. And Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River [Euphrates] to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt' (4:20-21).

Even in the aftermath of Israel’s exile into Babylon, Nehemiah extolled the faithfulness of God in fulfilling the land promises he had made to the patriarchs. ... In his impassioned prayer, Nehemiah praised the Lord for faithfulness to the Abrahamic covenant:

‘You gave them kingdoms and nations, allotting to them even the remotest frontiers .... You made their sons as numerous as the stars in the sky, and you brought them into the land that you told their fathers to enter and possess. [Their sons went in and took possession of the land.]’ (Nehemiah 9:22-24). [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 178-179]

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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Consider the Temple sacrifices mentioned in Ezekiel 40-48. Why would there be future sacrifices if Jesus Christ was the ultimate and sufficient sacrifice (i.e., at the cross)?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>First of all, when the Temple is rebuilt (still future), then at some point prior to the return of Jesus Christ, animal sacrifices will resume (due to the unbelief of the Jews). Antichrist will permit this for a while, but will then take away the sacrifice (in the middle of the 70th</td>
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week of Daniel, according to Daniel 9:27).

Secondly, the sacrifices in Ezekiel 40-48 appear to be occurring during the 1000-year Millennium after the return of Jesus Christ. So why are there sacrifices again? This poses a problem for dispensationalists. In Ezekiel 40-48, there are provisions for sin offerings, burnt offerings, guilt offerings, grain offerings, and fellowship offerings. Oddly enough, Ezekiel 45:15 says the offerings are “to make atonement for the people”. (To “make atonement” means to cover, to wipe away sins, or to purify. The same word for “atone” is used when the wood of Noah’s Ark was covered with pitch.) This is puzzling because it indicates future sacrifices are taking place, apparently after Christ’s finished work on the cross.

**Hebrews 10:11** Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

Some dispensationalists believe that these sacrifices are efficacious for sin; however, it is clear to evangelical Christians that Christ fulfilled the role of the Temple sacrifice (because Christ Himself was the ultimate sacrifice). Thus, the sacrifices mentioned in Ezekiel 40-48 appear to be a *memorial* (retrospective) sacrifice. Remember, even in Old Testament times, the animal sacrifices could “never take away sins”—they pointed to Jesus Christ. The same applies to any future animal sacrifices. Rather, they just point to the finished work of Jesus Christ. They are commemorative.

The only way it can be held that the sacrifices will be efficacious in the millennium is to hold that they were so in the Old Testament and this is a clear contradiction of the whole New Testament. What folly to argue that a rite could accomplish in the future what it never could, or did, or was ever intended to do, in the past. [Pentecost, 1958, p. 525]

Similarities between the Aaronic (Levitical) and millennial systems of worship (e.g., the Temple services) are investigated in [Pentecost, 1958]. The Millennium is not a restoration of the conditional, Mosaic covenant. Although Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles are mentioned in Ezekiel 40-48, there is no explicit reference to the third major feast, namely, Pentecost (the Feast of Firstfruits).

There do not appear to be any animal sacrifices after the Millennium.

In summary, the Temple being described in Ezekiel 40-48 appears to be the third temple. In other words, it is a future temple (because the Second Temple, Herod's Temple) was destroyed in 70 AD ... and
there is currently no temple in Israel.

There appears to be a sequential ordering in Ezekiel. For example, the scattering of the Jews and their return, the valley of the dry bones, the Magog invasion, and the Third (Millennial) Temple. Not specifically mentioned are the Rapture and Armageddon, although some scholars think that Ezekiel 38-39 describes the same event: Armageddon and Magog, together.

It may be possible for Israel to start building the Temple soon, perhaps with the Antichrist’s peace treaty giving the green light; however, there is currently a major obstacle: worldwide Muslim opposition. This is a reason for why the construction appears to be post-rapture. In fact, Ezekiel 38-39 appears to be post-rapture, too.

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<th>Preterist Position</th>
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<td>Christ’s death (i.e., the “finished work of Christ”) means that there is no more need for sacrifices; therefore, there will not be any future animal sacrifices.</td>
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Ezekiel 40-48 rules out the fact that a future Temple has sacrifices as a “memorial”, because it says that the sacrifices are for a *sin offering*. Therefore, this “future Temple” must have been future at the time of Ezekiel’s writing, but not so at the *first* Coming of Christ. In other words, the Temple that Ezekiel wrote about has been “built” already. In fact, each Christian believer’s *body* is “a temple of the Holy Spirit”:

1 Corinthians 3:16-17  Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him; for God’s temple is sacred, and you are that temple.

Since the time of Christ, Christians celebrate communion (bread and wine) to symbolize the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ. It is a memorial until Christ comes again. Thus, there is no need for a sacrifice; in fact, a sacrifice is an abomination to Christ’s finished work on the cross.

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<td>Is Ezekiel’s vision of the Temple (in Ezekiel 40-48) supposed to be taken literally? Is this the Temple also described in Revelation? Is the Temple mentioned in the book of Revelation the existing Temple (i.e., from before 70 AD), or is it a future, rebuilt, Temple? Is the Temple described in Ezekiel present during the Millennium?</td>
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The passage in Ezekiel is a difficult one for both the dispensationalist and preterist positions because it appears to describe future sacrifices.

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<th>Dispensationalist</th>
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<td>Background: This temple is being measured by an angel, and exact</td>
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dimensions are given in the text. When measures are being taken, this suggests a literal temple. We also note that the New Jerusalem is being measured in Revelation 21:15, implying that its existence is also to be taken literally.

No such temple has been constructed yet with these measurements, and since the measurements are specifically and literally given, it implies that this is a future temple. This temple may be the one used in the Millennium, or it may be the rebuilt Temple shortly before the advent of Antichrist (or perhaps even during his reign), or the Temple both before and during the Millennium.

Christ is likely the “prince” mentioned in Ezekiel 44 and 45.

Christ referred to the 70th week of Daniel in the Olivet Discourse. Daniel wrote of sacrifices and a temple. The Antichrist will set up an image of himself in the [rebuilt] Temple.

Preterists argue that the Temple was Herod’s Temple (i.e., the Second Temple), and therefore, the book of Revelation must have been written before 70 AD (because that is when the Second Temple was destroyed by the Roman army). However, most dispensationalists believe that Revelation was written between 90-96 AD; 95 AD is commonly accepted.

Thomas Ice writes:

It does not matter at all whether the temple is thought to still be standing in Jerusalem at the time that John sees the vision, since that would not necessarily have any bearing upon a vision. John is told by the angel accompanying him during the vision to “measure the temple” (Rev. 11:1). Measure what temple? The temple in the vision. In fact, Ezekiel, during a similar vision of a temple (Ezek. 40-48) was told to measure that temple. Dr. Gentry would agree, that when Ezekiel saw and was told to measure a temple, that there was not one standing in Jerusalem. Thus, there is no compulsion whatsoever, that just because a temple is referenced in Revelation 11 that it implies that there had to be a physical temple standing in Jerusalem at the time. [Ice, 2000]

Currently, Jews are not permitted access to parts of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Instead, their presence is limited to the area around the Western Wall (of the Second Temple, on the Temple Mount); otherwise, riots are likely to break out—not just at the Temple Mount, but in Muslim areas around the world.

John Whitcomb is quoted in [Ice, 1999]:

Thus, part of the strong covenant with “the many” in Israel (Daniel 9:24-27) must be permission to offer sacrifices again “in the temple of God” (2 Thess. 2:4). In light of the current situation in Jerusalem, it would take a very powerful person to obtain and guarantee such access by Israel to the Temple area. It seems possible that the “two witnesses” of Revelation 11:3-6, who have irresistible authority in Jerusalem during the first three-and-one-half years, will also be instrumental in arranging the terms of this covenant with the “little [horn],” for not until they are killed by him (after he “comes up out of the abyss”) is he able to break the covenant and terminate the sacrificial system.

Randy Price gives six differences between the Second Temple (now destroyed) and the Temple described in Revelation, indicating that they are different [LaHaye & Ice, 2003], and therefore, we should anticipate a future temple to fulfill the events in Revelation:

- The Temple in Revelation is said to be desecrated, but nothing is mentioned of it being destroyed; the Second Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, and it was a major event.
- The desecration of the future temple was to be a signal for the Jews to flee.
- The Generation of Jews that are alive at the time that see the desecration of the Temple are to look for the coming of the Messiah.
- Daniel 9:27 says that the one who destroys the Temple will himself be destroyed; however, Price points out that the Roman attackers were not destroyed “but returned to Rome in triumph carrying vessels from the destroyed Temple”.
- Israel would repent following the events around the destruction of the Temple. This did not happen in 70 AD.
- After the time of desecration, the scope of events would be worldwide; however, the events of 70 AD were relatively localized. Revelation frequently refers to worldwide events, whereas Jerusalem and Rome are the focal points in the events leading up to 70 AD.

| Preterist Position | If the Second Temple were still standing, John surely would have mentioned it when writing Revelation. Thus, it seems likely that Revelation was written while the Second Temple was still standing (i.e., before 70 AD). |

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Jesus worshiped in the Temple, and prophesied its destruction. There is no longer any need to sacrifice at the Temple, since Christ was the ultimate sacrifice—*the* sacrifice that the Old Testament pointed to.

John 4:20-24 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

The temple is a *type* of Christ. Roy Zuck, a professor of hermeneutics at Dallas Theological Seminary explains that a type is a precursor of something better yet to come:

A type may be defined as an Old Testament person, event, or thing having historical reality and designed by God to prefigure (foreshadow) in an preparatory way a real person, event, or thing so designated in the New Testament and that corresponds to and fulfills (heightens) the type. [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007]

Scripture says that the heavens cannot contain God. Christ is our “temple”, a temple not built by human hands.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him; for God’s temple is sacred, and you are that temple.

Because there are sin offerings and actual measurements, this Temple must be historical (i.e., before the cross). This is not about a literal, future Temple. Hank Hanegraaff puts out the question: If the Living Temple (Christ) is in our midst [during the Millennium], then why would people want to focus on a Temple that was built with human hands? This is a valid question. Memorials? Perhaps; but, that’s not what the text leads us to believe (because of the verses on sacrifices for atonement).

“The Word was made flesh among us” … We have seen the glory of God, not in a restored Temple in Jerusalem, but in Christ Himself. Jesus is the new Temple, and He fulfills everything mentioned in the Old Testament. Christ is the “body”, and all believers are the “Temple” of the Holy Spirit.
It is not appropriate to consider a post-crucifixion Temple to be efficacious for atonement. Christ finished the work, and it would be an abomination to offer further sacrifices because that would suggest that Christ’s work was not sufficient for salvation.

| Topic/Question | Every 50 years, the Jews were to observe a Year of Jubilee. At that time, at least three things happened: land was returned to its original owner, slaves were freed, and debts were cancelled. What is the significance of the Year of Jubilee with respect to Bible prophecy?

Isaiah 61:1-3 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD’S favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion--to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.

The “year of the Lord’s favor” is the Year of Jubilee [Wagner, 2002].

| Dispensationalist Position | The Year of Jubilee has some interesting parallels with Bible prophecy: it is the time when the Earth is returned to its rightful owner (Christ), when slaves to sin (i.e., humans) are freed from their bondage, and when all debts are wiped out (and things start out new).

It represents freedom, restoration, and renewal. Since a Year of Jubilee occurs every 50 years (on Yom Kippur, the 10th day of Tishri), and assuming Christ proclaimed a Year of Jubilee around 28 AD (in His reading of the scroll of Isaiah 61:1-3), then that means our next Jubilee will be the 40th Jubilee since the birth of Christ. Also, if we roll the calendars back to the time of Adam and Eve (circa 4000 BC), that would make the next Jubilee the 120th Jubilee in human history. Numbers such as “40” and “120” are interesting patterns in the Bible.

When Christ read the Isaiah 61 passage (above) at the start of His earthly ministry in 28 AD, He stopped (and put down the scroll) just before reading the words: “the day of vengeance of our God”—implying that that part of the Scripture was still in the future (i.e., it dealt with His Second Coming).

Luke 4:18-21 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom
for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the
blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the
year of the Lord’s favor.” Then he rolled up
the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and
sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue
were fastened on him, and he began by saying to
them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your
hearing.”

Note that when land was sold, its selling price reflected the fact that
the land would be redeemed in the Year of Jubilee; therefore, prices
tended to be lower closer to the Year of Jubilee. Note also that God
commanded that slaves be treated fairly. In fact, a slave could choose
to remain with his master. For example, a slave and his family may
have been treated particularly well, have been provided for, and have
steady employment (“life is good”). If he chose to remain with his
master, he would be called a “bondservant”.

To see how the notion of redemption better relates to eschatology,
some background is in order. In Old Testament times:

God provided that a wife, a slave and a possession might be
redeemed. In the case of a wife, if her husband died before
leaving offspring ... the dead husband’s brother was to take the
widow as his wife (if he were able) and to perpetuate the name of
his departed brother. There was also the law of redemption of a
slave. If a man, because of his neglect or misfortune, fell into
debt and was legally tried and unable to pay, he was to serve his
master to whom he owed this debt as a servant, but the law
provided that after six years he could again go free. If in the
meantime, however, a near of kin, some close relative, chose to
redeem him and were able to meet the payment, he could redeem
his poor brother and release him before the six years ended. This
marvelous provision is described in Leviticus 25 among the laws
of redemption.

Provision was also made for a third redemption: the redemption
of land which had been lost by its owner. ... When the Year of
Jubilee came, the land was to be returned to the original owner.
In the meantime, however, it could be redeemed and returned to
him. This could be done in two ways. Either the man himself
could pay the redemption price, which was unlikely, for he was
now a servant, or it could be purchased back by a near relative, an
uncle or a closer kin. The papers ... were written on two scrolls
of parchment ... One scroll was left open in the court of the
Temple or Tabernacle for all to read, but the other was rolled up,
sealed with seven seals and placed in the Temple to be brought
out only when a kinsman redeemer gave evidence that he was
willing and able to redeem it. ... If this kinsman, this relative,
were able to show that he was able to pay the redemption price
and could meet all the conditions of the law, the sealed scroll was
produced and he publicly tore open the seals and invalidated the
mortgage and the man could return to his purchased possession.
As time passed the practice of using one scroll instead of two was adopted. Instead of two scrolls, one public and the other sealed, these were combined into one. One scroll or parchment was used, and the terms of the redemption of the mortgage were written on both sides, within and without. When the scroll was rolled into a tube and sealed with the seven seals, the inside corresponded to the secret record and the outside containing the terms for the public ... That is the picture in Revelation. [DeHaan, 1946, pp. 89-91]

We see that the scroll in Revelation appears to be the title deed to the Earth, and Jesus Christ is the kinsman-redeemer.

In Leviticus, God said:

*Leviticus 25:23* "'The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants.

The short book of Ruth in the Bible is an interesting story of redemption. In it, Boaz redeemed some land and a bride. In Revelation, Christ redeems the Earth and His bride (the Church). Unlike Boaz, and Jeremiah, who both redeemed with silver, Christ purchased redemption via His shed blood.

It is significant that when Christ was crucified on the Cross, He wore a crown of thorns. Applying the law of first mention, we find that the thorns are first mentioned in the Bible in Genesis 3, in connection with the curse of God upon the earth and upon vegetation. ... The curse will be removed. The earth will bring forth her increase and there will be plenty for all. [DeHaan, 1946, pp. 113-114]

*Revelation 22:3* [KJV] And there shall be no more curse ...

Jewish sources (e.g., Maimonides) state that the Year of Jubilee was last observed during the First Temple period until the Babylonian exile (circa 586 BC) [Wagner, 2002]. There is no evidence to suggest that a Year of Jubilee was observed after this time.

One wonders what effect a Year of Jubilee would have on modern society, throughout the world!

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<th>What is the correct interpretation of the “70th week of Daniel” (also known as “seventy sevens” or “70 weeks of years”)—in light of the Second Coming? Is the 70th week still future, or was it fulfilled by 70 AD? Is there a gap of time between the conclusion of the 69th week</th>
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and the start of the 70th week?

Daniel 9:24-27  

"Seventy 'sevens' [70 * 7 = 490 years] are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.  "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, [Jesus Christ, the Messiah] comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens'.  It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.  After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One [Jesus Christ] will be cut off [literally "executed"] and will have nothing.  The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.  The end will come like a flood:  War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.  He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven'.  In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering.  And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him."

| Dispensationalist Position | Note that Daniel 9:24-27 is addressed to Daniel (via the angel Gabriel) and mentions “your people” (the Jewish people) and “the holy city” (Jerusalem). It indicates that there are 69 “blocks” of 7-year periods (i.e., 69 * 7 years * 360 days/Biblical year), from the giving of the order to rebuild the walls and the streets of Jerusalem, until the coming of the King. (360 days/year is used in Scripture as the basis for a Biblical year (e.g., see the book of Esther), and may have been the actual length of a year prior to the Flood. Chuck Missler remarks that all ancient calendars used 360 days/year.) Verse 24 provides the overview of the 70 weeks of years, and states that the purposes of this time period are “to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy”. Verse 25 deals with the first 69 weeks, verse 26 deals with the gap of time between the 69th and 70th weeks, and verse 27 deals with the 70th week.

Why the distinction between the first 7 weeks and the next 62 weeks? Many authors think that the first 7 weeks (i.e., 49 years) are the period beginning with Nehemiah’s decree to rebuild the streets and walls of Jerusalem, and in particular, to clear out the debris from the ruins of Jerusalem and restore it as a thriving city [Ice, 2003f]. There is no gap between the 7 weeks and the 62 weeks. |
The most quoted interpretation of the 7 + 62 weeks of years is due to Sir Robert Anderson [Anderson, 1984], as follows. (See further below for other models.)

There were four decrees to rebuild Jerusalem (Temple); however, only one to rebuild the walls and streets (city) of Jerusalem. King Artaxerxes Longimanus gave the order to rebuild the walls and streets of Jerusalem in the 26th year of this year. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, this would be March 14, 445 BC. According to Sir Robert Anderson, if we map these dates onto an extended Gregorian calendar, we come up with the date Sunday, April 6th, 32 AD (Palm Sunday, which equates to Nisan 10 on the Jewish calendar) when Christ—our Passover Lamb—rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, publicly declaring Himself to be the Messiah. Jesus’ ministry spanned 3½ years; but, it was only on the final Nisan 10 that He allowed Himself to be declared Messiah and King.

Zechariah 9:9  Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

At this point in time (Christ’s entrance into Jerusalem on Nisan 10), there is a break or gap that extends to the present age. (The Jews rejected Jesus Christ, and Christ was crucified.) The gap is similar to a referee blowing the whistle at a sporting event: the time doesn’t start again until play resumes. Another useful analogy is with respect to the movement of a train from a passenger’s viewpoint [Goodman, 2003]: a train enters a tunnel, then there is some delay when the passengers can’t observe the landscape outside the train, and then the train exits the tunnel. Afterwards, the passengers can see the landscape again, even though it may have changed.

Where, in Scripture, is there evidence of a gap of many years between the start of a prophecy being fulfilled, and its ultimate fulfillment? Scriptural support for a gap is implied in verses such as the following. The implication is that Jesus Christ’s First Coming (circa 3 BC to 32 AD) is separated from his Second Coming by an unspecified amount of time; but, after Christ’s Second Coming (at Armageddon), he will be accepted as ruler and king.

Isaiah 61:1-2  The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD'S favor and the day of vengeance of our God...
Isaiah 9:6  For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Luke 1:31-32  You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,

Revelation 12:5  She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.

Luke 21:24  They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

The following set of verses refers to Jesus Christ entering Jerusalem on a donkey on Nisan 10 (only to be rejected, and days later, crucified):

Luke 19:41-44  As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace--but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

Recall that Daniel 9:25 indicated that the Messiah would present Himself after 69 times 7 years (i.e., 483 years) after King Artaxerxes gave the orders to rebuild the walls and streets of Jerusalem. Jesus wept over Jerusalem. The Jews did not realize the time of his visitation (birth, life, and death), and this is why Israel has experienced a time of blindness. This “blindness of Israel” led to the dispersion of Israel, and the hardships that have come upon them. The blindness will be removed at the Second Coming when the Jews will see and acknowledge Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah:

Romans 11:25  I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob."
Zechariah 12:10 "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.

In summary, the (approximate) 2000-year gap is part of the times of the Gentiles which began with Israel’s Babylonian exile under Nebuchadnezzar, and extends to the physical return of Jesus Christ at the Battle of Armageddon, shortly before the start of the Millennium. The timeframe applying to the fullness of the Gentiles began shortly after the death of Jesus Christ (or more particularly with the start of the Church, i.e., on the Day of Pentecost, in Acts 2) and continues to approximately the start of the Tribulation (i.e., the Rapture of the Church) [Missler, 2006]. In Romans 11:25, Paul equates the times of the fullness of the Gentiles to the Church.

Regarding the April 6, 32 AD date of Jesus’ arrival on Palm Sunday: recent research (e.g., [Jones, 2004]) suggests that Anderson’s Nisan 10 calculation is off by three days because of an error he made in using the leap year rule: “years ending in ‘00’ that cannot be divided by 400 are not leap years”. This is a Gregorian calendar rule that cannot be applied when doing Julian to Julian date calculations. In particular, Nisan 10 would not have been Sunday, April 6th, 32 AD, but rather Wednesday, April 9th, 32 AD. So, if we use 32 AD for Christ’s entry into Jerusalem, followed days later by His death and resurrection, then we have a problem: Christ could not have died on Nisan 14 (i.e., when the Jewish Passover Lamb was slaughtered). It is generally accepted that Christ—our Passover Lamb—entered Jerusalem on a donkey on Nisan 10 (analogous to the Nisan 10 sanctification of the Passover lamb), that He died on Nisan 14, and rose on Nisan 17. Because of these arguments, Jones says that the 32 AD model seems unlikely.

Instead, consider the following model [Jones, 2004]: Some evidence suggests that Artaxerxes (the king who gave the order to rebuild the walls and streets of Jerusalem—as per Daniel’s prophecy) rose to power in 473 BC. The 20th year of his reign (when the king gave the order to rebuild) would be 454 BC, which is the same year used by Archbishop Ussher (who, incidentally, wrote of a 4004 BC creation date). Using 454 BC as the baseline, 69 weeks of years equates to: 454 BC + 483 years = 30 AD (and note that 1 BC to 1 AD is just one year—as Anderson also mentioned in his work). Note that we treat the years as ordinary solar years. In 30 AD, Nisan 10 fell on a Sunday, which is consistent with the Jewish Holy days.
Furthermore, the destruction of the Second Temple occurred [on Av 9] in 70 AD, which is 40 years after Christ’s death. Many Biblical events are associated with timeframes of 40 years of testing:

- Israel in the wilderness [during the Exodus], Israel under Philistine dominion (Judges 13:1), Moses in Midian, Moses on Mt. Sinai, Jonah’s preaching of judgment on Nineveh, the span the 12 spies searched out Canaan, Elijah’s fasting while fleeing from Jezebel, the span Goliath challenged Israel for a champion, the period of our Lord’s being tempted by Satan, the length of days [before] He showed himself to the disciples after the resurrection, etc.

Thus, it is deemed reasonable that God gave Israel a 40-year period from the crucifixion to reconsider, repent, and receive their long-awaited Messiah before bringing the judgment under Titus down upon them.

… As Titus’ destruction of the temple is firmly fixed at 70 AD, Eusebius places our Lord’s death in AD 30 by writing: “For forty whole years it (i.e., God’s Providence) suspended their (the Jews) destruction, after their crime against the Christ”.

Even the Jewish sages, who certainly have no reason to assist us in this determination, imply an AD 30 crucifixion. The Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds tell us that every night for 40 years before the destruction of the temple the middle or chief light on the golden candlestick would simply go out and that the great brass temple-gates which were closed each evening were seen to swing open every night of their own accord. Josephus tells us these doors were so massive that it took 20 men to close them (Wars, vi, 5, 3.).

The 40 years of Judah’s iniquity and its association to a siege of Jerusalem in Ezekiel 4:4-7 is herewith offered as a double reference prophecy with its second fulfillment being the span from the crucifixion to the ending of the sacrifice system by Titus’ AD 70 destruction of the temple and its altar (after all, the OT is about Christ, Luke 24:27, 44-45).

Moreover, Titus began the siege of Jerusalem on 14 Nisan AD 70. Are we to actually believe it is a mere coincidence that this was 40 years to the very day from a 14 Nisan AD 30 crucifixion? [Jones, 2004]

Daniel’s 70 weeks of years are 7 * 70 = 490 years. Are there other 490-year intervals in Scripture? Yes, in 1919, Clarence Larkin noted that there are three other periods before this [Missler, 2005]:

- Abraham to Exodus (less 15 years when Ishmael was the usurper) = 505 years – 15 years = 490 years
- Exodus to the First Temple (less the years of the servitudes of the Judges, i.e., subjection to the rule of Mesopotamia,
Moabites, Canaanites, Midianites, Ammonites, Philistines) = 601 years – 111 years = 490 years
• First Temple to the decree of Artaxerxes (less the 70 years of the Babylonian captivity) = (1005 BC to 445 BC) – 70 years = 560 years – 70 years = 490 years
• and, as already mentioned, from the decree of King Artaxerxes to the First and Second Comings of Christ = 69 weeks + (ignore gap) + 7 years = 70 * 7 years = 490 years

Let us return to the issue of 70 weeks of years. The 70th week of Daniel will begin with the signing, strengthening, or confirmation of a 7-year covenant or peace treaty between Israel and either its neighbours or the whole world. The Antichrist is the one who confirms the covenant. From that point on, there is a period of 7 years * 360 days/year until Jesus Christ returns at Armageddon. This 7-year period is called the Tribulation, “the 70th Week of Daniel”, or “the time of Jacob’s Trouble”. The second half of this 7-year period is marked by the Antichrist taking control of the rebuilt Temple, declaring himself to be God, and breaking the 7-year covenant made earlier.

Daniel specifically draws reference to the first 69 weeks, separating the 70th week from the first 69. He also states that the Messiah will be “cut off”—literally “executed”—this happened at the cross. The passage in Daniel 9:24-27 includes the phrase “to anoint the Most Holy” (i.e., to anoint Jesus Christ as Lord); however, Christ was not anointed as King or Lord, but rather, He was rejected. Thus, the 70th week appears to be in the future—after Christ’s Second Coming.

Who is the “prince that shall come” mentioned in Daniel 9:27? This is ambiguous. Some scholars think this refers to General Titus of Rome whose army destroyed the Second Temple in 70 AD, and which fulfilled Christ’s prophecy about the great Temple: “not one stone here will be left on another” (Matthew 24:2). Others think it refers to the future Antichrist. Because the Romans destroyed the Second Temple, they are the people of prince that shall come. Equivalently, this would mean that the future Antichrist will have a Roman connection—under this scenario. Verse 27 starts with “He will confirm a covenant”. The word “He” refers to the immediate preceding reference to a person: “the prince that shall come”. This implies that the “prince that shall come” is in fact the Antichrist. Thus, in both cases, it appears to refer to a Roman empire. The fact that there is a distinction between “the people of” and “the prince that shall come” suggests that there is a gap in time between the two personalities (i.e., 70 AD versus well into the future (Antichrist)). The Antichrist is likely to be a Gentile of Roman origin.
The “he” being mentioned in verse 27 is definitely not Jesus Christ, as some preterists suggest for at least two reasons: (a) grammatically, this would be incorrect; and (b) it is a 7-year covenant, so why would Christ’s sacrifice/covenant only be good for 7 years? With respect to the latter point, we note that Temple sacrifices and services continued for about 40 more years, until 70 AD. Thus, a notion of a 7-year covenant initiated by the Antichrist seems to be the logical fit. Incidentally, John Whitcomb notes that the “sacrifice and offering” that the Antichrist will put an end to, are the blood sacrifice (zebah) and the non-blood sacrifice (minhah, grain offering) [Ice, 2003f].

What is meant by the term “and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and even unto the end shall be war” (Daniel 9:26, KJV)? Symbolically, the term flood in Scripture refers to a military invasion [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. Parts of Jerusalem and all of the Temple were destroyed by Roman military action in 70 AD. War will also be occurring, on a grand scale, during the future reign of Antichrist.

Lastly, Daniel speaks of 70 years of exile. Daniel figured (from the writings of Jeremiah, e.g., Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10-14) that the 70 years of exile should have ended in his day; but, it didn’t. (Recall that the first phase of the exile began around 606 BC and that the Temple was destroyed around 587 BC (some authors use 586 BC); so, the time of Daniel’s writing (circa 540 BC) was approximately 70 years after the start of the exile.)

After Daniel sought the Lord in prayer, the angel Gabriel came to explain that another penalty was to take effect. This penalty was a future 70 weeks of years (from which the ultimate return from exile, and the end of sin, would occur). A week of years means seven years; therefore, Daniel’s 70 weeks of years really meant 490 years. The starting point of these 70 weeks of years would be in the future (at the start of King Artaxerxes’ 20th year of rule). The time from then until Christ’s first coming marked the end of the first 69 weeks
of years (see elsewhere in this document for a much broader explanation); but, if we look at the seven years after His death (which technically would have been the 70th and final week of Daniel’s 70 weeks of years), it becomes apparent that the 70th week was put on hold (because of Israel’s rejection of Jesus Christ at His first coming). Therefore, we assume that Israel will return from exile (i.e., from all over the world) at Christ’s Second Coming, which would mark the end of the 70 weeks of years.

So, what about Jeremiah’s “seventy years”? Does it mean there are another 70 years in Scripture that relate to the 70 years in exile, with respect to Babylon? Yes and no; the two are related. The words of Jeremiah likely apply to the fact that the nation of Israel did not allow the land to “enjoy its sabbaths” seventy times since they came into the land circa 1400 BC [Ice, 2003f]. Under Levitical law, Israel had certain obligations which it did not fulfill:

Leviticus 25:1-6  The LORD said to Moses on Mount Sinai, "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the LORD. For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. But in the seventh year the land is to have a sabbath of rest, a sabbath to the LORD. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest. Whatever the land yields during the sabbath year will be food for you—for yourself, your manservant and maidservant, and the hired worker and temporary resident who live among you,

But, Israel did not obey the Lord for some of the time between entering the land and the time of the Babylonian exile. Thus, the Lord sent Israel into exile (in Babylon) until the 70 missing sabbath years had been accounted for. Furthermore, after letting the land rest for 70 years, if Israel continued to be disobedient (which it was), God would multiply their punishment by seven.

Leviticus 26:14-18  "'But if you will not listen to me and carry out all these commands, and if you reject my decrees and abhor my laws and fail to carry out all my commands and so violate my covenant, then I will do this to you: I will bring upon you sudden terror, wasting diseases and fever that will destroy your sight and drain away your life. You will plant seed in vain, because your enemies will eat it. I will set my face against you so that you will be defeated by your enemies; those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee even when no one is pursuing you. "'If after all this you will not listen to me, I will punish you for your sins
seven times over.

Leviticus 26:21 "'If you remain hostile toward me and refuse to listen to me, I will multiply your afflictions seven times over, as your sins deserve.

Leviticus 26:23-24 "'If in spite of these things you do not accept my correction but continue to be hostile toward me, I myself will be hostile toward you and will afflict you for your sins seven times over.

Leviticus 26:27-28 "'If in spite of this you still do not listen to me but continue to be hostile toward me, then in my anger I will be hostile toward you, and I myself will punish you for your sins seven times over.

Leviticus 26:33-35 I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins. Then the land will enjoy its sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths. All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the sabbaths you lived in it.

The Bible states that Israel fulfilled its initial 70 years of exile in order to fulfill the word of the Lord given through the prophet Jeremiah. In other words, this was the 70 years of letting the land enjoy its sabbaths. After this time, King Cyrus (circa 537 BC—70 years after the initial exile) let some of the Jews return; however, only a small number (e.g., 50,000) returned to Israel, which displeased the Lord. Perhaps they were too accustomed to the Babylonian lifestyle and didn’t want to return.

2 Chronicles 36:16-23 But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy. He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians, who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and spared neither young man nor young woman, old man or aged. God handed all of them over to Nebuchadnezzar. He carried to Babylon all the articles from the temple of God, both large and small, and the treasures of the LORD’S temple and the treasures of the king and his officials. They set fire to God's temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there. He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all
the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah. In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing: "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: 'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you--may the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.'"

Preterist Position

The 70 weeks of Daniel are over. The “70 weeks” are 70*7=490 years. Steve Gregg says that they began with either the first decree of Artaxerxes, the second decree of Artaxerxes, or the decree of Cyrus (there were 3 decrees in all)—which one, however, is subject to debate. Nevertheless, the key thing is the 70th of the 70 weeks of years (i.e., the last 7 years of the 490 years) began with Christ’s ministry. Three and a half years later, Christ was “cut off”. This is when the “sacrifice and the offering” ceased; it is the “midst of the week” that Daniel spoke of, and therefore, the 70th week would have ended some 3½ years after Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection.

Gregg says the view that’s not credible is the one held by dispensationalists which believe that the 70th week is still future. The 490 years are consecutive. He remarks that there is no 7-year period mentioned in Revelation, but there is a three-and-a-half year period (actually, twice).

Furthermore, there is no need for a “gap” between the 69th and 70th weeks, as proposed by dispensationalists. There is nothing in the context that says, or even suggests, that an arbitrary period of time (e.g., 2000 years) must go here. Similarly, there is no “gap” between Matthew 24:2 & 24:4+ (“not one stone here will be left ... watch that no one deceives you ... many will come in my name”).

Hanegraaff agrees with Gregg that the 69th and 70th weeks have no gap between them. The source of this argument relates to how some people erroneously claim that there are “two distinct people [groups] with two distinct destinies, two distinct plans [for salvation] ... eventually culminating in two comings—a secret coming and a Second Coming—with a gap of seven years between them”.

Hanegraaff argues that numbers in Scriptures like “the cattle on a thousand hills” are not necessarily literal. Here, “thousands” and “cattle” combine to form a metaphor having to do with the fact that God owns everything. Thus, the term “thousand years” can refer to a
Thus, Daniel’s vision of the seventy sevens (70*7=490) is simply a symbolic period of extended exile for the Jews. Note that Scripture says that we are to forgive others “seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:22). The seventy ‘sevens’ [490 years] are also synonymous with ten Jubilee eras (10*49=490), which is symbolic of the return of Jesus Christ “to end transgression”, etc. (Recall that the Year of Jubilee was a time of redemption. It was when all debts were cancelled, slaves were set free, and land was returned to its original owners.)

Hank remarks, “The way you break the code of Revelation is not with a newspaper in your hand, but with the Old Testament in your hand.”

And on August 30 [70 AD] the unthinkable happened. ‘The very day on which the former temple had been destroyed by the king of Babylon,’ the second temple was set ablaze. As John had prophesied, ‘In one day her plagues will overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her (Revelation 18:8). ... By September 26 all Jerusalem was in flames. ‘The total number of prisoners taken during the war was 97,000 and those who died during the siege 1,100,000.’ [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 151-152].

The “he” being mentioned in Daniel 9:24-27 isn’t Antichrist because the subject of the passage is the Messiah. Some people believe that “he” is Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Steve Gregg also says that “he” who confirms the covenant is actually the Messiah (Christ). After Christ shed His blood, each subsequent sacrifice was considered an abomination (since Christ was the perfect sacrifice for all time). This would be followed with the desolation and destruction of both the Temple and Jerusalem in 70 AD. God is no longer interested in animal sacrifices and Temple worship. Christ was the sacrifice. Thus, Christ’s Church is the “temple” of the body of Christ/God (1 Corinthians 3:16).

Several scholars state that the Hebrew words for Daniel 9:27 are difficult. One possible rendering is “and one who causes desolation will come upon…” In general, there are different possibilities going from one language to a receptor language. For example, compare these two translations of verse 27: (a) “He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven’. In the middle of the ‘seven’, he will put an end to sacrifice and offering, and on a wing of the temple, he will set up an abomination that causes desolation…” [NIV translation], with (b) “… and one who causes desolation will come upon the pinnacle of the abominable temple, until the end that is decreed is poured out on the desolated city” [alternate NIV translation,
Gary DeMar believes that Jesus is the “he” that is being referred to in verse 27, and not the Antichrist [Ice, 2003f]. In other words, Christ is confirming the covenant. The covenant refers to the new covenant that Christ made—namely that His own sacrifice/blood caused the old sacrifice and offering to be rendered obsolete. Hank Hanegraaff remarks that any further animal sacrifice (the kind of sacrifice mentioned in the Old Testament) would be an abomination to God.

Hank says that if you start counting the 490 years by using King Artaxerxes’ decree as the baseline, rather than King Cyrus’ decree, then nothing seems to line up in terms of the timeline of Daniel’s 70 weeks (490 years). The period does not end with Christ riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. The starting point is unclear; it doesn’t matter whether you start with the decree of Cyrus or Artaxerxes—the math still doesn’t add up. As noted above, we need to think of the “70 weeks of years” as a metaphor. Note also that “70 sevens” also means 10 Jubilee eras (i.e., one Year of Jubilee every 49 years). Thus, the Bible may be referring to this in a broader sense that may not have anything to do with chronology, specific timeframes, or the 21st century. The final Jubilee is a type of the time when Christ returns to set the captives free and redeem planet Earth.

Furthermore, we should not be taking this material and turning it into events in the 21st century. Hank believes that the interpretation of the 70 weeks that is promoted by most classical dispensationalists is misleading. However, rather than being bitter at dispensational teachers, it is better to recognize the difficulty involved in interpreting the various forms of writing in Scripture—and actively study and debate the issues.

One interpretation is that the Jews’ captivity would not end after 70 years, but rather, after 70 times 7 years (i.e., 490 years). The fact that a few people returned to Israel in Nehemiah’s time, does not mean that 70 years, or 490 years, marks the end of captivity, sin, and sacrifice, but rather these would occur only after Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection. The land points to Christ. The return from spiritual exile is the point of the passage.

Hank says, “We must learn the art and science of Biblical interpretation” (i.e., hermeneutics). He emphasizes that we must become familiar with the language used. As an analogy:

I wrote to Hank Jr. about the pride I felt in watching him ‘turn a snowman into a tweeter on number seven’ the day before. Unless you were familiar with golf lingo in general or ‘Hankisms’ in
particular, you would have little hope of comprehending my meaning [i.e., turning a score of ‘8’ (a snowman) into a one-under-par score (tweeter) on the 7th hole of the golf course]”  
[Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 128]

Scripture has allegories/parables (both are extended metaphors), similes, hyperboles, idioms, symbols, figures of speech, etc. For example, Jesus said, “I am the bread of life.” Here, Jesus is using symbolic language—a metaphor. On the other hand, the story of Adam and Eve is not an allegory. As another example, Jesus stepped on the head of the snake; the snake bites Jesus on the heel. Christ overcame Satan through Christ’s passion on the cross. “If I say, ‘I’ve got a frog in my throat’, …”

The entire Bible is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. A lot of the language of prophecy (e.g., land of promise, time of rest, restoration, no more death or mourning) points to its fulfillment in Christ.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is the meaning of the “1260 days” (or 42 months) mentioned in Revelation? What is the meaning of “time, times and half a time” in Daniel? Are both of these time periods referring to the same event?</th>
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| Daniel 7:23-25 | "He gave me this explanation: 'The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time."

Daniel 12:7 The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, “It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed.

Revelation 11:3 And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.”

Revelation 12:6 The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.

Revelation 13:5 The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to
exercise his authority for forty-two months.

| Dispensationalist Position | A period of 1260 days equals 3½ Biblical years (of 360 days per Biblical year). We get the notion of a Biblical year from the books of Genesis (Noah’s Flood) and Esther (5-month period of 150 days).

The term “time, times and half a time” very likely means: 1 year, 2 years, and 0.5 years, respectively—i.e., a sum of 3½ years, which equates to 1260 days when using the notion of a Biblical year.

This timeframe represents one-half of the 7-year Tribulation. (The latter half of the Tribulation is often called the Great Tribulation by prophecy teachers. A notable exception is Arnold Fruchtenbaum who uses the term to describe the entire Tribulation.) It appears that the verses above (from Daniel and Revelation) refer to the same time periods: the latter half of the 7-year Tribulation. |

| Preterist Position | The 1260 days mentioned in Revelation (i.e., 3½ years, or 42 months) likely corresponds to the Jewish War that began in 67 AD and ended in the fall of 70 AD [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 61]. It does not refer to a future “Tribulation” period. |

| Topic/Question | What is meant by the “1,335 days” in the book of Daniel?

Note that the “1,260 days” discussed in the previous section is connected to this prophecy.

Daniel 12:1-13  "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people--everyone whose name is found written in the book--will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge." ... "How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?" ... I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, "It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed." I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, "My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?" He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end. Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be
wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand. "From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days. "As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance."

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<tr>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
<th>The “time of distress” is the 7-year Tribulation. It is the same period that Christ spoke about in Matthew:</th>
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<td>Matthew 24:15-22  &quot;So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel--let the reader understand-- then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now--and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.</td>
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<td>Christ urges the Jewish remnant not to waste a moment’s time in fleeing from the intense persecution of the Antichrist. They are to leave immediately. He says to pray that their flight will not be required on the Sabbath (when mobility and services are virtually shut down in Israel) or in winter (presumably when many of the wadis may fill with water in mountainous terrain, making escape via those routes treacherous, in the rainy season). It’s been said that more people die in the desert in Israel from drowning than from thirst due to the dangerous flash floods, which can easily sweep a large vehicle off the road.</td>
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<td>The “time, times and half a time” refers to 1,260 days or 3½ years, and appears to be the second half of the Tribulation. If we assume that the Antichrist violates the Holy of Holies in the rebuilt Temple at the midpoint of the 7-year covenant with Israel, then it is reasonable to assume that the 1,260 days represents the latter 3½ years of the Tribulation. We assume that the end of those 1,260 days is also the end of the 7-year covenant that Antichrist made, and the end of the Tribulation is when Christ appears at Armageddon. This leaves 30 days unaccounted for between the return of Christ at Armageddon, and the end of the 1,290 days. This time period has been the subject</td>
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of some speculation, and no good answers are apparent. Might this be the time when Christ actually appears to the hiding remnant near Edom/Bozrah (i.e., modern-day Jordan), as per Isaiah 63:1-6? Prophecy experts are mixed on this—with some thinking that Bozrah is one of his first stops during the Battle of Armageddon, rather than one of his last (or after the fact). Bozrah lies about 32 kilometres southeast of the Dead Sea.

Isaiah 63:1-6  Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save." Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress? "I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing. For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redemption has come. I looked, but there was no one to help, I was appalled that no one gave support; so my own arm worked salvation for me, and my own wrath sustained me. I trampled the nations in my anger; in my wrath I made them drunk and poured their blood on the ground."

The “1,335 days” appears to be an extra 45 days after the 1,290 days. Thus, there appears to be a window of 75 days following the return of Christ at Armageddon. Might the latter 45 days refer to the time between Christ’s appearing to the hiding remnant and the end of the time of judgment of those people alive after Armageddon?

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<th>Preterist Position</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Topic/Question</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>What timeframe is referred to in Daniel 8:14 with respect to the 2300 evenings and mornings (of Temple sacrifices)? Is it related to the end times? Is there a dual fulfillment?</td>
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Daniel 8:13-14  Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to him, "How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled--the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, and the surrender of the sanctuary and of the host that will be trampled underfoot?" He said to me, "It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated."

Daniel 8:26  "The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future."
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<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
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<td>The legality of the “occupation” of the West Bank, Gaza, Golan Heights, etc?</td>
<td>Because of anti-Semitism in Europe and elsewhere, the Israelis believe it is their land to possess fairly—especially since Israel won it in a war that it did not initiate. Furthermore, it is part of what the Bible calls “the promised land”.</td>
<td>The Jews retaining the land is not an issue with respect to the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy. It is important to be just and ethical with respect to the land. Israel knew that it was taking land that was occupied by others.</td>
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<td>In the summer of 2005, the Israelis started pulling out of Gaza. Does this have</td>
<td>The land is being “divided up”, and is likely to result in more trouble/terrorism, pushing Israel even closer to Armageddon.</td>
<td>Hank Hanegraaff notes that the New Testament deals more with the Lord and the people, rather than with the law and the land. “My kingdom is not of this world”, said Christ. Hank says that Israel needs to be fair to the Palestinians, and not throw them out of the land. The land belongs to the Lord, and not to Israel. Most Israelis today are secular, and their behaviour to their neighbours leaves much to be desired. There were strict rules in the Old Testament about how the Israelites were to treat the aliens and sojourners. When the Israelites returned from their exile in Babylon, there were people (especially poor people) living in the land of Israel. A similar analogy applies today with the Palestinians.</td>
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<td>significance to Bible prophecy?</td>
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<td>Is the return of the Jewish people to Israel (i.e., regathering in unbelief)</td>
<td>There was a regathering of Jews in the land, most dramatically since May 14, 1948 when Israel became an independent nation—for the first time in thousands of years. The return of Jews to Israel is surely a fulfillment of prophecy, and an indicator of Christ’s soon coming. Many Jews are moving to Israel, coming out of Russia (especially),</td>
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Africa, Europe, and numerous nations throughout the world.

Dave Hunt writes:

“One of the most remarkable prophecies in the Bible is found in the many declarations that Jews would be scattered to all nations where they would be hated, persecuted, and killed like no other people.” [Hunt, 2006]

Jeremiah 23:3 "I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number.

Jeremiah 23:7-8 "So then, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when people will no longer say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,' but they will say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the descendants of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.' Then they will live in their own land."

Ezekiel 36:19-20 I dispersed them among the nations, and they were scattered through the countries; I judged them according to their conduct and their actions. And wherever they went among the nations they profaned my holy name, for it was said of them, 'These are the LORD'S people, and yet they had to leave his land.'

Ezekiel 36:24 "'For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land.

Isaiah 43:6 I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth--

The Bible speaks of two regatherings of the Jews: one in unbelief, in preparation for judgment; and the other in belief just before the Messianic Kingdom [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]:

Ezekiel 20:34-35 I will bring you from the nations and gather you from the countries where you have been scattered--with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with outpoured wrath. I will bring you into the desert of the nations and there, face to face, I will execute judgment upon you.

Zephaniah 2:1-2 Gather together, gather together, 0 shameful nation, before the appointed time arrives and that day sweeps on like chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD
They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious. In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the sea. He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth.

Preterist Position
There is no Old Testament prophecy that predicts a return of Jews to the land occurring shorting before the return of Christ. Zechariah is the only possible exception; that book of the Bible speaks of God regathering His people.

Ezekiel 37 speaks of a “new heart” in the people. This certainly hasn’t happened yet. There may be more Jews in New York City than there are in Israel. There may be more Jews in Russia than in Israel today. Some people (in 2004) would argue that there are more Jews leaving Israel than coming in.

Jesus never predicted that the Jews will come back after they were scattered throughout the world.

Some scholars do not believe that Israel’s presence in the land, or for that matter, any other contemporary events shown on the news, have anything to do with the fulfillment of Bible prophecy.

Topic/Question
The “Magog invasion”: Does Ezekiel 38-39 speak of a Russian-Muslim alliance vs. Israel? Does this Scripture passage refer to a past event—or does it refer to a future event? What nations are the invading armies?

Note: There is disagreement among Bible scholars as to whom the nations of Ezekiel 38-39 are. Many of these concerns are about Russia’s involvement. Extensive details are provided in this section (below).

Dispensationalist Position
The book of Ezekiel was written around 570 BC. The Magog invasion, the major prophecy in Ezekiel 38-39, did not happen on or before 70 AD; therefore, it must refer to some future time. It is one
of the most important unfulfilled prophecies in the Bible.

Ezekiel 38-39 indicates that specific nations near Israel will attack Israel in the latter days (i.e., latter years or near end times), and that 5/6 (i.e., 83.3%) of those invaders will be destroyed on the mountains of Israel. Then, Israel (and presumably many other countries and people) will acknowledge that the God of the Bible is for real.

Chief among these invading nations is a major power “from the north”—which many scholars believe is Russia:

Ezekiel 38:2-12  "Son of man, set your face against Gog [the leader], of the land of Magog [southern republics of the former Soviet Union?], the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal [both Turkey]; prophesy against him and say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. I will turn you around, put hooks in your jaws and bring you out with your whole army--your horses, your horsemen fully armed, and a great horde with large and small shields, all of them brandishing their swords. Persia [Iran and possibly parts of Iraq and Afghanistan], Cush [Sudan and possibly Ethiopia], and Put [Libya] will be with them, all with shields and helmets, also Gomer [yet another tribe from ancient Turkey?] with all its troops, and Beth Togarmah [again, Turkey?] from the far north with all its troops--the many nations with you. ’Get ready; be prepared, you and all the hordes gathered about you, and take command of them. After many days you will be called to arms. In future years you will invade a land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate. They had been brought out from the nations, and now all of them live in safety. You and all your troops and the many nations with you will go up, advancing like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land. ’"This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On that day thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil scheme. You will say, "I will invade a land of unwalled villages; I will attack a peaceful and unsuspecting people--all of them living without walls and without gates and bars. I will plunder and loot and turn my hand against the resettled ruins and the people gathered from the nations, rich in livestock and goods, living at the center of the land."

Ezekiel 38:7  [KJV]  Be thou [Gog] prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard [armourer] unto them [these nations].

Ezekiel 39:1-2  [KJV]  Therefore, thou son of
man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel.

Israel will use the weapons of the invading armies, for fuel, for seven years. (Could this refer to nuclear energy?) It will take Israel seven months to bury the dead. The dead will be buried in a valley east of Jerusalem called the Valley of Hamon Gog (meaning hordes or multitudes of Gog). After this time, if anyone sees a body part/bone, he/she is to place a marker next to it, and the appropriate authorities will move and bury it:

Ezekiel 39:4-16 On the mountains of Israel you will fall, you and all your troops and the nations with you. I will give you as food to all kinds of carrion birds and to the wild animals. You will fall in the open field, for I have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD. I will send fire on Magog and on those who live in safety in the coastlands, and they will know that I am the LORD. "'I will make known my holy name among my people Israel. I will no longer let my holy name be profaned, and the nations will know that I the LORD am the Holy One in Israel. It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the Sovereign LORD. This is the day I have spoken of. "'Then those who live in the towns of Israel will go out and use the weapons for fuel and burn them up--the small and large shields, the bows and arrows, the war clubs and spears. For seven years they will use them for fuel. They will not need to gather wood from the fields or cut it from the forests, because they will use the weapons for fuel. And they will plunder those who plundered them and loot those who looted them, declares the Sovereign LORD. "'On that day I will give Gog a burial place in Israel, in the valley of those who travel east toward the Sea. It will block the way of travelers, because Gog and all his hordes will be buried there. So it will be called the Valley of Hamon Gog. "'For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them in order to cleanse the land. All the people of the land will bury them, and the day I am glorified will be a memorable day for them, declares the Sovereign LORD. "'Men will be regularly employed to cleanse the land. Some will go throughout the land and, in addition to them, others will bury those that remain on the ground. At the end of the seven months they will begin their search. As they go through the land and one of them sees a human bone, he will set up a marker beside it until the gravediggers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon Gog. (Also a town called Hamonah will be there.) And
The fact that Israel will use the invaders’ weapons for fuel for seven years, and that it will take Israel seven months to bury the dead, gives clues as to the timing of the event [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. In particular, it rules out a mid-Tribulation or later timeframe of the Magog invasion because Israel will be too busy fleeing from the wrath of the Antichrist, and would simply not have time to bury the dead (near a newly constructed town: Hamonah). Furthermore, it is debatable whether Israel will be using the weapons for fuel during the first 3½ years of the Millennium. Thus, Fruchtenbaum believes the Magog invasion will take place at least 3½ years before the start of the Tribulation.

Some authors believe the Magog invasion is actually part of the Battle of Armageddon. For more on this, see the section below entitled, “Is the Magog invasion part of the Battle of Armageddon?”.

It’s hard to see how the Preterist position explains the burial of the dead over a seven month period as being a fulfilled event. This event can only apply to the future because it hasn’t been fulfilled yet, and the language in the text clearly indicates that it is a major event (that surely would have been noticed had it already occurred).

Currently, in world geopolitics, most, if not all, of the invading nations mentioned above would like to wipe Israel off the map.

Here is a summary of the nations involved in the Ezekiel 38-39 invasion of Israel [Hitchcock, 2006; Rhodes, 2008; Shoebat & Richardson (S&R), 2008]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ancient (Biblical) Name</th>
<th>Modern Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rosh</td>
<td>[Hitchcock, Rhodes]: Russia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[S&amp;R]: Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magog</td>
<td>[Hitchcock, S&amp;R]: Lands in central Asia and possibly Afghanistan (e.g., land today occupied by the former southern Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and possibly the northern parts of modern Afghanistan).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Rhodes, p. 103]: “The Expositor’s Bible Commentary suggests that Magog refers to “the land of the Scythians, a mountainous region around the Black and Caspian seas.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meshech</td>
<td>[Hitchcock, S&amp;R]: Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Source(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tubal</td>
<td>[Rhodes, p. 110]: Meshech &amp; Tubal = area to the south of the Black and Caspian seas, in Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persia</td>
<td>[All 3]: Iran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cush</td>
<td>[Hitchcock, S&amp;R]: Sudan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put</td>
<td>[Hitchcock]: Libya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gomer</td>
<td>[Hitchcock]: Turkey</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beth-Togarmah</td>
<td>[Hitchcock]: Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note the absence of Babylon (modern-day Iraq) from the above list. Iraq would like to wipe Israel off the map. Hitchcock writes:

I believe Iraq’s absence from this invasion is quite clear if we follow God’s blueprint for the end times, in Scripture.

First of all, I believe that the ancient city of Babylon will be rebuilt in the end times as a great commercial capital for the Antichrist (see Isaiah 13; Revelation 17-18) …

Second, the Bible says that Babylon will be destroyed at the end of the Tribulation just before Jesus comes back to earth. According to Ezekiel 38, the Islamic invaders will be destroyed in the first half of the Tribulation … She will not meet her doom with the other Islamic nations during the Tribulation, but will be destroyed later. Babylon has her own personal appointment with destiny just before the Second Coming of Christ. [Hitchcock, 2006, pp. 169-170].

Shoebat and Richardson write:

If we examine some of the greatest Biblical references, like the Macmillan Bible Atlas, Oxford Bible Atlas, and The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands, they all locate Magog, Meshech, Tubal, Gomer, and Beth Togarmah in Asia Minor, and not Russia.

Are they all wrong?

... One common denominator in the argument over the Gog and Magog story is that everyone at least agrees that Gog is Prince of Meshech and Tubal. No serious historian would argue that Meshech and Tubal are not in Turkey. [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008, pp. 256-257]

Ezekiel 38 describes the events as follows: There will be a great earthquake (verses 19-20); disease (verse 22); and rain, hailstones, fire, and burning sulphur (verse 22).

... Infighting among the troops of the various nations (Ezekiel 38:21). In the chaos after the powerful earthquake, the armies of each of the nations represented will turn against each other. Just think about it: the troops from the various invading nations will speak Russian, Farsi (Persian), Arabic, and Turkic languages. They will probably begin to kill anyone that they can’t identify. This could be the largest case of death by friendly fire in human history. [Hitchcock, 2006, pp. 170-171].

Chapter 37 deals with Israel’s restoration to the land; however, the initial regathering is in unbelief. Chapter 40 begins a new section describing the millennial temple and sacrifices. Therefore, the invasion of Gog and Magog [Ezekiel 38-39] is placed sometime between the beginning of Israel’s restoration to
the land and the beginning of the Millennium or 1,000-year earthly reign of Christ. [Hitchcock, 2006, pp. 170-171]

… the invasion will occur at a time when Israel is “at rest”, “living securely”, and dwelling in “unwalled villages.” It is true that the inhabitants of modern Israel live in unwalled villages and have some degree of security due to their military might. However, they are not “at rest” as required by Ezekiel 38:11. The Hebrew word translated at rest means “be quiet, undisturbed.” This hardly describes Israel today. The nation is one huge, armed camp. The people are disturbed on a regular basis by threats and homicide bombings. Since 1948, Israel has lived under the constant threat of terrorist attacks and invasion by her neighbors. The terminology in Ezekiel 38 fits much better with the first half of the seven-year tribulation when Israel will enjoy the protection of her covenant with the Antichrist and will temporarily let down her guard (Daniel 9:27). [Hitchcock, 2006, p. 182]

The power vacuum created by the destruction of the armies of Russia, Iran, and most of the other Islamic nations [involved in Ezekiel 38-39] will be quickly filled by the Antichrist. He will seize this opportunity to launch his world empire at the midpoint of the seven-year tribulation. He will establish a headquarters in Babylon (modern Iraq) … [Hitchcock, 2006, pp. 193-194]

Was Ezekiel 38-39 fulfilled during the time of Esther? No, for the following reasons. First, Ezekiel 38:16 speaks of the land of Israel being invaded, and the invaders being destroyed on the mountains of Israel. In Esther, the events took place in Persia—a long way from Israel. Second, God destroys the invaders of Ezekiel 38-39 via supernatural and natural means; however, in Esther, the Jews and the local government did this. Third, Put (Libya) was not part of the Persian empire. Fourth, God sends fire upon Magog and those who live in the coastlands (Ezekiel 39:6); however, no such thing happened in the book of Esther. [Hitchcock, 2006]

Ron Rhodes writes:

The unique alignment of the nations described in Ezekiel 38-39 has never occurred in the past, but it is occurring now. ... even now one can observe alliances between Russia, Iran, and other Muslim nations, all of whom would like to see Israel obliterated.

Related to this, an alliance between many of the nations mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39 may not necessarily have made good sense in Ezekiel’s day because some are not located near each other, but it makes great sense in our day because the nations that make up the coalition are predominantly Muslim. That alone is more than enough reason for them to unify in attacking Israel—especially given current Islamic hatred for Israel.
Ezekiel’s invasion occurs after Israel is regathered from all over the earth—“gathered from many nations” (Ezekiel 38:8,12)—to a land that had been a wasteland. Certainly the Jews had been in bondage before. For example, they were held in bondage in Egypt. They went into captivity in Assyria and Babylon. But in each of these cases, they were freed from a single nation, not many nations around the world. The only regathering of Jews from many nations around the world in Israel’s history is that which is occurring today.

Ezekiel 36-37, which prophesies the rebirth of Israel, appears to be fulfilled before our very eyes as Jews return to their homeland from all over the world. Chapters 36-37 are apparently being fulfilled literally, so we can reasonably assume that chapters 38-39 will likewise be fulfilled literally.” [Rhodes, 2008, pp. 90-91]

Regarding taking prophecy literally, Rhodes adds:

“Undoubtedly one of the major problems in understanding prophecy is determining whether it should be understood in its natural, or literal meaning. Unless prophetic statements are taken in their normal sense, it is almost impossible to determine their meaning with any consistency. If one denies that a prophecy is to be taken in its normal sense, the door is opened to dozens of unauthorized interpretations. The non-literal interpretation of prophecy has been a major source of confusion and contradiction.” [Rhodes, 2008, p. 91]

Regarding Iraq’s notable absence in Ezekiel 38-39, he adds:

“Another possible scenario is that Iraq will not be a part of this Islamic invading coalition because a rebuilt Babylon (capital of Iraq) will be the headquarters of the Antichrist during the tribulation period (Revelation 17-18). Scripture reveals that the Antichrist will sign a seven-year peace pact with Israel (Daniel 9:27), and this will signal the beginning of the tribulation period. If the Ezekiel invasion takes place in the first half of the tribulation, Iraq could not possibly be a part of the invading force simply because Iraq, with its capital in Babylon, will be controlled by the Antichrist, who signed the peace pact with Israel. J. Dwight Pentecost suggests the possibility that when God destroys the invading coalition, the Antichrist may try to take credit for it.” [Rhodes, 2008, p. 115]

Regarding America’s possible absence from Ezekiel 38-39 (and actually from seemingly all of Scripture), Rhodes writes:

An interesting discussion has arisen over the phrase, “Tarshish with all its villages.” Thomas Ice is one of many who believe the phrase “refers to the colonies of Western Europe and the nations that have subsequently arisen from them. This would include North America and the United States.” What are the arguments for this interpretation?
[Thomas Ice]: “First, merchants of Tarshish refer to the Phoenician maritime and trading community located in Spain during the general time of King Solomon, 3,000 years ago. Second, the merchants of Tarshish, during the last 500 years, developed into the modern mercantile nations of Western Europe like Spain, Holland, and Britain. Third, the phrase “with all its villages” or the variant rendering “with all the young lions” [in the KJV] would be a reference to its trans-Atlantic colonies, which would include America. Thus, it is reasoned, because America is the most dominant of these Western nations, this must be a reference to America.”

If this interpretation is correct, then according to Ezekiel 38:13, the United States would be among the nations lodging a protest against this massive invasion into Israel. But the protest is not backed with action.

Many today believe this passage refers to the United States, but I just don’t find enough scriptural evidence to support the view. Therefore, I cannot subscribe to it. [Rhodes, 2008, p. 121]

For more on the notion of the United States being in (or not in) Bible prophecy, see the section below entitled “Is America in Prophecy?”

Preterist Position

The language of Ezekiel is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Most of Ezekiel 38-39 can be taken symbolically. For example, the words about fire, brimstone, and earthquakes are apocalyptic writing, and should not be taken literally. Other writings are expressed in apocalyptic language (e.g., Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, and other Old Testament books), and are also meant to be taken symbolically.

The idea that “Rosh” and “Gog and Magog” refer to Russia is nonsense. When using the word “north”, Ezekiel is giving the direction of the attack, not the location of the attacker. The idea that this is a future attack by Russia is nonsense. Every single word applies to us today, but it was written to a different audience, at a different time. All of this has happened in the past. Authors who believe that Russia will invade Israel from the north (in the future) are leading people astray with their irresponsible interpretation of Scripture.

Hank Hanegraaff says that the book of Ezekiel (and also Daniel) was fulfilled a century after its writing, that is, when Ezra and Nehemiah rebuilt Jerusalem and the Temple (which was subsequently destroyed in 70 AD).
It is wrong to associate the Prince of Rosh with Russia. *Rosh* is never used as the name of a nation in the Bible. Instead, it means “chief” or “head”, such as that indicated by the Jewish Holy Day *Rosh Hashanah* (literally translated as *head of the year*). By associating Gog and Magog with modern-day Russia, it is negatively associating today’s Russians with errant Bible prophecy. As a side note, Hank comments that the notion of Gog and Magog being Russia isn’t something that Christians should divide over.

Gary DeMar states that Ezekiel 38-39 was fulfilled around 473 BC in the days of Queen Esther of Persia—as described in Esther 9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When will the Magog invasion in Ezekiel 38-39 take place? Is the Magog invasion part of the Battle of Armageddon?</td>
<td>Regarding the timing of the future fulfillment of Ezekiel 38-39, the most common timeframes seriously considered today are:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Are the references about the destruction of Babylon, Assyria, Land of the Philistines, Moab, Damascus, Cush, Tyre, Egypt, Edom, Arabia, etc., also part of the Battle of Armageddon? Have any of these prophecies been fulfilled? Is there any reason to believe that these prophecies are part of the Magog invasion? What about Israel’s neighbours: Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt? Are they also part of the Magog invasion or Armageddon? | 1. After the Rapture, but before the Tribulation  
2. After the Rapture, but during the first part of the Tribulation  
3. After the Rapture, but at the Battle of Armageddon (i.e., at the end of the Tribulation) |
| | Less common timeframes include:  
4. After the Rapture, but at the middle of the Tribulation. Thomas Ice writes that this position was popular in the 1980s, and included (at the time) notable prophecy researchers such as Hal Lindsey, John Walvoord, J. Dwight Pentecost, and Charles Ryrie [Ice, 2009d]. Today, many dispensationalists hold to the pretribulational view of the Magog invasion.  
5. Before the Rapture (few scholars believe this) |
| | Let us treat the most common cases, in order: |
| | (1) **After the Rapture, but before the Tribulation** |
| | Thomas Ice, an advocate of [the first] position, puts it: “It will be during the interval of days, weeks, months, or years between the |
rapture and the start of the seven-year tribulation.” Several arguments support this view:

1. The world will be in a state of absolute chaos following the rapture. The United States has a heavy population of Christians, so the rapture will have a devastating effect on the United States. Russia and her Muslim allies may well seize the moment and launch a massive attack against Israel, which, up until this time, had been protected by the United States.

2. Once God destroys Russia and the Muslim invaders prior to the tribulation, the Antichrist would be free to rise as the leader of the revived Roman Empire—a European superstate. Thomas Ice writes, “...this would remove much of the Russian and Muslim influence currently in the world today and allow a Euro-centric orientation to arise.”

3. If God destroys the Muslim invaders prior to the beginning of the tribulation, the Antichrist could more easily sign a peace pact with Israel (Daniel 9:27), guaranteeing that Israel will be protected...

4. This scenario ... may account for Israel’s ability to construct the Jewish temple on the temple mount in Jerusalem...

5. If the invasion takes place after the rapture, and the rapture takes place at least three and a half years prior to the beginning of the tribulation, Israel would have time to burn the weapons for seven years prior to the midpoint of the tribulation, when they take flight from Jerusalem. A significant lapse of time may therefore exist between the rapture and the beginning of the tribulation.” [Rhodes, 2008, pp. 182-183]

If the invasion takes place prior to the tribulation, it would make good sense to place it at least three and a half years prior to the tribulation. This view solves one of the primary dilemmas—the burning of the weapons for seven years prior to Israel taking flight from Jerusalem in the middle of the tribulation, after which the Jews will be the target of severe persecution by the Antichrist. [Rhodes, 2008, p. 193]

(2) After the Rapture, but during the First Part of the Tribulation

Ron Rhodes argues:

A third possibility is that the northern military coalition’s invasion into Israel takes place sometime during the first half of the tribulation, even as late as the middle of the tribulation. This view is held by John F. Walvoord, J. Dwight Pentecost, Charles Ryrie, Herman Hoyt, Mark Hitchcock, and others. Here are some of the arguments in favor of this position:
1. This position easily satisfies the precondition of Israel being secure and at rest prior to the invasion. This state of security and rest will be based on Israel signing the peace pact with the leader of the revived Roman Empire (the Antichrist). During this time of security and rest, during the first half of the tribulation period, the northern military coalition will invade Israel.

2. When God destroys the northern coalition during the first half of the tribulation, the resulting power vacuum will allow for the quick ascendancy of the Antichrist. With no more Russian and Muslim military forces, the Antichrist will have a much easier time of attaining world domination (see Revelation 13). As John F. Walvoord puts it, “When the invading armies are defeated, the ruler of the ten nations will elevate himself and proclaim himself ruler of the entire world.”

3. The destruction of Muslim forces in the first half of the tribulation will also allow for the emergence of a one-world religion ... [which] will be much easier in this religious vacuum. [Rhodes, 2008, p. 184]

Thomas Ice writes:

I recently read that on the modern battlefield of today, because of the great firepower of modern armies, that about 20% of warfare deaths worldwide are due to friendly fire. [Ezekiel 38:21] clearly states that the only killing to be done by Gog’s invaders of Israel will be that of massacring their fellow troops. “And I shall call for a sword against him on all My mountains,’ declares the Lord GOD. ‘Every man’s sword will be against his brother.’” Apparently in the confusion generated by the Lord’s earthquake and great shaking of the mountains of Israel, Gog’s armies will experience a whole lot of friendly fire as the Lord confuses them and they turn upon one another.

Imagine the great embarrassment and humiliation that Gog’s constituents back home experience when they learn that the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] did not even engage this great army; they did not have to because many of them killed each other. Upon further examination Gog’s allies will learn that it was really the God of Israel that they went up against. [Ice, 2008]

(3) After the Rapture, but at the Battle of Armageddon (i.e., at the End of the Tribulation)

A minority of Bible scholars, including Dave Hunt and Hal Lindsey, believe that the events of Ezekiel 38-39 are part of the Battle of Armageddon. Hunt argues that the Antichrist needs to enforce some “guarantees” to convince Israel to live in peace without walls, bars, or gates; and to allow the Temple to be rebuilt. At the end of this battle, “all Israel shall be saved”. Here are some Scriptures that suggest this is “the grand finale”:
Ezekiel 39:7  "'I will make known my holy name among my people Israel. I will no longer let my holy name be profaned, and the nations will know that I the LORD am the Holy One in Israel.

Ezekiel 39:22  From that day forward the house of Israel will know that I am the LORD their God.

Ezekiel 39:28-29  Then they will know that I am the LORD their God, for though I sent them into exile among the nations, I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind. I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD."

With respect to Ezekiel 38-39 being part of the Battle of Armageddon, Mark Hitchcock writes:

However, there are four main obstacles to this view. First Ezekiel 38 names specific allies, whereas Armageddon involves all the nations of the earth. Second, in Ezekiel 39 the destruction is on the mountains of Israel while at Armageddon it stretches from Megiddo in the north to Petra in the south. Third, in Ezekiel the armies are destroyed by convulsions of nature, but at Armageddon they are destroyed by the personal appearance of Christ. Fourth, and most importantly, at the end of the tribulation Israel will not be “at rest” or “living securely” which is required by Ezekiel 38:8,11,14. In the time of great tribulation, Israel will not be at rest, for Christ told them to flee to the mountains to escape their persecutors. By the end of the tribulation many Jews will have obeyed Him and fled into the wilderness, and the rest of the Jewish people will have endured three and a half years of persecution by the Antichrist. The end of the tribulation will be one time when Israel will not be “at rest” or “living securely.” Therefore, the invasion described by Ezekiel could not be a part of the battle of Armageddon ...” [Hitchcock, 2006, p. 183]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Battle of Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 38-39)</th>
<th>Armageddon (Revelation 16 &amp; 19)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gog leads the invasion.</td>
<td>Antichrist leads the invasion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel is at peace.</td>
<td>Israel is not at peace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armies gather to plunder Israel.</td>
<td>Armies gather to fight Christ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran, Russian, and Islamic allies</td>
<td>All nations invade Israel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>invade Israel.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[source: Hitchcock, 2006, p. 184]

Furthermore, the Battle of Gog and Magog takes place on the mountains of Israel, whereas Armageddon takes place on a vast plain (wide valley) starting at Megiddo in northern Israel, and heading south past Jerusalem. The armies of Armageddon battle against Israel and Jesus Christ, whereas the Magog invasion is specifically against Israel. At Armageddon, Christ appears; but not so in the
Lastly, in the Magog invasion, nations “protest” the invasion, but not so at Armageddon. [Rhodes, 2008]

The weapons mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39 are bows, arrows, shields, war clubs, and spears; and horses are used for transportation. Although this is possible, Hitchcock emphasizes Ezekiel may have simply been writing in the language of the day—when readers would have understood the battle scene much more readily than if Ezekiel had described guns, missiles, tanks, and planes to an ancient audience. This is also another reason why Ezekiel referred to the invading nations by their ancient/Biblical names (e.g., from the table of nations in Genesis 10). Some nations seem to change names and borders relatively often; therefore, their ancient names provide a more stable reference point. This also encourages the study of Bible prophecy, without giving away too much, and without encouraging some groups to influence, or determine the outcome, of prophecy.

Walid Shoebat and Joel Richardson also believe that the Magog war is part of the Battle of Armageddon because of verses such as the following:

Ezekiel 38:23  And so I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD.'

Ezekiel 39:7-8  "'I will make known my holy name among my people Israel. I will no longer let my holy name be profaned, and the nations will know that I the LORD am the Holy One in Israel. It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the Sovereign LORD. This is the day I have spoken of.

... and because of a major earthquake described in several passages:

Ezekiel 38:19-20  In my zeal and fiery wrath I declare that at that time there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. The fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, every creature that moves along the ground, and all the people on the face of the earth will tremble at my presence. The mountains will be overturned, the cliffs will crumble and every wall will fall to the ground.

Revelation 16:18-20  Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and
gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found.

Joel 3:12  'Let the nations be roused; let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side.

Joel 3:16  The LORD will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem; the earth and the sky will tremble. But the LORD will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel.

Zechariah 14:2-4  I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city. Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.

Ezekiel 38:22  I will execute judgment upon him with plague and bloodshed; I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulfur on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him.

Revelation 16:16-21  Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon. ... Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.

Walid Shoebat and Joel Richardson comment that the seven year period for burning the weapons could easily extend into the Millennium. As noted in the table above, they believe that Magog is not Russia, but rather Turkey. They are of the viewpoint that the war involving Gog and Magog and its allies are all Muslim nations:

Speaking to an audience of several of the most prominent prophecy authors in Dallas, Texas, I asked a question, “Besides the argument of whether Magog is Russia or not, can you name
any literal references in the Bible to a nation that God destroys in the end-times that is not Muslim?"

I paused, waiting for someone to rise to answer the question. “No one is raising their hands. Is it because you can’t find any?” ... Yet, all of them failed to name a single nation that Jehovah-God will destroy that is not a Muslim nation.

In every portrayal of Christ’s return to the earth, He is fighting a nation that today is Muslim. Try to imagine how I felt when I read Habakkuk 3, which says that in the last-days, God, the Holy One, would actually come to the earth on a mission to execute vengeance on Teman (Arabia) and Cushan (Sudan). “I saw the tents of Cushan in distress, the dwellings of Midian in anguish” (Habakkuk 3:7). Here Christ fights in battles against Arabia, Sudan and Somalia—all Muslim nations. I had to ask myself, if Allah and the God of the Bible are one and the same, why then does the Bible consistently portray God as being on the side of Israel and against the Muslims? ... in the Book of Isaiah, chapter 19: He will come to Egypt to execute vengeance; “See Jehovah rides on a swift cloud and is coming to Egypt. The idols of Egypt tremble before him, and the hearts of the Egyptians melt within them.”

Again, in Isaiah I read that “the Lord, Jehovah Almighty would lop off the boughs of the ‘great cedar’ [Antichrist] with great power and ‘Lebanon will fall before the mighty one.’” (Isaiah 10:34) ...

I could not deny the fact that the Bible portrays Jesus the Messiah as returning to fight nations that come against Israel. In numerous passages, he actually confronts them by name. Even in Joel 3, where we find the judgment of the nations for dividing Israel, we read: “Now what have you against me, O Tyre and Sidon [Lebanon] and all you regions of Philistia [Gaza]; Are you repaying me for something I have done? If you are paying me back, I will swiftly and speedily return on your own heads what you have done.” (Joel 3:4).

... But which nations does He [God] rouse Himself to fight? The nations that He wars against are well defined in Psalm 83 as a confederacy of Muslim nations allied against Israel: “They form an alliance against you—the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, of Moab and the Hagrites, Gebal, Ammon and Amalek, Philistia, with the people of Tyre. Even Assyria has joined them to lend strength to the descendants of Lot.” (Psalm 83:5-8)” [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008, p. 29-32]

The authors continue to describe the nations that Jesus Christ fights against upon His return, emphasizing that these are Middle Eastern nations, and not European nations. They draw many references from the Old Testament about unfulfilled Bible prophecies that will be fulfilled when Jesus Christ returns, at the Battle of Armageddon:
Gideon is crucial if we want to understand what the Messiah will do during His war expeditions after He sets foot on the Mount of Olives to fight for the Battle of Jerusalem. Though it is rarely discussed, Christ, like Gideon will fight against “Midian.” The Bible refers to Midian as Ishmaelites (Judges 8:22). They are the descendants of Abraham’s fourth son with his concubine Keturah.

Like Gideon, the Bible portrays Christ as fighting against the inhabitants of Arabia: “God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth. His splendor was like the sunrise; rays flashed from his hand, where his power was hidden” (Habakkuk 3:3-4). Jesus in person is returning from battle out of Teman in Arabia. How often is this discussed in churches? Jesus will physically return and will judge not only the inhabitants of Arabia, but also Cush, which includes the modern day Islamist nations of Sudan and Somalia: “I saw the tents of Cushan in distress, the dwellings of Midian in anguish” (Habakkuk 3:3-6).

Midian refers to the regions east of the Jordan River and southwards on into modern Saudi Arabia.

... Ezekiel 35 speaks of the judgment of Mount Seir (v. 1) and connects it with Edom: “As you rejoiced because the inheritance of the house of Israel was desolate, so I will do to you; you shall be desolate, O Mount Seir, as well as all of Edom—all of it! Then they shall know that I am the Lord” (v. 15). Greater Edom encompasses the land from Teman to Dedan which today is from Yemen to Saudi Arabia.

... “The hand of Jehovah will rest on this mountain (Zion); but Moab will be trampled under him as straw is trampled down in the manure” (Isaiah 24:10) ... Once again, the Messiah comes back to trample Moab.

... For those who hold to the European Antichrist paradigm, why does God specifically mention Moab and not any nations from Europe? If you take a face-value approach to interpretation, which is more reasonable to conclude; that this passage is pointing to the final End-Time defeat of the modern day physical and spiritual descendants of Moab, or that this passage is allegorically pointing us to Europe? Let’s get real here. The Bible simply does not teach a European Antichrist paradigm.

The Prophecy of Isaiah 63 concludes with the Messiah emerging out of Edom with his robes literally drenched with blood from the multitudes of those that he has slaughtered. That’s right. Have you ever seen Messiah portrayed this way? He left as a lamb, but he returns as a mighty conquering lion: “Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? ‘It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save.’ Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress? ‘I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and
trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments,
and I stained all my clothing. For the day of vengeance was in
my heart, and the year of my redemption has come.’” (Isaiah
63:1-4).

Ezekiel 25 also reveals exactly how God feels about Edom:
“Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because that Edom hath dealt against
the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly
offended, and revenged himself upon them; Therefore thus saith
the Lord GOD; I will also stretch out mine hand upon Edom, and
will cut off man and beast from it; and I will make it desolate
from Teman; and they of Dedan shall fall by the sword” (v.13
[KJV]).

Teman is in Yemen, while Dedan was an ancient city in central
Saudi Arabia that is now known as Al-Ula. Because of the use of
both Teman and Dedan, we are to understand that the entire
landmass stretching southward along the Red Sea and well into
central Saudi Arabia is being highlighted. The Jewish Tanakh
translates this verse; “from Teman to Dedan.” This is a massive
area.

... So who are the nations God says on whom He will pour out his
wrath? The list follows. As you read the list, ask yourself if the
emphasis is on the Middle East or Europe: “Pharaoh king of
Egypt, his attendants, his officials and all his people, and all the
foreign people there; all the kings of Uz; all the kings of the
Philistines—those of Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the people left
at Ashdod, Edom, Moab and Ammon; all the kings of Tyre and
Sidon; the kings of the coastlands across the sea; Tema, Buz and
all who are in distant places; all the kings of Arabia and all the
kings of the foreign people who live in the desert; all the kings of
Zimri, Elam and Media; and all the kings of the North, near and
far, one after the other—all the kingdoms on the face of the earth.
And after all of them, the king of Sheshach will drink it too... for
I am calling down a sword upon all who live on the earth,
declares Jehovah Almighty” (v. 19-26, 29).

Again, the word used for earth is “eretz” and need not literally
refer to every last nation on the whole earth. If it were, then what
would be the point of providing all of these names? The nations
that are named however are all middle Eastern Muslim nations.
Is this a coincidence? [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008, pp. 185-
190]

Regarding the judgment of nations mentioned in the book of Isaiah,
Shoebat and Richardson write:

Consider the nations that are emphasized: **Babylon**—Isaiah 13;
**Assyria and the Philistines (Palestinians)**—Isaiah 14; **Moab**—
Isaiah 15; **Damascus**—Isaiah 17; **Cush (Sudan and
Somaliland)**—Isaiah 18; **Tyre**—Isaiah 19; **Egypt and Cush**—
Isaiah 20; **Babylon (Iraq and Arabia) and Edom (Arabia)**—
Isaiah 21; **Tyre (Lebanon)**—Isaiah 23.
Does this sound like a ten-nation European confederation to you? [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008, p. 226]

The authors note that the locations of the nations of Isaiah 21 (Dumah, Dedan, Tema, Kedar) are all part of Arabia, “the desert by the sea” (Isaiah 21:1):

Some might argue that the context of Isaiah 21 is only historical. But it is difficult to ignore the multiple references throughout the Book of Isaiah to Kedar, Tema, Dedan and Dumah. Dumah is in Saudi Arabia near Yathrib (Medina), and today is known as “Dumat el-Jandal.” Dumah, one of the sons of Ishmael, is also associated with Edom and Seir in Isaiah 21:11. It is believed by many that Kedar, another of Ishmael’s sons, is the line from which Muhammad descended. It is likely that Mecca is the “glory of Kedar” mentioned in verse 16. Historians generally identify Dumah with the Addyrian Adummatu people. By these and other references, we can conclude that Dumah stands for Arabia. [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008, p. 397]

Around 760 BC, the prophet Amos wrote the following prophecies, that are yet to be fulfilled:

Amos 1:1-15 The words of Amos, one of the shepherds of Tekoa--what he saw concerning Israel two years before the earthquake, when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam son of Jehoash was king of Israel. He said: "The LORD roars from Zion and thunders from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds dry up, and the top of Carmel withers." This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Damascus, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. Because she threshed Gilead with sledges having iron teeth, I will send fire upon the house of Hazael that will consume the fortresses of Ben-Hadad. I will break down the gate of Damascus; I will destroy the king who is in the Valley of Aven and the one who holds the scepter in Beth Eden. The people of Aram will go into exile to Kir," says the LORD. This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Gaza, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. Because she took captive whole communities and sold them to Edom, I will send fire upon the walls of Gaza that will consume her fortresses. I will destroy the king of Ashdod and the one who holds the scepter in Ashkelon. I will turn my hand against Ekron, till the last of the Philistines is dead," says the Sovereign LORD. This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Tyre, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. Because she sold whole communities of captives to Edom, disregarding a treaty of brotherhood, I will send fire upon the walls of Tyre that will consume her fortresses." This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Edom, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. Because he pursued his brother with a
sword, stifling all compassion, because his anger raged continually and his fury burned unchecked, I will send fire upon Teman that will consume the fortresses of Bozrah." This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Ammon, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. Because he ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to extend his borders, I will set fire to the walls of Rabbah that will consume her fortresses amid war cries on the day of battle, amid violent winds on a stormy day. Her king will go into exile, he and his officials together," says the LORD.

Furthermore, consider the following Scriptures:

Ezekiel 30:3-5  For the day is near, the day of the LORD is near—a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations. A sword will come against Egypt, and anguish will come upon Cush. When the slain fall in Egypt, her wealth will be carried away and her foundations torn down. Cush and Put, Lydia and all Arabia, Libya and the people of the covenant land will fall by the sword along with Egypt.

Ezekiel 32:24-30  "Elam is there, with all her hordes around her grave. All of them are slain, fallen by the sword. ... Because their terror had spread in the land of the living, they bear their shame with those who go down to the pit; they are laid among the slain. "Meshech and Tubal are there, with all their hordes around their graves. ... "You too, O Pharaoh, will be broken ... "Edom is there, her kings and all her princes; despite their power, they are laid with those killed by the sword. ... "All the princes of the north and all the Sidonians are there; they went down with the slain in disgrace despite the terror caused by their power."

Psalm 83:4-8  "Come," they say, "let us destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel be remembered no more." With one mind they plot together; they form an alliance against you—the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, of Moab and the Hagrites, Gebal, Ammon and Amalek, Philistia, with the people of Tyre. Even Assyria has joined them to lend strength to the descendants of Lot ...

Bill Salus believes that the Magog alliance and the Battle of Armageddon are separate events, and furthermore, these two events follow a decisive victory (by the Israeli Defense Forces) over Israel’s neighbours. He groups these three battles into three zones or rings, each progressively farther away from Israel [Salus, 2008]:
1. Israel’s “exceedingly great army” gaining victory over its immediate neighbours (e.g., Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, (part of) Saudi Arabia, and Egypt)—as a fulfillment of Psalm 83
2. The Magog invasion—as a fulfillment of Ezekiel 38-39
3. The Battle of Armageddon—as a fulfillment of Revelation 19-20

His thesis for considering this separation of ordered events is based on these observations: (a) Psalm 83 gives prophecies about Israel’s immediate neighbours, but these nations seem to be absent from Ezekiel 38-39, which is quite surprising given the context of armies making up the Magog invasion; (b) Israel has an “exceedingly great army” (Ezekiel 37:10), following its return to the Land in 1948 and beyond, which Salus claims may well be a reference to the modern-day Israeli Defense Forces; (c) Israel is a very wealthy nation at the time of the Ezekiel 38-39 passage, which is hardly the case today; and (d) Ezekiel 38:11 characterizes Israel as being the home to a peaceful people, dwelling without walls, gates, or bars before the Magog invasion—again, not the case today.

Ezekiel 37:10 [NKJV] So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.

Ezekiel 38:11 You will say, "I will invade a land of unwalled villages; I will attack a peaceful and unsuspecting people—all of them living without walls and without gates and bars.

Psalm 83:3-18 With cunning they conspire against your people; they plot against those you cherish. "Come," they say, "let us destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel be remembered no more." With one mind they plot together; they form an alliance against you—the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, of Moab and the Hagrites, Gebal, Ammon and Amalek, Philistia, with the people of Tyre. Even Assyria has joined them to lend strength to the descendants of Lot. Selah Do to them as you did to Midian, as you did to Sisera and Jabin at the river Kishon, who perished at Endor and became like refuse on the ground. Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna, who said, "Let us take possession of the pasturelands of God." Make them like tumbleweed, O my God, like chaff before the wind. As fire consumes the forest or a flame sets the mountains ablaze, so pursue them with your tempest and terrify them with your storm. Cover their faces with shame so that men will seek your name, O LORD. May they ever be ashamed and dismayed; may they perish in disgrace. Let them know that you, whose name
is the LORD—that you alone are the Most High over all the earth.

Salus writes:

The modern equivalents of the Psalm 83 confederates are: tents of Edom (Palestinian Refugees and Southern Jordanians), Ishmaelites (Saudi Arabians), Moab (Palestinian Refugees and Central Jordanians), Hagrites (Egyptians), Gebal (Northern Lebanese), Ammon (Palestinian Refugees and Northern Jordanians), Amalek (Arabs South of Israel), Philistia (Palestinian Refugees and Hamas of the Gaza Strip), inhabitants of Tyre (Hezbollah and Southern Lebanese), Assyria (Syrians and perhaps Northern Iraqis), and the children of Lot (Moab and Ammon above). [Salus, 2008, p. 20]

... the Psalm 83 confederate Arab nations are absent from the Russian-Iranian alliance. Some commentators have found it interesting that Palestinians, Lebanese, Syrians, Jordanians, [Saudis], and Egyptians, who are presently the most observable opponents of the Jewish state, appear to opt out of this advance. The logical explanation for their transparency would be their prior defeat at the hands of Israel’s exceedingly great army. [Salus, 2008, p. 50]

Regarding the Abrahamic covenant, and a god of the Ammonites at the time—Ammon worshipped Milcom, and Moab worshiped Chemosh—the prophet Jeremiah wrote:

Jeremiah 49:1-3 Concerning the Ammonites: This is what the LORD says: "Has Israel no sons? Has she no heirs? Why then has Molech taken possession of Gad? Why do his people live in its towns? But the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will sound the battle cry against Rabbah of the Ammonites; it will become a mound of ruins, and its surrounding villages will be set on fire. Then Israel will drive out those who drove her out," says the LORD. "Wail, O Heshbon, for Ai is destroyed! Cry out, O inhabitants of Rabbah! Put on sackcloth and mourn; rush here and there inside the walls, for Molech will go into exile, together with his priests and officials.

These passages allude to the defeat and captivity of the peoples, priests, princes, and their gods Chemosh and Milcom. The theme of defeat, plunder, captivity, and god reduction all worked hand-in-hand, and was well understood in historic times. Ancient armies commonly prayed to their deity for victory before entering into battle. In defeat, the conclusion was that the god of the victor was greater than the god of the loser. [Salus, 2008, p. 317]

For centuries, the region worshipped Jehovah, Milcom, Chemosh, Baal, Asherah, Dagon, Molech, and others. Scholars estimate that as many as 360 different gods had been worshipped in the
region throughout the time leading up to the arrival of Muhammad.

He declared that he was the last prophet, and [invited followers of all other gods to submit to] Allah. [Salus, 2008, p. 229]

Jeremiah 49:7-8 Concerning Edom: This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Is there no longer wisdom in Teman? Has counsel perished from the prudent? Has their wisdom decayed? Turn and flee, hide in deep caves, you who live in Dedan, for I will bring disaster on Esau at the time I punish him.

Teman was the grandson of Esau, making Abraham his great-great-grandfather. Teman was one of the chiefs of Edom during his generation, and was renown in the region for his wisdom. This wisdom included an acutely detailed understanding of the contents of the Abrahamic Covenant. What was common knowledge to Teman and accredited to him as "wisdom," has vanished from his Edomite [descendants] ... [Salus, 2008, p. 310]

Zephaniah 2:3-7 Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the LORD'S anger. Gaza will be abandoned and Ashkelon left in ruins. At midday Ashdod will be emptied and Ekron uprooted. Woe to you who live by the sea, O Kerethite people; the word of the LORD is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines. "I will destroy you, and none will be left." It will belong to the remnant of the house of Judah; there they will find pasture. In the evening they will lie down in the houses of Ashkelon. The LORD their God will care for them; he will restore their fortunes.

Obadiah 1:15 "The day of the LORD is near for all nations. As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head.

Obadiah 1:18 The house of Jacob will be a fire and the house of Joseph a flame; the house of Esau will be stubble, and they will set it on fire and consume it. There will be no survivors from the house of Esau." The LORD has spoken. People from the Negev will occupy the mountains of Esau, and people from the foothills will possess the land of the Philistines. They will occupy the fields of Ephraim and Samaria, and Benjamin will possess Gilead.

The third and outer ring of Salus’ thesis involves nations from around the world. It is the Battle of Armageddon:
Daniel 11:40-45  "At the time of the end the king of the South [Egypt] will engage him [the Antichrist] in battle, and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood. He will also invade the Beautiful Land [Israel]. Many countries will fall, but Edom [southern Jordan and parts of Arabia], Moab [central Jordan] and the leaders of Ammon [northern Jordan] will be delivered from his hand. He will extend his power over many countries; Egypt will not escape. He will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt, with the Libyans and Nubians [Ethiopians] in submission. But reports from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many. He will pitch his royal tents between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.

Salus summarizes:

First, the Jordanians align themselves as a member nation in the Psalm 83:6-8 confederacy. Second, this confederacy engages in a major war against Israel. Third, Israel exacts victory via the hands of its “exceedingly great army.” Fourth, Israel establishes sovereignty over Jordan. Fifth, the Antichrist initiates a military campaign to overthrow the glorious land ... comprised of countries predominantly under Israeli sovereignty, including Jordan. Sixth, the Antichrist avoids Jordan, and marches through Israel proper instead.

... Because the Antichrist is on a campaign to overthrow the “Glorious Land” and kill all the Jews, his focus is on the supreme leadership headquartered in Israel, rather than their ambassadors stationed in Ammon.

... The Antichrist intercepts troubling news while he is basking in the glory of his victory over Egypt. The newsworthy information comes from the east and the north.

... The Antichrist then moves to “plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain.” This move by the Antichrist sets the stage for the heavily prophesied campaign of Armageddon. [Salus, 2008, pp. 271-276]
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<th>Jerusalem?</th>
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| Dispensationalist Position | Babylon is mentioned many times in Scripture. For example, 44 of the 404 verses in Revelation alone deal with Babylon [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007]. There are many parallels between Isaiah 13-14, Jeremiah 50-51, and Revelation 17-18—suggesting that end-time Babylon may be literal Babylon (in modern-day Iraq). There is likely to be an end-times revival of ancient, historical Babylon (located several hundred kilometres southwest of Baghdad). Antichrist will establish a power base in Babylon in the latter days. Babylon is the source of most, if not all, of the world’s false religions. It was the capital of the world’s first dictator (Nimrod, whose name means “we will rebel”), and it may well be the capital of the world’s last dictator (Antichrist). The Bible gives “A Tale of Two Cities”, says Chuck Missler: Babylon (the city of man) vs. Jerusalem (the city of God). Scripture says that Babylon will be destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah, and that even the building materials will not be reused. This has not yet happened because: (a) Babylon was never destroyed; it gradually was reduced in size and power; (b) Babylon was used by Alexander the Great several hundred years after Nebuchadnezzar; (c) Peter wrote an epistle from there in the first century; (d) today, Babylon is being rebuilt, in part (and is a tourist attraction); and (e) around 539-535 BC, when the Medes and the Persians conquered the Babylonian Empire, Babylon actually fell without a battle (i.e., the Euphrates River was diverted and the water levels were lowered to about 2-3 feet deep at the entrance to the city). Missler says that some of the residents of Babylon didn’t even know that the city had been overthrown, for three days. In fact, the Cylinder of Cyrus in the British Museum in London confirms that Babylon fell “without any battle ... I also gathered all their former inhabitants and returned to them their habitations.” The point is that Babylon has not yet been destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah. Is this city the actual Babylon on the Euphrates River? (The Euphrates River is an important geographic location in Revelation, and is mentioned shortly before the description of the Battle of Armageddon.) There are two popular views to the city called Babylon: (a) literal Babylon (in modern-day Iraq), and (b) symbolic Babylon, which is a different city and is most often associated with Rome. Both of these views may be true. Some scholars (including... |
Catholic apologist Karl Keating) believe that Babylon is a code word for Rome [Tetlow, 2006]. For example, some scholars believe that Peter wrote his first epistle (letter) from Rome, even though he used the term “Babylon”:

1 Peter 5:13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark.

Others believe that Peter actually wrote the epistle from Babylon (modern-day Iraq). Babylon was a major Jewish center at the time. For example, the Babylonian Talmud (respected Jewish writings) originated there [Missler, 2005].

Rome is built on seven hills. At the time of writing of Revelation, Rome was the ruling power:

Revelation 17:9-11 “This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while. The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.

Revelation 17:18 The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.”

Jack Hibbs says that he cannot draw any other conclusion about these (and other) Scriptures than Rome. He says that the church of Rome (which has its roots in ancient Babylonianism) has killed more people from the 1500s to the 1800s than any other entity throughout history [Hibbs, 2008a].

Frank Boyd writes:

While [Revelation] chapters 17 and 18 are linked in the term “Babylon,” there is clearly a distinction between the two. In chapter 17 the term is applied to a system, politico-ecclesiastical, but in chapter 18 to a literal city, a great commercial center. Since the transfer of the center of Babylonian mysticism to Rome and its incorporation into the Roman Catholic Church, Rome has been the seat of Babylonish power; but after the consolidation of the kings under the leadership of the beast is effected, it is probable that the seat of power will be transferred to a new capital city in the “land of Shinar,” the Euphrates Valley, the site of ancient Babylon. [Tetlow, 2006, p. 108]

Babylon may have seemed weak and impotent in John’s day, but she was not dead. Her unclean and idolatrous ways had survived
through the other nations she had contaminated, and she herself, through them, would one day revive in greater wickedness than ever. [Morris, 1983, p. 325]

We are well-justified biblically, therefore (and the Bible is our authority), in inferring that the religious system established at the original Babylon (or “Babel”) by its founder and first king, Nimrod, is the root source of the later Assyrio/Babylonian complex of religion and philosophy. This inference is also supported by many parallel indications in archaeology, ethnology, and cultural anthropology, when these are divested of their evolutionary distortions.

Furthermore, with the confusion of tongues and resultant dispersion (Genesis 11:9), this religious system was carried by the scattering tribes into every region of the world. Each had its own cultural distinctives, and the names of the pantheon of gods and goddesses were different in each nation, because the languages were now different. But the basic system was still the same everywhere. [Morris, 1983, p. 327]

But to say that spiritual Babylon is either Rome or the Roman Catholic Church is to grossly underestimate the age-long global impact of this great mystery, Babylon the Great. Babylon is the mother of all the harlots and abominations of the earth. From her have come ancient paganism, Chinese Confucianism, Asian Buddhism, Indian Hinduism, Shamanism, Taoism, Shintoism, animism, astrology, witchcraft, spiritism, Sikhism, and all the world’s vast complex of “gods many, and lords many” (1 Corinthians 8:5).

Of more direct concern in twentieth-century America is the direct descent of modern scientism and evolutionary humanism from this ancient mother of harlots. As noted before, modern evolutionism is in no way scientific, being contradicted by all true facts of science, but is merely a revival of ancient Greek (and ultimately Babylonian) evolutionary pantheism. This current manifestation of Babylon’s philosophy has to considerable degree subverted Christian doctrine, not only in the Catholic Church but in most other Christian sects and denominations. [Morris, 1983, p. 332]

Most vicious of all have been the mass executions instigated in the name of humanistic socialism, whether the system of a totalitarian fascism (as Hitler’s Germany) or of revolutionary communism. It is estimated that, since Marx, more than one hundred million people have died in communist purges. This monstrous fruit of the bitter root of evolutionary atheism has, of course, destroyed multitudes of people who were not Christians at all, but it is God’s true witnesses who have been the objects of its special hatred.

All of these systems and many others have their roots in
One may wonder why God permitted ancient Babylon (under King Nebuchadnezzar) to take Israel captive. Well, Israel had many blessings from God, but they continually rebelled to the point where they became even more evil than the nations around them. Tim LaHaye writes:

Take for example the eighty years of Israel under David and Solomon, the blessings of God on an obedient people was almost unimaginable until Solomon permitted his wives to bring idolatry into the land where they caused the people to worship idols “in the high places.” This sin permeated Israel and even Judah at the time of the captivity.

The ten tribes of Israel had been taken into captivity by the Assyrians over one hundred years before, because of their idolatry and disobedience. Surely Judah would have heeded this lesson.

Unfortunately, Judah did not heed the warnings of God through His prophets and they became unbelievably corrupt. This is seen clearly in Ezekiel 8:6-18, an incredible passage of Scripture. (Please read it before proceeding.) It shows how the Lord let the young prophet Ezekiel look into the sanctuary of God where “seventy of the elders of Israel” were worshipping the worst kind of “wicked abominations.” They were actually bowing before some of the grossest kinds of idols. Most of the idols of Babylon were represented there right in the sanctuary of God. And the women were no better; “they were weeping for Tammuz” the Sumerian fertility god. And twenty-five other leaders turned their backs on the temple of God and worshipped the sun!

If ever a nation deserved the judging hand of God it was the children of Israel. Their leaders and many of the people had become pagans right there in the Holy City of God, Jerusalem. But why take them to Babylon where all this idolatry originated? … Babylon is mentioned more in Scripture than any other city, save Jerusalem. Babylon was the capital of Satanic activity and Jerusalem the city of God. They were the capitals in the long war against God, often called “the conflict of the ages.” [LaHaye, 2000b]

Some scholars argue that Babylon is a metaphor for Jerusalem, and that the destruction of “Babylon” refers to the destruction of the Temple and (parts of) the city of Jerusalem in 70 AD. There are problems with this viewpoint. First, Jerusalem was not “destroyed” when it fell in 70 AD. Second, Revelation was likely written circa 90 AD, and the destruction of Babylon was still in the future (according to Revelation); thus, Babylon couldn’t have been Jerusalem (or the Temple) since the event had already occurred. Third, the judgments in Revelation are connected with Babylon, and there is no evidence to
suggest that the seals, trumpets, and vials of God’s judgment were fulfilled on or before 70 AD.

One can imagine the triumphant blasphemies as great Babylon is rebuilt. Its long desolation had been superseded by an even more splendid metropolis than Nebuchadnezzar had built, and God’s judgment on Babylon had seemingly been set aside by the greater power of the beast. So they will boast, with malicious glee.

But their triumph will be very short-lived. In only a few days, perhaps, the desolation will be even greater and will last forever. None will be left there except a horde of demons and evil spirits. These, no doubt, had exercised great influence over the men and women of wicked Babylon, but now they are merely disembodied spirits. The bodies they had possessed had burned to embers and their souls departed to Hades.

... It is the same as in Revelation 14:8: “She made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” It is evident that the “Babylons” of Revelation 14, 17 and 18 must all be the same Babylon.

Yet, as we have seen, there must also be a difference. There must be a religious Babylon, the great whore, and a political Babylon, the scarlet beast. They are like two sides of the same coin; each is part and parcel of the other and each supports the other. Each is the great city Babylon, long dead and now risen from the dead, yet never really dead. [Morris, 1983, pp. 353-354]

As we have seen, there is much debate over what city or entity is referred to as “Babylon” in the end times. The literal viewpoint is, obviously, that it refers to historical Babylon in modern-day Iraq. The claim is that that city will be rebuilt (because it is currently in ruins), will have power and great influence in future world affairs, including commerce and religion, and will be destroyed in the manner that the Bible mentions—and will never be inhabited thereafter. Some scholars believe that “Babylon” is Rome; and some have gone as far as saying that it is New York or the United States. While there are some parallels between the characteristics of ancient Babylon and many modern-day cities, this idea doesn’t seem to fit very well with other prophecies concerning Babylon.

Others argue that Babylon has its fulfillment in Arabia [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008]. For example, consider these verses:

Jeremiah 51:12-13 Lift up a banner against the walls of Babylon! Reinforce the guard, station the watchmen, prepare an ambush! The LORD will carry out his purpose, his decree against the people of Babylon. You who live by many waters and are rich in treasures, your end has come, the time for you to be cut off.
Isaiah 13:19-20  Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms, the glory of the Babylonians' pride, will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah. She will never be inhabited or lived in through all generations; no Arab will pitch his tent there, no shepherd will rest his flocks there.

Their argument is that these verses cannot reasonably apply to Rome since, realistically, Arabs wouldn’t pitch their tents in Rome.

Babylon appears to be a city rather than a nation, and sea captains will see the smoke of her burning: “O great city, O Babylon, city of power! In one hour your doom has come!” Babylon is near central Iraq, and is simply too far away from the sea.

Preterist Position

Ancient Babylon was destroyed many years before Christ (but well after 537 BC, which is about the time that Daniel received his vision of the 70 Weeks). The “Babylon” mentioned by Peter in one of his epistles, and in Revelation, should be understood as being symbolic—perhaps as Rome. The owl and other animals mentioned in Scripture passages about Babylon are symbols of false gods.

Hank Hanegraaff writes:

John describes the historical location of the looming apocalypse as the domain of the first-century Roman Empire—not a ten-nation confederacy in the twenty-first century. ... As the student of history well knows, Rome is historically depicted as the city of seven hills—Capitoline, Palatine, Esquiline, Aventine, Caelian, Viminal, and Quirinal. Thus, there is little doubt that John had the ancient Roman Empire in mind.

Likewise, the seven kings are seven Roman Caesars. The first five—Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula and Claudius—had fallen, Nero was presently on the throne, and Galba the seventh king had not yet come; But when he did he only remained on the throne for seven months—or as John put it—‘a little while.’ Internal evidence points to the fact that when John recorded the Revelation of Jesus Christ, the sixth king—Nero Caesar—ruled the Imperial Roman Empire. Only when we grasp the reality that Revelation was addressed to seven historical churches located in the epicenter of Caesar worship and written by John, who was exiled on Patmos during the Neronian persecution, will we fully appreciate the great tribulation chronicled within its pages. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 113-114]
Dispensationalist Position

“Mystery Babylon”—a term only used in one place: Revelation 17:5—is the worldwide system of false religion in the end times. It gives worship to Satan/Antichrist rather than to God; but, oddly enough, the Antichrist later turns against Mystery Babylon.

There are two symbolic women in Scripture: Israel, and the woman riding the beast in Revelation. Israel is sometimes called the wife of God; however, the woman riding the beast is not the wife of God—rather, she is a wicked woman (prostitute) enticing the world to come to her.

Zechariah 5:5 speaks of a woman called “the wickedness” who went to build a house in Shinar (Babylon is on the plain of Shinar). This seems to establish a link between Babylon and the evil woman in Revelation.

Zechariah’s prophecy was made after Babylon’s captivity of Israel and after Babylon had been conquered by the Medes and Persians—suggesting that Zechariah’s prophecy is for the future [Tetlow, 2006]. Furthermore, John, Isaiah, and Zechariah all connect a wicked woman with Babylon.

J. Dwight Pentecost writes that the false religion propagated by the Mystery Babylon system will be in competition with the religious worship of the Antichrist in the last days. Thus, the Antichrist will destroy the harlot religion “so that the Beast may be the sole object of false worship as he claims to be God” [Pentecost, 1958, p. 368].

This first great city of Babel and kingdom of Babylon [under Nimrod] was ruled by two persons, a man and a woman. The man ruled politically and was the head of the Babylonian State; the woman ruled religiously and was the head of the pagan system of religion and idolatry. The city and the tower, politics and religion, merged into one great gigantic system of world-unity. [DeHaan, 1946, p. 219]

Henry Morris argues that Mystery Babylon is the accumulation of spiritual evil since Nimrod’s Babylon:

In various Old Testament prophecies, this final Antichrist is identified in one way or another with all six of these ancient empires. ... Babylon will indeed be resurrected as a great city, capital of a worldwide empire. She will be the eighth of these great kingdoms of the earth, arising out of them even as they all are also reviving. Yet in mystery form, Babylon the Great has existed ever since Nimrod. She has never actually died, even in a physical sense, and the great prophecies of her utter desolation in Isaiah and Jeremiah have never yet been really fulfilled. But they will be! Egypt and Assyria will be thriving nations in the

[The ten kings in Revelation] will eagerly jump at the chance to destroy this despised harlot once the beast gives permission. Already a persecution has been mounted against Christians and Jews—why not get rid of all religion at the same time? ... The kings will mourn the later destruction of political Babylon (Revelation 18:9) but will exult over this destruction of her religious parasite.

As a system, religious Babylon began at Babel, whence it permeated every nation on earth, maintaining its special character and influence not only in both ancient Babylon and later Babylon, but also in Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome, the others in the succession of great nations which transmitted the Babylonian heritage of heresy down through the ages. It finally will reach its zenith of power in rebuilt Babylon, the capital city of the final world empire, the kingdom of the beast. There the old harlot will again, through very briefly, become that great city which reigns over all the kings of earth. But it is also there that these same kings will turn on her and destroy her. [Morris, 1983, pp. 346-347]

Preterist Position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Is the Battle of Armageddon a real battle; or, is it a metaphor (i.e., not to be taken literally)? If it is a real battle, where does it take place? Why does Bozrah (or Petra) in modern-day Jordan seem to be associated with Armageddon?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>Armageddon is a real battle that takes place or begins in northern Israel near Megiddo, Israel—carries on past Jerusalem, and on into Jordan (e.g., Bozrah or Petra). According to Wikipedia, the word Armageddon comes from the Hebrew language and means “mountain of Megiddo” (har Megiddo), so technically it is a location rather than a battle, but the events surrounding it are definitely associated with the world’s largest battle. The hill of Megiddo, located west of the Jordan River in north central Palestine, some ten miles south of Nazareth and fifteen miles inland from the Mediterranean seacoast, was an extended plain on which many of Israel’s battles had been fought. There Deborah and Barak defeated the Canaanites (Judges 4 and 5). There Gideon triumphed over the Midianites (Judges 7). There Saul was slain in the battle with the Philistines (1 Sam. 31:8). There Ahaziah was slain by Jehu (2 Kings 9:27). And there Josiah was slain in the invasion by the Egyptians (2 Kings 23:29-30; 2 Chron. 35:22) ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Preterist Position | There are several other geographical locations involved in this campaign. ... Joel 3:2,13 speaks of events taking place in “the
Bozrah and Petra are located in Jordan, in the general area of Mount Seir. Why do so many authors (e.g., [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]) think that Bozrah or Petra will house the fleeing Jewish remnant during the Great Tribulation (i.e., the final 3½ years)? Significantly, in Hebrew, Bozrah means “sheepfold”; and in Greek, Petra means “cleft in the rock”. The latter, in particular, resembles a giant sheepfold with a very narrow passageway that has high cliffs as walls, and extends for about 1 mile (1.6 kilometres), providing high defensibility. Consider [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]:

- Revelation 12:6 and 12:14 both speak of Israel fleeing to the wilderness
- Jesus Christ tells the Jews to waste no time in fleeing to the mountains when they see “the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel” (Matthew 24:15-16)
- The prophet Micah hints at a sheepfold:

  Micah 2:12  "I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob; I will surely bring together the remnant of Israel. I will bring them together like sheep in a pen, like a flock in its pasture; the place will throng with people.

- The prophet Isaiah wrote:

  Isaiah 33:14,16  The sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling grips the godless: "Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning? ... this is the man who will dwell on the heights, whose refuge will be the mountain fortress. His bread will be supplied, and water will not fail him.

Bozrah and Petra are in ancient Edom. In fact, Moab and Edom are in modern-day Jordan, and these areas escape the Antichrist:

Daniel 11:40-41  "At the time of the end the king of the South will engage him in battle, and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood. He will also invade the Beautiful Land [Israel]. Many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand."
Some scholars also connect the events of Ezekiel 38-39 with Armageddon, although that association has some problems (discussed elsewhere in this document—see “Is the Magog invasion part of the Battle of Armageddon?”)

Armageddon describes a holocaust for the Jews conceivably worse than that of the Nazi holocaust, but there is also worldwide distress (Matthew 15:21-22). Jesus returns at Armageddon to save the Jews and other believers in God. He appears to the hiding remnant, and shows them that it is He the Christ—the same Jesus who was crucified around 30 AD: the Messiah for whom they’ve been waiting for thousands of years.

Zechariah 12:10 They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child.

Isaiah 63:1 Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson?

Zechariah 13:6 And one shall say unto him, “What are these wounds in thine hands?” Then he shall answer, “Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.”

Zechariah 13:8-9 “In the whole land,” declares the LORD, “two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.'”

Romans 11:26 “And so all Israel will be saved.”

Zechariah 13:8-9 says that two-thirds of the Jews in Israel will be killed during the reign of Antichrist (i.e., during the “time of Jacob’s trouble”). The remaining one-third will survive, and will be saved. There is no evidence to suggest that this Scripture has already been fulfilled.

Four groups of Jews can be identified during the Great Tribulation [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]:

1. Apostate Jews that enter the Antichrist’s 7-year covenant, and are called “the many” in Daniel 9:27.
2. The 144,000 Jews that are sanctified in Revelation 7, and evangelize the world
3. The other Jewish believers who receive the gospel via the 144,000 or the Two Witnesses of Revelation 7
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. The Faithful Remnant that survive the Tribulation. All Jews that survive the 70th week of Daniel will be saved (Romans 9:27; 11:25-26)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Will the whole world be involved in Armageddon? Many prophecy scholars believe so; however, “all nations” in Scripture often refers to nations around Israel, and not from the far ends of the earth (like China, Scotland, New Zealand, Canada, New Guinea) [Shoebat &amp; Richardson, 2008]. For example, Daniel 5 gives a prophecy about Alexander the Great, who ran across “the whole earth”. “Earth”, in the Hebrew, is the word “eretz”, which is often translated as “land”. Furthermore, consider:</td>
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<td>Zechariah 12:2-3  &quot;I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling. Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem. On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves.</td>
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<td>(See also the introductory section on “Classical Dispensationalism (i.e., Pre-Trib Futurism)” near the top of this document for more details about the Battle of Armageddon, and the sequence of events surrounding it.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preterist Position Preaching (or looking forward to) Armageddon can be depressing for people in the Middle East. For example, dispensationalists would like things to get worse, rather than better, in order to “speed the coming of Christ”. Some dispensationalists want to accelerate the regathering of Jews to Israel, but for what reason? To create the Battle of Armageddon? They often quote Zechariah 13:8-9:</td>
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<td>In the whole land,” declares the LORD, “two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, ‘They are my people,’ and they will say, ‘The LORD is our God.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Battle of Armageddon is not a real battle. When Christ returns to destroy evil-doers with a two-edged sword coming out of his mouth, it does not mean that Christ will be chopping off people’s heads in some big battle. Instead, the two-edged sword referred to in Scripture is a metaphor for the Word of God (the Bible). That’s how he’ll conquer evil: with truth, with His Word. But there is a literal resurrection of believers and unbelievers: everyone will be raised at the second coming of Christ; and after that, the second state (Heaven) will take place. (Unbelievers will not be in the presence of</td>
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Hank Hanegraaff summarizes the sequence of events as follows: Christ returns, there is a judgment, and then there is the eternal state. The same set of people who inhabit this planet are the same people who will be resurrected. Hank says there is no secret rapture for the Church, there is no “Battle of Armageddon”, and after Christ’s return, no marrying, no procreation, and no Millennium.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Will Christ literally set foot on the Mount of Olives, and will the mountain split when He does so?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>Most classical dispensationalists believe that this Scripture will be fulfilled literally at the time of the Battle of Armageddon. Some scholars believe that Christ sets foot on the Mount of Olives at the end of Armageddon, and that He visits Bozrah (Jordan) as one of His first stops during the Battle of Armageddon (Isaiah 63:1-3) [LaHaye &amp; Ice, 2003].</td>
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</tbody>
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**Zechariah 14:3-5** Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.

**Zechariah 14:8** On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea [the Dead Sea] and half to the western sea [the Mediterranean Sea], in summer and in winter.

It is interesting to note the following spiritual picture. Mount Herman feeds the Sea of Galilee with water. The Sea of Galilee has life. It receives water, and it gives water to the Jordan River which flows into the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea receives water, but doesn’t give any. There is no life there, not even bacteria. At some point in the future, the Dead Sea will teem with fish, as life is brought to it via the waters coming down from Jerusalem. This is literal, and it is also a fitting picture of the redemptive work of the Creator of life.

**Ezekiel 47:1-10** The man brought me back to the entrance of the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). ... As the man went eastward with a measuring line in his hand, he measured off a thousand
cubits and then led me through water that was **ankle-deep**. He measured off another thousand cubits and led me through water that was **knee-deep**. He measured off another thousand and led me through water that was **up to the waist**. He measured off another thousand, but now it was a river that I could not cross, because the water had risen and was deep enough to swim in—a river that no one could cross. ... He said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, where it enters the [Dead] Sea. When it empties into the Sea, the water there becomes fresh. Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live. Fishermen will stand along the shore; from En Gedi to En Eglaim there will be places for spreading nets. The fish will be of many kinds—like the fish of the Great Sea.

**Preterist Position**

No, it’s symbolic, says Hank Hanegraaff. This event isn’t intended for a 21st century audience. Zechariah used apocalyptic messages in his writing.

Dispensationalists should not be spreading the Armageddon message. In particular, the Jewish people should not be “herded back” to Israel by classical dispensationalist, evangelical, Christian dollars—to await Armageddon. Otherwise, such Christians would create a self-fulfilling prophecy.

**Topic/Question**

Should we support Jacob’s descendants more so than Esau’s descendants? (e.g., support of Jews over Palestinians, support of Jews over Muslims?)

**Dispensationalist Position**

A blessing is promised to those who bless the Jews; however, Christ commands us to treat all people well.

> Genesis 12:3  I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

> Matthew 22:36-40  "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

In terms of the Promised Land, however, God made it clear that it was land he gave unconditionally to the descendants of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob. Hence, we should not divide, give away, or sell the
land to others, lest we incur the judgment of God Almighty:

Joel 3:2  I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will enter into judgment against them concerning my inheritance, my people Israel, for they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land.

(The context of Joel 3:2 is Armageddon.)

| Preterist Position | All people are treated alike by Christ (no preference over believers who were Jews or who were Muslims). “For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile, the same Lord is Lord of all” (Rom. 10:12). It is wonderful to see Jewish believers join Gentile believers, together in Christ. This is more likely to build bridges, and to bring peace and justice to both sides in the conflict.

While there are about 6,000 Messianic believers in Israel, there are about 145,000 Palestinian Christians. Let us consider the latter a little more seriously than we have been doing so far (i.e., instead of always being on the Israelis’ side, let’s support our brothers in Christ, too).

Recall that in the Sermon on the Mount, Christ says, “Blessed are the peacemakers”.

When God promises Abraham, ‘I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you’ (Genesis 12:3), such blessings and cursings pertain not simply to the faithful remnant of ethnic Israel, but to true Israel, which consists of every person who through faith has been adopted into the family of God.

Just as Joshua is a type of Jesus who leads the true children of Israel into the eternal land of promise, so King David is a type of the ‘King of Kings and Lord of Lords’ who forever rules and reigns from the New Jerusalem in faithfulness and in truth (Revelation 19:16; cf. 19:11). In each case, the lesser is fulfilled and rendered obsolete by the greater. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 200-201]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is the “mark of the beast”?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>The mark of the beast is a “mark” of some sort literally placed on, or in, the right hand or forehead. The King James Version (KJV) of the Bible states that the mark is “in” the right hand or the forehead. The “mark” appears to facilitate a cashless society in the end times:</td>
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Revelation 13:16-18 And he [the False Prophet] causeth all, both small and great, rich and
poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast [Antichrist], or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six [666].

According to Revelation 14:9-11, whoever takes the mark of the beast will suffer an eternity in hell:

Revelation 14:9-11 A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name."

The mark of the beast may be a computer chip used to facilitate a cashless society, whereby financial trading is done through marks and numbers, partly for “security” reasons, and partly through some kind of “pledge of allegiance” to the Antichrist. It is believed that the technology to do this currently exists.

Given the current state of computer technology, the reduction in ethics all around the world, the growth of evil and immorality on television and in the movies, the soaring crime rate, the lack of privacy, increased fear, endless security concerns, identity theft, etc., it seems likely that some form of chip implant will be used in a cashless society.

One secular author has noted that it’s no longer an issue of whether or not we’ll lose our privacy, it’s just a matter of how we’ll wind up negotiating the surrender of our privacy. Everyone has a price. Perhaps the price is “security” or “peace and safety” or the avoidance of fear (about tyrannical leaders). It remains to be seen.

Preterist Position Being sealed with the Holy Spirit is being “marked”, and thus there is no need to speculate on some barcode, computer chip, or other technology. No “Antichrist” figure will be shoving a microchip under your skin. This is not what is meant by Revelation 13:16-17. All Christians are marked already; thus, there is no need to worry about receiving the “mark of the beast”. The mark on the right hand or the forehead is a Biblical symbol of being sealed (i.e., saved), and has parallels in other areas of Scripture. According to Steve Gregg
and Hank Hanegraaff, there is no way that the mark could be an implantable microchip, since a microchip is not a “mark”.

Slaves in Bible times had a mark (tattoo or brand) on their bodies, signifying their respective owners. Reflect on your own life, and see whose servant you are. Is God your master, or is Satan? The way you act in your life is an identification of the master you’re following.

God promises that He will write, on the foreheads of believing overcomers’ foreheads: the name of God, the city of God, and “a new name”. This is symbolic language. Jesus is not running around “with a magic marker in His hand”, argues Hank Hanegraaff.

God wanted the Jews to bind His laws between their eyes and on their hands. They did so, literally, with their phylacteries (little boxes that they tied to their forehead and hand). It is unlikely that this is what God meant. On the other hand, symbolically, the forehead could represent *thoughts*, and the hand could represent *actions*. A “mark” on the forehead is symbolic of what you *think* or *believe*; a mark on the right hand is symbolic of what you *do*. Thus, the mark would be associated with your worldview.

It is unlikely that there will be a cashless society. Technology is always changing. Dispensationalists have been thinking that the mark of the beast might be credit cards or universal product codes or barcodes or microchips—depending on the technology of the day.

“Sunday worship” is not the mark of the beast, either.

At the time of John, he was writing about things that were “soon to pass”—meaning in the lifetime of much of his audience (circa 70 AD). This includes the Scripture about the mark. John was not writing to a 21st century audience.

As for the notion of a “cashless society”, or being unable to buy and sell (unless they had the “mark”), the explanation may be as simple as follows. Jews who became Christians had a great deal of difficulty buying from, or selling to, Jews—once it was known that they were Christians.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is the meaning of the number(s) “666”, that is, “the mark of the beast”?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dispensationalist Position</strong></td>
<td>666 will be the number corresponding to the letters (either Hebrew or Greek, but not English or most other languages) of the name of the Antichrist.</td>
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</table>
It is interesting to note that the early church fathers did not correlate “666” with Nero [LaHaye & Ice, 2003]. For example, Irenaeus was still writing about “666” as being future, in Irenaeus’ time.

| Preterist Position | 666 is the number corresponding to the letters (either Hebrew or Greek) of the name of a specific Roman Emperor, an antichrist: “Nero Caesar” (which when written in Hebrew) is 666 (“six hundred and sixty-six”, not “six-six-six”). In Latin, Nero Caesar is 616; in Greek, it’s 1005. John, however, wrote in Hebrew. The intended audience was the first century Christian. Such a person was told (in Revelation) that, with wisdom, he/she would be able to calculate the number of the beast. So, if 666 didn’t apply to an antichrist (or the Antichrist) until the 21st century, what was the point of telling this to a first century audience? It makes more sense to consider this a first century, historical, fulfillment. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Who are the eight kings referred to in Revelation 17:10-11?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Revelation 17:10-11</td>
<td>They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while. The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Dispensationalist Position | The best explanation seems to be that the kings refer to successive, historical kingdoms. Five of the kings refer to the five major empires that ruled the world before Rome: (1) Egypt (in the time of the Pharaohs), (2) Assyria (however, some authors replace “Assyria” with “Nimrod’s Babylon” (i.e., Babylon from around the time of the Tower of Babel, which of course, pre-dates Egypt) [Franz, 2008]), (3) Babylon (under Nebuchadnezzar), (4) Medo-Persia, and (5) Greece (under Alexander). Rome was the world power at the time that Revelation was written; this is the sixth king—note the words “one is” in Revelation 17:10). The seventh king refers to a future, revived, but brief, Roman empire (at the time of the end). This revived Roman Empire is believed to include most of modern-day Europe. Eastern Asia, Europe (the revived Roman Empire), and perhaps even revived Babylon (modern-day Iraq, Iran, and possibly part of Afghanistan) are possible powerhouses, since all seem to be referenced in Revelation. The eighth king refers to the final kingdom of Antichrist, which comes out of the seventh (or one of the prior empires). It will be a |
brief kingdom.

Note that Daniel 7 mentions four beasts: lion (Babylon), bear (Medo-Persia), leopard (Greece), and the ten-horned beast (Rome?) Thus, we have a precedent and argument for considering successive, historical kingdoms. The ordering of the beasts in Daniel 7 looks forward from the time of Daniel. In Revelation 13, the same beasts are mentioned going backwards from the apostle John [DeHaan, 1946; Goodman, 2003].

Revelation 13:1-2 And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.

There are five kingdoms listed by John when going backwards because he also includes the Assyrian and Egyptian empires as being the respective predecessors of the Babylonian empire of Daniel’s time.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum divides the beasts and kingdoms of Daniel 2, Daniel 7, Revelation 13, and Revelation 17 into the following categories and subcategories [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]:

1. Babylonian Empire
2. Medo-Persian Empire
3. Greek Empire
   a. United Stage
   b. Four Division Stage
4. Fourth Empire (Imperialism)
   a. United Stage (Roman Empire)—63 BC to 364 AD
   b. Two Division Stage—364 AD (when Emperor Valentinian divided the Roman Empire into eastern and western entities) and this is up to the present day (e.g., the western division is represented by the democratic nations of western Europe)
   c. One World Government Stage—future
   d. Ten Division Stage—i.e., the “ten kingdoms”, future
   e. Antichrist Stage—absolute imperialism, future
5. Messianic Kingdom—future, after the Second Coming of Jesus Christ

Rome began a new system called imperialism. This is what made the Fourth Empire diverse from all the others. When Rome
conquered, Romans were sent in to rule (e.g., Pontius Pilate, Felix, Festus). This was the policy of imperialism. Thus, a better name for the Fourth Empire would be “imperialism” rather than Rome, for Rome was merely the first of five stages of the Fourth Empire of Imperialism. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 33]

Daniel 7:23 states that the fourth empire “devours the whole earth”, and some scholars debate whether this has actually taken place, or whether it applies to the future. Fruchtenbaum argues that it will be a future fulfillment, and will usher in the era of Antichrist. Furthermore, the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar’s statue represent a partitioning of worldwide power—not just Europe or a “revived Roman Empire”. Europe may well be one of the ten toes, but not all ten, according to Fruchtenbaum. This would be consistent with the Club of Rome’s proposal of dividing the earth into 10 geographic regions (e.g., Europe, North American, South & Central America, etc.)—see the section on globalism below [e.g., Franz, 2008]).

Revelation 13 focuses on the fourth empire, and in particular, the stage involving the Antichrist.

Revelation 17:9-10 states that the seven heads are both mountains (or hills) and kings. The term mountain is often a symbol for kingdom in Scripture, so this unifies the Scripture. It’s been said that Rome is the city built on seven hills, but this may not be the intent here, especially because of the phrase “five have fallen”—which relates to kingdoms rather than to hills or mountains.

Unlike most other prophecy scholars, Arnold Fruchtenbaum explains the seven heads-mountains-kings in terms of the progression of the Roman Empire and imperialism [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Head #</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tarquin Kings</td>
<td>753-510 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Counsulors</td>
<td>510-494 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Plebians or Dictators</td>
<td>494-390 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Republicans or Decimvers</td>
<td>390-59 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Oligarchy of Ten)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Triumvirate</td>
<td>59-27 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Roman Empire</td>
<td>27 BC to present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Antichrist stage</td>
<td>future, 3½-year duration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With respect to this interpretation, note that we are living in the days of the sixth head, and that the sixth head aggregates these four stages (enumerated above): United stage, Two Division stage, One World
government stage, and Ten Kingdom stage. The 7th king (Antichrist) is also spoken of as an 8th king because he uproots 3 of the 10 horns (kings) before him. In other words, 7 of those 10 kings submit to his authority. At this point in time, the Antichrist rules with absolute authority.

Jesus Christ returns to destroy the Antichrist, his system, and his followers, and establishes the final kingdom: a kingdom of justice, righteousness, and peace.

Walid Shoebat and Joel Richardson provide another viewpoint: an interesting argument about how the kingdoms refer to Islamic kingdoms during the course of history, and that the final kingdom is also Islamic [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008]. The successive empires are the following, starting with the oldest: (1) Egyptian, (2) Assyrian, (3) Babylonian, (4) Persian, (5) Greek, (6) Roman (which includes some of the Middle East, Northern Africa, and much of Europe during the time John wrote the book of Revelation), and then comes (7) the unnamed empire, and finally (8) will be a revival/extension of (7).

The Roman Empire didn’t actually completely fall until the eastern portion of the Empire finally collapsed in 1453 A.D. to the Muslim Turks led by Mehemet II.

... the Christian world leveled a significant blow to Islam in 1924, after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. The Office of the Caliph was abolished. So while it was the Islamic Empire that ultimately succeeded the Roman Empire, it was the Christian West that offered Islam a series of defeats that led to the severing of its head, the office of the Caliph in 1924. The only empire that fulfills the patterns necessary to be considered the seventh empire is the Islamic Empire that culminated with the Turkish/Ottoman Empire. [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008, pp. 304-305]

So, if this is the case, how does Daniel’s prophecy concerning the statue of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2, and the four beasts described in Daniel 7, tie in to the Roman Empire, if at all? Also, how do the four beasts in Daniel 7 relate to the eight kingdoms in Revelation 17, if at all? Bible scholars have traditionally referred to the 4th kingdom in Daniel 7 (and the legs of Nebuchadnezzar’s statue) as the Roman Empire.

Daniel 2:36-44 "This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. You, O king [Nebuchadnezzar], are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and
the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold. "After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron--for iron breaks and smashes everything--and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom ... the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay. "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.

Revelation 13:4b "Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?"

Shoebat and Richardson write:

Did the Roman Empire crush ancient Babylon/modern Iraq? No. Only for a few months in A.D. 116 under Emperor Trajan did the Roman Empire ever extend its territory toward Babylon. But they were almost immediately beaten back.

... The four Empires described in this passage are not what western students think, they are:

1. Babylonian Empire
2. Medo-Persian Empire
3. Greek Empire, (or possibly the Greco-Roman Empire)
4. Islamic Empire

... While the Roman Empire did not fulfill the necessary requirements to be considered as the fourth empire of Daniel 2, there was an empire that did. The Islamic Empire fulfilled these requirements completely. Islam conquered all of the three previous empires—Babylonian, Medo-Persian, and the Grecian. Bear in mind, Islam also conquered the Roman Empire, which had ceased to exist in Europe. Revelation 13 insists that the fourth beast constitutes the three previous empires. This must exclude Europe. Islam conquered the entire eastern Byzantine Roman Empire and large portions of what was the Western Roman Empire. That included Iraq (Babylon), and Iran (Persia). The Roman Empire cannot make this claim and thus only Islam meets the biblical criterion of Daniel 2:40.

... While the Grecian Empire extended all the way to India, the Roman Empire’s furthest Eastern expansion barely reached the Euphrates River.

[Shoebat & Richardson, 2008, pp. 310-311, 315, 333]
Note the description of the fourth kingdom in Daniel 2 (above): “the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom ... the people will be a mixture and will not remain united”. Might this be a mixture of Sunni/Shiite, Arab/Persian, or other groups?

Ezekiel 38:21  I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Sovereign LORD. Every man's sword will be against his brother.

... the Last-Days Empire is also said to be a divided (peleg) empire. The division, of course, that this passage speaks of is truly an appropriate description of the Islamic world, as it has existed from its earliest days until modern times with its various sectarian divisions. [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008, p. 318]

Phillip Goodman also believes there will be an Assyrian connection tied to the “land of Nimrod”—and that the seven empires are Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, and the Ottoman Empire [Goodman, 2003]. He notes that there are only seven heads in Revelation 13:1 and 17:3,7,9,11, and therefore concludes that the eighth head has a double existence (i.e., is one of the earlier seven, with its roots in ancient Assyria today known as Syria-Iraq). Consider the following unfulfilled prophecies:

Micah 5:5-6  And he will be their peace. When the Assyrian invades our land and marches through our fortresses, we will raise against him seven shepherds, even eight leaders of men. They will rule the land of Assyria with the sword, the land of Nimrod with drawn sword. He will deliver us from the Assyrian when he invades our land and marches into our borders.

Revelation 13:1  And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name.

Revelation 17:3  Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.

Revelation 17:7  Then the angel said to me: "Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the seven heads and ten horns.

Revelation 17:9-11  "This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on
which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while. The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.

Goodman argues that only the Assyrian empire disappeared during the time of the writing of Revelation; the others lived on. Thus, only Assyria qualifies as the kingdom that will be “reincarnated” (i.e., whose “fatal wound had been healed” (Revelation 13:12)):

... the demon spirit known as the prince of Assyria, who once ruled over that ancient empire, will ascend from the Abyss in the latter days. He will inhabit and possess a man whom the world will behold in wonder as the reincarnated Assyrian. [Goodman, 2003, p. 120]

In summary, Goodman states that the end times will see a revived Roman Empire, but it will be headed by a restored Assyria (which in turn was part of the Greek empire). The eight empires are therefore: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, the Ottoman Empire (temporarily), and a revived Roman Empire whose roots are in ancient Assyria. Furthermore, present-day Iraq and Syria (Mesopotamia) will be home to the Antichrist, whose kingdom will attain global preeminence and acceptance.

Greece will re-emerge at the end of the age in an “empire within an empire” relationship to a similarly revived New Rome, where it will occupy the same basic geographic outline as did its ancient prototype. This future fourfold division will include the territories of modern day Greece, Turkey, Egypt, and Syria-Iraq.

... [Daniel] Chapters 8 and 11 shift ... from a panoramic view of latter-day Rome in general to a close up of latter-day Greece in particular. The focus on New Rome is narrowed to the “empire within an empire,” Greece. As one reads through these chapters, the focus further narrows in a series of steps. First, the two middle kingdoms of the fourfold Grecian empire are isolated. Then the emphasis further narrows to the northern kingdom, Seleucia (Syria-Iraq). The focus is next tightened to lift out from the northern kingdom a single personality—the antichrist type, Antiochus Epiphanes. The goal of the progressively narrowing scope in these visions is finally attained when this blasphemous Seleucian king is then projected to the end time. There his image emerges with his “clone,” the ultimate blasphemer, the Antichrist himself. [Goodman, 2003, pp. 54-55]

Historical confirmation of Antiochus’s career ceases with verse 35 [in Daniel chapter 11]. There are numerous contradictions with known facts of his reign beginning in verse 36. Though there may be some secondary application to Antiochus in verses 36-39, he is totally out of view in the final section beginning with
verse 40 because the last verse records the death of this vile person as taking place in the Holy Land, whereas Antiochus died in Persia. [Goodman, 2003, p. 63]

Daniel 11:36-45 "The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place. He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any god, but will exalt himself above them all. Instead of them, he will honor a god of fortresses; a god unknown to his fathers he will honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. He will attack the mightiest fortresses with the help of a foreign god and will greatly honor those who acknowledge him. He will make them rulers over many people and will distribute the land at a price. "At the time of the end the king of the South will engage him in battle, and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood. He will also invade the Beautiful Land. Many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand. He will extend his power over many countries; Egypt will not escape. He will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt, with the Libyans and Nubians in submission. But reports from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many. He will pitch his royal tents between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.

The king of the north is believed to be the Antichrist. Note that modern-day Syria-Iraq (Assyria) is one of the four regions corresponding to the ancient Greek Empire. Note also that ancient Assyria contained Ninevah, the wicked city that temporarily repented after the preaching of Jonah around 760 BC. After its destruction (circa 612 BC), almost all traces of Ninevah seemed to have disappeared, having only been unearthed by archaeology in the 1800s.

Today, just as Israel has been reborn, the ghost of Assyria awaits its prophetic cue from beneath the sands of Syria and Iraq to assume center stage as the head of the world’s last and greatest empire, and as the domain of the Antichrist—the preeminent kingdom at the end time. [Goodman, 2003, p. 1]

There is good news that comes out of this scenario, though. After the
Lord Jesus Christ returns, there will be peace and rejoicing, and even Egypt and Assyria will rejoice and be blessed:

Isaiah 19:23-25 In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The LORD Almighty will bless them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
<th>The seven kings refer to the emperors after the fall of the Republic of Rome. The first five were Julius Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius. The sixth (i.e., the current one at the time that Revelation was written—assuming a pre-70 AD writing of Revelation) was Nero. Following Nero, we have Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian.</th>
</tr>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is meant by the “ten horns” in Revelation? Are the 10 horns “kingdoms” (or “kings”)? Do the 10 horns refer to a European “revived Roman Empire”, a worldwide empire, or perhaps a Middle Eastern empire?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First, some background is in order about the 10 horns. There are many passages in the Bible that refer to “ten horns”, “ten kings”, or “ten kingdoms”. Note also that “seven heads”, “ten horns”, and “seven crowns” often appear together:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Revelation 12:3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads.

Revelation 13:1 And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name.

Revelation 17:3 Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.

Revelation 17:7 Then the angel said to me: "Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the seven heads and ten horns."

Revelation 17:12 "The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings
Revelation 17:16  The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire.

Daniel 7:7  "After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast--terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.

Daniel 7:19-25  "Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying, with its iron teeth and bronze claws--the beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell--the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom. "He gave me this explanation: 'The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time."

Dispensationalist Position  
The identification of the 10 horns is difficult to pinpoint, but we can try to put the puzzle together using scriptures from the books of Daniel and Revelation.

First of all, the metaphor “horn” is sometimes used in Scripture to represent strength, as in the strength of nations—perhaps militarily, perhaps economically. Daniel 7:24 and Revelation 17:12 specifically state that the 10 horns are 10 kings.

The focus appears to be the 10 kingdoms; but an eleventh (led by the Antichrist) will arise to subsequently displace, or kick out, three. Are these the kings referred to in Daniel 11:40-45?
In his war against the ten kings, the Antichrist moves out in all directions in conquest. He is seen moving against the north (vv. 40,44), the south (vv. 40,42-43), and the east (v. 44). The three kings he will succeed in killing (Dan. 7:20,24) will be the king of the north (Syria), the king of the south (Egypt) and the king of the east (Mesopotamia). His conquest of Egypt opens the door for his conquest of Africa (vv. 42-43). He will also invade Israel, the glorious land (v. 41 and also mentioned in Rev. 11:1-2), setting the stage for the Abomination of Desolation...

Although eventually the Antichrist will gain political control of the whole world, three countries will escape his domination: Edom, Moab, and Ammon (v. 41). All of these three ancient nations are under one government today: the Kingdom of Jordan.

In verse 45, Daniel states where the Antichrist will plant his headquarters during this Midtribulation war. ... It is set up between the seas, meaning between the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea. Furthermore, it is at the glorious holy mountain, meaning the Temple Mount, or Mount Moriah or Mount Zion. ...

It is apparently during this conflict [with the ten kings] that the Antichrist is killed. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 240-241]

The attempt of the Antichrist to gain political control will be interrupted by his death. But after his resurrection, the second world war of the Tribulation will continue until three of the ten kings are killed. ... Daniel 7:24:

And as for the ten horns, out of this kingdom shall ten kings arise: and another shall arise after them; and he shall be diverse from the former, and he shall put down three kings.

[Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 244]

Classical dispensationalists often think that the 10 horns or kingdoms are European nations that form a “revived Roman Empire”. These nations allow the Antichrist [the first beast, i.e., the beast from the sea] to establish a power base from which to rule. The “sea” is often used to refer to Gentile nations; thus, the Antichrist will likely be a Gentile. He uses the False Prophet [the second beast, i.e., the beast from the land, likely Israel] to come to power. Later, however, the Antichrist has no need for the False Prophet’s religion. (False religion opposes the one true God of the universe, and is often branded with metaphors like “prostitute” with which the kings of the Earth commit “fornication”. This metaphor appears many times in Scripture.)

The 10 nations are the 10 toes on the statue described in Daniel 2, as well as the 10 horns on the beast described in Daniel 7. We don’t
know what the nations are; however, in the final form of the revived Roman Empire, there appear to be 10 nations or kings that dominate. Right now, there are more than 10 nations in the European Union (EU), sometimes called the European Community (EC) or the European Common Market (ECM). In fact, as of 2004, there were 25 member nations that signed the EU constitution [Hitchcock, 2006]. Furthermore, more nations want into the EU. As of 2008, there are 27 countries in the EU, and 3 more are seeking admission. This casts some doubt on the European country model, especially as geopolitical boundaries and alliances change.

A more recent viewpoint is that these 10 nations do not simply represent a European community (i.e., the “revived Roman Empire”), but rather these are 10 worldwide political and economic regions. In other words, **globalism** is replacing a localized interpretation of the 10 horns. In particular, the nations and their currencies [Franz, 2008] are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Countries (some examples)</th>
<th>Name of Currency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>Canada, United States, Mexico</td>
<td>Amero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>European nations</td>
<td>Euro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>African nations</td>
<td>Afro or Golden Mandela</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASEAN (acronym for Association of Southeast Asian Nations)</td>
<td>Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Cambodia</td>
<td>Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Australia, New Zealand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, breakaway Muslim countries of the former Soviet Union</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>South American countries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>China</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The argument is that that the Antichrist will eventually attempt to take control of not just a “revived Roman Empire” but of the whole world, climaxing in a world government, world religion, and a single, unified currency. Recent geopolitical and economic upheaval certainly seems to provide some strength to this hypothesis.

Yet another alternative hypothesis to the traditional “revived Roman Empire” model of eschatology is the notion that the “ten horns” in Daniel and in Revelation may in fact represent successive powers that focus on Babylon, Israel, and much of the Middle East. For example, the ten horns could be made up of these kingdoms/powers throughout history: Egyptian (accounts for 1 horn), Assyrian (1), Babylonian (1), Medo-Persian (1), Macedonian Greek (4—because four generals divided the empire after Alexander the Greek), Roman (1), and Islamic (1) [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008]. It is not clear, however, which three empires would be uprooted by the Antichrist.

Preterist Position

The idea that the European Union represents the 10 nations in Revelation is nonsense. The problem with “newspaper eschatology” is that people try to map current events to the Bible—and they often get it wrong. Dispensationalists were counting off the 10 nations of the European Common Market: 1, 2, …, 10; but then the number of nations in the ECM went beyond 10. So, now what do you do?

Topic/Question

Is the New Jerusalem a literal city coming down from Heaven to Earth? What is the relationship to the New Jerusalem and the Earth during the Millennium? What is life like in the New Jerusalem?

 DISPENSATIONALIST POSITION

The New Jerusalem is a literal city, albeit a very large one—and it’s designed by God. Believers, unfallsen angels, and Jesus Christ will be there. It appears to be suspended over the Earth during the Millennium, and thereafter it will descend to earth.

John 14:2-3 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

Hebrews 11:10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

Hebrews 11:16 Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

Hebrews 13:14 For here we do not have an
enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

Revelation 3:12  Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.

Revelation 21:9-10  One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.

Revelation 21:22-27  I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

... it may be argued that Christ will return to the earth at the second advent and He will reign on David’s throne. The center of that authority is recognized to be earthly Jerusalem. That does not necessitate the presence of Christ on that throne constantly. Christ may still reign on David’s throne over David’s Kingdom, but make the heavenly Jerusalem His place of residence with His Bride.

... there will be night in the millennial earth, but need not be in the heavenly city, since the Lamb is there to give light. [Pentecost, 1958, pp. 569-570]

J. Dwight Pentecost notes that only the redeemed, resurrected individuals enter the New Jerusalem during the Millennium [Pentecost, 1958]:

- The New Jerusalem is to be inhabited by God, the Church, the unfallen angels, and the redeemed of all ages.
- At the time of Christ’s Second Coming, the living Gentiles and Jews enter the Millennium with unresurrected bodies. They will populate the Earth during the Millennium. They are not permitted to enter the New Jerusalem in unresurrected
bodies.

- The saved Old Testament saints go into the New Jerusalem, where they join the Church saints who are already there (because they were taken there upon the Rapture).
- After the Millennium, all of the saved have resurrected bodies, and can enter the New Jerusalem.

The New Jerusalem is measured and described in Revelation 21. Its length, width, and height are about 2200 km each. Note that commercial aircraft fly at a height of about 11 km (approximately 36,000 feet), and that 2200 km x 2200 km would cover an area equal to over half of the United States. The city could be in the form of a cube; however, there are an infinite number of symmetrical and asymmetrical shapes that could also satisfy the constraint. The fact that the Most Holy Place was a cube may add some weight to the New Jerusalem being cubic. Note also that resurrected bodies are not subject to gravitational or electromagnetic forces; thus, “streets” in the New Jerusalem can be vertical, diagonal, etc. [Morris, 1983]

Henry Morris ponders the duties of the saints during the Millennium:

... the resurrected apostles of the Lord have been promised that they will be assigned earthly thrones from which they will judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Luke 22:28-30). It seems also that the resurrected King David may be placed over the entire nation of Israel (Ezekiel 37:24,25; Jeremiah 30:9; Hosea 3:5). Some will be assigned jurisdiction over ten cities, some over five (Luke 19:17,19). Apparently there will be a hierarchy of authority assigned to the saints in either civil or religious duties or both.

It may appear at first that the hosts of resurrected saints, including all the redeemed of all the ages, will so far outnumber the depleted population of the earth at the beginning of the millennium, that there will be more “kings and priests” than “subjects”. ... Those who had attained a higher state of spiritual knowledge and effectiveness in the days of their flesh may well serve as teachers and leaders for those who died as “babes in Christ,” at least for the early years when the human population on earth is still low.

Furthermore their ministries will be needed for all those who had died while still too young (many even still in the fetal state) to have even reached the so-called “age of accountability.” They must surely be allowed to grow to maturity somehow, both physically and spiritually, and many of the more mature saints may well have assignments to train and tutor these.” [Morris, 1983, pp. 418-419]

It is during the Millennium that the population of the earth will swell, so that the number of people is “like the sand of the seashore”. In fact, towards the end of the Millennium, the enemies of God, alone,
will be “like the sand on the seashore”:

Revelation 20:7-8 When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth--Gog and Magog--to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore.

What is life like in the eternal state, following the Millennium? The following characteristics describe life in the eternal state [Pentecost, 1958]:

• Fellowship with God
• Rest
• Full knowledge
• Holiness
• Joy
• Service (purposeful activity)
• Abundance
• Glory
• Worship

How old will we be, at resurrection time? Will we age in eternity? To answer these questions, Henry Morris writes:

The Scriptures are not explicit on this, but there is at least a possible implication that the “apparent age” of each person in the resurrection may be in, say, his or her early thirties. When Adam and Eve were created, they were mature adults, capable of raising children. Since aging and death were part of the results of their sin, they would presumably have remained at the same “age” as that at which they were created if they had not sinned. ...

It also seems significant that those who were to serve as priests or Levites in the service of the tabernacle had to be thirty years old and upward (Numbers 4:3). Joseph was thirty years old when he was made ruler over Egypt (Genesis 41:43,46), and David, the man after God’s own heart, became king over Israel at age thirty (2 Samuel 5:4). Since those who are in the resurrection are also to serve as priests and kings in the millennium (Revelation 20:6), it would be likely that their resurrection “age” would be of this same order.

Even the Lord Jesus Christ entered on His earthly public ministry at age thirty (Luke 3:23), and went to the cross only about three-and-a-half years later. It is significant that His own resurrection body was of this same apparent age, different in its glorified state but still easily recognizable. The Scriptures, of course, also teach that those who are Christ’s will be “like Him” when He comes again (1 John 3:3), with bodies “fashioned like unto his glorious
None will ever age, nothing will ever be lost, all work will be productive and enduring. The entropy law, the so-called second law of thermodynamics, will be repealed. Information will nevermore become confused, ordered systems will not deteriorate into disorder, and no longer will energy have to be expended merely to overcome friction and dissipation into nonrecoverable heat. Entropy will from now on be conserved along with energy and mass and momentum. [Morris, 1983, p. 467]

| Preterist Position | This is not a physical city. It is a symbolic reference to Heaven, given in a poetic language. By the way, the expression “See you next year in Jerusalem” can be taken to represent an eternal state. |

| Topic/Question | The Rapture. When will the Rapture occur? Who will be raptured? Is the Rapture really pre-tribulational? If so, where in Scripture is the pre-tribulational Rapture described or inferred? Who will participate in the Rapture? [Note: See the immediately succeeding sections/questions for more explanations about characteristics of, and events associated with, the Rapture.] |

| Dispensationalist Position | Scripture doesn’t *specifically* refer to a pre-tribulational rapture, but the circumstantial evidence is strong. The same applies to the words “Bible” and “trinity”; they are not stated explicitly in the Bible, but they are implied. The Greek word used to describe the Rapture is *harpazo* which means “forcibly snatch away” or “great snatch” [Missler, 2006]. The pre-tribulational Rapture can be defined as follows. In His first (future) coming, Christ comes back in the sky/clouds to gather the saved (living and dead) and give them perfected bodies; but, He doesn’t touch down on the Earth. Seven or more years later, He physically returns to the Earth with the raptured saints. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 is the strongest verse that supports the Rapture: *For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and* |
the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

Note the words: “in Christ”, “caught up” (harpazo), “we who are still alive”, and “in the air”. The “dead in Christ” refer only to Christians (and not to Old Testament Saints, for example).

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 provides evidence of the Rapture, but these verses do not state whether or not the Rapture is pre-tribulational. Rather, they simply highlight the fact that at some point in the future, Christ will return and believers who are alive at that time will receive translated (perfected) bodies at that time:

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep [die], but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

Both 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 speak of a “trumpet”. Is this one of the seven trumpet judgments in Revelation? No. Some scholars connect the “last trumpet” (having to do with the Rapture) with the last of the seven trumpet judgments in Revelation; however, the last trumpet of the seven occurs well into the second half of the Tribulation. The Rapture appears to take place much earlier in Revelation (e.g., Revelation 4), and most likely before the Tribulation begins. Arnold Fruchtenbaum thinks that the “last trump” (or “last trumpet”) fulfills the Feast of Trumpets:

The Corinthians would not have had any knowledge of seven trumpets. Yet it is evident from the fact that Paul used the definite article the least trump that he expected the Corinthians to know what he was talking about. The only knowledge they would have of trumpets are those spoken of in the Old Testament, especially those of the Feast of Trumpets. The last trump refers to the Feast of Trumpets and the Jewish practice of blowing trumpets at this feast each year. During the ceremony there are a series of short trumpet sounds concluding with one long trumpet blast which is called the tekiah gedolah, the great trumpet blast. This is what Paul means by the last trump. As such, it says nothing concerning the time of the Rapture; only that the Rapture, whenever it comes, will fulfill the Feast of Trumpets. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 147]

Some verses which are suggestive of a pre-tribulational rapture include the following examples.

The idea that Christ will take believers from the Earth to Heaven at
some point:

John 14:2-3  In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

This passage does make one key point: this coming for the believers was for the purpose of taking them to where He was then going. Since Jesus was then going to Heaven, this is a coming to take the saints to Heaven and not to the Earth. This is important because in Posttribulationism the saints meet the Lord in the air and return with Him to the earth. But this is not the promise here. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 143]

There is also the notion of imminence, that is, waiting for the Rapture to take us to Christ at any moment.

Philippians 3:20-21  But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Mark 13:32-33  No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.

Imminence is a key characteristic of the Rapture. In other words, the Rapture could happen at any time. Even for those who reject the notion of an imminent rapture, the reality is that any of us could die before we take our next breath; so, it is important to make a decision for Jesus Christ as soon as possible, and not to wait to see how things turn out on Earth before committing to Christ.

Verses suggestive of Christ removing believers from Earth before the Tribulation (i.e., the coming time of wrath):

1 Thessalonians 1:10  and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead--Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

1 Thessalonians 5:9-10  For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-8  Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or
letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.

Note the ordering in the above passage from 2 Thessalonians [Missler, 2006]:

- The “rebellion”, or a falling away (apostasy), occurs.
- The “one who now holds it back” (i.e., the “restrainer” according to some translations) will be taken out of the way. The restrainer of sins can only be the Holy Spirit. Angels cannot restrain sin.
- The lawless one (Antichrist) will be revealed.
- The Day of the Lord occurs (i.e., “our being gathered to” Christ).

This also implies that there is a passage of time (of indefinite amount) between the Rapture and the start of the 70th week of Daniel. The amount of time could be days, or it could be years, suggests Missler. All we know is there are at least 7 years between the Rapture and the Second Coming because that is how long the Tribulation lasts. Tim LaHaye [LaHaye, 2009b] says there could be 25 or more years between the Rapture and the Second Coming—no one, other than God, knows.

Christ returns from the sky in a manner similar to how He ascended to Heaven:

Acts 1:9-11 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."
Some Jewish traditionalists say that Enoch was born on, and later was translated (raptured) on, the Day of Pentecost (Sivan 6).

Might it be that Enoch is a foreshadowing (or type) of the Church? Recall that the Christian Church was born on the Day of Pentecost. Might this suggest a future rapture (taking away of the Christian Church) on the Day of Pentecost?

Romans 11:25 I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles [Christian Church] has come in.

If you view the ministry or career of Christ in its entirety, then it’s obvious from Scripture that it is composed of two major parts or phases. The first phase encompasses the first coming of Jesus 2,000 years ago, while the second phase will consist of His second coming some time in the future. Yet many Old Testament prophecies about the coming Messiah referenced both phases in a single passage, without distinguishing them from one another.

It is commonly understood today that the Jews of the first century did not understand that these Old Testament prophecies spoke of a single Messiah who would come twice—once in humiliation, then again in glorious exaltation. We have learned that many Jews of Christ’s day thought there would be two different Messiahs—Messiah ben Joseph and Messiah ben David. Messiah ben Joseph would suffer and die, and would be followed by Messiah ben David, who would reign in glory. The reality of Scripture, however, is that there is but one Messiah—Jesus of Nazareth—who comes twice. This means there is a gap of time between the two comings. [Ice, 2003f, p. 346]


Thomas Ice summarizes the strength of the notion of a pre-tribulational rapture, and adds some comments on Enoch, Elijah, etc., as follows. I am quoting it because of its thoroughness [Ice, 2009a]:

… while the rapture of the church is the first time that God will take a large group of people from earth to heaven without experiencing death, it will not have been the first time that God takes individuals to heaven in this way. Look at the following inventory of rapture events throughout biblical history as noted in the following list.
Enoch

As far as the biblical account records, Enoch became the first individual to be raptured and taken to be with the Lord. Genesis 5:24 records the remarkable event of Enoch’s translation to heaven. “And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him” (Genesis 5:24). What does it mean that Enoch “was not, for God took Him?” It means that Enoch was translated, without dying, and went directly to be with the Lord. Enoch was raptured, to use the language of 1 Thessalonians 4:17 or he was “taken,” to use the language of John 14:3. That Enoch was raptured or translated to heaven is clear when compared with the dismal refrain “and he died” that accompanies the legacy of the other patriarchs mentioned in Genesis 5.

Enoch's rapture is confirmed by the divinely inspired New Testament commentary found in Hebrews 11:5 which says, “By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.” The New Testament word “taken up” in Hebrews is the same one selected by those who translated the Old Testament into Greek. This word conveys the idea of being removed from one place to another. Thus, it is clear that both the Genesis passage and the thrice-repeated reference to Enoch in Hebrews teaches the idea of translation to heaven.

Elijah

… Like Enoch, Elijah was translated to heaven without dying. 2 Kings 2 records this interesting event with an emphasis upon the mode of Elijah's transportation to heaven. 2 Kings 2:1 says he was taken “by a whirlwind to heaven.” In 2:11 the whirlwind is further described as "a chariot of fire and horses of fire." No doubt this was an appearance of the Shechinah glory of God since Hebrews 1:7 says, “and of the angels He says, ‘Who makes His angels winds, and His ministers a flame of fire.’” God objectively marked Elijah as a genuine prophet by identifying him with the glory of God and his rapture to heaven.

We can see a pattern developing. Enoch was raptured before judgment while Noah remained and was preserved through the judgment. Elijah was raptured while Elisha remained behind. How does this relate to the rapture of the church?
Isaiah was called into the throne room of God (Isaiah 6). Since this was a physical transportation of Isaiah from earth to heaven and back to earth again, it most likely took place via a rapture.

**Jesus Christ**

Revelation 12:5 speaks in the form of a symbol that represents important aspects of the career of Christ. Within this picture, Christ is called the “male child” who it is said “was caught up to God and to His throne[“] (Rev. 12:5). This picture looks back to the ascension of Christ that is described in Acts 1:8-11, where Christ ascends to heaven in a cloud. Thus, because Revelation 12:5 uses the word for rapture, this means that Christ’s Acts 1:11 ascension is viewed as a rapture, a trip from planet earth to heaven.

**Philip**

Philip, who was “snatched away” by the Spirit of the Lord after evangelizing the Ethiopian eunuch and “found himself at Azotus” (Acts 8:39-40), which is located in what we call today the Gaza Strip. Philip was not taken to heaven, but was physically transported from the Judean wilderness to the modern-day Gaza Strip area. This is the only example of a rapture in the Bible where the subject is not transported to heaven. Here he is taken from point A to point B upon earth.

**Paul**

Twice Paul mentions that he was “caught up [raptured] to the third heaven” and received “visions and revelations of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 12:1-4). Paul's heavenly trip reminds us of Isaiah’s throne room commission (Isaiah 6:1-13). Perhaps a rapture was involved in this incident. Paul, via rapture, received a commission, message, and revelation that became the foundation for the unique purpose for the church during this age, “which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit” (Ephesians 3:5). Apparently, Paul’s heavenly visit was such a heady experience, the Lord gave him “a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me—to keep me from exalting myself!” (2 Corinthians 12:7).

**Rapture of The Church**

This is the most well known rapture in the Bible to the average Christian. 1 Thessalonians 4:17 says, “we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.” Of all the raptures in the Bible, this is the first time that our Lord will take a large group to heaven in a single instance, without first facing death. This is such a clear teaching in the Bible that even those Christians who do not
second coming in some way. Yet, this is the event that will take place before the seven-year tribulation.

**Two Witnesses**

Reminiscent of Elijah, the two witnesses during the tribulation are summoned “into heaven in the cloud” (Revelation 11:12). Certainly these special Divinely commissioned and protected messengers fulfill the role as ambassadors for our Lord to the Jewish nation during the tribulation. Along the same line, the “male child” is said to be “caught up [raptured] to God and His throne” in Revelation 12:5.

The Bible provides us with seven citations of the rapture of individuals throughout history. This provides a strong support that a group—the church—will be raptured in the future as 1 Thessalonians 4 teaches. Some opponents of the rapture seek to suggest that the worldwide disappearance of millions would be too odd to consider as a realistic possibility. Such is not the case if the Bible is the criterion for establishing possibilities. In fact, the Bible reveals a significant number of raptures or trips directly to heaven that provides assurance that God can and will take millions at one moment in time. Are you ready for the rapture?

**Types**

1 Corinthians 10:11, speaking of some Old Testament events says, “Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, ...” The word “example” is from the Greek word *tupos*, which means “form, figure, or pattern.” The English word “type” is developed from the Greek word and provides the basis for why Bible students coined the term “typology.” Typology refers to Old Testament patterns that illustrate doctrine—usually New Testament doctrine. It is wrong to teach a doctrine from a type. Types serve only to illustrate a doctrine that is taught clearly, or directly from the biblical text.

Old Testament raptures, while not teaching the New Testament truth of the rapture of the church, do provide us with Old Testament types, patterns, or illustrations of the rapture. Thus, Enoch and Elijah stand as types of the rapture of the church. I believe that the purpose for both Old Testament and New Testament raptures come into clearer focus when seen within the framework of the covenantal protocol of recalling one’s ambassador from a distant land.

**Ambassadors for Christ**

Paul describes New Testament believers as “ambassadors for Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:20). As I have noted earlier, an ambassador is one who represents a dignitary, often in a foreign land. Corresponding with Isaiah’s commission in the Old Testament, the church has been given its Great Commission through Christ’s apostles (Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-18;
Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:6-10). This commission includes the command to preach the gospel throughout the world until the end of the current age. Instead of just a local responsibility, as with Israel in the Old Testament, the New Testament church has a global responsibility as Christ’s ambassadors to entreat and beg humanity to “be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20). Paul asks the Ephesians church to pray for him “that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (Ephesians 6:19-20). The primary issue during the current church age between God and all mankind is the issue of belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ. When, in God’s estimation, the world reaches the point of global rejection of Christ, then, as with Israel before her global deportation, God will recall His ambassador—the church—before the judgment of the tribulation. Since the church is described as heavenly citizens (Philippians 3:20), it makes sense that she is raptured before God’s war commences against “those who dwell upon the earth” (Revelation 3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 12:12; 13:8,14; 14:6). This is one of many purposes for the New Testament doctrine of the pretribulational rapture of the church.

Conclusion

... I don't think that the concept of a rapture is such a strange event for those who have an understanding of biblical events. Regardless of what others may think, I am going to let the Bible inform me of what is possible and what the future holds. That’s why I am constantly looking for our Lord’s any-moment return. Maranatha!

Ron Rhodes writes:

Throughout Scripture, God protects His people before judgment falls (see 2 Peter 2:5-9). Enoch was transferred to heaven before the judgment of the flood. Noah and his family were in the ark before the judgment of the flood. Lot was taken out of Sodom before judgment was poured out on Sodom and Gomorrah. The firstborn among the Hebrews in Egypt were sheltered by the blood of the Paschal Lamb before judgment fell. The spies were safely out of Jericho and Rahab was secured before judgment fell on Jericho. So too will the church be safely raptured before judgment falls in the tribulation period.” [Rhodes, 2008, pp. 16-17]

Chuck Missler provides a comparison of the Rapture of the Church and the Second Coming of Christ, a portion of which is presented here [Missler, 2006]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rapture</th>
<th>Second Coming</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Translated saints go to Heaven</td>
<td>Translated saints return to Earth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Imminent** (can occur at any moment) | Follows a definite set of predicted signs (70th week of Daniel, i.e., 7 years)
---|---
Not in the Old Testament | Predicted in the Old Testament
Believers only | All people
Christ comes for His own (i.e., claims His Bride) | Christ comes with his own (i.e., comes with His Bride)
Only His own see Him | Every eye shall see Him
Tribulation begins | Tribulation ends

**Who will participate in the Rapture?** (a) All believers in Jesus Christ, for sure—young and old, dead or alive; and probably (b) all people before “the age of accountability” because they have not been able to make a decision for, or reject, Jesus Christ. This latter category includes fetuses, babies, and many handicapped individuals.

**Preterist Position**

There are two main viewpoints about the Rapture, from a preterist perspective: (a) full preterists say that Christ has already come *spiritually*, and (b) partial preterists say that Christ will come *physically* in judgment at the end of time, and that His coming affects everyone simultaneously—saved and unsaved.

There are no clear Scriptures that indicate a pre-tribulational rapture. Even Darby, in the 1800’s, decided that there are an earthly people (the Jews), and a heavenly people (the Christians). Prior to the 19th century, almost all believers believed that the Rapture and resurrection were simultaneous events.

We will be left on this earth in a new body; we won’t go off to Heaven, and then come back to Earth. We’ll be on this Earth, forever, with a resurrected, perfected body.

No one’s denying that Jesus is going to return again. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 is an often misused passage. It simply says we’ll meet Christ *in the air*; but, it doesn’t say this will be followed by all kinds of events, like a 7-year tribulation, the reign of the Antichrist, etc.

It is dangerous for dispensationalists to say that there is a pre-tribulational rapture because it gives false hope to people who miss the Rapture. For example, current unbelievers might be thinking, “Well, if I see these things happening like you describe, then I’ll believe in Jesus; but, I have at least 7 more years to do so.”

Hank Hanegraaff writes:

> Nowhere does the text say that when Christ comes down from heaven ‘with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God’ (1 Thessalonians 4:16) that
Christ will hover with us in midair, suddenly change directions, and escort us to mansions in heaven while all hell breaks out on earth. Nor would the Thessalonians have understood Paul this way. As Dr. N.T. Wright has aptly noted, Paul conjures up images of an emperor visiting a colony or province. The citizens go out to meet him in open country and then escort him into the city. Paul’s image of the people ‘meeting the Lord in the air’ should be read with the assumption that the people will immediately turn around and lead the Lord back to the newly remade world.’ [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 58]

Conversely, as our Lord declares, ‘a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned’ (John 5:28-29; cf. Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 12:35-48). ... The plain and literal sense of our Lord’s words suggests a moment in the future when both the righteous and the unrighteous will be resurrected and judged together. The notion that believers will be raptured during a secret coming of our Lord 1007 years prior to the resurrection of unbelievers is thus an imposition on the text.

Even given pretribulational presuppositions, the literal sense of the parable of the weeds suggests that the wicked will be judged prior to the wheat being gathered, not the other way round (Matthew 13:24-30). Likewise, in the Olivet Discourse, the unjust are ‘taken’ in judgment while the righteous are left behind, not vice versa (Matthew 24:36-41). During his earthly sojourn, our Lord fervently petitioned his heavenly Father not to rapture his bride out of the world, but to protect them from the evil one while they were in the world (John 17:15). [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 60-61]

Matthew 13:24-30 Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. 'The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' "'An enemy did this,' he replied. 'The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' "'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"

Matthew 24:37-41 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark;
and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. 
That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

John 14:2-3 talks about the Father’s House, but it is wrong to think that this is a physical place. Later, in verse 23, it says that “we” (Jesus and the Father) will make “my home” with [each believer]. The “House of God” mentioned in the Old and New Testaments never speaks of a heavenly location. In the Old Testament, it refers to the Temple; in the New Testament, it refers to the Church, which is the Body of Christ. In all cases, that home is on the Earth.

The greater reality to which a type points and in which it finds its fulfillment is referred to as an antitype (from the Greek word antitypos). The writer of Hebrews specifically employs the word antitype to refer to the greatness of the heavenly sanctuary of which the Holy Land, the Holy City, and the holy temple are merely types or shadows: ‘Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one [antitype]; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence’ (Hebrews 9:23-24). The antitype of the land is found in the Lord, the antitype of Jerusalem is found in Jesus, and the antitype of the majestic temple is found in the Master Teacher.

... In his letter to the Romans, Paul refers to Adam as a ‘pattern’ (literally, type) of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:14). Similarly, the writer of Hebrews explains that the earthly temple is merely ‘a copy and shadow of what is in heaven’ (8:5), and ‘the law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves’ (10:1). Paul, likewise, taught the believers at Colossae that the dietary laws, religious festivals, and Sabbath of the old covenant were ‘a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ’ (Colossians 2:17).

The interpretive principle of typology is equally pervasive in the Gospels. Jesus’s successful resistance of temptation in the desert after forty days of fasting is a direct typological contrast with the disobedience of the Israelites that resulted in their forty years of wilderness wanderings (see Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13). In remaining faithful to his Father, Jesus did what Israel was unable to do. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 170-171]

Hank adds:

It is not too much to say that the biblical principle of typology is anathema for Christian Zionists such as Tim LaHaye. In his view, to depart from a strictly literal interpretation leads the student of the Bible ‘to all forms of confusion and sometimes heresy.’ The reality is that the debate does not revolve around whether one reads the Bible literally or metaphorically but
whether old covenant shadows find their final consummation in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

A classic case in point involves the words of Jesus, ‘Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days’ (John 2:19). The Jews believed Jesus to be speaking of Herod’s temple. Thus, with sarcasm dripping from their voices, they respond, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?’ (v. 20). However, says John, the temple Jesus had spoken of ‘was his body’ (v. 21). [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 174]

The conclusion?

The conclusion of the matter is this: All of the types and shadows of the old covenant, including the holy land of Israel, the holy city Jerusalem, and the holy temple of God, have been fulfilled in the Holy Christ. It is Paradise—a new heaven and a new earth—not Palestine for which our hearts yearn. It is ‘the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband’ (Revelation 21:2) upon which we fix our gaze. And it is the Master Teacher, not a majestic temple, that forever satisfies our deepest longings. While John saw the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God ...

Revelation 21:22-27 I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

[Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 224-225]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Is 2 Thessalonians 2 talking about Christians being worried that the Day of the Lord has already come? In other words, did they think that the apostle Paul had written them a letter saying that they had missed the Rapture?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Thessalonians 2:1-12</td>
<td>Concerning the coming of</td>
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</table>
our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the **day of the Lord** has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the **man of lawlessness** is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
<th>Apparently they misunderstood Paul’s letter. They thought that the Rapture had come, and that they had missed it. The tribulations they were going through at the time may have formed the basis for some of their concerns. Note, however, that Paul as a Christian would have been raptured; so, they clearly misunderstood the note. This also implies that they (and Paul) believed in a pre-tribulational rapture.</th>
</tr>
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</table>

2 Thessalonians 2 can be interpreted in the following way (with possible interpretations in square brackets):

2 Thessalonians 2:1-8 Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him [the Rapture], we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day [starting with the Rapture and continuing until Christ’s Second Coming] will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness [the Antichrist] is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? And now you know what is holding him back [the Holy Spirit is holding back the work of Antichrist], so that he [Antichrist] may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one [the Holy Spirit] who now holds it back will continue to do so till he [the Holy Spirit, via the Church] is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one [the Antichrist] will be revealed,
whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming [at the Glorious Appearing, i.e., the Second Coming of Christ]. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie [the counterfeit Christ, a false religion, or according to some, the theory of evolution (which denies the existence of God)] and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

Note that the omnipresent Holy Spirit does not stop His ministry when the Church is removed; just His *restraining* ministry is removed [Pentecost, 1958].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
<th>Does this mean that they thought they had missed the Rapture? Well, nobody was missing! They knew that the Apostle Paul wouldn’t have missed it. So, how could the Apostle Paul have written them a letter, if in fact he had already been raptured (and wasn’t there to write it).</th>
</tr>
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</table>

**Topic/Question** What does the eschatological phrase “two men in the field; one will be taken and the other left” refer to? Is it about the Rapture? Also, what does the following refer to: “two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left”?

Matthew 24:37-41 *As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.* For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
<th>The ones “taken” are unbelievers who are taken away in judgment. It does not mean “raptured”. The ones who are left are believers; they enter the Millennium in their natural bodies. This is similar to the way that unbelievers were taken away in judgment—that is, destroyed by—Noah’s Flood.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preterist Position</td>
<td>In this context, you don’t want to be the one <em>taken</em>. Just like in the days of Noah, people were taken away—in this case, by the Flood—and they perished.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Some people look at this passage as a rapture passage (being taken away in the air), but this is not a resurrection or rapture passage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What signs precede Christ’s return, and hence before the start of the Tribulation? What chronological (time-ordered) events precede the Tribulation?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matthew 24:3</td>
<td>As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. &quot;Tell us,&quot; they said, &quot;when will this [Temple’s destruction] happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
<th>Three questions are being asked in Matthew 24:3: (1) When will the Temple be destroyed? (2) What will be the sign of Christ’s coming? (3) What will be the sign of the end of the current age (and the start of the second (Messianic)) age?</th>
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<td></td>
<td>The Olivet Discourse in Matthew does not answer question (1); Luke 21:20-24, however, does, by mentioning that the city will be surrounded by armies. Questions (2) and (3) are answered in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Arnold Fruchtenbaum mentions the following *sequential* signs that precede the Tribulation [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. There are other pre-tribulational signs as well, but it is difficult to place them in any sequence.

**Sign 1** is when “nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom”—accompanied by famines and earthquakes. Fruchtenbaum analyzes the Old Testament verses that refer to the phrases “nation against nation” and “kingdom against kingdom”, and concludes that these phrases refer to a *worldwide* conflict. A worldwide conflict did not occur before World War I. (Recall that the Babylonian invasion of Israel was a localized event.) Some authors claim that World War II was essentially a continuation of World War I. Famines and earthquakes followed, including a very large increase in the number of earthquakes of significance. For example, in the first thousand years after Christ, only about 5 major earthquakes were recorded (i.e., written about). In the 18th century, there were 640 earthquakes; in the 19th century, there were 2119 major earthquakes; and in the 20th century, there were about 900,000 earthquakes [Fruchtenbaum, 2004].

**Sign 2** is the reestablishment of Israel; however, there are various positions (see “replacement theology” earlier in this document).
Sign 3 is Jerusalem being under Israeli/Jewish control. This occurred in 1967. Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4; and Revelation 11:1-2 all refer to a future Jewish Temple, which implicitly assumes control over Jerusalem.

The other six significant, sequential signs preceding the Tribulation are in the future [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]:

Sign 4 is the Magog invasion of Ezekiel 38-39.

Sign 5 is a one-world government (Daniel 7:23-24).

Sign 6 is about the ten kingdoms mentioned in Revelation and Daniel 7:24a.

Sign 7 is the rise of Antichrist (Daniel 7:24a). Paul writes that the rise of Antichrist precedes the Day of the Lord:

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.

Sign 8 is a time of false peace and security:

1 Thessalonians 5:1-3 Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

Sign 9 is the signing of the seven-year covenant, marking the start of the 70th week of Daniel (Daniel 9:24-27).

Preterist Position

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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What other events (i.e., non-chronological events) need to take place before the beginning of the Tribulation?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>The events that appear to take place before the beginning of the Tribulation include: (1) the darkening of parts of the Earth, (2) the return of Elijah, (3) the construction of the Third Temple (in</td>
</tr>
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</table>
unbelief), and (4) the Rapture.

First of all, we remind the reader that the “Day of the Lord” or “Day of Jehovah” refers to the Tribulation (and possibly post-Tribulation events).

(1) The Bible speaks of five “blackouts” (similar to Exodus 10:21-23 and Matthew 27:45) that occur before the start of the Tribulation [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. For example:

Joel 2:31  The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

(2) Elijah will return:

Malachi 4:5-6  “See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.”

Fruchtenbaum makes it clear that Elijah was only to come before the Tribulation prior to the Second Coming of the Messiah, and not His first coming. In John 1:19-23, John the Baptist specifically says that he is not Elijah, but rather “the voice of one calling in the desert” (i.e., preceding/announcing the Messiah). Had the Jews accepted Jesus Christ at His first coming, then John the Baptist would have fulfilled the role of Elijah, but they didn’t. God knew this from eternity past, and thus Elijah will indeed precede the Second Coming of Christ, and to be more specific, he will appear before the Tribulation.

(3) There must be a third temple, but it is not clear whether this is actually present before the Tribulation. Given that its construction will take time, and given that the Temple must have sacrifices in effect prior to the middle of the Tribulation, there is a good chance that this temple will begin construction prior to the Tribulation. There are four scriptures that specifically acknowledge the existence of a temple during the Tribulation: Daniel 9:27, Matthew 24:15, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, and Revelation 11:1-2. All of these necessitate the existence of a functioning temple.

Unlike the first and second temples, this third temple will not be sanctioned by God [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. The Millennial Temple will be built by Christ when He returns; therefore, it will be sanctioned by God.
### Preterist Position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Who are the two witnesses in Revelation 11? And when do they die?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revelation 11:3-12</td>
<td>And I will give power to my <strong>two witnesses</strong>, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.” These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want. Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth. But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, &quot;Come up here.&quot; And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Dispensationalist Position

Dispensationalists believe that the two witnesses are actual people. Although some dispensationalists do not think that the two witnesses will be people from the past, many believe that they will be either Moses and Elijah, or Elijah and Enoch. The former are Israel’s greatest prophets in the Old Testament; the latter are the only people on Earth who have departed to Heaven without dying. These two witnesses are real people who return to the Earth to preach to the Jewish people (and ultimately to the world), and turn many hearts to Christ. Their testimonies are analogous to the work of Moses and Aaron in Egypt prior to the Exodus, including turning waters into blood (Revelation 11:6). It is interesting to note that Moses and Elijah are mentioned in the last three verses of the Old Testament, giving some support to their literal return.

Revelation speaks about people giving gifts to each other after the
(temporary) death of these two witnesses, and rejoicing over their death. This event has not happened in history; thus, Revelation 11 has not been fulfilled, and this is further evidence that many events in Revelation could not have been fulfilled by 70 AD.

The two witnesses die during the Tribulation, probably during the second half of the Tribulation because they preach for 1260 days before they die, and we assume that their preaching begins no sooner than the start of the Tribulation. It is not clear when in the second half they die. Their ministry is based in Jerusalem. Contrast this to the ministry of the 144,000 Jews from the tribes of Israel—who appear to have a worldwide focus.

Note the detail which Revelation 11:3-12 (above) uses to describe the two witnesses and events surrounding their lives. This is strong evidenced to suggest that all the events are “real”.

One of the main problems with using Moses as one of the witnesses is that Moses died and was buried. Thus, as Henry Morris notes (Morris, 1983), he would be dying twice, which seems to contradict Hebrews 9:27: “It is appointed unto men once to die” [KJV]. A supporting Scripture for using Enoch as one of the two witnesses (Elijah the other) is 1 Corinthians 15:22: “For as in Adam all die...” [KJV]. Morris comments that Enoch and Elijah currently wait, in heaven, in their natural bodies. Enoch’s message before the Flood is remarkably similar to what would be required in the end times:

Jude 14-15  Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

Morris adds:

Although it is obviously speculation, it seems possible that they may even have stood by Him [Jesus] when He came to earth, or at least at the climax of that visit when He died and rose again. On the morning of the empty tomb, it is remarkable that there were two men standing by ... (Luke 24:3,4).”

Note that there are exceptions to the one death per person rule: Christ raised Lazarus from the dead, and he presumably died again. Elijah raised a young boy to life, and he presumably died again. At the Rapture, many millions of people will be given resurrection bodies, without having died. Enoch was translated, that is, he was given a resurrected body; so, he likely won’t be “downgrading”. Even Elijah
has a translated body since he was taken to Heaven. Only perfected (i.e., translated) bodies can enter Heaven.

The idea of Elijah and Enoch, or Elijah and Moses, returning to complete “unfinished business” is not relevant since many people on the earth could claim the same thing [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. Instead, Fruchtenbaum states that the two witnesses are likely to be two Jewish prophets chosen by God during the Tribulation, rather than two historical figures.

| Preterist Position | The two witnesses are probably not people. Rather they are models or symbols of witnesses. Like Christ, they’re killed and later vindicated. This is a model of everyone who comes to Christ. There is a lot of symbolism in this passage (fire from their mouths; olive trees from Zechariah 4:3; plagues in the Old Testament, especially from Exodus; etc.) Do not try to interpret the two witnesses by using a newspaper in your hand, and don’t think of the two witnesses as having a flame-thrower in their mouths; this passage is not to be taken literally.

Some preterists, like J. Stewart Russell, believe that the two witnesses could be Peter and James. Other preterists, like Steve Gregg, believe in the idealist version of Revelation 11 (with respect to the two witnesses).

Hank Hanegraaff writes:

Equally significant is the fact that the two witnesses are described as two olive trees and two lampstands. The imagery harks back to a familiar Old Testament passage in which Zechariah sees two olive trees on the right and the left of a lampstand that symbolize ‘the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth’ (Zechariah 4:14). In Zechariah’s day the two witnesses were Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah who returned to Jerusalem to lay the foundation of a second temple, and Joshua, the high priest commissioned to preside over its altar. In Revelation this imagery is invested in two witnesses who, as literary characters in the apocalyptic narrative, represent the entire line of Hebrew prophets in testifying against apostate Israel and preside over the soon-coming judgment and destruction of Jerusalem and the second temple. Like Moses the witnesses have power to turn water into blood and to strike the earth with plagues (Exodus 7:17ff; 1 Samuel 4:8; Revelation 11:6). And like Elijah, they have power to call down fire from heaven to consume their enemies and to shut up the sky so that it will not rain for three and a half years (1 Kings 18; Luke 4:25; Revelation 11:6). [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 131]  

| Topic/Question | Setting dates for the second coming of Christ (and, in particular, the |
| Dispensationalist Position | We shouldn’t set dates. Some in the dispensationalist camp have given dates (e.g., 1981, 1988, 1996, 2000), and even done so in print. People are naturally enthusiastic about Christ’s return, and sometimes the enthusiasm gives way to date-setting. Most classical dispensationalists believe that date-setting is not appropriate; however, one can sense from “the signs of the times” or “the times of the signs” that Christ’s Second Coming must be near. Christian apologist Ron Rhodes writes:

> I will always continue to warn people against the folly of date-setting (Acts 1:7), but I will also urge people to be thoughtful observers of the times (see Matthew 16:1-3; Luke 21:29-33) who seek to understand how certain current events may relate to the fulfillment of end-time prophecies. For example, the current events in Russia, Iran, and other Muslim nations may be setting the stage for an eventual invasion into Israel by a northern military coalition, as predicted by the prophet Ezekiel 2600 years ago. [Rhodes, 2008, p. 14]

We cannot know “the day or the hour” of the Rapture. Scriptures which point to this include:

Matthew 24:42  "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

Luke 12:40  You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."

Acts 1:7  He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority."

Chuck Missler believes that part of the reason for not providing more timing clues is to catch Satan by surprise [Missler, 2006]. For example, Chuck thinks the antichrist is alive today, but he also believes that an antichrist was alive hundreds of years ago. In other words, Satan always seems to have someone on the go.

Some of those who guess at dates begin with a base year of 1948— which is the year Israel became an independent nation for the first time in over 2000 years. They also quote Jesus in Matthew 24:

Matthew 24:32-34  "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened." |
Most dispensationalists agree that date setting (with respect to the Rapture) is dangerous. For example, a calculation that some classical dispensationalists may have done goes as follows: Assuming that one generation is taken to be 40 years, and since 1948 + 40 = 1988, and since we need to subtract 7 years for the Rapture, we get to the year 1981—which, of course, was wrong.

Consider the following passage that is taken by some preterists as fulfilled prophecy in the first century AD:

Matthew 16:27-28  For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done. I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

Most preterists think that this passage is about the coming of Christ in judgment in 70 AD; however, some dispensationalists argue that it’s actually about the transfiguration of Christ, also involving Moses and Elijah, fulfilled during Christ’s earthly ministry, and witnessed by the disciples Peter, James, and John). Note that Jesus said that John the Baptist came in the spirit of Elijah (and thus would have fulfilled the passage in Malachi about Elijah coming before the Messiah comes at the great and dreadful day of the Lord)—that is, had the Jews accepted Christ.

Malachi 4:5 "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes.

Matthew 11:14 And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come.

As for Christ’s return, if we were to know the start of the 7-year Tribulation (i.e., by living to it) and witnessing the first part of the Tribulation (which can easily be confirmed at the 3½ year mark), then we would easily be able to calculate when the seven years end (i.e., when Christ returns at the Battle of Armageddon). Thus, being here for some of the Tribulation is an argument for both: (a) the existence of the Rapture, and (b) the date of the Rapture being unknowable. Dave Hunt, for example, believes that the date being spoken of (i.e., not knowing the day or the hour) is that of the Rapture.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
<th>We shouldn’t set dates—period.</th>
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Dispensationalists often make claims that Christ is soon to return and that the Rapture is just around the corner. For example, given the events of 1948, some dispensationalists said that the Rapture can’t be
more than \((40 - 7 = 33)\) years away—in other words: 1981. It didn’t happen, so they changed the date by applying another “significant event” (e.g., Six Day War: \(1967 + 40 - 7 = 2000\)). Coincidentally, Y2K was another “significant event” (actually, it turned out to be a non-event) that, unfortunately, added more “evidence” to the timing of the Rapture. There have been other cases. Such date-setting is an embarrassment to Christianity. Calculations such as these are nonsense because the Tribulation took place on or before 70 AD.

The year 1967 not only reinvigorated the faith of Christian Zionists, it renewed their fascination with timing the two-pronged return of Christ. This time the math was downright magical. Add forty to 1967, then subtract seven, and 2000 emerges as the new date of destiny. Chuck Smith saw this as more than accidental. ‘I think it is more than coincidental that it was just about six thousand years ago that Adam and Eve disobeyed God and sold the world into slavery. According to biblical chronology, it was roughly 4000 BC when Adam first ate of the forbidden fruit. That means the world is coming very close to entering the “seventh year” of its captivity.’ Smith subsequently recalibrated the date to not later than 2014—this, said Smith, is ‘the maximum.’

While dispensationalists have come up with a variety of formulas to explain away the fact that Christ has not yet returned, 1967, the year ‘the Jews took Jerusalem,’ has retained its significance. Jack Van Impe, for one, recalculated a generation to be 50 years—51.45 to be exact. ‘Add 51.4 to 1967 when the Jews took Jerusalem and you come out to 2018,’ says Van Impe. ‘Add the extra six months because it happened in June of 67 and the 4/10ths and you come out to 2019 years and take away the seven from that and you come out to 2012.’...

As dates come and go, one thing remains unchanged. For Christian Zionists, 1967 is a definitive date of destiny. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 188-189]

In 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul is writing to believers to give them comfort of the eventual (simultaneous) resurrection of all believers (i.e., all at one time). There is no evidence of a secret pre-tribulational rapture. Far from being secret or quiet, 1 Thessalonians 4 claims that it is “with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God”, that the Rapture (resurrection) takes place, and it is at the end of time, not seven or more years before the physical return of Christ to Earth. Christ does not come back to secretly rapture believers, then reverse his direction, and finally come back seven or more years later for the rest.

In Revelation 11, the Temple is still standing. That’s because the time of writing of the book of Revelation was prior to 70 AD. Dispensationalists claim that the Temple is a rebuilt Temple (still in
The Great White Throne judgment takes place at the end of time, that is, after everyone has been resurrected. The “separation of the sheep and the goats” refers to this judgment. There is one judgment; not separate judgments for separate groups. All people—saved and unsaved—will be resurrected. It is just a matter of where these individuals will spend eternity (i.e., Heaven or Hell).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Is the first beast in Revelation 13 the same as the “man of sin” in 2 Thessalonians 2? (b) Is this beast the same as the fourth beast in Daniel 7? (c) Who, or what, is the “beast” of Revelation?</td>
<td>(a) Yes. (b) Yes. (c) Most scholars refer to the first beast in Revelation as the Antichrist. He is a real person—whom Satan indwells—to thwart God’s plan for the redemption of mankind (i.e., to destroy not only Israel but the whole world). The Antichrist will appear on Earth before Christ returns physically to the Earth.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Many interesting parallels exist between [the beast of Revelation 13 and the beast of Daniel 7] ... For example, both have a worldwide empire (Daniel 7:7,23; Revelation 13:8), both rule for three-and-one-half years (Daniel 7:25; Revelation 13:5), both dominate the saints for three-and-one-half-years (Daniel 7:25; Revelation 12:14; 13:7), and both are characterized by their arrogant and blasphemous words (Daniel 7:8,11,20,25; Revelation 13:5).</td>
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<td>...many of the details regarding the fourth beast of Daniel 7 have obviously not yet come to pass. For example, ancient Rome never crushed the entire earth (Daniel 7:23), never came to power through the assistance of a ten-king confederacy (Daniel 7:7,24), never experienced instantaneous destruction (Daniel 7:11,26), and was never immediately replaced by a subsequent eternal political kingdom following its sudden demise (Daniel 7:27). Because these details do not fit the known facts of history, they obviously await a future fulfillment. [Woods, 2003, p. 238]</td>
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<td>The wording in Revelation 20:4 describes the same beast/image as in Revelation 13. Revelation 20:4 is acknowledged by both classical dispensationalists and partial preterists (but not full preterists) as a future event because it occurs after the physical return of Christ. Furthermore, because the two beasts of Revelation spend eternity in the Lake of Fire, the two appear to have eternal souls. This cannot be true of an institution.</td>
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Furthermore, some commentators have observed the connection between the false prophet (second beast of Revelation) and Elijah. Just as Elijah called down fire from heaven (1 Kings 18:38; 2 Kings 1:10-12), the false prophet will imitate Elijah’s
miracle by also calling down fire from heaven (Revelation 13:3). If this comparison is correct, then it stands to reason that the false prophet’s miracle will be just as genuine as Elijah’s miracle was.

Has there ever been a “mark of the beast” in history?

... although there are many examples of people receiving a mark in the first century, none of these instances fully satisfies the details of Revelation 13:16-17. ... At any rate, none of the first-century examples of people receiving a mark comes even close to matching the description in Revelation 13:16-17. [Woods, 2003, pp. 249-250]

Also, Nero couldn’t have been the Antichrist because:

He was never in Jerusalem, he did not desecrate the temple, nor was he destroyed by the “breath of His [Christ’s] mouth at ... the appearance of His coming” as Paul promised in 2 Thessalonians 2:8.

... [He was not] the king who makes a covenant with Israel for seven years and breaks it in three and one half years (Daniel 9:26-27). Nor could he be called the “man of sin” or “the son of perdition” mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-8. And, as we have seen, Nero was not destroyed by the coming of Christ, but committed suicide by cutting his own throat in A.D. 68. To make him the Antichrist takes intellectual gymnastics that makes a mockery out of both biblical and historical scholarship, for he died two years before the destruction of Jerusalem occurred, which is when preterists claim Christ returned.” [LaHaye & Ice, 2003]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
<th>(a) Yes. (b) Yes. (c) The beast of Revelation should be interpreted as a complex entity (e.g., nation, empire), rather than a person. The man of sin is not Nero, but Nero was the reigning member of the beast at the time that Revelation was written. The man of sin is not necessarily the same as the beast of Revelation. Nero was an antichrist, probably the greatest antichrist of that time. He had a very evil lifestyle, and was the personification of evil. For example, Hank Hanegraaff documents that Nero:</th>
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<tr>
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<td>• had his mother murdered</td>
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<td>• castrated a young boy, married him, and consummated the marriage</td>
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<td>• kicked his pregnant wife to death</td>
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<td>• had other female and male lovers</td>
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<td>• cruelly murdered many</td>
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<td>• impaled Christians on a stake</td>
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<td>• set Christians on fire</td>
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• wore animal skins and then attacked Christians who were bound to a stake, violating their private parts
• had a 100+-foot statute made of himself and placed in the Temple of Mars
• wanted to be deified while he was alive
• was incredibly greedy
• lived in such extravagance that he bankrupted the Empire

Thus, Nero can easily be pictured as a “beast”, and is likely the beast of Revelation. Christians in the 64-70 AD timeframe were indeed subjected to great tribulation. The “beast” wasn’t just Nero, but the Roman Empire that oppressed Christians and others. Furthermore, 666 is the numerical “value” of Nero’s name. Nero subjected the church to 3½ years of persecution:

Only with Nero Caesar’s death, June 9, AD 68, did the carnage against the bride of Christ [the young Christian church] finally cease. Not only is there a direct correspondence between the name Nero and the number of his name (666), as noted above, but the ‘forty-two months’ he was given ‘to make war against the saints’ (Revelation 13:5-7) is emblematic of the time period during which the Beast wreaked havoc on the Bride. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 148-149]

Even today, many Christians throughout the world (especially those in countries that don’t experience freedom of religion, such as those in Islamic nations) are suffering greatly.

The Temple of God mentioned in 2 Thessalonians should be understood to be the Church, rather than the Jewish Temple. So, when Paul says that the man of sin is sitting in the Temple of God (1 Corinthians 6:12; 2 Corinthians 6:12), he’s likely referring to the Church. Paul also calls the Church “the Israel of God”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>The nephilim are “the fallen ones”. Are they fallen angels (i.e., demons)? Are they a special class of demons? Did they have sex with humans?</th>
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<td>Genesis 6:1-4 When men began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. Then the LORD said, “My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years.” The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.</td>
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**Jude 6-7**  And the *angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home*—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.

**Dispensationalist Position**  This is not necessarily part of the dispensationalist position, but many scholars believe that a class of fallen angels was involved in sexual sin with humans, and by crossing a boundary not permitted by God, they are now being held for judgment (and are no longer permitted to interfere with, or influence, mankind). Other demons still factor in the affairs of mankind:

Revelation 16:13-14  Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They are *spirits of demons* performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle [Armageddon] on the great day of God Almighty.

Revelation 18:2  With a mighty voice he shouted: "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird.

In Jude 6, the phrase “on the great Day” is significant. It places the judgment of the fallen angels at the end of the Millennium, but *before* the Great White Throne judgment (because of the word “then” in Revelation 20:11), after the judgment of Satan. Note, however, that we know relatively little about angels and demons (i.e., fallen angels).

Perhaps the demons released from the bottomless pit during the fifth trumpet judgment in Revelation 9 are the demons referred to in Jude [DeHaan, 1946]; however, Jude 6 does seem to suggest that these wicked angels are held in the Abyss (bottomless pit or Tartaros) for judgment, as per 2 Peter 2:4.

... though all others perished in the waters of the cleansing Flood, the line of the promised Seed was preserved. The bodies of the demon-possessed men and women perished in the waters of the great sea which received the Flood waters, and their lost souls were imprisoned in Sheol, or Hades. The angels who participated in this further act of rebellion received a special judgment, however. ‘The angels which kept not their first estate [same world as “principality”], but left their own habitation, he hath
reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day” (Jude 6). ‘God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell [Greek Tartarus, the lowest hell], and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment’ (2 Peter 2:4). ...

It seems clear that there are a number of different prisons in Hades. Tartarus, where the twice-fallen angels are confined, is one of these. Before the cross, the spirits of the lost and the spirits of the saved, were separated by ‘a great gulf’ (Luke 16:26). The ‘pit of the abyss’ is possibly still another compartment of Hades, in which have been stored a hoard of fearsome creatures waiting to be unleashed. The legion of demons allowed by Christ to enter the herd of swine had urged Him not to send them to the abyss (Luke 8:31). ...

And so the judgment of the fifth angel, more fearsome than all before it, will involve giving these demons their freedom to torture those men who are still on the earth. ...

The word “abyss” comes from roots meaning “without depth” and so is properly translated “bottomless.” It is apparently at the very center of the earth and so, in truth, has no bottom. Its boundaries in all directions are all ceilings; one cannot go “down” in any direction. The pit of this abyss of Hades is apparently one of its imprisoning cells, and it is only this one to which Satan actually receives the key. [Morris, 1983, pp. 155-157]

This particular host of fallen angels is under the command of one mighty angel named Abaddon or Apollyon (both the Hebrew and Greek names meaning “the destroyer”). Many have thought he was Satan himself, but is must be remembered that Satan commands a hierarchy of “principalities” and “powers” (Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 2:15). Satan’s present domain is not in Hades, but in the heavenly places. He is the “prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2).

Abaddon, on the other hand, with all the bevy of wicked spirits under his command, has apparently been incarcerated with them in their abyssal prison every since their presumptuous attempt to destroy mankind in the days of Noah [Morris, 1983, p. 164].

The characteristics of the locusts spoken of by the prophet Joel (Joel 1:6; 2:5,8) have some parallel with Revelation 9:7-9.

| Preterist Position | The Scripture is not about sexual sin. Angels could not have sex. Humans, animals, plants, etc. reproduce according to their own kind. Angels cannot take physical form, and they cannot provide DNA. The idea that the offspring of such a union could be part human, and part supernatural, is taken from Greek mythology. Furthermore, if the angels could have taken on human form, then “they could have masqueraded as the resurrected Christ”, argues Hank Hanegraaff. |
Angels do not have creative power. (God does.)

In Greek mythology, angels/gods were having sex with women. The daughters of men and the Sons of God (Genesis 6:1-4) refer to mankind. Specifically, the Scripture passage refers to the sinfulness of mankind and not angels. This sinfulness resulted in judgment via Noah’s Flood.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is hell? Where is hell? Is hell a real place? Is hell the same as the Lake of Fire? What is meant by the term “judgment” and its relative timing to other eschatological events? (Compare this section to a later section entitled “What is Heaven going to be like?”)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Notes that Apply to Both Positions</td>
<td>Hell is described in Scripture as:</td>
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<td>- a fiery furnace</td>
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<td>- a lake of burning sulphur</td>
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<td>- blackest darkness</td>
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<td>- a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth</td>
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<td>- unquenchable fire</td>
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<td>- Gehenna, which is mentioned in the Old Testament as a garbage dump burning in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, which is a gorge just southeast of Jerusalem. It is a place where “idolatrous Israel offered up child sacrifices to their gods Molech and Baal” [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man].</td>
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Hank Hanegraaff says, “The most excruciating pain can be endured if we know that it will finally end. In hell, no such hope exists. In the words of Dante: ‘Abandon hope, all ye who enter here’.”

With regard to one part of your body causing you to lose your soul, Jesus comments: it is better to lose one part of your body than to send your whole body into hell—suggesting that hell is definitely a place to avoid!

Without a hell, there’s no need for a Saviour. Without hell, there’s no need for salvation or sacrifice. Christ suffered torment, so that we wouldn’t have to suffer eternal torment.

**There are four words in Scripture used for “hell”** [Pentecost, 1958]:

1. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word Sheol is used to describe the place of the dead. Sheol is a place of conscious existence, and is used 65 times in the Old Testament: 31 times it is translated as “hell”, 31 times it is translated
“grave”, and 3 times it is translated “pit”. Sheol was temporary; the souls in it await a future physical resurrection. Thus, we can probably use the term “grave” as an informal synonym for Sheol.

(2) In the New Testament, the Greek word *Hades* is used to describe the place of the dead. It is equivalent to the Hebrew word Sheol, and is translated “hell” throughout the New Testament, except for 1 Corinthians 15:55 where it is translated “grave”. Because Jesus Christ took the saved souls from Sheol to paradise (sometimes called “Abraham’s Bosom”) upon his death and resurrection, Hades contains the unsaved dead, who await the final resurrection at the Great White Throne judgment. In other words, before the ascension of Jesus Christ, Hades was divided into two compartments or abodes: one for the saved, and one for the lost. Since Christ’s resurrection, the saved are taken to paradise, which is where all the saved go to today, upon death. Recall Jesus words to the repentant thief on the cross: “today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). Note, however, that the occupants of paradise are still awaiting a physical resurrection, and this will likely take place at the Rapture.

(3) In the New Testament, the Greek word *Tartaros* (sometimes spelled Tartarus) is used only once to describe hell—and that in 2 Peter 2:4—to describe the judgment of a class of fallen angels. These especially wicked angels apparently crossed a boundary line established by God (Jude 6). (There are other fallen angels, who are actively promoting evil to this day. They will be judged, too; but, unlike the Tartaros class of angels, they are not currently chained for judgment in Tartaros.)

(4) In the New Testament, the Greek word *Gehenna* is used 12 times. In all cases, it is a geographical term, and it is the final state of the dead (i.e., the Lake of Fire) which is common to many people’s traditional notion of “hell”. This is the place where the bodies and souls of the unsaved dead will go to after judgment. It is a place of eternal punishment.

Henry Morris conjectures that there may be another compartment of Hades called the “pit of the abyss”:

It seems clear that there are a number of different prisons in Hades. Tartarus, where the twice-fallen angels are confined, is one of these. ... The “pit of the abyss” is possibly still another compartment of Hades, in which have been stored a horde of
fearsome creatures waiting to be unleashed. The legion of
demons allowed by Christ to enter the herd of swine had urged
Him not to send them to the abyss (Luke 8:31).

But who is this mysterious [falling/fallen] star from heaven?
That it is not a physical “star” falling from the sky, as under
the two previous trumpets, is evident from the context—to him was
given the key.”

... The key is the perfect tense of the verb, which should be
translated “fallen” (instead of “fall,” as in the King James). It
refers to action completed in the past. John beheld, not a falling
star, but a fallen star.

... The bottomless pit which he forthwith unlocks is literally “the
pit of the abyss.” The word “abyss” comes from roots meaning
“without depth” and so is properly translated “bottomless.” It is
apparently at the very center of the earth and so, in truth, has no
bottom. Its boundaries in all directions are all ceilings; one
cannot go “down” in any direction. The pit of this abyss of
Hades is apparently one of its imprisoning cells, and it is only this
one to which Satan actually receives the key. [Morris, 1983, pp.
156-157]

It seems that such a place will be Satan’s confine [minus the key]
during the millennium, as far removed from human beings as it is
possible to be on this planet.

... Eventually, toward the close of the millennium, Satan “must”
be released for a brief period, apparently because the people born
during the millennium must be tested.” [Morris, 1983, p. 408].

Here are some verses that explain when one of the compartments of
Hades became paradise. Note that they are all from the New
Testament. The first set of verses is a parable that Christ told before
He went to the cross; the second was spoken by Christ on the cross;
and the remaining two are some time after Christ’s resurrection and
ascension.

Luke 16:22-23  "The time came when the beggar
died and the angels carried him to Abraham's
side. The rich man also died and was buried.
In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up
and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his
side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham,
have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip
of his finger in water and cool my tongue,
because I am in agony in this fire.'  'But
Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your
lifetime you received your good things, while
Lazarus received bad things, but now he is
comforted here and you are in agony. And
besides all this, between us and you a great
chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to
go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross
over from there to us.' "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

Luke 23:43 Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

2 Corinthians 12:2-4 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know--God knows. And I know that this man--whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows--was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell.

Ephesians 4:8-10 This is why it says: "When he [Jesus] ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

Physical death is the first death; the Lake of Fire (Gehenna) is the “second death”. In summary, the unsaved dead go to Hades first, then they are resurrected, and then they are cast into the Lake of Fire. The Lake of Fire appears to exist already, although it is presently unoccupied:

Matthew 25:41 "Then he [Jesus, at the final judgment] will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

Revelation 2:11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.

Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

Revelation 20:14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.

Revelation 21:8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."
Abraham’s Bosom is essentially a synonym for “being in the presence of the Lord”. A great gulf or chasm separates the two abodes; it is not possible to get from one to the other, as illustrated in Jesus’ parable about the saved beggar Lazarus and the unsaved rich king. (It is also the only parable in which Christ used people’s names—suggesting that the events were real.) After the resurrection of the dead, the unsaved are thrown into the Lake of Fire. Newer Bible translations correctly distinguish between Hades (the idea of a temporary holding tank) and hell (the final dwelling place of the unsaved—i.e., permanent separation from God). Right now, no one is “burning in hell”. Also, note that after 1000 years, the Antichrist and the False Prophet are still in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:10). Thus, their bodies and souls are not annihilated.

For a thousand years, they will be its sole occupants, and one can well imagine their unspeakable loneliness, the bitter recriminations, the implacable hatred which will consume their thoughts during this period. [Morris, 1983, p. 401]

Is hell “endless torture”? Hank Hanegraaff states that hell is not eternal torture, but rather eternal torment because you’re shut out from the presence of the Lord. Whether there will be flames for eternity is another issue. It could be that flames, sulphur, blackest darkness, etc. are metaphors that describe being shut out from the presence of God. Hell is being described in terms we can understand. When you are in God’s presence, you’ll see things from God’s perspective, and you’ll be satisfied with His righteous judgments (i.e., justice), love, and mercy.

Christ will judge between the quick (living) and the dead. The fact that he sits at “the right hand of God” means that He is exalted above all. Many philosophers have attempted to probe the secrets of life and death. Henry Morris states that “one of the mountain-peak verses of Scripture, and one of the most amazing of the great claims of Christ” is Christ’s claim to have the keys to hell (Hades):

Revelation 1:18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

When Christ first promised to build His Church, He also promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). When He returned from the dead, He Himself had the keys of hell (Revelation 1:18), the gates had been opened, and those of his captives who had died in faith had been set free to ascend with Him to Paradise. He still retains the keys, and the gates of hell can never close again on those who die in faith, as members of His Church. When they become absent from the
After death, would unbelievers simply “cease to exist”—instead of suffering for eternity in hell? Non-existence cannot be better than existence, argues Hank Hanegraaff. He says that “hell on earth” is “living apart from God”. Hell can be accurately described as a place of quarantine. If we choose to rebel against God, He will not drag us kicking and screaming into Heaven against our will.

There are degrees of punishment in hell (e.g., Hitler would be treated differently than a common pagan). It appears that all people—believers and unbelievers—will be resurrected; however, just as there are degrees of reward for believers, there are degrees of punishment for unbelievers.

In Romans 2:1-16, Paul pointed out that God will look at what people have done with their privileges and opportunities, and that He will be completely impartial and fair (vv. 5-11). Those who possessed His Word, the law of verses 12-14, will be held accountable for their response to it. Those who never received special revelation will be held accountable only for what they knew (vv. 14-16).

Jesus taught this same principle when He said that the servant who knew his master’s will and disobeyed would be beaten with “many stripes,” but that the servant who had less knowledge would be beaten with “few” (Luke 12:47,48).

No judge or jury fully understands the person on trial. No human being can evaluate the exact degree of accountability in himself or anyone else. We are all profoundly influenced by hereditary and environmental factors beyond our control. Yet we make choices after weighing options. Therefore, we are all accountable—at least to some degree. And God understands to what extent. He also knows how much we need His mercy.

When the young man who died in a gang war stands before Jesus Christ, he will find that the Lord understands all the circumstances of his short, violent, and troubled life—his absent father, his immoral mother, his disadvantaged peers, his complete ignorance of the gospel message, and this despair. The Lord Jesus will take all these factors into consideration. He knows exactly the degree of responsibility of this young man and will give him a sentence that perfectly suits his offense. [Sper, 1990, pp. 12-13]

He will be absolutely fair in punishment. Jesus pointed out that on the day of judgment the inhabitants of ancient Sodom would be treated with more mercy than the people in Judea who had deliberately rejected Him and His apostles (Matt. 10:15). He also spoke of the servant who would be punished lightly because he

God will hold those who never hear the gospel responsible for what they did with the light that they had in this world. Paul said of the pagans that God had revealed Himself to them in nature (Rom. 1:18-21) and in conscience (Rom. 2:12-16). They must give an account of what they did with this light and will be punished accordingly. [Sper, 1990, p. 27]

Dave Hunt argues that the unsaved will not have a bodily resurrection:

In contrast, the damned could not have been raised bodily, or death would not have conquered their bodies. ...

The only possible argument for a bodily resurrection of the damned would be so they could be eternally tortured in physical flames. So say Islam and Catholicism, but that is not biblical. The torment of the damned will mean something that physical pain could not produce: the terror and guilt of being confronted with the ‘exceeding sinfulness’ of their sin in the presence of Christ who died for their sins. Like Adam and Eve after they rebelled, the damned will have nowhere to hide from God’s justice. The overwhelming moral and spiritual conviction of the exceeding wickedness of their hearts will burn for eternity in the conscience that God gave them and that they refused to heed but can no longer escape. ...

Nowhere in 1 Corinthians 15, the “resurrection chapter” (or anywhere else in Scripture) is there anything about bodies of the damned being raised. [Hunt, 2008b, p. 6]

The Bible does not say whether or not hell is a place of community, as opposed to a place of isolation. In other words, for those who are sent to hell, it is not known whether they will interact with one another.

Can you imagine standing before God Almighty in judgment without having Christ’s righteousness to cover you (i.e., without having Christ defend you via His sacrificial act of love on the cross)? Sadly, many people today reject Christ’s message of salvation, implicitly or explicitly.

Humans have physical and spiritual existence. Our souls have existence outside of our bodies. While we are alive, our soul dwells in our body—and we make choices and take actions for which we are accountable on the day of judgment. In fact, much of our existence deals with the choices we make. The sum of our choices determines
**our character and our destiny.** The choices we make depend on how we react to, and what we do with:

- the body we’ve been given (e.g., mental and physical health, intellectual ability, athletic ability, relationship ability, etc.)
- how we respond to the environment where we have been placed (e.g., country, degree of freedom, language, culture)
- the type of resources that we’ve been given this life (e.g., family situation, financial situation, type of job)
- how we relate to others (e.g., spouse, family, co-workers, neighbours, friends, and even enemies)

To paraphrase Henri Nouwen: “Life is a journey, and the one who sent me on that journey is waiting for me to come home and to tell the story of what I’ve learned”.

With respect to the above, we note that there are many things beyond our control in life:

> Acts 17:26 From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.

What is important, however, is what we do with the resources (or lack of resources) that we’ve been given. How do we treat others, regardless of our circumstances? Remember, in Heaven, we will have all the resources we want at our disposal. No one will be poor, sick, or handicapped in any way in Heaven. Earth is just a temporary dwelling for us—and time goes by so quickly. The two essentials commanded by Christ are as follows:

> Matthew 22:36-40 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

At the time of death, there is separation between our body and soul. There is a judgment, and a resurrection (where the soul gets a physical body).

Most people, however, are merely ignoring the long-term possibilities of their own choices. They are either counting on the hope that God is too loving to send them to hell, or they are assuming that they aren’t bad enough to be sent there. Many are so preoccupied with tying to survive day-to-day struggles that...
they have chosen not to worry about the future. [Sper, 1990, p. 5]

Robert Peterson writes:

“... seven passages teach the survival of the soul after the death of the body (2 Cor. 5:8; Luke 23:46; [Mark 9:43; Phil. 1:23; Rev. 6:9; Heb. 12:23; Luke 16:19-31). Study of these texts should give annihilationists pause. And further theological reflection should do the same. The intermediate state/resurrection view demonstrates the continuity of personal identity. The same person who dies, lives on without the body and will one day be reunited in body and soul in the resurrection of the dead. The extinction/re-creation view, however, encounters serious difficulties in maintaining personal identity at the resurrection. In what sense is a human being who dies and ceases to exist the same person as the one who is re-created by God at the resurrection?” [Peterson, 2007, p 16]

“Hell is ‘where the fire never goes out’ [Mark 9:43] because the suffering of the wicked in hell never ends. Scripture in a number of passages uses fire imagery to depict the sufferings of the wicked, rather than their extermination, as conditionalists teach (e.g., Matt. 13:42,49-50; 25:41; Luke 16:23-25,28; Rev. 14:10[11]; 20:10). ... All fires go out when they run their course and exhaust their fuel. Jesus says that the worms and fires of hell, by contrast, will never run out of fuel: the worm of the wicked is undying and the fire of hell is not quenched. That is, hell knows no end.” [Peterson, 2007, pp. 18-19]

“Consider Revelation 20:10, however: ‘And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.’ John here teaches ... that after the Devil is cast into the fiery lake as well, the beast, the false prophet, and the Devil ‘will be tormented ... for ever and ever,’ the beast’s ‘destruction,’ therefore, is not annihilation, but eternal punishment.

“The words ‘they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever’ plainly admit of only one meaning—everlasting conscious torment. Annihilationists attempt to deny this by claiming that the beast and false prophet represent institutions and not persons and thus could not be tormented forever, but this is not convincing. (The best interpretation of the beast and false prophet, I believe, is that they represent various enemies of God throughout history, culminating in two individuals.) Regardless of the precise identification of these two, the Devil's identity is transparent and there is no doubt that he is a personal being capable of suffering, and that is precisely what John teaches when he says that the Devil ‘will be tormented day and night for ever and ever’ (Rev. 20:10).

“Annihilationists try to attain their goal by arguing as well that even if Revelation 20:10 teaches that the Devil will suffer endless punishment, that text says nothing about the fate of human
beings. This argument fails also because five verses later John says that human beings too are ‘thrown into the lake of fire’ (Rev. 20:15; cf. 21:8).” [Peterson, 2007, p. 21]

Henry Morris summarizes:

Every human being ever conceived, possessing a divinely-created human soul and spirit, will exist forever somewhere. [Morris, 1983, p. 270]

Lastly, note that Christ finished the work of redemption with his death on the cross. He did not need to go to hell and “finish” the job. He descended to Hades, all right, but he did not need to fight the devil there because Christ already (through His shed blood and death) finished the redemption. Jesus said, “It is finished” (John 19:30).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Comments from the Dispensationalist Position</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are four groups of people who will enter into the Millennium, three in their glorified bodies, and one in their natural bodies. Those who enter in their glorified bodies will be the Old Testament believers, the Church and the Tribulation believers who will have been martyred for their faith. The righteous who survive the Tribulation will enter in with their natural bodies to procreate and repopulate the earth, especially the Jewish people …</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those entering the Kingdom in their natural bodies who are blind, deaf, lame [or] dumb will be immediately healed (Isaiah 35:5-6). Most will be blessed with longevity of life since they will be free from illness (Isaiah 33:24). If one dies at a hundred years of age, it will be as if he had died in childhood (Isaiah 65:20).

Like Israel, the Church will be made a kingdom of priests (Revelation 1:6) and will be given authority to reign with the Lord, most likely serving Him among the nations (Revelation 2:26-27). Scripture seems to indicate that Christians who are given leadership in the Kingdom will rule and reign over Gentile cities (Luke 19:17-19), while the apostles are to be seated on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:28-30). [Levy, 1987, pp. 81-83]

The Great White Throne Judgment occurs at the end of the Millennium when all the unsaved throughout history will be judged. Their status (unsaved) is obvious at this point because the saved don’t take part in this judgment; instead, the degree of punishment for each unbeliever is what is being determined.

Many people associate hell with the Lake of Fire. Scripture tells us that hell itself [the place holding the unsaved dead] will be thrown into the Lake of Fire. The first two people to be thrown into the Lake of Fire are the Antichrist and the False Prophet (right after the Battle of Armageddon), followed by Satan 1,000 years later.
John MacArthur comments:

When a sinner dies today, he ends up in hell immediately. He doesn’t have to wait for the return of Jesus Christ for that. It is almost like being in prison before his final sentence. When somebody commits a crime, he is caught and waits in prison for the final adjudication and sentencing.

That final sentencing will come when Christ returns in His glory. He will come for His church, but His glory will not be manifest in the earth. The church will disappear in the Rapture, followed by a terrible time of Great Tribulation, and then Jesus will come back in shining glory. At the Second Coming, He will return to earth to set up His rule in full display ... [MacArthur, 2003a, p. 89]

| Additional Comments from the Preterist Position | In summary, when Jesus Christ comes again, all will rise from the dead; some to heaven, and some to eternal damnation. (The judgments for (some of) the believers and (all of) the unbelievers are not separated by 1000 years.) There are degrees of reward in Heaven, and degrees of suffering in hell (e.g., garden-variety pagan vs. Hitler, red light violator vs. unrepentant serial killer). Hell is not annihilation. Hank Hanegraaff says that the thought of Hitler dying in the comforting arms of his mistress—with no eternal consequence—is inappropriate. God’s justice demands that there is a hell; and everlasting torment is what the Bible teaches about hell. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Y2K: Is it a key part of end time prophecy?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Dispensationalist Position | Before the year 2000, some prophecy teachers warned that Y2K was part of the prophetic scene, perhaps ushering in economic and social chaos, which in turn could lead to the mark of the beast, a cashless society, a one-world government, a one-world currency, etc. Some Bible teachers viewed Y2K as a harvest time for when we can (and should) share our food, water, and other resources with our unsaved neighbors.

We should thank the people who warned about, and took action on, Y2K during the late 90’s, since the many billions of dollars spent on the problem helped to avoid the undoubtedly catastrophic consequences of an unfixed Y2K problem. |

<p>| Preterist Position | Y2K was a failed prediction bringing some embarrassment to the Church. Y2K came and went, but some people have short memories about the teachings and the personalities involved. Some Christian leaders were even selling freeze-dried food, and advocating the 4 G’s: God, gold, groceries, and guns. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| If the pre-tribulational Rapture theory is true, then why was it not taught until the 1800s? Is there any evidence for a two-phase coming of Christ? Did the early church also believe in the premillennial return of Christ? | Regardless of the position of the early Christians, Daniel 4:12 states: “But you Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end.” This suggest that towards the time of the end, more events would become clear regarding prophecy.

Contrary to those who claim that the pre-trib Rapture theory originated with John Nelson Darby around 1830, some of the early Christians believed in the two-phase coming of Christ: first the Rapture, then a return following the Tribulation. For example, Thomas Ice quotes a sermon written between the 4th and 6th century AD, which some people attribute to Ephraem the Syrian, entitled “Sermon on the Last Times, the Antichrist, and the End of the World”:

> “Why therefore do we not reject every care of earthly actions and prepare ourselves for the meeting of the Lord Christ, so that he may draw us from the confusion, which overwhelms all the world? ... For all the saints and elect of God are gathered, prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins.” [Ice, 2001]

By the 4th or 5th century AD, the amillennialism of Origen and Augustine was preached. Despite interpreting a lot of Scripture literally, Augustine believed that much of Revelation was to be taken symbolically or metaphorically. Today, we realize that amillennialism is likely incorrect; however, in light of the widespread teachings of amillennialism during the Middle Ages, little teaching of premillennialism took place, and therefore, it is reasonable to assume that even less teaching took place about a pre-tribulational rapture.

By the late 1500s or early 1600s, however, premillennial teaching returned. This was due to:

- the Reformation
- the fact that an increasing number of people had Scriptures available to them
- better hermeneutics (Biblical interpretation) and historical exegesis, including more of an emphasis on literal interpretation rather than allegorical interpretation
- more Protestants came into contact with Jews, and learned Hebrew
“One’s hermeneutics determine one’s eschatology” [Missler, 2006]. People who take the Bible literally are more likely to be in the pre-millennial camp. Those who allegorize prophetic teachings are more likely to be in the amillennial or post-millennial camps. Also, within the pre-millennial camp, we have pre-trib, mid-trib, pre-wrath, and post-trib rapture scenarios. Most denominations today fall into the amillennial and post-tribulational camps, whereas most fundamentalist Christian churches fall into the pre-millennial and pre-tribulational camps [Missler, 2006].

The first known writings about a rapture that was separate from the Second Coming of Christ occurred in Joseph’s Medes’ writings in 1627. Other individuals who taught about a pre-tribulational rapture included Increase Mather, Thomas Collier (1674), Peter Jurieu (1687), Philip Doddridge (1738), John Gill (1748), James Macknight (1763), and Thomas Scott (1792). Morgan Edwards (founder of Brown University) wrote in 1742-1744 about a distinct rapture taking place 3½ years before the start of the Millennium. These writings are pre-Darby (1830).


Renowned schools such as Moody Bible Institute, Philadelphia Bible College, Bible Institute of Los Angeles (BIOLA), and Dallas Theological Seminary all taught and defended the pre-trib Rapture [Ice, 2006]. In the 1970s, Hal Lindsey’s New York Times’ best-seller The Late Great Planet Earth caused worldwide interest in the pre-trib Rapture.

With respect to the current status of teaching on the pre-trib Rapture, Ice writes:

“Although still widely popular among evangelicals and fundamentalists, dominance of pretribulationism began to wane first in some academic circles in the 1950s and ‘60s. … Pretribulationism is still the most widely held view of the day, but it cannot be taken for granted in many evangelical, charismatic, and fundamentalist circles as it was a generation ago. The doctrine of the rapture … has surfaced wherever premillennialism is taught, especially when adhering to literal interpretation, futurism, and Dispensationalism, and a distinction between Israel and the church.”
Ice remarks that the partial and mid-trib rapture positions have only been developed in the 1900’s.

“In America, the Puritans were horrified at the implications of preterism and its allegorical interpretations of Scripture.” [Ice, 2003b, p. 51]

“No doubt the father of American preterism is clearly the aforementioned Moses Stuart (1780-1852) of Andover Seminary, who ‘introduced Preterism into the United States about 1842.’” [Ice, 2003b, p. 56]

“It also appears that Reformed and Reconstructionist scholar Greg L. Bahnsen (1948-1995) is the source and inspiration for the rise and spread of partial preterism. In the late 1970s, Dr. Bahnsen taught at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. Four of his students during this time were David Chilton, James Jordan, Gary DeMar, and Kenneth Gentry. I know from personal conversations over the years with these men that Bahnsen influenced their thinking toward a postmillennial form of preterism. ... His view of Revelation was the more traditional form of partial preterism:

‘Here then is the course of history according to the book of Revelation. (1) Jesus is with His Church and has established the kingdom. (2) The Jews who persecuted are going to be destroyed by God. (3) The Romans who persecuted are going to be destroyed by God. (4) Then the Word of God is going to conquer the nations. The Great Commission is going to be fulfilled. (5) At the very end of history, Jesus will come back in judgment and he will introduce the new heavens and the new earth, where every tear will be wiped from our eyes and everything will be perfect.’ [Ice, 2003, p. 59]

Like Dr. Bahnsen, Dr. Gentry believes the Olivet Discourse applies to A.D. 70 only up to verse 36. However, Dr. Gentry differs from Dr. Bahnsen in that he believes almost the entire book of Revelation was fulfilled by A.D. 70: “I believe that the judgment chapters of Revelation (chs. 6-19) focus almost exclusively on the events associated with the first imperial persecution of Christianity (A.D. 64-68), the Roman Civil Wars (A.D. 68-69), and the destruction of the Temple and Israel (A.D. 67-70).” ... While DeMar holds to a preterist view of the book of Revelation, he has also focused on arguing for a first-century fulfillment of all of the Olivet Discourse (including Matthew 25).” [Ice, 2003, p. 61]

More discussion on the early adherence to dispensationalism can be found in [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007].

Preterist Position

Today, a lot of people believe that the Rapture will occur seven or more years prior to Jesus Christ setting foot on Earth again. Up until 1830, however, virtually all Christians believed that the Rapture and the Second Coming (i.e., the physical presence of Christ on Earth)
were the *same* event.

For nineteen hundred years of church history, no one—including historical luminaries such as Ephraim, Augustine, Calvin, Luther, Knox, Zwingli, and Wesley—had any concept of the pretribulational rapture that LaHaye claims is so ‘clearly taught’ in Scripture. [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 47]

Finally, as there is no postponement or parenthesis in the plan of God, so too there is no pretribulational rapture. For nineteen hundred years, the idea of a pretribulational rapture was completely foreign to mainstream Christianity. Prior to Darby, the Plymouth Brethren believed that the rapture and the return of Christ were simultaneous events. Darby’s innovative invention gave birth to the notion of a pretribulational rapture. As historian Timothy Weber explains, ‘Before Darby, all premillennialists, futurists included, believed that the rapture would occur at the end of the Tribulation, at Christ’s second advent. But Darby understood the rapture and the second coming as two separate events. At the rapture, Christ will come for his saints, and at the second coming, he will come with his saints. Between these two events the great tribulation would occur.’ [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 55]

John Nelson Darby expressed the idea because he felt that God was dealing with two distinct groups of people: Jews (“Israel”), and Christians (“the Church”). A third group refers to Gentiles or pagans, who are neither Jews nor Christians. His thesis was: when the Jews rejected Christ (at His first coming, ending with His crucifixion), God turned from the Jews to the Gentiles, as per the book of Acts. Then, in the future, there will be a time when God raptures the Church from the Earth, and once again, deals with the Jews (separately).

Steve Gregg states that Francisco Ribera, a Jesuit priest from Spain, expressed this futurist view in the late 1500’s. About three years before Darby, Samuel Maitland introduced this futurist view to the non-Catholic world. Apparently, Darby picked it up from there.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 is the set of verses most often quoted by pretribulationalists. In it, Paul was *not* saying that Christ would come back secretly and silently, and then return seven years later at His Second Coming. Instead, he was referring to Christians who have *died* and gone on to be with the Lord (in spirit).

*Premillennialism* was there since the beginning (i.e., the early Christians, or the Christian Fathers). The *pre-tribulational Rapture*, however, has no evidence in the early church—none before the 19th century, it appears.

When Luther made the Bible available to the common people of the
day, he made it easier for Christians to avoid erroneous teaching, such as, indulgences (i.e., people paying to have deceased loved ones become saved, or to minimize the deceased loved ones’ suffering in purgatory (the “holding tank” afterlife)).

There will be one physical resurrection at the end of time for both believers and unbelievers (at the same time), and then comes the judgment.

In the Olivet Discourse, what is the question that Jesus is posing? He uses the language of the Old Testament prophets, and uses final consummation language to speak of a near future event—to get the point across to people of the day. With respect to the Temple being destroyed, however, Christ was very specific, stating that “this generation” would not pass away until the Temple would be destroyed. It is likely that “this generation” meant exactly that: the generation that literally heard Christ say these things.

Christ will return bodily to the Earth at some point in the future. We have no way of knowing when Christ will return. Are we living in the “last days”? Yes, any time after Christ, is a wide window of time typically referred to as the “last days” or “the final hour”. In fact, the coming of the Messiah was the time of the “last days” of that system—the Jewish system—prior to 70 AD. Some people believe that the “last days” refers to the whole church age—and that may be true, too. The word parousia typically means the “coming” of Christ, but it could mean many things, depending on the context. For example, Christ said, “If you do not repent, I will come to you” [paraphrased]. Jesus told six of the seven churches in Revelation that He would “come” to them. Revelation 3:20 speaks of another invitation from Christ.

It’s hard to say what the official eschatological view currently is of the Catholic church. Catholics have had different views over time. Late in the 1500’s, before the Reformation, they took the historicist view—as did most other believers. Later, some Catholics were upset that Reformers were calling the Pope “the Antichrist”, so they were quick to promote the futurist view of Revelation. The Catholic church, however, is amillennial—and it has always been so. We have very little information about the early church fathers, but it appears they were premillennial and historicist.

Lastly, a full preterist doesn’t believe there is a Second Coming; however, this scenario contradicts an essential message in the Bible, and is a heretical position.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Who are the 144,000 in Revelation, and do they literally have a mark on their foreheads?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Dispensationalist Position** | They are real people: 12,000 descended from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. They will witness to a large number of non-believers attempting to draw them to Jesus Christ. They are virgins, they don’t lie, and they are “blameless” (Revelation 14:4-5). They have God’s grace upon them, as did Noah, who “was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God” (Genesis 6:9).  

The 144,000 martyrs are sealed and protected during their witness—they preach the gospel after the Rapture of the Church—and they are specifically enumerated into 12 groups of 12,000. (The innumerable saints, on the other hand, are unsealed martyrs “from every nation, tribe, people, and language” (Revelation 13:7). Thus, these two groups are different; the latter are Gentiles.)  

During the seventieth week the church must be absent, for out of the saved remnant in Israel God seals 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from each tribe, according to Revelation 7:14. The fact that God is again dealing with Israel on this national relationship, setting them apart to national identities, and sending them as special representatives to the nations in place of the witness of the church, indicates that the church must no longer be on earth.  

[Pentecost, 1958, p. 214]  

The remnant described in Romans 11:26 are not converted to Christ until shortly before, or at, the Second Coming. The 144,000 are a part of Israel that is saved. It is true that all that remain of Israel (i.e., the “remnant”) will be saved—and there will be many saved. |
| **Preterist Position** | The number 144,000 is probably representative of a large multitude of individuals: 12 x 12 x 1,000. We know that the word “thousand” is used in many ways in Scripture to indicate a large number. It may represent “true Israel”—a number too large to count—a purified people from all nations and languages. The number “12” is used to indicate the tribes of Israel, or the disciples.  

The 144,000 don’t have the name “The Lamb” and “The Father” actually written on their foreheads; rather, John is using symbolic language.  

The 144,000 is the “great multitude” in Revelation, albeit from different viewpoints. For example, the “lion” and the “lamb” both refer to Jesus, yet with different viewpoints; both of these terms are also used in Revelation. The 144,000 people refer to the purified bride of Christ, and is likely a figurative number meaning a very large number of people who are redeemed through Christ. This group is |
called “true Israel”. It has nothing to do with what the Jehovah’s Witnesses call the 144,000 (which is a select group that has been closed off to membership, many years ago).

True Israel is made up of Jew and Gentile, male and female. There is no need to think of this group as being 144,000 men from the 12 tribes of Israel. God is neither racist nor sexist.

Indeed, the 144,000 are “a great multitude” that no one can count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne and to the Lamb’ ” (Revelation 7:9-10). ...

Literarily, the 144,000 and the great multitude are comparable to the Lion and the Lamb. Just as John is told about a Lion and turns to see a Lamb (Revelation 5:5-6), so he is told about the 144,000 and turns to see a great multitude (Revelation 7). Thus, the 144,000 are to the great multitude what the Lion is to the Lamb, namely, the same entity seen from two different vantage points. From one vantage point, the purified bride is numbered; from another, she is innumerable—a great multitude that no none can count. ...

It is far more likely that 144,000 is a number that represents the twelve apostles of the Lamb multiplied by the twelve tribes of Israel, times one thousand. The figurative use of the number twelve and its multiples is well established in biblical history. ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Does Dispensationalism actually “help” prophecy to move along? Wouldn’t “taking back” the Dome of the Rock (to make room for the Third Temple) accelerate Armageddon? Wouldn’t encouraging the Jews to return to Israel also accelerate Armageddon?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>In terms of evangelism, dispensationalism would help bring in the “full number of the Gentiles” by introducing more and more people to Jesus Christ, by giving people an understanding of the world through a Biblical worldview, and by convincing people that the Bible is as relevant for today as ever before. As for accelerating Armageddon, God has set the timetable and we should leave it to Him.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
By the way, it is possible that Mount Moriah is just north of the Dome of the Rock, meaning that the Islamic site would not have to be disturbed. If the Dome of the Rock were to be disturbed, it would probably cause a serious reaction. (See the next section for further comments.)

Preterist Position

By speeding the return of Jews to Israel, dispensationalists (using their own theological arguments) would be encouraging Israel to actually speed up a meeting with the Antichrist and would thus bring on a holocaust of much greater scale than the Holocaust of World War II. This is not encouraging news to the Israelis.

Furthermore, if the Dome of the Rock needs to be destroyed to make room for a rebuilt Jewish temple, this could well ignite a world war (or accelerate Armageddon).

Steve Gregg warns that the eschatological viewpoint of 50 million or more evangelical Christians in the United States could seriously impact world politics; therefore, it is extremely important that dispensationalists not get too excited about giving Israel the green light to “take back” the Temple Mount. With respect to dispensationalists sending money to allow Russian, Polish, etc., Jews to migrate back to Israel (where those same dispensationalists believe that the Battle of Armageddon will occur and where the Antichrist will massacre some of them), Gregg comments, “Why would I want to pay the airfare for somebody to go to the place where I believe they are going to be doomed? It’s part of the inconsistency of the whole dispensational system. They think they are pro-Israel [but]…”

Every Jew is loved by God, and He wants every Jew and Gentile to be saved, but that does not mean that God wants all Jews to return to Israel.

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**Topic/Question**

Is the Islamic Dome of the Rock located where the first and second Temples used to stand? If so, won’t this cause major political and religious problems?

**Both Positions**

Agreed. It would be a huge problem to build the third Temple on a Muslim holy site. However, it is unclear where, precisely, the third Temple is to be located. Similarly, we do not know where, exactly, the first and second temples were located. Recall that the second Temple was completely destroyed in accordance with Jesus Christ’s prophecy about the Temple in Matthew 24:2 and elsewhere that “not one stone here will be left on another”. Furthermore, the Romans leveled the whole city of Jerusalem around 135 AD and built a Roman city on top of it. Thus, it is not easy to determine the precise
There are at least three positions with respect to the location of the Temple [Missler, 2006]. The traditional view, and the rabbis’ official view, is that the Temple stood where the Dome of the Rock presently stands. However, the view of scholars like Asher Kaufman is that the Temple stood about 100 metres to the north of the Dome of the Rock, lining up with the Eastern Gate (sometimes called the Golden Gate). If that were the case, then this view satisfies some comments in Revelation 11, because it puts the Dome of the Rock in the outer court:

Revelation 11:1-2 I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.

Some scientists disagree with the official view of the rabbis. For example, there are issues about the presence of a military moat, the water aqueduct, the view that King Agrippa had of the Azarah (the place where they performed the offerings), etc. [Missler, 2006]

Finally, the third view is about 100 metres south of the Dome of the Rock. Some clues about this location come from the design of the Jupiter Temple at Baalbek in Lebanon, which when laid on top of the Temple Mount suggests this southern location. Ancient documents claim this was right over the Jewish Temple. In particular, an equestrian statue of Hadrian was placed over the Holy of Holies. Chuck Missler remarks that infrared photography and ground penetrating radar actually support the southern view.

All three views have their adherents. It is tough getting information (e.g., underground archeology) because Israeli authorities and teams are barred from seeking artifacts under Muslim sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Are these locations one and the same: Calvary, Mount Calvary, Golgotha, Mount Moriah, the Garden Tomb, the Temple Mount, the threshing floor of Araunah, the site of the First Temple (Solomon’s Temple), and the site of the second Temple (Herod’s Temple)?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both Positions</td>
<td>First of all, Christ did not die at the Temple, so Calvary and the Temple site are not the same place. The whole Temple Mount, however, is 35 acres in size—and arguably the most prized real estate in the world. The Garden Tomb is located outside the walled city of Jerusalem (i.e., outside of “inner” Jerusalem), and it may be close to</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Calvary. Calvary (from the Latin) or Mount Calvary, and Golgotha (from the Aramaic), are synonyms and all refer to the place of Jesus’ crucifixion: “the place of the skull” (John 19:17).

Crucifixion was actually invented by the Persians, but was the form of capital punishment implemented by the Romans around the time of Christ. It was a very painful way to die. We get the English word “excruciating” from the root word for “crucify”.

In order to put some of the locations into perspective, it helps to consider the significance of key points in Old Testament history. Consider the event where Abraham (the father) offered Isaac (his son) as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah. That event is believed to be a type (i.e., an event that foreshadows another more significant event—2000 years in advance—namely that of God (the Father) offering Jesus Christ (the Son), as a sin offering for the world ... the most significant event in human history.

It is interesting to note that Abraham’s servant, Eleazar, later finds a bride for Isaac. Eleazar is a type of the Holy Spirit. His name means “comforter”, which is what the Holy Spirit is. Rebekah agrees to marry Isaac, despite not having met him. They wed at the well of LaHai Roi, which means “the well of Living One [who] sees me” or “the well of the Living God”.

The above picture is pregnant with meaning. It is one way of many ways in which, “The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed; The Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed.” (e.g., [Missler, 2005]). Chuck Missler states that the Bible is a distributed message system: the themes of redemption, sacrifice, salvation, Christ, etc. are present throughout Scripture (including the Old Testament), so that even if some of the Scripture were to be lost through “hostile jamming”, so to speak, the key messages would still be there through repetition.

Jesus Christ was sacrificed on the cross as the sin offering for the world—a sin offering that fulfills another type provided in the Old Testament ... this one being the animal sacrifices from the time of Adam and Eve until the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. The cross was at Golgotha, and Golgotha is believed by many to be Mount Moriah, the same place where Abraham offered up Isaac, before Abraham was stopped by the angel of the Lord.

Some scholars think that Christ may have been sacrificed on the Temple Mount; however, this places the event inside the city of Jerusalem, and it is more likely that Christ died just outside the city.
The Temple Mount may well be the same place as the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, which was the place where King David met the angel of the Lord, and where the plague on Israel stopped. To honour the Lord, David purchased the threshing floor of Araunah, in an interesting and significant real estate transaction recorded in the Bible:

1 Chronicles 21:14-27  So the LORD sent a plague on Israel, and seventy thousand men of Israel fell dead. And God sent an angel to destroy Jerusalem. But as the angel was doing so, the LORD saw it and was grieved because of the calamity and said to the angel who was destroying the people, "Enough! Withdraw your hand." The angel of the LORD was then standing at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. David looked up and saw the angel of the LORD standing between heaven and earth, with a drawn sword in his hand extended over Jerusalem. ... Then the angel of the LORD ordered Gad to tell David to go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. So David went up in obedience to the word that Gad had spoken in the name of the LORD. While Araunah was threshing wheat, he turned and saw the angel; his four sons who were with him hid themselves. Then David approached, and when Araunah looked and saw him, he left the threshing floor and bowed down before David with his face to the ground. David said to him, "Let me have the site of your threshing floor so I can build an altar to the LORD, that the plague on the people may be stopped. 

Sell it to me at the full price." Araunah said to David, "Take it! Let my lord the king do whatever pleases him. Look, I will give the oxen for the burnt offerings, the threshing sledges for the wood, and the wheat for the grain offering. I will give all this." But King David replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the LORD what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing." So David paid Araunah six hundred shekels of gold for the site. David built an altar to the LORD there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. He called on the LORD, and the LORD answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering. Then the LORD spoke to the angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>The ashes of the red heifer—are they important? How about with respect to the timeframe of a rebuilt Temple?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>The ashes of a perfect red heifer are needed to consecrate the Temple’s furnishings and vessels. The rule about the ashes of a red heifer is detailed in Leviticus 16, where it is specified that the ashes are used in the purification of the high priest and the altar. This practice is significant in the context of the Temple’s restoration, as it connects the duties of the high priest with the consecration of the Temple, ensuring its divine holiness and the ability to receive offerings.</td>
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</table>
The red heifer and a rebuilt Temple are connected. There have only been a small number of such heifers (e.g., nine) throughout history, according to Jewish tradition. Dispensationalists in America want to “help the process along”. For example, a cattleman in America wants to help produce a perfect red heifer. According to the prophecy, three years after a red heifer is born, it is ready for sacrifice; so, this may speed about the rebuilding of the Temple, and the rebuilding will cause much friction among Muslims. In this respect, the red heifer would be a “four-legged time bomb”.

Hank Hanegraaff appeals to the book of Hebrews to describe Christ’s relationship to the red heifer:

Hebrews highlights that Jesus is the antitype not only of the temple and the high priest, but he is the antitypical sacrifice as well: ‘The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!’ (9:13-14). Indeed, even the sacred ashes of the red heifer, like the blood of bulls and goats, find their ultimate antitypical fulfillment in the blood of Jesus Christ. It is for this reason that the writer of Hebrews explains in no uncertain terms that to revert to a sacrificial system is to trample the Son of God under foot, to treat as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant and to insult the Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:29; cf. Galatians 3-5; Hebrews 5:11-6:12). [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 223]
so sure that his position is finally fixed yet. He wants to be a lover of truth, and is prepared to change his viewpoint, as necessary. (Side note: This is a great goal for all prophecy lovers.) Steve realizes that as a prophecy teacher, he has a higher level of accountability than Christians who don’t teach.

It’s not a matter of the Church replacing Israel, but rather what the Church is a type of. In every age prior to Christ, there were some believers who are part of “true Israel”. During Christ’s earthly ministry and thereafter, believers were called Christians (followers of Christ).

Gregg isn’t pro-Israel unconditionally. When Israel commits atrocities, he speaks out. Conversely, many dispensationalists are pro-Israel unconditionally because they think that they’ll be “cursed” if they don’t do so.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>The Church is not found in the Bible after Chapter 3 of Revelation. Does this support a pre-trib Rapture?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>The Church has been raptured from the Earth before most of the events of Revelation take place, thereby leaving God to deal with the Jewish people separately again (although many people—Jews and Gentiles—will be saved after the Rapture). There have always been two groups of people on Earth: believers and unbelievers. These groups can be partitioned into Jews and Gentiles before Christ; and into Jews, Gentiles, and Christians after Christ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preterist Position</td>
<td>The fact that the Church is not found in Revelation after Chapter 3 is perhaps the strongest argument (of any) for the dispensationalists. The first 3 chapters mention “churches” (i.e., seven churches), rather than the Church as a whole. We do find the Church mentioned by other names, such as, “the saints”. Dispensationalists argue that these saints are believers after the Rapture (i.e., they’re “tributational saints”). If a person would use a concordance, the word “saints” is synonymous with the word “Christians”. Thus, there’s no reason to think that Revelation 13 or 19 refers to a separate group of saints. Thus, the Church is on Earth during this time.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Is the Millennium a literal period of 1000 years? Also, if there really is a literal Millennium, wouldn’t this amount to three comings of Christ, rather than two?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>Revelation states that it will be a literal period of 1000 years. Scripture says that the saints will live and reign with Christ for a thousand years. The saints are those individuals who have not taken</td>
</tr>
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</table>
the mark of the beast, but have been beheaded because of their testimony for Christ. (It is interesting to note that Islam still practices beheading.)

By the way, this means that there would have been about 6000 years since Adam (i.e., 4000 years before Christ, 2000 more years until now), plus 1000 years (the Millennium). During the Millennium, we have the binding of Satan, the presence of Jesus Christ, the institution of a just and righteous government, the removal of temptation, and the provision of all human needs (so that coveting is unnecessary). Nevertheless, we still find that “the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9), even apart from Satanic influence! Furthermore, even under these ideal living conditions, the true nature of many people’s hearts manifests itself in a final (albeit unsuccessful) rebellion against Jesus Christ at the end of the Millennium (Revelation 20:7-9).

Jesus said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The devil tries to tell us that we need merely better our environment, improve the physical quality of the race by eliminating the weak and mentally unfit, and promote education, reformation and better social understanding, and consequently man will become better and better until we have a world of perfect peace and perfect people. God is going to prove twice that this is the devil’s lie. He proved it once in the Garden of Eden. [DeHaan, 1946, p. 256]

Note that the 7000 years have a parallel to the 7 days of creation—as per Hosea 6:2 and 2 Peter 3:8:

Hosea 5:15-6:2 Then I will go back to my place until they admit their guilt. And they will seek my face; in their misery they will earnestly seek me." “Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence.

2 Peter 3:8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.

Chuck Missler reminds us that Christ will literally return to the earth, to rule those on the earth (i.e., physically, after the Second Coming, and throughout the Millennium) [Missler, 2006]:

- There are 1845 references to Christ’s return, in the Old Testament.
| Preterist Position | Steve Gregg is a partial preterist and an amillennialist. (Not all Preterists hold to amillennialism.) He says: because Christ disarmed the powers of death and darkness at the cross, we are already in the “Millennium”. If there were to be a literal, separate, “Millennium” in the future, then this would amount to three comings of Christ: His first coming, His coming before the Millennium, and His coming at the end of the Millennium. Also, think of the strange situation of glorified saints living with mortal people, on Earth during the Millennium.

A thousand years shouldn’t be taken literally. For example, the word “thousand” is used over and over again in Scripture, and it’s not to be taken literally. Examples of such passages include references to: God punishing the third and fourth generations, showing love to a thousand generations; that God will bless you a thousand times over; for one day with the Lord is like a thousand years; the least of you will become a thousand; the Lord owns the cattle on a thousand hills; and so on. Hank Hanegraaff remarks that nowhere in Scripture does a “thousand” literally mean a thousand; it’s a large round number, in a metaphorical sense.

The “code breaker” is the Old Testament, says Hanegraaff: We won’t be able to understand what Revelation is saying without understanding the Old Testament. In Revelation, 278 verses out of 404 verses in total, are direct allusions to Old Testament passages. There is a lot of figurative language, including many metaphors.

There is no 1000-year Millennium that will intervene between Christ’s return and the judgment. Jesus didn’t speak of it, nor did Paul, nor did Peter. The end of the Millennium in Revelation 20 is the end of the church age (i.e., the current stage we’re living in). The binding of Satan in Revelation 20 is the stage at which the devil is |

|  | 17 of 39 Old Testament books give prominence to the Messiah ruling on the earth. |
|  | There are 318 references in the New Testament. |
|  | 23 of 27 New Testament books give prominence to the event. |
|  | For every prophecy about Christ’s first coming, there are eight about His Second Coming. |
|  | Christ will sit on the throne of David. |

Luke 1:32-33  He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."
ultimately defeated, and this is the start of eternity.

The book of Revelation is far more obscure than other parts of Scripture, so when readers see something that’s hard to understand, they sometimes try to make the obscure passages conform to their vision of Revelation (e.g., pre-tribulational).

The resurrection of the dead is our hope—but not the pre-tribulational Rapture.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Is Heaven a literal place? Are believers physically resurrected, that is, will they have real bodies? Will there be animals in Heaven?</th>
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</table>
| Both Positions | Dispensationalists and preterists share many of the same understandings about Heaven. Both assume a literal Heaven. Where dispensationalism differs from preterism is in the timing. Dispensationalists believe that Heaven begins with the resurrection at the Rapture. Also, dispensationalism assumes the existence of a literal Millennium. Nevertheless, the characteristics of Heaven are the same to both positions. Heaven is a real place with real people doing real things. For example, Scripture tells us that there will be food and drink in Heaven; but, we will not need these things to survive. We will not be purely spiritual (as opposed to physical). Resurrection is literal: our physical bodies will rise from the dead some day. We will also have a spirit, of course, since the spirit is non-physical and is eternal. In fact, when a Christian dies, his/her spirit goes to be with the Lord. When an unbeliever dies, his/her spirit goes to Hades, which is essentially a holding tank for the dead, awaiting judgment. Will animals be in Heaven? Most Bible scholars seem to think so. After all, God will renew this planet, to the state it was in before sin entered the world. Hank Hanegraaff comments: “We will not be Casper the Ghost strumming a harp on a cloud.” Spirits are non-physical. Reincarnation is “escape from the body”. Resurrection has continuity: there’s continuity between the body you now have, and the body you will have, even though the atoms may not be the same. Thus, to use the analogy of the uniqueness of DNA, your current DNA (minus the imperfections) is re-connected with your resurrection body. While alive, you are a body-spirit entity (or equivalently, a body-soul entity): your spirit is where your body is. When you die, the spirit
separates from the body; thus, the body dies, but the spirit continues to exist (i.e., for Christians, we say that the spirit “is present with the Lord”). The abode of the dead is where everyone’s spirit goes upon death, awaiting resurrection. In the case of believers, the spirit goes to be with God (this is called Abraham’s Bosom or paradise); in the case of unbelievers, it is Hades. In both cases, the body will be resurrected in the future: believers to Heaven, and unbelievers to hell.

Since Christ was not constrained by walls, etc., and moved about freely following His resurrection, it stands to reason that we won’t be either, given that “we shall be like him” (1 John 3:2) [Morris, 1983].

Upon resurrection, the spirit is reunited with the body, but this time (in the case of believers), it’s a perfected body. There will be a real, physical universe, with a real, physical Christ—and we’ll live forever. Thus, in terms of the Garden of Eden scenario, “paradise lost” becomes “paradise restored”. By the way, the word “paradise” has Persian roots, meaning “pleasure park”. In summary, Heaven is the restored universe, i.e., the way the universe was before sin entered the world. Paradise refers to being in the presence of God.

The apostle Paul refers to the “third heaven” (2 Corinthians 12:1-4). The first heaven refers to the atmosphere (e.g., frost and wind (Job), dew (Deuteronomy), and clouds (Psalms)). The second heaven refers to the Celestial heaven (e.g., the realm of the sun, moon, and stars (Genesis)). The third heaven refers to the dwelling place of God (e.g., “Our Father Who art in Heaven”). Most often, the notion of Heaven refers collectively to the whole universe in its perfected state.

Like dispensationalists, Hank believes that there will be food, animals, plants, trees, flowers, etc. in Heaven. Animals are among God’s most wonderful creations, and we expect that they’ll be there. Many authors stress the literal nature of Heaven. Grant Jeffrey, for example, wrote one of his first books about Heaven—to highlight the modern church’s lack of emphasis on a literal heaven [Jeffrey, 1990].

... the description of this New Jerusalem [Revelation 21-22] follows closely the description of the first abode of mankind in the garden of Eden. There, too, was the literal river with its three heads, and there, too, were trees, and in the midst, the tree of life. On this tree grew literal fruit and literal leaves.

The tendency to spiritualize is the result of a wrong conception of the life hereafter, of heaven and the New Jerusalem. We are liable to think of heaven as a place with golden streets, where angels and the saints play golden harps all day long. This is, however, wholly erroneous. When we get to glory, after the resurrection, we will still be human beings. Our resurrection bodies will be literal human bodies and we shall eat and drink and
Relationships will exist in Heaven (albeit non-sexual ones); but the relationships will be better than on the current Earth. God will restore the Earth to its state prior to the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden. Heaven means everlasting life, in the presence of God, and without sin, sadness, pain, etc.

Preterist Position

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<td>In Matthew 24:30-34, it says that “all nations” will see Christ “coming on the clouds with power and great glory”, and that “this generation” would see the events leading up to this bigger event. What group of people is “this generation” referring to? Is it the people of that day? Is it the people alive at the Second Coming of Christ (i.e., at the Rapture)?</td>
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Dispensationalist Position

| Matthew 24 contains the Olivet Discourse—a major set of prophecies concerning the end times, given by Jesus Christ two days before his death. Although there is some debate as to the chronology, some scholars believe the events in the Olivet Discourse are, in fact, chronological. For example, Schuyler English notes that the first five seals in Revelation mirror the order of the events given in Matthew 24:5-9 [Pentecost, 1958]. |
| “This generation will not pass away until” refers to the generation that is alive to see the “signs of the times” of the days/years immediately prior to the Rapture. Sometimes this is linked to the generation that sees Israel become a nation again (i.e., in 1948). There is considerable controversy among prophecy scholars as to what the specific context of the passage is. In the pre-trib model, the key observation is the phrase “all these things” [Ice, 2000]. This suggests an end times fulfillment because “all these things” certainly weren’t fulfilled in the first century, and also, “all these things” combined with the words “this generation” suggests a fulfillment within a single generation. The rapid succession of major fulfilled prophecies is a theme that is consistent with the book of Revelation. |

Matthew 24:29-34  "Immediately after the distress of those days 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on
the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened."

Matthew 24:2 "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."

Mark 13:30 I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.

Luke 21:32 "I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.

Even though in context Jesus may refer to the future “this generation” as “you,” this is a conventional usage of language with respect to reference and does not have to apply to a present audience. In the prophetic passages of the Old Testament, it is common to find such language. For instance, Moses used language similar to Jesus’ when he said, “So it will be when all of these things have come upon you...” (Deuteronomy 30:1). Even though he is speaking to the present generation (“you”), it is evident from the context that His words speak about a future generation that will live thousands of years later and into the eschatological period. The people of this “generation” (the “you”) are those who will have already suffered the judgment of exile (verse 1), captivity (verse 3), been regathered and restored (verses 4-5), and receive spiritual regeneration (“circumcision of heart,” verse 6). [Price, 2003b, p. 380]

We assume that the book of Revelation refers to global events, not to localized events. As evidence of this hypothesis, note the phrase (above): “all the nations of the earth will mourn”.

But in Luke 21:25-28 (a passage that’s parallel to Matthew 24:30-34), there is a change of language in reference to God’s intervention, which shifts from judgment upon Israel (as in A.D. 70 and Luke 21:20-24) to His judgment upon “the earth,” where there is “dismay among nations” (ethnon, 21:25) and “the world” (oikoumene, 21:26) and to His rescue of Israel from her enemies (21:25-28). This is said to involve “signs in sun and moon and stars” (21:25). [Ice, 2003c, p. 79]

Furthermore, as a summary of the events of Revelation, including the
return of Christ and the Millennium, “all these things” is likely what is referred to in:

Revelation 22:6 The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place."

With respect to Christ having already come “in judgment” in 70 AD:

Gentry interprets a reference to clouds in Revelation 1:7 as a non-personal coming of Christ. Christ never returned to earth in A.D. 70 personally, so explaining the fall of Jerusalem as his coming violates the principle of literal interpretation. All contextual indications point to a literal and personal coming of Christ in that verse. Gentry calls this a “judgment-coming” of Christ, but the criteria of Revelation also connect a deliverance of the faithful with that coming. Preterism nowhere explains the promised deliverance from persecution that is associated with the coming, for example, in 3:10-11. Gentry's interpretation of 1:7 simply does not fulfill the criteria of literal interpretation of the text. The fact is, the church did not escape persecution in A.D. 70, but continued to suffer for Christ’s sake long after that. [Ice, 2000]

… Another hermeneutical shortcoming of preterism relates to the limiting of the promised coming of Christ in 1:7 to Judea. What does a localized judgment hundreds of miles away have to do with the seven churches in Asia? John uses two long chapters in addressing those churches regarding the implications of the coming of Christ for them. For instance, the promise to shield the Philadelphian church from judgment (3:10-11) is meaningless if that judgment occurs far beyond the borders of that city. [Thomas, 1998].

Also, just as the sun was literally darkened as a sign, during Jesus’ crucifixion, so will it be darkened at His return. And, the burden of proof is on preterists who do not take this passage literally as to why they don’t. [Ice, 2003d, p. 95]

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<tr>
<td>Preterists literally believe that “this generation will not pass away” [i.e., the generation living at the time of Christ, circa 30 AD] would not pass away until Christ comes again. By “come again”, we don’t mean “literally, in person”, but in the sense of His vindication/exaltation. In particular, recall that Christ told the high priest: “You will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds…” which ties in to His vindication in 70 AD. “Some of you standing here won’t taste death [before the coming of the Lord].” D.A. Carson mentions that “this generation” can only be used with great difficulty to mean anything other than the audience of the writer’s day.</td>
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</table>
Again, we emphasize that the “coming” of Christ doesn’t mean a physical coming. It needs to be taken in context. This is seen in other passages. For example, in Colossians 1:23, it says that the gospel has been proclaimed to every creature under Heaven. Does this literally mean all over the world? In Colossians 1:6, it says that “all over the world, the gospel is bearing fruit”. Does this mean all over the world, or in the Roman Empire? Acts 2 says that Jews from every nation on Earth were present on the Day of Pentecost. The “code breaker” to this type of language is the Old Testament.

“This generation” applies to the generation which witnessed the fact that “not one stone [of the Temple] will stand upon another”. This was fulfilled in 70 AD. Hank Hanegraaff elaborates:

The meaning of the pronoun you in the context of Christ’s Olivet Discourse is just as clear. When Jesus says, ‘You will hear of wars and rumors of wars ... Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me ... When you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ ... Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath ... So if anyone tell you, ‘There he is, out in the desert,’ do not go out ... when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door,’ it should be obvious that he is referencing a first-century, not a twenty-first-century, generation. [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 72]

Hank adds:

Far from predicting his second coming, however, Jesus was telling his disciples that those who witnessed Jerusalem’s destruction would likewise see his vindication and exaltation as Israel’s rightful king.

Similarly, when the disciples asked Jesus about ‘the end of the age,’ they were not asking Jesus about the end of the world (kosmos). They were rather asking Jesus about the end of the current corrupt age (aion) in the context of his chilling prediction of the destruction of the temple and its buildings. With the destruction of the temple would come the end of the old covenant age of sacrifices that pointed forward to the ultimate sacrificial Lamb in whom the symbols would be fully and completely satisfied. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 84-85]

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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is meant by the term “coming on the clouds”?</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dispensationalist Position</strong></td>
<td>It refers to Christ coming physically in judgment—because of the Scripture referring to Christ’s ascension:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acts 1:9-11 After he said this, he was taken up</td>
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before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

The whole focus of Christ’s cloud coming after this event is defined by the ascension. The next time Christ comes on the clouds, it is clearly said here to be bodily, personal, and coming with clouds. This is what Matthew 24:30 and Revelation 1:9 refers to. All of the New Testament, because of this event, looks to Christ’s return in this way. Thus, any future cloud coming from this point on would have to be seen in light of this glorious promise. [Ice, 2000]

Preterists argue that the “coming on the clouds” is judgment language, and that the high priest Caiaphas would see Christ coming in judgment (in 70 AD); however, Caiaphas died before 70 AD [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007].

Preterist Position

One of the key problems is a misunderstanding of words, especially “coming”. Every time we come across the word “coming” or “coming on the clouds”, we cannot read into it the Rapture or Christ descending to the Earth. “Coming on the clouds” is so common in the Old Testament, that it’s surprising that Bible teachers miss this.

“Coming”, in the Old Testament, refers to the imagery of judgment (e.g., Isaiah 19: judgment on Egypt; Daniel 7: the Ancient of Days). Remember, Christ told Caiaphas and the court that they would see Christ coming on the clouds [in judgment].

...when Jesus told followers that within a ‘generation’ they would see him ‘coming on the clouds of heaven,’ he was using an Old Testament judgment metaphor. ... Far from saying that the end of the world was at hand, Jesus employed the Old Testament symbolism of clouds to warn the council that just as judgment had fallen on Egypt, so too, judgment would fall on Jerusalem (see Matthew 24:34; 26:64; cf. Isaiah 19:1).

... Christ was not saying Caiaphas would see him riding a cloud-chariot of sorts, but that he would understand that Jesus was indeed who he claimed to be. With the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, they would understand that Jesus had indeed ascended to the right hand of power as the Judge of heaven and earth. Thus, ‘seeing’ is an obvious metaphor for comprehension and understanding. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 106-107].

Said Jesus, ‘I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven’ (Matthew 26:64). The generation that
crucified Christ would see the day that he was exalted and enthroned at ‘the right hand of the Mighty One.’ John makes this point explicit in Revelation 1:7: ‘Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be!’ Amen.’ ‘The crucifiers would see Him coming in judgment—that is, they would experience and understand that His Coming would mean wrath on the Land. ... In the destruction of their city, their civilization, their Temple, their entire world-order, they would understand that Christ had ascended to His Throne as Lord of heaven and earth.’ [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 230]

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>In Heaven, will we get to see God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dispensationalist Position</strong></td>
<td>(same as for Preterism)</td>
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</table>
| **Preterist Position** | Hank Hanegraaff says that it depends on what we mean by “see”. For example, the term “I see” means “I understand”.

We will see Jesus Christ because He is forever in flesh. Recall that Christ was seen, physically, after He rose from the dead. He will walk on the restored Earth with us. Resurrection is physical, not platonic.

God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, are spirit, and therefore they cannot be seen. However, there are theophanies (physical manifestations of God) in the Bible. For example, God appeared with two angels on the plains of Mamre to meet with Abraham. Might this have been Christ, pre-incarnate?

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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>How important is eschatology to apologetics?</th>
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What is meant by “[Christ] preached to the spirits in prison … who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built”? Does this somehow mean that there’s a “second chance” for everyone to believe?

1 Peter 3:18-20 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the
body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water,

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Preterist interpretation does not meet Matthew’s criteria, since Jesus was not personally present at the later destruction of Jerusalem. [Ice, 2003d, p. 88]

Preterist Position

No, Jesus is the “firstfruits” from the dead; therefore, it is unlikely that Moses and Elijah had real bodies. Scripture says that there is a time coming when all will rise from the dead. At some point in the future, the believers (including dead in Christ) will change in the twinkling of an eye.

We assume that Moses and Elijah didn’t actually have a body on the Mount of Transfiguration. Sometimes we read about Christophanies (or Theophanies) or angelophanies, where Christ or the angels take on the appearance of a human (even though angels do not have a form).

Recall that God is spirit. God can give form to Elijah. God can give form to Moses. These are not permanent appearances; and, it does not undermine the fact that they will both be resurrected in permanent, perfected, bodily form—but at the time of the judgment.

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<td>The soul consists of the mind, the will, and the emotions. The spirit gives the ability to have a relationship with God. These terms are used interchangeably in Scripture, and there is no distinction between them in Scripture. “Biblically, I don’t think you can make the case [that there is a difference between soul and spirit],” writes Hank Hanegraaff. The soul and spirit are two aspects of the incorporeal (non-physical) aspects of humanity. Our soul relates to the creation; our spirit relates to the Creator. Our body, soul, and spirit are related, but note, for example, that the mind is distinct from the brain. The mind is non-physical. (Naturalists have a hard time explaining non-physical realities.) Upon death, a believer’s soul/spirit goes to be with the Lord, whereas the body awaits a future resurrection—at which point the (perfected) body and the soul/spirit become reunited.</td>
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<th>Does the woman in Revelation actually represent Israel? Is Revelation 12:3-6 referring to the end times?</th>
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<td>Revelation 12:3-6</td>
<td>Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads.</td>
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His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.

Dispersationalist Position

It has both historical and future aspects. Historically, the child is Jesus, the mother is Mary (symbolically representing Israel—she was a Jew and the mother of Christ)—and the dragon is Satan. From other parts of Scripture, there is no question about Christ being the child, and the dragon being Satan. The woman cannot be the Church, since this would reverse the roles of Christ and the Church, which essentially had its birth at Pentecost (i.e., after Christ’s death and resurrection). Obviously, the Church did not give birth to Christ. “Stars” are metaphors for “angels” (in this case, fallen angels—also called demons).

Note that the Church is not present in this picture. After the middle of the Tribulation, Israel flees to the wilderness or desert for the remaining 3½ years of the tribulation. This is $3\frac{1}{2} \times 360$ days = 1260 days.

The dragon has 7 heads and 10 horns and 7 crowns, suggesting that Satan is manifesting his evil through 7 people/leaders and 10 institutions. It is not known who or what these entities are.

Henry Morris notes that the woman should include not only Israel but Eve herself because of the first prophecy about the coming redeemer [Morris, 1983]:

\[
\text{Genesis 3:15} \quad \text{And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.}
\]

The prophecy “so that he might devour her child the moment it was born” likely refers to King Herod’s attempts to kill male infants and toddlers in and around Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16).

Morris thinks that the child being “snatched up to God” may also include the snatching up of the two witnesses of Revelation 11. Furthermore, the “desert” (or “wilderness” in the KJV) is likely the destination of Jesus’s command to “flee to the mountains” (as a path of escape) in Matthew 24:15-16. Since Daniel 11 states that Edom,
Moab, and Ammon (modern day Jordan and northern Saudi Arabia) will not fall into the domain of the Antichrist, these areas may be the same general location. Some scholars think that Petra is likely to be one specific destination within this broad area.

Appropriately enough, this is the very middle verse of the book of Revelation [Revelation 12:9], and the event it describes marks again the middle of the tribulation period. The rapture of the two witnesses, the breaking of the Jewish temple treaty by the beast, the flight of Israel, the casting out of Satan and the appropriation of world power by the beast must all occur within a few days of each other at this midpoint of the tribulation. [Morris, 1983, p. 225]

As the forty years in the wilderness prepared the people of Israel in olden times to enter the land of Canaan, so these three-and-a-half years in the wilderness will make them ready to receive Christ and enter the glorious kingdom age of the millennium. [Morris, 1983, p. 230]

**Preterist Position**

Revelation 12:14 states, “The woman was given two wings of a great eagle ...” The timing of this is *not* in the future. Scripture goes on to say, “She bore a male child.” This was a long time ago. “1260 days” likely refers to the time of the Jewish remnant. After the Messiah died, “the woman fled into the wilderness”. The church in Jerusalem received a warning before 70 AD, and they fled to the wilderness—to Pella, Jordan. The child is Jesus, the woman is Israel, and the dragon is Satan.

David Pawson comments that Satan is in Heaven today, and it’s only at some point in the future that Satan is kicked out of Heaven to join his proxies on Earth, that is, to join the demons that have already been sent to Earth, and to join the human leaders that are spreading evil over the Earth.

Interestingly, Pawson believes that the woman is *not* Israel. We know that the woman is clothed with the sun, she’s standing on the moon, and she has 12 stars around her head. In Genesis, Joseph had a dream where the moon, sun, and 11 stars bowed down to him; however, there does not seem to be a connection to Revelation. For example, in Revelation 12, there is nothing to say that the woman is Israel. Pawson believes the woman is the *Church*, and this includes Jewish and Gentile believers, and that the dragon is after the [male] leaders of the Church. Pawson acknowledges that the woman could be Israel, but prefers the Church. He strongly feels that the Church will *not* be snatched up to Heaven; therefore, this is not a rapture passage. (In fact, Pawson believes that a pre-trib rapture is nonsense.)
What is “the abomination that causes desolation”?

Dispensationalist Position

An “abomination” is an unholy/vile image or idol. In the Bible, God speaks of idols that are “detestable things”. Evil and wickedness accompany the idol and are characteristic practices of the religion underlying the image/icon/statue. The abomination of desolation is “the introduction of an idolatrous image or an act of pagan sacrilege within the sanctuary that produces the highest level of ceremonial impurity, Temple profanation” [Price, 2003b]. In other words, it is a hostile insult that openly defies, insults, and dares the true God of the universe.

In the middle of Daniel’s 70th Week, there is an image that is set up in the rebuilt Temple, specifically the part of the Temple called the “Holy of Holies”. This is the inner part of the Temple/Tabernacle where the Ark of the Covenant would have been located. It was behind the thick curtain where the high priest of Israel was to meet with God once per year—on the holiest day on the Jewish calendar: Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). The high priest sprinkled blood around the mercy seat (the Ark of the Covenant).

The term “abomination that causes desolation” comes from the book of Daniel. Jesus Christ confirmed that Daniel was a prophet, and that there will be an abomination that causes desolation in the Temple.

The abomination that causes desolation is still future, and refers to the Antichrist in the middle of Daniel’s 70th Week. The second half of the Tribulation is the “Great Tribulation”.

2 Thessalonians 2:4  He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

Today, the Temple Mount, or in Arabic Haram Ash-Sharif, is the location of two Mosques and is considered to be the third holiest site of Islam. The above verse [2 Thessalonians 2:4] written by the apostle Paul indicates that there will be a rebuilt Jewish Temple in Jerusalem in the future. The apostle Paul says that the Antichrist will “set himself up in God’s Temple,” or more literally, “he takes his seat in the temple of God.” This event was also taught by the early Christian Church. The early Church Father Irenaeus writes: “But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months and will sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire.” [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008, p. 175]

Did the abomination of desolation occur in 70 AD, or shortly before
that? No. Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice give the following reasons for why the abomination of desolation did not occur then [Ice, 2003e, p. 179]:

In the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem there was...

- No image set up in the holy place.
- No worship of the image required.
- No 3½ year period of time between that event and the coming of Christ. This is especially true since the destruction of Jerusalem occurred at the end of the siege by Rome. It was over in a matter of days. D. A. Carson notes, “By the time the Romans had actually desecrated the temple in A.D. 70, it was too late for anyone in the city to flee.”
- No image came to life and beckoned men to worship it.

Furthermore, in 70 AD, only Rome was attacking Jerusalem; however, in Zechariah 12-14 (a parallel eschatological passage), Jerusalem is surrounded by nations (plural) that are trying to destroy it.

Preterist Position

In 70 AD, a Roman image was set up in the Temple. This was the abomination of desolation. There is no such future event involving an antichrist.

Topic/Question

Who is Antiochus Epiphanes, and what is his connection to Revelation, if any? Is he somehow connected to the Scripture about “the abomination that causes desolation”?

Daniel 11:31-32 "His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation. With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him.

(Note: Search for further occurrences of “Antiochus Epiphanes” in this document.)

Dispensationalist Position

Antiochus Epiphanes (more formally cited as Antiochus IV Epiphanes) rose to power in 175 BC [Missler, 2005]. At the time, Judea was a buffer zone between the Seleucian and Ptolemaic empires. He invaded Egypt and defeated Ptolemy VI. He made Torah reading a capital offense (deserving death). He desecrated the Second Temple in 165 BC when he slaughtered a pig on the altar and put an idol to Zeus in the Holy of Holies (i.e., in the most sacred place in the Temple in Jerusalem). That event is a foreshadowing of
the ultimate “abomination of desolation” that Christ referred to around 30 AD as still being in the future (see Matthew 24:15); therefore, it couldn’t have referred to Antiochus Epiphanes.

The Maccabean army (Jewish) rebelled against the Syrian army, captured the Temple Mount, and cleansed the sanctuary of the Second Temple in 165 BC [Jeffrey, 1988]. The Jewish feast of Hanukkah celebrates this.

Antiochus Epiphanes is a type of the Antichrist, but he is not the Antichrist referred to in end-times prophecy. Scripture sometimes has double fulfillments: a short term fulfillment, and a long term (the main/intended) fulfillment. An example of this is Antiochus Epiphanes (short term: the “little horn” mentioned in Daniel 7:8, and further described in Daniel 11:21-39), and the Antichrist (long term: the “beast” from the sea in Revelation 13:1 and Daniel 11:40-45). The “sea” symbolically refers to Gentile nations. Mark Hitchcock and Arnold Fruchtenbaum add that since Antiochus Epiphanes was both a Gentile and a type of the Antichrist, it follows that the Antichrist will be a Gentile as well. Furthermore, because the “times of the Gentiles” do not end until the Second Coming of Christ, the Antichrist will be the final Gentile ruler.

Preterist Position Hank Hanegraaff writes:

“The abomination of desolation” spoken of by Jesus, had been prophesied six centuries earlier by Daniel. ... In 167 BC Daniel’s prophecy became an unforgettable reality when Antiochus IV Epiphanes took Jerusalem by force, abolished temple sacrifices, erected an abominable altar to Zeus Olympus, and violated the Jewish covenant by outlawing Sabbath observance.”

“In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus had taken the quintessential Jewish nightmare and extended it to cosmic proportions. In the fullness of time, what Jesus declared desolate was desolated by Roman infidels. They destroyed the temple fortress and ended the daily sacrifice. This time the blood that desolated the sacred altar did not flow from the carcasses of unclean pigs, but from the corpses of unbelieving Pharisees. This time the Holy of Holies was not merely desecrated by the defiling statue of a pagan god, but was manifestly destroyed by the pathetic greed of despoiling soldiers.” [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 88]

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start of a 7-year period sometimes called the Tribulation]. In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering [the daily animal sacrifices and other offerings that appear to be taking place for the first 3½ years of the Tribulation]. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation [a vile image that desecrates God’s Holy Temple], until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.”

Daniel 12:11 “From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days.

Note that the following Scripture (which also mentions the “abomination of desolation”) appears to refer to Antiochus Epiphanes and not the Antichrist of Revelation. Antiochus Epiphanes set up an abomination that causes desolation (i.e., he slaughtered a pig on the altar, dedicating the altar and sacrifice to Zeus) in 165 BC. Antiochus Epiphanes is a foreshadowing (type) of the Antichrist who still to come.

Daniel 11:31 “His [Antiochus Epiphanes’] armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation.

It seems confusing because Daniel 7:8 mentions “the little horn” (which refers to Antiochus Epiphanes). Daniel 8:9-12,23-25 also refers to Antiochus Epiphanes; but, in Daniel 8:17,19, the angel Gabriel tells Daniel that the prophecy concerns “the [appointed] time of the end”. Note that Daniel 8 includes some political and military events that were fulfilled before the time of Christ. (Search this document for the words “Because the book of Daniel is so accurate” to get more details.)

Nevertheless—and this is the key part—we know that the ultimate “abomination of desolation” is still to come because Jesus Christ said so, around 30 AD:

Matthew 24:15-16 “So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel--let the reader understand--then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Randy Price comments on possible “abominations of desolation”, such as Robert Gentry’s preterist interpretation; however, none of which satisfy the intent of Daniel’s text:
Gentry also explains the “abomination of desolation” in light of the invading Roman army’s actions. He views the presence of these attaching soldiers—who possessed military regalia carrying standards that bore images of Tiberius Caesar and brought these images into Jerusalem and the temple precincts—as “an abomination leading to desolation.” However, the problem with proposing such an explanation is that any one of a number of similar events could also fit the historical fulfillment. Examples would include Pontius Pilate’s orders for soldiers to march with their standards into Jerusalem, Gaius Caligula’s order to place his statue in the Jewish Temple, the illegitimate service of the Zealot-sponsored high priest Phanni in the Temple, Titus and his general’s entrance into the Holy Place of the Temple, and the erection of Roman standards in the Temple court and Roman sacrifices proclaiming Titus as imperator. All of these acts could qualify as “abominations of desolation.” But, the problem with a nonspecific reference of Temple desecration is that Jesus’ hearers would have been left to choose from an assortment of possible desecration scenarios, each of which has been argued as fulfilling Jesus’ prophecy of the “abomination of desolation” by modern preteristic commentators. [Price, 2003b, p. 385]

| Preterist Position | The “abomination that causes desolation” simply refers to the state of the Temple after Christ’s death. After Christ offered Himself as the ultimate sacrifice, any further sacrifices would be unnecessary, and in fact, would be an abomination to God. Christ paid for all of mankind’s sins, on the cross. There is no need for further sacrifices. Even in Old Testament times when the Temple was in operation, the sacrifice of animals was only temporary, that is, until the next time that the priests offered the sacrifices—which was daily. All of these sacrifices pointed forward to the time of Christ—when the God of the universe would give His own life to redeem fallen creation.

Some preterists or partial preterists believe that the abomination that causes desolation may be the ensigns of the Roman army that surrounded Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD, prior to the Temple’s destruction.

Regardless of which of the above two positions is adopted (i.e., Christ’s fulfillment at the cross, or the Roman army in 70 AD), the point is that Christ mentioned, “when you see these things come to pass…”—implying that that current generation (hearing Christ’s words) would see its fulfillment. It does not, however, represent a far off fulfillment concerning an “Antichrist” in the 21st century. |

| Dispensationalist Position | This is a “king” at the time of the end. This figure is likely the Antichrist. |

| Topic/Question | Who is the king in Daniel 11:40-45? This king doesn’t seem to have a match in history. Might this be the Antichrist? |
### Preterist Position
There are many interpretations to this passage. Steve Gregg says that he has seen about seven different views. The timing of this passage is linked to the verse: “At that time, Michael the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of great distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until now.” It is most likely a reference to the Roman Empire, or perhaps to a Roman emperor like Nero.

Some people have understood this figure to be Herod, or the Roman Empire, etc.

There is a big gap between the description of Antiochus Epiphanes and this “king”, so perhaps a Roman connection (circa 70 AD) is more suited. This king is likely *not* “the Antichrist” (at the time just before Christ’s return).

The reference in Daniel 11 may even refer to the “cruel shepherd” in Zechariah 11.

### Topic/Question
Are there any “signs of the times” of Christ’s Second Coming?

Matthew 24:37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

### Dispensationalist Position
Yes, there are plenty. Many of the events in Revelation could not have been fulfilled in previous generations, such as, the “mark of the beast” (especially if it is a microchip implant), the notion of a cashless society, weapons of mass destruction, the intense hatred between Muslim and Jew, etc.

### Preterist Position
There are no signs that specifically indicate that we are very close to the time of Christ’s second coming. Jesus said that His Second Coming would be during times similar to days of Noah—when *no sign* was given. The point is: we need to be prepared, at all times.

### Topic/Question
For believers, is there only one resurrection event—or are there multiple resurrection events? Will unbelievers be resurrected? When do these events occur?

### Dispensationalist Position
Scripture indicates that there are multiple resurrections; not all will be resurrected at the same time.

1 Corinthians 15:22-23 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

A good summary of the relative timing of the various resurrections is
provided by Henry Morris:

The “first resurrection” does occur in more than one stage, according to 1 Corinthians 15:20-23. The resurrection of the dead began with Christ Himself, as the “firstfruits of them that slept,” followed immediately by “many bodies of the saints” which “came out of the graves after his resurrection” (Matthew 27:52,53). Next comes the rapture, when “the dead in Christ shall rise” along with the living saints (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17). At the middle of the tribulation the two witnesses rise (Revelation 11:11) and now finally all the rest of the tribulation martyrs.” [Morris, 1983, p. 417]

Revelation 20:5 [KJV] But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

With respect to the last sentence, Morris points out that the word “is” appears in italics in the KJV Bible, meaning it is absent in the original manuscripts. Thus, the sentence should read: “This, the first resurrection”—or, equivalently: “This completes the first resurrection”. Hence, the next verse makes perfect sense:

Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

John F. Walvoord writes:

In reconstruction of the order of resurrection, it is clear that all will not be resurrected at the same time. Also mentioned in relation to Christ’s resurrection was the token resurrection of a small number of saints (Matt. 27:51-53). At the Rapture of the church at the end of the present age, members of the body of Christ, Christians who died since Pentecost, will be raised out from among the dead. A special resurrection also was revealed concerning the two witnesses (Rev. 11:3-13) who will be raised and caught up to heaven at the conclusion of their witness (v. 12). All of these resurrections precede the resurrection at the time of the Second Coming (Dan. 12:2-3). The resurrection of some to shame and everlasting contempt (v. 2) will not occur until the end of the Millennium as is made clear in Revelation 20:4-6,11-15. The resurrection here [at the Second Coming is] extended to all the saved of the Old Testament, whether Jews or Gentiles, all who were not resurrected at the time of the Rapture. They will be given resurrection life and new bodies and will enter the millennial kingdom as resurrected people. Tribulation saints will also be raised [at that time] (v. 4). At the beginning of the Millennium the only ones remaining in the grave will be the unsaved. [Walvoord, 1990, pp. 275-276]

J. Dwight Pentecost writes:
... there will be a multitude of believers among the Gentiles who will believe and await His return. In order for the Lord to fulfill the promises made in the Abrahamic, Davidic, Palestinic, and new covenants at His second advent, it is necessary that there be a believing remnant over whom He can reign and to whom the covenants can be fulfilled. There must also be a group of believing Gentiles who can receive, through faith, the benefits of the covenants in His reign. These groups go into the millennium in their natural bodies, saved, but not having experienced death and resurrection. If the church were on earth until the time of the second advent, these saved individuals would have been saved to a position in the church, would have been raptured at that time, and consequently there would not be one saved person left on the earth. [Pentecost, 1958, p. 214]

The bottom line is that there are several resurrections. The first has already occurred, and this is Jesus Christ Himself. The metaphor of “firstfruits” applies to this. The “harvest” and “gleanings” are still to come.

The last resurrection is the resurrection of the unsaved dead. They will be sent to hell for eternity.

In some futurist circles, the Rapture includes both the believers in Christ and the Old Testament saints; however, most scholars believe the Rapture only applies to the New Testament Church (i.e., believers called Christians, sometimes called “The Body of Christ” in Scripture). In this more common understanding of the Rapture, the Old Testament saints take part in a future resurrection, that is, after the seven-year Tribulation, when Christ returns physically to the Earth.

The Church is composed of all true believers from Pentecost in Acts [chapter] two until the Rapture of the Church. The Rapture excludes the Old Testament saints. It also excludes the Tribulation saints. The only saints who will be raptured are the Church saints. The Rapture passages clearly state that only those who are in Christ will partake of the Rapture. Throughout his writings, Paul uses terms such as in Christ, in Jesus, in Jesus Christ, in Christ Jesus, in Him, in Whom, in the Lord, in a very technical way, referring to those who were baptized by the Spirit into the Body of the Messiah, which only began in Acts two. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 142]

Let us try to put some of the days into perspective. From the start of the 70th week of Daniel (i.e., the beginning of the Tribulation), there will be seven years to the Second Coming (i.e., 7 years @ 360 days/Biblical year = 2520 days). There are 3½ years (1260 days) to the middle of the Tribulation, and then 1260 more days to the Second Coming. From the book of Daniel, we see that there are 30 days
more (presumably immediately following the Second Coming), to make a total of 1290 days, and then there are another 45 days to make a grand total of 1335 days. Presumably, the 1335-day mark is the start of the Millennium:

Daniel 12:11-12  "From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.

Though he will declare his deity within the Holy of Holies of the Temple, the Antichrist will not set up his throne there, but in Babylon. The Abomination of Desolation is to last a total of 1,290 days, while the Antichrist himself is allowed to continue 1,260 days. Hence, the Abomination of Desolation must include something more than merely the Antichrist’s self-proclamation of deity. Furthermore, the Daniel and Matthew passages implied an image of idol that would be erected in the Temple. ...

Jerusalem will become the religious capitol of the Antichrist, and the Temple will be the center of the worship of the Antichrist, where the living image will be standing. So while the Antichrist will be disposed of after 1,260 days, the image will remain in the Temple another thirty days beyond that. Then it, too, will be disposed of. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 255-256]

Note the sequence of events in the following Scriptures, with some of these events occurring before the Revelation scriptures about the Battle of Armageddon:

Revelation 19:7-9  Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!"' And he added, "These are the true words of God."

Revelation 19:14-15  The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.

Revelation 19:19-20  Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The
two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

In Revelation 19:7-9 it is revealed that the consummation of the union between Christ and the church precedes the second advent. In many passages, such as Matthew 25:1-13; 22:1-14; and Luke 12:35-41, the King is seen in the role of Bridegroom at His coming, indicating that the marriage has taken place. This event, likewise, requires the expiration of a period of time and makes the view that the rapture and revelation are simultaneous events impossible...

The translation [Rapture] sees the saints caught up into the air, and in the second advent He returns to the earth. ... In the translation Christ comes to claim a bride, but in the second advent He returns with the bride. ... The translation is imminent, while the second advent is preceded by a multitude of signs. [Pentecost, 1958, pp. 206-207]

As for further (circumstantial) evidence that the Rapture of believers occurs prior to Christ’s physical return to the Earth:

Zechariah 14:4-5 On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.

Jude 14-15 Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

Note that when Christ comes at the end of the Tribulation, all Jews who are alive will be saved. They have to believe before they call on the Lord. It appears that those who endure until the end will believe, and will be saved.

Romans 9:27 Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved.

Romans 11:25-26 I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away
For those who became Christians *after* the Rapture, and have died, they are resurrected at the *end* of the Great Tribulation, but *before* the Millennium:

Revelation 20:2-5 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore *until the thousand years were ended.* After that, he must be set free for a short time. I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection.

Thus, it appears that the first resurrection is in multiple parts.

There is also another book, which is not a book of records of works but the book of life. In this book had once been inscribed the name of every child ever conceived and who, therefore, had been granted “life” by God. Sadly, however, multitudes during their lifetimes (when it became evident that they had irrevocably rejected God’s provision of salvation for them through Jesus Christ) had had their names “blotted out of the book of life” (Revelation 3:5; Exodus 32:33; Psalm 69:28). This book will also be opened, as the resurrected dead stand before the awful Majesty on the shining throne. [Morris, 1983, p. 428]

To summarize:

[There are] four judgments that have eschatological implications: the judgment on the nation Israel (Ezek. 20:37-38; Zech. 13:8-9), the judgment of the nations (Matt. 25:31-46; Isa. 34:1-2; Joel 3:11-16), the judgment on fallen angels (Jude 6) and the judgment of the great white throne (Rev. 20:11-15). [Pentecost, 1958, p. 413]

After the Millennium and the judgments, Christ will create a “new heavens and a new earth” (Isaiah 65:17). The old heavens and earth will be renewed by fire:

2 Peter 3:7-12 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of
ungodly men. But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar: the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.

Matthew 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

Isaiah 65:17-18 "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.

Isaiah 66:22 "As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the LORD, "so will your name and descendants endure.

Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

It is not clear why there would be no sea. Why do the heavens and earth have to be purged with fire? Nature and creation are currently under the curse, and there is so much evidence of sin the world (and being exported into space (e.g., moon, Voyager)).

The elements of the earth are to be dissolved in the intense heat of the divine fire and all of man’s “works” on the earth will also be burned up (Greek katakao, “wholly consumed”). The agelong effects of God’s great curse on the ground (Genesis 3:17) must be purged from the very elements before the earth can be renewed for its eternal purposes. The great beds of fossils and other testimonials of an agelong reign of sin and death must all be burned away.” [Morris, 1983, p. 426]

The new heavens and earth will last for eternity, and there will be no more sin. Believers will enjoy the new heavens and the new earth for all eternity, with Jesus Christ:

Revelation 21:1-4 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first
earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is only one resurrection, not two (or more). The fact that two resurrections are mentioned in Revelation can be described as follows. The first resurrection is not contrasted with a second resurrection; rather, the first resurrection is contrasted with the second death. First, there’s the judgment of the believers. Second, there’s the judgment of the unbelievers. (Both of these are part of a one-time judgment—only the order keeps them separate.)</td>
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<td>As far as “first” goes, note the following examples. Christ is said to be the firstborn over all creation (Colossians 1:15-16). This means that he has the preeminent position. David is said to be the firstborn of Jesse, yet he was last of Jesse’s sons.</td>
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<td>All of humanity will stand before the throne of God to be judged. As far as the “books” go: there’s the Book of Life, which can also be thought of as the book of mercy, which contains the names of all of those who are dressed in the robes of Christ’s spotless perfection (i.e., all the saved). The books of merit, so to speak, include all those works that will be rewarded. Remember that everyone will be judged by what he has done. The separation that Christ spoke about is between the sheep (saved) and the goats (unsaved). We will either receive the robes of Christ’s righteousness, or those dirty robes of our own way. Then, in these respective camps, there are judgments: degrees of rewards for the saved, and degrees of punishment (eternal conscious punishment) for the unsaved.</td>
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<td>In summary, when Christ returns, all the living and the dead will be judged at one event—not at two or more events separated by 7 years, or by 1007 years, etc.</td>
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<td>Gary DeMar states that Jesus is sitting on His throne—the throne of David—right now (i.e., since Christ ascended to Heaven).</td>
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<td>Be aware that the only people living in the “Millennium” are those who were beheaded for Christ. This differs from the point of view of the dispensationalists. Note the sequence of events in the following</td>
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Revelation 20:1–5  And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection.

Revelation 20:7–8  When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth--Gog and Magog--to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore.

Revelation 20:11–15  Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

2 Corinthians 5:10  For we [Christians] must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the
things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Romans 14:10  You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we [Christians] will all stand before God's judgment seat.

Matthew 25:31-33  "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

<table>
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<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Rapture occurs <em>seven or more years</em> before the return of Christ (i.e., before He physically sets foot on the Earth at the Battle of Armageddon). Believers in Christ are called the <em>Bride of Christ</em> in Scripture. They are <em>already</em> saved because of their belief in Christ’s finished work on the Cross, so that is not what the (Bema) Judgment Seat of Christ is about.</td>
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<td>Romans 8:1  Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,</td>
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<td>Instead, the Bema judgment is one of rewards—<em>not</em> punishment. It is similar to awards given to the victors at athletic contests. The term <em>bema</em> refers to an elevated platform used in Grecian games to reward the winners. (See the section on “crowns”, below.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>What kind of activities will be rewarded? Well, to begin, the foundation is laid when a person accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. What a person does with his or her life after this point determines his or her reward:</td>
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1 Corinthians 3:11-15  For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

Many Christians will have little to show for their lives, even though they may have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour many years before they died. Perhaps because of indifference, lack of desire, or enchantment with the world, the rest of their lives are symbolically
represented as “wood, hay or straw”. Others may have worked hard for the Lord, sacrificed greatly (the persecuted church comes to mind), and worked tirelessly for the Lord:

1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Colossians 3:23-24 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

There are rewards for the saved. This judgment takes place in two parts: (a) after the Rapture (and probably before the Marriage of the Lamb) for Christian believers, and (b) about 1,000 years later, at the end of the Millennium, for those who became Christians following the Rapture.

The judgment involving the separation of the sheep and the goats appears to be a separation of the nations at the return of Christ, that is, after the Battle of Armageddon, but before the Millennium. This judgment determines who will enter the Millennium. There will be degrees of reward for the saved (who enter the Millennium), and degrees of eternal, conscious punishment for the unbelievers (who do not).

With respect to the Rapture, Judgment Seat of Christ, and the Second Coming, Dave Hunt writes:

“Matthew 24:29 (vv. 27-31) refers not to the Rapture when believers are caught up to meet Christ in the air, but to the Second Coming when His feet touch the Mount of Olives and angels gather back to Jerusalem from all over the world ‘His elect’ [i.e., the 1/3 of the Jews who have survived the Great Tribulation and are left alive when Christ returns to take the throne of His father David—Ezk 39:28 and Zec 13:9]. This occurs at the end of the Great Tribulation and has nothing to do with the Rapture. By the way, when His feet touch the Mount of Olives, Christ brings ‘all the saints’ (Zec 14:5) from heaven with Him—so the Rapture must have already occurred to take them up there. Of course this must be the case, because the Judgment Seat of Christ must have occurred in order for the bride to be ‘arrayed in fine linen, clean and white’ to dress her for the wedding in heaven’ (Rv 19:7,8). Only after these two events in heaven can the Second Coming take place (19:11-21). [Hunt, 2007, p. 5]

It appears that the “second resurrection” occurs at one stage only: at
the end of the Millennium, and it is the resurrection of the damned. This is called the Great White Throne Judgment, and it refers to the judgment of the unsaved. Just like there are degrees of rewards for the saved, there are degrees of punishment for the unsaved. The latter is what is happening at the Great White Throne Judgment.

(See also the comments below on the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.)

| Preterist Position | There is only one set of judgments: one for the believers, and one for the unbelievers. When Jesus Christ comes again, all will rise from the dead: some to heaven, and some to eternal damnation. The judgments for (some of) the believers and (all of) the unbelievers are not separated by 1000 years.

There are degrees of reward in Heaven, and degrees of suffering in hell (e.g., garden-variety pagan vs. Hitler, red light violator vs. unrepentant serial killer). Hell is not annihilation. Hank Hanegraaff says that the thought of Hitler dying in the comforting arms of his mistress—with no eternal consequence—is inappropriate. God’s justice demands that there is a hell; and everlasting torment is what the Bible teaches about hell. |

| Topic/Question | What are the “crowns” that are spoken of in Scripture, with respect to rewards? |
| Both Positions | Arnold Fruchtenbaum explains the notion of crowns well:

The Greek language has two words meaning “crown.” One is the world diadem, which is a king’s crown. It is the crown of a sovereign and of a person who is royal by his nature and by his position—a king. This is the kind of crown that Jesus wears. The second Greek word is stephanos, which is a crown given to an overcomer, a victor, one who has won a race. These are the kinds of crowns available to believers because they overcame in the spiritual warfare and now crowed at the Judgment Seat of the Messiah.

There are five such crowns mentioned in the Scriptures. The first such crown is called the incorruptible crown in I Corinthians 9:24-25 ... given to those who ... have learned to live a Spirit-controlled life.

In I Thessalonians 2:19, a second crown is called the crown of rejoicing ... given to those who win souls for Jesus ...

II Timothy 4:7-8 speaks of a third crown, the crown of righteousness ... for those who have kept the faith both doctrinally and morally in spite of adverse circumstances. It is a crown given to those who love his appearing, those who look longingly for the return of the Messiah...
A fourth crown is called the *crown of life* and is mentioned in two passages. In James 1:12, it is a crown for those who endure trials ... In Revelation 2:10, it is given to those who suffer martyrdom for their faith ... 

A fifth and final crown mentioned in the Scriptures is a *crown of glory* in 1 Peter 5:2-4 ... for faithfully feeding the flock of God. It is available to those pastors, elders and others who feed the sheep with the milk and meat of the Word of God. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 158-160]

**Topic/Question**

What is the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and when will it take place? Is this the same event as the “marriage of the Lamb”? (Some translations use “wedding” instead of “marriage”.)

Revelation 19:7-9  Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God."

**Dispensationalist Position**

Symbolically, the wife of God is Israel. Israel has temporarily rejected God. Israel will eventually return to God.

The Bride of Christ includes all believers of Jesus Christ (i.e., Christians from every part of the earth, including Jews who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour). The Lamb of God is Jesus Christ, the Creator of the universe, who came to earth as the unblemished “Passover” lamb. He offered His own life as the ultimate sacrifice for sins—to pay a penalty that mankind could not pay. Thus, He redeemed us by His shed blood on the cross.

The Marriage of the Lamb refers to the post-rapture gathering of saints in Heaven. This particular event only includes Christians because the Lamb is Jesus Christ. It may follow the Bema judgment of the saints (i.e., the Bema “judgment seat of Christ”), where rewards are given to the saved for their works on Earth. It appears to precede the Battle of Armageddon, since a short description of that battle follows a few verses later in Revelation 19 where the Lord appears to be returning with His saints. The implication is that the Marriage of the Lamb has occurred.

Matthew 8:11  I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and
Luke 22:16-18 For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.” After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, “Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

Luke 13:28-29 “There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.

Luke 22:29-30 And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Thomas Ice and Arnold Fruchtenbaum (and others) believe that the Marriage Supper of the Lamb takes place in the first part of the Millennium, but the Marriage of the Lamb appears to take place in Heaven after the Rapture and before the Second Coming [Ice, 2009b]. There is a distinction between the two events. In particular, the Marriage of the Lamb includes only those individuals who have been raptured (i.e., Christians, including deceased Christians); however, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb includes, as participants or guests, all of the saved people since the beginning of time. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb takes place on Earth, and involves Israel.

Israel, at the second advent, will be waiting for the Bridegroom to come from the wedding ceremony and invite them to that supper, at which the Bridegroom will introduce His bride to His friends (Matt. 25:1-13). [Pentecost, 1958, pp. 227-228]

Ice emphasizes, “The most important thing for anyone to consider is whether they will be invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. ... Make sure you are one of them by trusting Christ’s gift of salvation through simple faith in Him and in His gracious work on the cross that paid for the sins of all those who believe.”

The Kingdom of God is generally believed to be the period of time after the Second Coming ... and extending to all eternity.

It helps to get some background of the wedding customs of Biblical times:

The betrothal was normally arranged by the parents long before
the actual wedding. The marriage contract was effected by the payment of a dowry by the bride’s parents. Months, or perhaps years, later when the bride and groom were ready for marriage, the date for the wedding feast would be set. At the appointed time, the bridgroom and his friends would set forth from his home to her home to claim his bride.

There she, his chaste virgin bride, would await his coming with her own friends, all virgins, who would accompany her to the wedding supper, sumptuously provided at great expense by the father of the bridgroom. Upon the arrival of the bridgroom, the bride would be surrendered to him by her parents, and he would carry her back to his own home with great joy and anticipation. They would be followed by their friends, who would then join them in the happy wedding celebration at the home of the room’s father.

From that time on, the bride and groom were united, never to be parted ...

It is this beautiful custom which apparently is in view here in this striking picture of the marriage of the Lamb. The marriage had been engaged long ago when the heavenly Father essayed to claim a Bride for His Son from the world of lost mankind. In this case, however, the Bride had no dowry to offer for a husband and was quite unworthy of such a wedding. Therefore the Son offered to pay the price Himself. He became the Lamb of God, taking away the sin of the world (John 1:29), and His shed blood became the purchase price that made the Bride fit to enter the home of His father. The garments of salvation, her robes of righteousness provided by Him, replaced her own filthy rags, and she became His espoused Bride.

It was a long time, however, before He could actually go forth to claim His Bride. Finally the day had come and He had received her to Himself from the home of her parents, taking her with Him to the place of the wedding. The time en route (corresponding to the time between the “rapture” and the actual wedding supper) would be a time of fellowship and also a time of further cleansing and purification in His presence (corresponding to her appearance at His judgment seat). But now, at least, it was almost time for the wedding.

... in the parable of Matthew 22:1-14 ... All have been invited to His wedding, but most people decline His gracious call.

... It is certain that all who were saved, both before and after Christ, will be with Him, eating and drinking with Him in the kingdom of God. [Morris, 1983, pp. 386-388]

Arnold Fruchtenbaum writes:

The Rapture is the fetching of the Bride. Jesus will come in the air in order to fetch His Bride to His home, which is in Heaven. Only God the Father knows the timing of this event (Mat. 24:36).
Furthermore, it will only happen once the place of residence has been prepared (Jn. 14:1-3).

In Heaven, the third step will take place. This is the marriage ceremony given in Revelation 19:6-8 ... The marriage ceremony takes place in Heaven and involves the Church. That it must take place after the Judgment Seat of Messiah is evident from verse eight, for the Bride is viewed as being dressed in white linen, which is *the righteous acts of the saints*. This means that all the wood, hay, and stubble has been burned away and all the gold, silver, and precious stones have been purified. Thus, following the Rapture of the Church in which the Bridegroom brings the Bride with Him to His home, and following the Judgment Seat of Messiah which results in the Bride having the white linen garments, the wedding ceremony takes place. It takes place before the actual Second Coming of Messiah. The Judgment Seat of Messiah corresponds to the Jewish practice of the cleansing of the bride.

... the marriage feast, will take place on earth after the Second Coming, and with the feast the Messianic Kingdom will begin. For that reason, some of Messiah’s Kingdom parables were in reference to the marriage feast (Mat. 22:1-14; 25:1-13). Whereas the marriage ceremony involves only the Church, the marriage feast will include the Old Testament saints and the Tribulation saints. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 161-162]

Contrast the Marriage Supper of the Lamb to an earlier “feast” at the Battle of Armageddon:

An invitation had gone out long ago to come to the marriage supper of the Lamb, and many had responded. Now an invitation is issued to another feast, the supper of the great God, but what a difference in the two suppers! The guests at the one are the redeemed saints [believers] of the ages, joyfully feasting in the presence of the Redeemer. Those invited to the other are the birds of prey and the carrion-eating fowl from all over the world, and their dinner is to be the flesh and blood of the slain multitudes at Armageddon. [Revelation 19:17-18] [Morris, 1983, p. 396]

| Preterist Position |

| Topic/Question | Who are “the elect” mentioned in Matthew 24, Mark 11, and a few other places in the New Testament? The angels are seen to be “gathering” the elect from the ends of the earth. |
| Preterist Position | The angels gathering the elect from the four corners of the world refers to the early Christians that were scattered all over the earth preaching the gospel, and it’s a statement indicating that people from all over the world will be saved. (Also, wherever the saved go |
throughout the world, they will be part of the Rapture at Christ’s Second Coming.) The Rapture and resurrection will take place simultaneously. There are not going to be multiple resurrections. The Rapture has not already taken place. There is no “secret” rapture of the Church; everyone gets resurrected at the same time: believers get eternal life, and unbelievers get eternal damnation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>In Matthew 25, what is the significance of the parable of the ten virgins? The passage speaks of five foolish virgins and five wise virgins—the latter of which had enough oil for their lamps, and were admitted into the Kingdom of God.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Dispensationalist Position | J. Dwight Pentecost rejects the notion that the virgins represent the church.  
   In Revelation 19:7-16 the wedding supper follows the wedding itself. Luke 12:35-36 seems to suggest that while the marriage is in heaven the marriage feast is on earth. This parable then would describe the coming of the Bridegroom and the bride to the earth for the marriage feast to which the five wise virgins will be admitted and the foolish excluded. ... The second view sees the virgins as representing the nation Israel. [Pentecost, 1958, p. 283] |
| Preterist Position | The foolish virgins weren’t believers. They weren’t prepared to meet God. Hence, Christ is saying, “I don’t know you.” There does not appear to be an eschatological slant to the parable. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Will the Antichrist be able to raise himself from the dead? Is this a fake resurrection?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Dispensationalist Position | Revelation 13:3 One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast.  
   It’s unclear whether the Antichrist actually suffers a fatal wound, dies, and is raised to life again (and furthermore, where the power source is for the apparent resurrection). Note the word “seemed” in the phrase “seemed to have a fatal wound”. Some scholars think that the Antichrist will rise from the dead, and that he will use that as a mechanism to convince would-be followers that he is the “Christ”. Others think that the Antichrist cannot be resurrected at that time because the unsaved dead are resurrected at the Great White Throne judgment following the Millennium (e.g., [Pentecost, 1958]).  
   Dave Hunt writes: |
I agree that Antichrist will not be killed and rise from the dead (Rv 13:1-3). Only one of his seven heads was “as it were wounded unto death” and “his deadly wound was healed...” [KJV, emphasis added by Hunt] This was not a resurrection but a healing that will cause all the world to “wonder” (Rv 13:3). I don’t know why so many prophecy teachers claim that Antichrist will be resurrected. Physical resurrection comes only to those who belong to Christ and participate in “the power of his resurrection...” (Phil 3:10). [Hunt, 2008c]

Arnold Fruchtenbaum disagrees:

It is apparently during this conflict [with the ten kings] that the Antichrist is killed. Daniel 11:45b states:

Yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.

In Revelation 13:3 the death of the Antichrist is stated as:

And I saw one of his heads as though it had been smitten unto death; and this death-stroke was healed: and the whole earth wondered after the beast; ...

The seventh head, which is the Antichrist, is smitten unto death. The phrase, as though it had been smitten unto death, does not simply mean apparent death, for it is also used of Messiah in Revelation 5:6. This is simply an idiom for a resurrected individual and real death is involved.

So in the course of this conflict between the Antichrist and the other ten kings, the Antichrist is killed. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 240-241]

Thomas Ice conjectures that it may be that God raises the Antichrist from the dead, perhaps to send people “a powerful delusion” (2 Thessalonians 2:11). Hitchcock and Ice quote LaHaye:

As far as I know, this will be the first time that Satan has ever been able to raise the dead. His power and control of man is limited by God, but according to His wise providence He will permit Satan on this one occasion to have the power to raise the dead. When studied in the light of 2 Thessalonians 2, it may well be the tool he will use to deceive men. [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007, p. 103]

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but
have delighted in wickedness.

It appears that “the lie” may be the “resurrection” of the Antichrist. Some authors argue that the “powerful delusion” may mean that people who “knew” about God but were not taken in the Rapture may not have a second chance of being saved ... because they will receive a strong delusion “so that they will believe the lie”.

The Greek phrase used in verses 3 and 12 describes the fatal wound to the Beast. ... We believe that the text supports the actual death and resurrection of the Beast. ... Revelation 5:6 describes the Lamb “as if slain [hos esphagmenen],’ the same words used of the wound received by the Beast (hos esphagmenen, 13:3).” Because of this close similarity Charles Ryrie concludes, “If Christ died actually, then it appears that this ruler will also actually die. But his wound would be healed, which can only mean restoration to life.”

Those of us who agree with LaHaye’s understanding of these matters do not necessarily believe that Satan is the source of these miraculous events. [See 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12] [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007, pp. 109-112]

Some authors conjecture that “the lie” might be doctrine about: (a) evolution (e.g., the non-existence of God), and/or (b) a false god/religion in place of the God of the Bible (who alone is the omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient Creator of the Universe). For example, (b) may well be “acceptance of the ‘big lie’ of the Antichrist’s self-proclaimed deity and the submission to the worship of him by means of taking the mark of the Beast” [Fruchtenbaum, 2008, p. 255]

Both lost men and fallen angels had rejected God as Creator, deceiving themselves into believing that the universe itself was the only eternal reality, worshiping and serving “the creature more than the Creator” (Romans 1:25). Having deceived themselves with this monstrous lie, they have ever since taught this falsehood to all who would hear until, as the Scripture says, Satan has deceived “the whole world” (Revelation 12:9). And if Christ is not the Creator, He can hardly be the Savior or the coming King. These men of the last days must first be called back to believe in a true creation and therefore a real Creator God before then can ever be constrained to come to Him as Savior.

... Paul, for example, always began with the Scriptures when he witnessed to his fellow Jews, who already knew and believed the Scriptures, needing only to convince them that Jesus was the Messiah promised in the Scriptures. When he witnessed to pagans, however, he first preached the gospel of creation (Acts 14:14-17; 17:22-30). This approach, whether for this or other reasons, was also the approach of the mighty flying angel [Revelation 14:7], who gave forth a final urgent call to the lost multitudes on earth, urging them to turn back in simple faith to
Contrary to traditional dispensationalist views of eschatology, Shoebat and Richardson take a different approach about the “fatal wound”. They conjecture that the fatal wound may refer to Islam, in part because the words “head”, “mountains”, and even “beast” are sometimes used as metaphors for empires, in the Bible. For example, the term “beast” in Daniel is used as a metaphor for the successive empires beginning with Nebuchadnezzar (see Daniel 7:5-7,11,19,23). Note also that the term “horn” is a metaphor for leader.

... it will be the revival of a previously great empire that will have suffered what the Bible calls a “fatal head wound.”

[It is] not the Antichrist as commonly understood by Western prophecy analysts. This empire is the Islamic Ottoman Empire which replaced the Roman Empire after the fall of its’ [sic] remaining Eastern section, and was one of the world’s greatest empires. But it was also the head of history’s most anti-Christian empire. Ultimately it was dismantled and broken up by the Christian West ... on March 3rd, 1924.

... Islam is rising from the ashes of its past in order to claim its place as the most dominant world power. Islamists the world over are now seeking to return to the triumphant days when Muslims ruled the Middle East and non-Muslims were subservient. [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008, pp. 81-82]

Preterist Position

Hank Hanegraaff argues that the idea of an Antichrist rising from the dead is silly. If so, then “he could have masqueraded as the resurrected Christ”.

Note that only one of the seven heads seems to have been fatally wounded. This suggests the fatal wound is symbolic, and does not necessarily mean that the Antichrist rises from the dead. Note that the beast is “like” a leopard, bear, and lion. We shouldn’t take these symbols literally. Christ had the power to lay down His life, and take it up again; however, Satan cannot lay down his own life and take it up again.

In Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins’ *Left Behind* book series, the fictional character Nicolai Carpathia (the Antichrist) dies, and raises himself from the dead after three days. He does so to try to convince the world that he is God.

Hank urges his listeners and readers to become familiar with Biblical interpretation—to avoid such arguments. Hank says that it is
important “to learn the art and science of Biblical interpretation”. Satan can try to mimic the deity and work of Christ; but, mimicking is all he can do, in this context.

Remember, that the audience of John’s day knew that “666” marked the Antichrist of that time. If it had really meant the number/name of some future Antichrist, then it would be silly to tell them to look for someone whose name equates with 666.

The Great Tribulation under Nero is *symbolic* of every kind of tribulation that future believers would face.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Are angels real?  How was (or is) Christ’s body similar to that of angels?  Did Christ appear in bodily form in the Old Testament?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dispensationalist Position</strong></td>
<td>There are 2 kinds of divine appearances in the Old Testament: <em>theophanies</em> (appearances of the Father), and <em>Christophanies</em> (appearances of Jesus Christ, preincarnate). When there are Christophanies in the Old Testaments, the phrase that’s often used is “the angel of the Lord”. This is a preincarnate view of Jesus Christ. The term “angel of the Lord” is not used in the New Testament.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preterist Position</strong></td>
<td>Jesus is not the manifestation of God—He is the <em>fullness of the deity in bodily form</em> (Colossians 2:9). God the Father is a <em>spirit</em> being.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hank Hanegraaff says that, “Virtually every theological heresy begins with a misconception of the nature of God.” The Bible reveals to us that there is only one God, and that He is revealed in three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), and that these three persons are eternally distinct.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Angels are <em>created beings</em>, and they are not in any way equal to God. The devil is not the equal and opposite power of God. The devil is a creation that the Creator created. Demons are fallen angels, and they cannot repent or be saved. Their fate is sealed. By the way, at this point in history, the “good” angels cannot fall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Angels are non-physical beings. They don’t have locality or bodies. This area of study is called <em>ontology</em>: the study of the nature of being, existence, or reality. Hank Hanegraaff states, “Saying that angels have locality is a little like saying, ‘What does the colour “blue” taste like?’”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our culture pictures the devil as a guy in red, with horns and a</td>
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</table>
The angels as having wings and white robes. Angels are messengers to do God’s will, but in the Bible they can be awesome or terrifying. Angels were present at creation, at the birth of Christ, at His resurrection, and at His ascension (and, of course, at other times). There are hierarchies of angels (e.g., archangels).

A demonic spirit can only harm people indirectly, that is, not by inhabiting them directly, but by influencing people through their minds. Hank Hanegraaff states that demons can tempt you to lie (but not make you lie); a demon cannot bite you; a demon cannot cause you to levitate; and a demon cannot write messages on your fogged-up bathroom mirror. Angels cannot have sexual intercourse, contrary to what some people believe about Genesis 6. Angels do not have creative power.

Appearances of angels:
- Abraham: angels conversed with Abraham about Sodom & Gomorrah
- Daniel: angels shut the mouths of lions
- Lot: angels moved Lot’s family to safety
- Jesus: angels strengthened Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, before His arrest
- Jesus and the children: angels are watching over children

And, from earlier in this document: “We assume that Moses and Elijah didn’t actually have a body on the Mount of Transfiguration. Sometimes we read about Christophanies (or theophanies) or angelophanies, where Christ or the angels take on the appearance of a human, even though angels do not have a form.”

As for the story about Saul and the witch of Endor, and the appearance of a “ghost”, this is not normative. There is no such thing as a ghost. Hank Hanegraaff believes that the image of Samuel that was brought up “by” the witch was not actually brought up by her, but rather, in spite of her. In other words, God may have brought up the image. Note that the witch herself was surprised!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What does Jesus look like in Revelation? Is this how He will look, physically, when we see him?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Words which describe Jesus’ appearance include: white robe that reaches his feet, golden sash, head and hair are white like wool, feet are as bronze, tongue is a two-edged sword, eyes are like blazing fire, and He holds seven stars in his hand.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dispensationalist
Position

Preterist Position  These are word pictures or symbols. In ancient times, people were measured by the size of their robes. Thus, kings with long robes had a wide dominion. The characteristics mentioned in Revelation are used to describe what Christ is like, rather than what he looks like. Note that there were Christophanies in the Old Testament. Genesis 18 speaks of a theophany (i.e., God the Father taking human form, appearing with 2 angels (an angelophany) on the plains of Mamre).

Scripture References  Revelation 1 (Christ); Psalm 51 (Holy Spirit); Genesis 18 (Father)

Topic/Question  What is meant by Revelation 9:6, which states: “During those days, men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.” The context is: locusts torturing men in the latter days—for 5 months. Are these literal locusts?

Dispensationalist Position  There are not literal locusts. Their origin is from the Abyss, where demons are temporarily being held. The fallen angel that opens the Abyss is called Abaddon in Hebrew, and Apollyon in Greek. Both words mean “destruction” [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. The purpose of these demons is not to kill, but rather to torment.

David Levy writes:

To those who faced and fought the locust plague in Judah, it seemed like a living hell on earth. But this was a vivid type of a more vicious locust plague which will descend on the whole earth during the Great Tribulation. In that day, the fifth trumpet of judgment will be blown (Revelation 9:1) and with it will be opened the bottomless pit, out of which will emerge smoke so dense that it will darken the atmosphere, blotting out the light of day (Revelation 9:2). Coming out of this black pit of Hell will be a swarm of locusts (Revelation 9:3) which almost defies description. …

Are these real locusts? No, since they will not feed on grass or any green thing, but will sting men like scorpions for five months—those who are without the seal of God in their foreheads (Revelation 9:4).

Then who are they? They are demonic spirits which will take on this strange body, so vile and wretched that they will have been chained in the bottomless pit for centuries (Jude 6), so vile and wicked that they could not be allowed freedom to roam the earth. Their king will be none other than Satan himself, who is called Abaddon in Hebrew and Apollyon in Greek (Revelation 9:11), meaning the destroyer.

… Here is the picture of the final Hell that awaits them in eternity! Men will be tormented without relief, desiring to die,
only to find their suffering to be eternal.

Notice, this horrible locust plague, as well as the sixth trumpet judgment (Revelation 9:13-20), will not bring repentance! In fact, mankind will become more vile, manifesting his wickedness without restraint.” [Levy, 1987, pp. 21-23]

Amos 7:1 also speaks of locusts, and the Septuagint translation of that verse says that “... a swarm of locusts were coming, and behold, one of the young devastating locusts was Gog the King.” This is interesting because at the end of the Millennium “Gog” is mentioned again—and this presumably over 1000 years after the events of Ezekiel 38-39 (which involve Gog, the leader of the northern army). Furthermore, Locusts have no king (Proverbs 30:27—contrast this with the king over the locusts of Revelation, in Revelation 9:3,11). Thus, Gog appears to be a demonic leader. This explains how Gog could survive 1000 years. [Missler, 2005]

We are going to live forever. There is going to be a resurrection. Everyone who has ever lived on Earth will be resurrected. If you are resurrected to eternal life, you’ll be with God; if you are not saved, then you’ll be separated from God—and be consciously aware of that fact—for all eternity (but you will long for a permanent death).

Equating the locusts of Revelation to the Romans circa 70 AD, as suggested by some preterists, seems a little silly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Who is going to occupy the “New Earth” following Christ’s return?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>All believers following the Rapture who are alive when Jesus Christ returns will occupy the New Earth for the first 1000 years (Millennium) of eternity. These are the people who will “repopulate” the Earth. Raptured believers will likely also have access to the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Earth. Then, following the Millennium, when Christ creates a “new heavens and new earth”, all the saved will have access to Heaven and Earth, but new people will no longer be born.

| Preterist Position | This is a way of saying “Paradise Lost becomes Paradise Restored”. All the saved go here. It is a real, physical place, with Christ physically present. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Will there be memories in Heaven?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>(same as the preterist position)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preterist Position</td>
<td>Yes, we will have positive memories, and be able to see things in light of the way that God sees them. In other words, we will have a new understanding. Negative memories (e.g., sin, shame) will be swept away.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>How do UFOs fit into the end-times? Are “aliens” demons?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>The term UFO simply means “unidentified flying object”. It does not mean “flying saucers” or “aliens” from outer space; it is just an “unidentified” object that appears in the sky—and many of these objects have good explanations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preterist Position</td>
<td>Hank Hanegraaff states that fallen angels cannot take on a form, since they don’t have creative power. In Bible times, [good] angels have taken on human form, but since the completion of the Bible, no such events have been documented anywhere with hard evidence—which is not to say that they cannot occur.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is no evidence from science or the Bible that there are other living forms in the universe, or that there are other “universes”. 80% or more of UFO “facts” are attributable to natural causes. Furthermore, the “messages” that the “aliens” appear to give to “witnesses” (e.g., regarding humanity, the future of humanity, origins) are inconsistent with the Bible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Will Christ come back to Earth riding on a white horse (literally), and having a sword in His mouth (literally)?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preterist Position</td>
<td>These are both symbols. The Church has been God’s vehicle to preach the Word (i.e., the Bible). The two-edged sword that comes out of Christ’s mouth is symbolic of preaching the gospel to the world (but not with violence, of course, since that was not Christ’s method in the four gospels). Christ proclaimed the message peacefully, and we are to do the same.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Topic/Question** | Revelation refers to the things “what must come soon to pass”. “Behold, I come quickly”. What is meant by the words “soon”, “quickly”, and “the time is near”? Wouldn’t these words indicate that the time of fulfillment was in the first century, rather than, say, in the 21st century? How should readers of Revelation, over the centuries, interpret these words?

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**Dispensationalist Position** | “Soon” is relative. Revelation was written around 90-96 AD. Every generation is closer to the Second Coming of Christ. For example, in World War II, it could be argued that Hitler and Stalin were “antichrist” figures, and that may have had merit to the audience of the time.

The word “soon” (tachos/tachus in the Greek) occurs eight times in Revelation (Revelation 1:1; 2:16; 3:11; 11:14; 22:6,7,12,20) [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007]. The word “near” (engus) occurs twice (Revelation 1:3; 22:10). Importantly, note that “near” and “soon” appear at the beginning of the book and at the end of the book. Thus, they encompass all of the events of Revelation. But, within this timeframe, Revelation includes descriptions of Armageddon and the 1000-year Millennium—leading us to conclude that “near” and “far” are relative terms, and did not terminate in 70 AD. Thus, the terms act as “bookends” to Revelation.

Yet, if Revelation was written in AD 65-66 and Rev. 1:1-20:6 was fulfilled “soon” in the events of AD 64-70 as partial preterists maintain, then the bulk of the book was already fulfilled before most Christians ever heard or read its contents. By the time the book was written by John on Patmos in AD 65-66, copied, and carried by the messengers of the seven churches, and then re-copied and widely disseminated, the prophesied events would have already occurred. The powerful prophetic message of the Apocalypse would have been one great anti-climax. By the time most people heard the message of the book, the “soon” events of AD 70 would have already occurred. Revelation would have had one of the shortest shelf-lives of any book in history. [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007]

Most parts of Revelation can have a near-term and a far-term fulfillment (with the primary fulfillment being far-term). The New Jerusalem, the scope of the plagues, a cashless society, etc., can only be applied to a future generation beyond the first century audience. Preterists often refuse to accept Revelation literally, and this causes a great divide between the two camps (i.e., dispensationalism and preterism).

The coming of Christ is still future, and is increasingly relevant for us today. Many of the lessons in Revelation provide hope for the future,
but they also provide a picture of the terrors that the await those that reject Christ, or who make war against Christ.

| Preterist Position | The beast was somebody the early Christians could identify. In fact, Jesus said that the “generation will not pass away” before these things would come true.  

In the book of Daniel, Daniel was told to seal up the words. In Revelation, John is unveiling the things which will “soon” take place. Futurists (including dispensationalists) do a disservice to Christianity by claiming that the information contained in Revelation is only relevant to a future generation.  

Revelation was written for every generation to learn from. It was written prior to 70 AD; thus, people in Nero’s day could understand that he was the beast of Revelation. Nero committed suicide in 68 AD; so, if Nero was a beast in Revelation, this pegs a date of 68 AD or earlier for the writing of the book of Revelation. |

| Topic/Question | What is the significance of Jesus cursing the fig tree (because it wasn't bearing fruit), and then commenting: when we see the blossoming of the “fig tree”, then that means that His coming would be near?  

Matthew 24:32-34 “Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. |

| Dispensationalist Position | The fig tree represents the nation of Israel. (The olive tree represents spiritual Israel.) At the time of Christ’s first coming, He was rejected by Israel; but not so at His Second Coming. Most dispensationalists believe that the fig tree parable refers to the re-establishment of the nation of Israel, in its own land, in 1948.  

Matthew 12 describes the rejection of Jesus Christ by the Jews, even after He performed miracles that testified that He was the promised Messiah. Not only did they reject Christ as Messiah, but later they condemned Him to death. In what may be the greatest irony of history, they claimed that Jesus was able to perform demon exorcism because He was demon-possessed.  

When demons speak they use the vocal chords of the person under their control. However, in the case of the [blind and mute man who was demon-possessed (Matthew 12:22)], Jewish
exorcism was to no avail, for communication with that kind of a
demon was impossible. But Jewish theology taught that the
Messiah, when He came, would even be able to cast out that kind
of demon. The Jewish observation that dumb demons were
different was validated by Jesus in Mark 9:17-29 (particularly vv.
17, 25, 29).

... However, the people were not willing to come to a decision by
themselves, but were looking to their religious leaders, the
Pharisees, to reach a verdict for them. ... But if they were to
conclude that He was not the Messiah, the Pharisees would also
have to explain how Jesus was able to perform His many
miracles, especially the miracles that were supposed to be unique
to the Messiah only.

Then, in [Matthew 12] verses 30-37, He pronounced a judgment
on the Jewish generation of that day. That generation had
committed the unpardonable sin: the blasphemy of the Holy
Spirit. ... The content of the unpardonable sin was the national
rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus while He was physically
present on the grounds that He was demon possessed. This sin
was unpardonable, and judgment was set. The judgment came in
the year A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and the
Temple and the worldwide dispersion of the Jewish people.
[Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 295-296]

In fact, Christ wept over Jerusalem in His final days because the Jews
had rejected Him as Messiah, and He saw the future destruction of
Jerusalem, the Temple, and many lives and souls:

Matthew 23:35-39  And so upon you will come all
the righteous blood that has been shed on earth,
from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of
Zechariah son of Berekiah [i.e., from the
beginning to the end of the Jewish/Old Testament
Scriptures], whom you murdered between the
temple and the altar. I tell you the truth, all
this will come upon this generation. "O
Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets
and stone those sent to you, how often I have
longed to gather your children together, as a
hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you
were not willing. Look, your house is left to
you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see
me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord.'"

Luke 19:41-44  As he approached Jerusalem and
saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you,
even you, had only known on this day what would
bring you peace--but now it is hidden from your
eyes. The days will come upon you when your
enemies will build an embankment against you and
encircle you and hem you in on every side. They
will dash you to the ground, you and the
children within your walls. They will not leave
one stone on another, because you did not
recognize the time of God's coming to you."
In Matthew 12:38-40, Jesus told the Jews who saw, but rejected, his miracles, that he would only give them the sign of the prophet Jonah—a sign of resurrection:

Matthew 12:38-40  Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you." He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

For that generation there would be no sign but one: the sign of Jonah, which is the sign of resurrection. It is a sign that would come for Israel on three occasions: first, at the resurrection of Lazarus; second, at Jesus' own resurrection; and third, at the resurrection of the Two Witnesses in the Tribulation. The first two were rejected. The third will be accepted, for the resurrection of the Two Witnesses will lead to the salvation of the Jews of Jerusalem. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 297]

Leviticus 26 indicates that the Jews would be scattered throughout the world because of their disobedience. In particular, verse 40 speaks of a time in the future when the Israelites would confess their iniquity (sin), and the iniquity of their fathers. The Hebrew word used for iniquity is in the singular. Fruchtenbaum states that that specific sin is the rejection of the Messiah, and this needs to be confessed, before Christ returns. Also, the Jews must want Him to come back.

Hosea 5:15  Then I [Christ] will go back to my place [Heaven] until they admit their guilt. And they will seek my face; in their misery they will earnestly seek me."

Zechariah 12:10  "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.

Preterist Position  Jesus used the fig tree as a metaphor to describe people whose lives were bearing no fruit. It does not refer to the restoration of national Israel.

Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Will David be resurrected and become the King of Israel during the Millennium?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist</td>
<td>Probably. The Bible says that Israel will be judged, but not</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Position | destroyed. There are promises of the restoration of Israel and, of course, the resurrection of the dead.

Jeremiah 30:9 Instead, they will serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.

Preterist Position | David will be resurrected, but this passage isn’t talking about this. The passage is referring to the Messiah, who will rule from “David’s throne”. In fact, Christ is already enthroned in Heaven, and is ruling from “David’s throne”. David won’t be literally ruling over the people during some alleged Millennium.

You don’t want to take this passage literally because it talks of the time of Jacob’s trouble. So, with Jacob being long dead, it isn’t Jacob that’s going to experience that trouble. Instead, the passage is a prophetic warning of what’s going to happen to Jerusalem, if the people carry on in their ways, and don’t repent.

Topic/Question | Revelation says that the first beast (Antichrist) will come from the “sea”, and the second beast (False Prophet) will come from the “land”? Are the terms “sea” and “land” meant to be taken literally? What can we say about the possible identification of the Antichrist and the False Prophet?

Dispensationalist Position | Although we should take things literally as much as reasonably possible, it appears that “sea” and “land” are to be taken metaphorically in this context. In particular, the land is Israel, and the sea is the rest of the nations (i.e., the world).

God “set apart” Israel from the rest of the nations. The intent was to use Israel as an example of how God blesses the nations that proclaim Him as the one true God; however, much of Israel disobeyed God over the centuries. God will still bless the descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; He is not through with Israel yet.

Symbolically, the first beast (the Antichrist) rises from a nation other than Israel, and the second beast (the False Prophet) rises from Israel. These false leaders will appear to do good things at first; however, they will ultimately try to destroy both Israel and the world. They will try to destroy many people through a false peace.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-4 Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “Peace and safety”, destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not
escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief.

Some Bible scholars think that the religious leader may come out of Israel, and that the Antichrist might come out of the revived Roman Empire (greater Europe). Others think the False Prophet might come out of the Roman Catholic church. For example, the late Pope John Paul feared that an ungodly leader, perhaps even the Antichrist, may some day come from the Roman Catholic church.

David Pawson thinks that the first beast might be an Arab Muslim, representing seven nations and ten armies [Pawson, 2004]. Note that Israel is desperate for peace today—peace at almost any price. Pawson remarks that this would put a Muslim and a Jew together to achieve “peace”—and almost the whole world would rejoice and support their plan. He adds that Islam is the only religion in the world that has built into it a denial of the fundamental truths of Christianity (e.g., that Jesus is the Christ—God’s Son).

According to the prophet Daniel, the Antichrist will make (or strengthen) a seven-year peace treaty with Israel. (The square brackets delimit my comments, for clarification purposes.)

Daniel 9:24-27  "Seventy 'sevens' [70*7 = 490 years] are decreed for your people and your holy city [Jerusalem] to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy [Jesus Christ].  "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem [King Artaxerxes’ order, possibly on March 14, 445 BC] until the Anointed One, the ruler, [Jesus Christ, the Messiah] comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens' [e.g., April 6, 32 AD]. It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One [Jesus Christ] will be cut off [literally "executed"] and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He [Antichrist] will confirm a covenant [peace treaty] with many for one 'seven' [7 years]. In the middle of the 'seven' [at the three and one-half year mark] he will put an end to sacrifice and offering [in the rebuilt Temple]. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation [a vile image blasphemous to God], until the end that is decreed is poured out on him."
Remember, people today are desperate for peace in a world that seems to grow more chaotic and unstable each day. Even in the United States, it is very difficult to achieve national security, as evidenced in the days post-September 11, 2001. Energy prices are soaring, as there appear to be fewer and fewer politically friendly nations around the world, meaning that energy prices often command a substantial “fear” premium.

The False Prophet will try to get the world to worship the Antichrist. In one of Revelation’s most famous prophecies (still future), the False Prophet will cause all of mankind to receive a mark on (or in) their right hand or their forehead in order to receive some kind of a “mark” (chip?) in order to buy or sell. Only those who worship the Antichrist or his image will be permitted to receive the mark. Revelation really appears to describe a cashless society. This is not at all surprising in today’s world, with the emphasis on electronic commerce, credit cards, online banking, etc.; and especially so, given the amount of financial fraud that goes on, including counterfeiting, identity theft, and other forms of financial crime. In many nations today, there are few effective deterrents or penalties for financial crimes. Furthermore, many financial payments and transactions today go through computers (e.g., online transactions in a store, or even transactions from home, over the Web)—and do not involve the physical transfer of cash.

Revelation 13:16-18 He [the False Prophet] also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast [Antichrist] or the number of his name. This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.

Revelation 13:16-18 [King James Version] And he [the False Prophet] causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast [Antichrist], or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

We probably won’t be able to tell who the Antichrist and the False Prophet are before they actually come to power, but whoever they are, it appears that they will cause much harm and destruction, as described in Revelation.
Charles Dyer comments on the role of the Antichrist in the end times scenario:

“What is this ‘covenant’ that the Antichrist will make with Israel? Daniel does not specify its content, but he does indicate that it will extend for seven years. During the first half of this time Israel feels at peace and secure, so the covenant must provide some guarantee for Israel’s national security. Very likely the covenant will allow Israel to be at peace with her Arab neighbors. One result of the covenant is that Israel will be allowed to rebuild her temple in Jerusalem …

The Antichrist will come with the olive branch of peace in his hand. He will come on the scene and accomplish what was considered impossible. He will solve the Middle Eastern peace puzzle. He will rid the world of terrorism. He will be hailed as the greatest peacemaker who has ever lived.

You can just see it now. He will be Time Magazine’s Person of the Year. He will win the Nobel Peace Prize.” [Hitchcock, 2006, pp. 134-135]

(See also the section in this document on the “mark of the beast”.)

Preterist Position

Did Nero rise from the sea? Did Rome rise from the sea? The beast is both Nero and Rome. Even when Nero no longer rules, the beast will exist. Rome is west of Judea, across the Mediterranean, and it seems that armies from Rome came from the sea. The sea is also symbolic of sin (e.g., dark depths, chaos); this also describes the nations.

We should not be playing “pin the tail on the Antichrist” (i.e., let’s not try to guess names).

Dispensationalist Position

Probably literally, upon Christ’s return at the Battle of Armageddon. Mud, water, large hailstones, etc., mixed with blood in certain areas.

Topic/Question

Scripture says that blood at the end of the Battle of Armageddon will flow to the height of the horses’ bridles for a distance of about 320 km or 176 miles (i.e., 1600 stadia or furlongs). Is this to be taken literally, or allegorically?

Revelation 14:19-20 The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath. They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles [about 1.5 metres or 5 feet] for a distance of 1,600 stadia [about 320 kilometres or 200 miles].
could reach that height. The battle spans the distance from the
(Mount of) Megiddo in the north (about 60 miles or 100 kilometres
north of Jerusalem), then past Jerusalem, and down into Bozrah,
Edom (i.e., modern-day Jordan). Many armies will be there—
possibly hundreds of millions of people. One furlong (stadium)
equals approx 0.2 km; therefore, 1600 furlongs (stadia) * 0.2
km/furlong = 320 km. Equivalently, there are 8 furlongs in a mile.

Henry Morris entitles this section of his Revelation commentary,
“The Grapes of Wrath”. There are actually two sickle judgments in
Revelation 14: the first appears to involve the harvesting of grain,
and the second involves the harvesting of grapes. The first sickle
judgment may refer to the harvesting of Babylon (calling a remnant
of people out of her, that is, to repentance, via the collective
judgments of Revelation). The second appears to be the final sickle
judgment of the Beast and his followers at Armageddon [Morris,
1983]. Joel 3 also speaks of this judgment in the Valley of
Jehoshaphat (at Armageddon):

Joel 3:12-14  ‘Let the nations be roused; let
them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for
there I will sit to judge all the nations on
every side. Swing the sickle, for the harvest
is ripe. Come, trample the grapes, for the
winepress is full and the vats overflow—so
great is their wickedness!’ Multitudes,
multitudes in the valley of decision! For the
day of the LORD is near in the valley of
decision.

Reaping (e.g., harvest in Revelation 14:14-16) is a term used in
Scripture for salvation; treading (e.g., grapes in Revelation 14:17-20)
is a symbol of judgment [Fruchtenbaum, 2004].

Preterist Position  This is an allegory; the physical dimensions described make this
impossible.

Dispensationalist Position  Yes, the hailstones are literal. There is no evidence to suggest this
occurred in 70 AD. Two precedents occurred in the Old Testament,
and we can assume that the events of Revelation will be fulfilled,
literally:

Exodus 9:22-26  Then the LORD said to Moses,
"Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that hail will fall all over Egypt—on men and animals and on everything growing in the fields of Egypt." When Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, the LORD sent thunder and hail, and lightning flashed down to the ground. So the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt; hail fell and lightning flashed back and forth. It was the worst storm in all the land of Egypt since it had become a nation. Throughout Egypt hail struck everything in the fields—both men and animals; it beat down everything growing in the fields and stripped every tree. The only place it did not hail was the land of Goshen, where the Israelites were.

Joshua 10:11  As they fled before Israel on the road down from Beth Horon to Azekah, the LORD hurled large hailstones down on them from the sky, and more of them died from the hailstones than were killed by the swords of the Israelites.

| Preterist Position | Robert Gentry says that the Roman Tenth Legion hurled large boulders against Jerusalem, via catapults, and that this may have fulfilled the prophecy [LaHaye & Ice, 2003]. |

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Does Islam believe in a “Messiah”-like figure in the Last Days?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>According to the UK Telegraph (January 14, 2006), “‘Divine Mission’ Driving Iran’s New Leader”:</td>
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<tr>
<td>“All streams of Islam believe in a divine saviour, known as the Mahdi, who will appear at the End of Days.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Iran’s dominant ‘Twelver’ sect believes this will be Mohammed ibn Hasan, regarded as the 12th Imam, or righteous descendant of the Prophet Mohammad.”</td>
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<td>“He is said to have gone into ‘occlusion’ in the ninth century, at the age of five. His return will be preceded by cosmic chaos, war and bloodshed. After a cataclysmic confrontation with evil and darkness, the Mahdi will lead the world to an era of universal peace.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“This is similar to the Christian vision of the Apocalypse. Indeed, the Hidden Imam is expected to return in the company of Jesus.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark Hitchcock writes:</td>
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<td>“According to Islamic teaching, he will return near the end of the world. According to their end-time view, when he returns, he will rule the earth for seven years, bringing about the Final Judgment and end of the world. The mention of a seven-year rule</td>
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</table>
for the Mahdi is interesting to me because the Bible predicts that
the Antichrist or false messiah will hold sway over the earth for
seven years, ruling the entire world for the final half of the seven-
year period. Could it be that the Islamic expectation of a messiah
who will rule for seven years could set them up to initially accept
such a leader who will make a seven-year peace treaty according
to Daniel 9:27?” [Hitchcock, 2006, p. 77]

Ron Rhodes, quoting Dore Gold author of The Fight for Jerusalem,
writes:

For [Iranian President Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad, the destruction
of Israel is one of the key global developments that will trigger
the appearance of the Mahdi.” He seeks to “wipe Israel off the
map” (a phrase he borrowed from the deceased mullah, Ayatollah
Khomeini). … He boldly and defiantly claims the world will soon
be without the Great Satan (America) and the Little Satan
-Israel), and this will give rise to the emergence of the Twelfth
Imam. [Rhodes, 2008, pp. 31-32]

Of grave concern is the possibility of the use of nuclear weapons
against Israel, the United States, and the West.

Other authors write:

Westerners do not understand that when it comes to the Muslim
world, even the most “moderate” of Muslims, if they are
religious, all believe in the coming of the Mahdi and the
establishment of the Caliphate to rule the entire Globe by
changing world laws to adapt the Islamic Sharia. The Coming of
the Mahdi to religious Muslims is as holy of a belief as the
coming of Messiah is to Christians and Jews.” [Shoebat &
Richardson, 2008, p. 45]

An Islamic prophecy speaks about an army of Muslims carrying
Black Banners, with the creed of Islam written across them:
There is no god but Allah, Mohammed is Allah’s messenger.
The black banner has always been the banner of Jihad. In this
tradition, the Muslims are marching from Iran and are heading
toward Israel to take Jerusalem for their Mahdi. After the
Muslims have conquered Jerusalem, the Mahdi is said to use the
Temple Mount as his seat of authority from which he will rule
over the whole earth.” [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008, p. 138]

Today, Mt. Moriah, sometimes known as the Temple Mount or in
Arabic as Haram Ash-Sharif, is the location of two Mosques and
is considered to be the third holiest site of Islam. There is
endless speculation about the Temple Mount regarding issues
such as exactly where the Jewish Temple once was located on the
Mount or whether or not there will be a Jewish Temple rebuilt
there in the future. Based on the above verse from the Apostle
Paul, it certainly seems to indicate that there will indeed be a
rebuilt Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. The Apostle Paul says that the Antichrist will “set himself up in God’s Temple,” or more literally, “he takes his seat in the temple of God”. This speaks not so much of a literal sitting down as it does of a taking a position of authority. Thus we see that the Antichrist will make Mt. Moriah, and more specifically, the rebuilt Jewish Temple, the specific location of his rule. Jesus warned of this event two thousand years ago.

... we see that the Mahdi is the leader of a world revolution that will institute a “new world order” that will be based on the religion of Islam. Islam will be the only religion that will be allowed to be practiced. Both the Antichrist and the Mahdi are said to be the unqualified leaders of a global religious movement that will draw worship away from the God of the Bible and His Son Jesus Christ. [Richardson, 2008]

In response, Mark Hitchcock argues that it is very unlikely that a leader in Islam would actually claim to be God, as required by 2 Thessalonians 2:4. This suggests that the Antichrist will not be Islamic [Hitchcock, 2008].

2 Thessalonians 2:4 He [Antichrist] will oppose and exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

Islam’s Antichrist is known as the Dajjal. For more information about Islamic eschatology, see [Reagan, 2009].

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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Is the failure to teach the pre-tribulational Rapture crushing the hope of many people? Is this what is meant by scoffers asking, “Where is the promise of His coming?”</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Peter 3:4</td>
<td>They will say, &quot;Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Dispensationalist Position | Dave Hunt warns that the failure to support classical dispensationalism may lead to a denial of the “blessed hope” that many Christians should be looking forward to. |
| Preterist Position        | It should not crush the hope of many people, but should actually help build their faith. |

| Topic/Question | Will Satan literally be chained or bound with a physical chain (and with a physical lock requiring a key) for 1000 years, and be placed in an abyss? Furthermore, has Satan been bound, yet? |
| Dispensationalist Position | It is most likely symbolic, but Satan *will be bound* for 1000 literal years, so that he cannot deceive people during that time.  

Satan has not been bound yet; this event is still in the future. One look at the evil in today’s world (and going back over the centuries) makes it clear that Satan has not been bound yet! If Satan were “chained” today, then the church should not be undergoing persecution, and there shouldn’t be much evil in the world— but there is. In fact, it appears that Satan has been more active in the past 2000 years than before Christ [Morris, 1983]. Timothy describes the “last days”, and arguably, our current world’s social situation, as follows:

> 2 Timothy 3:1-5 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

> 2 Timothy 3:12-13 In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. |

| Preterist Position | It is symbolic. Satan is a spiritual, not physical, being. He is not a literal dragon or serpent, and therefore cannot be “chained” up.  

Satan was bound at the time of Christ’s crucifixion on the cross. |

| Topic/Question | How should we be interpreting current news events, in the light of end times prophecy? |

| Dispensationalist Position | News events have been indicating that prophetic events in the Bible are being fulfilled before our eyes. The time of Christ’s Second Coming is near; however, we have to be careful: we cannot predict the *date* or *time* of Christ’s return. We should not try to identify the Antichrist or the time of the Rapture. Scripture tells us that only God Himself knows those times. Even Christ, when He was on Earth, claimed (in His earthly body) that only God the Father knew the times.  

Some news events that strongly suggest that the time of Revelation’s fulfillment is drawing closer include:

- The return of national Israel to its land in 1948—after an absence of thousands of years |
Increased strain in Middle East relations, especially between Israel and its neighbours

the prophecy in Revelation 13:16-17 about mankind requiring a mark (chip?) in the right hand or in the forehead to buy and sell (engage in commerce). This could literally be fulfilled in our lifetime—and it may well be used to facilitate the cashless society that the apostle John wrote about over 1900 years ago.

A general decline in ethics, an increase in godlessness, and an increase in violence, greed, etc.

Teaching that a microchip implant in the right hand or forehead is safe and violates no Scripture ... is a very dangerous teaching, since there is at least some possibility that such a chip may be used to implement a cashless society. If such a chip actually turns out to be the mark of the beast (and we assume that people receiving this mark would know that they are pledging allegiance to the Antichrist), then obviously, the mark should be avoided at all costs (to avoid losing one’s soul to hell). By warning people about such a prophecy ahead of time, some people may refuse to accept such a mark, and therefore their souls will be saved.

One of the reasons why people are so confused about Revelation is because they’re afraid to read the text at face value; thus, they’re open to all kinds of conflicting opinions. Time will tell how Revelation unfolds, but until then, it’s reasonable to believe that God actually means what He wrote, and that we shouldn’t engage in vague guesswork about how a particular prophecy may have been “fulfilled” in the past. The bottom line is that most of Revelation is still in the future—and perhaps in the very near future.

Preterist Position

Reading the Bible in one hand while holding a newspaper in the other hand is called “newspaper eschatology” and this should be avoided. Current events cannot be used to interpret or predict events that are about to be fulfilled in Revelation, especially since much of Revelation has been fulfilled over 1900 years ago. Instead, we should become familiar with proper biblical interpretation skills in order to avoid such nonsense.

Hank Hanegraaff believes that the “mark of the beast” in Revelation 13:16-17 is unlikely to be a computer chip implant, and that a cashless society is unlikely to be realized. These ideas are pure sensationalism, and cause embarrassment to Christianity. “Why drag Christ’s name through the mud?” Hank says that the book of Revelation should not be reduced to a book of riddles. The symbols in Revelation are deeply rooted in Old Testament history. Besides, Greek grammar indicates that the mark is “on” the hand and forehead, and not “in” them; therefore, the mark cannot be a microchip implant.
The mark is an internal “mark”: when we believe in Christ, we are essentially “marked” as belonging to Christ. Thus, the mark is not literal. Hank says that what we do, and what we say, are more important to our Christian testimony—than the idea of warning against a microchip implant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Is there such a place as purgatory? Catholics believe that, upon death, people go here to suffer some degree of punishment before being admitted to Heaven. For example, an unbeliever or a weak believer would go here prior to going to Heaven.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both Positions Share the Same View</td>
<td>There is no such thing as purgatory. It is not in the Bible. Christ paid the full price on the cross. It is through faith, and by God’s grace (unmerited favour), that we are saved. Beyond believing in Christ for salvation, there is nothing we can “do” on our own to get into Heaven; Christ accomplished it all. Furthermore, Christ did not have to go to Hades or hell after he died to “finish” the job. It was completed at the cross. At that time, Satan’s power over us was broken. Note that there was no need for Christ to “wrestle the keys of hell and death” from Satan in Hades—because Christ finished the work of atonement on the cross. The Greek word tetelestai is an ancient accounting term. It means “paid in full”. When Christ used that word while He was on the cross, He literally meant that His death paid, in full, the penalty of sin for all of mankind—providing, of course, that a person accepts that forgiveness. God the Father demands that payment be made for sin because He is a just God who demands payment for transgression. That penalty is the shedding of innocent blood. Christ provided that penalty for us. To that end, God looks upon a believer as having been cleansed from sin, because of Christ’s perfect sacrifice. In other words, we are “justified” by Christ. Only Christ, who was sinless, could offer a perfect sacrifice—i.e., the sacrifice of Himself. Jesus Christ, the Creator of the universe, died on behalf of His creation. Because God Himself provided the sacrifice, there is nothing else that anyone can be added to make up for one’s sin. No amount of personal punishment or pleading will do. It is finished—Christ’s sacrifice on the cross was sufficient to pay the full penalty of sin. To insist that something be added beyond what Christ did, is wrong (i.e., apart from believing in Christ and accepting/acknowledging his forgiveness and authority). He was the “Lamb of God”. It was the sacrifice of Christ that all the Old Testament animal sacrifices pointed to. Once Christ provided His own body as a sacrifice, there was no more need to continue with the animal sacrifices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Acts 4:12 | Salvation is found in no one else,
for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

Before Christ, believers in God implicitly looked forward by faith to the promised Saviour (Christ) who would pay the penalty for their sins. Many millions of common folk, pre-Christ, were saved. Thus, Old Testament saints are saved in the “same way” that we are today.

It is important that people reject the notion of purgatory (the Catholic notion of a period of suffering after death to help purify an individual from his/her sins) because it implies that Christ’s death was not sufficient for the payment of our sins. After we die, our works are done with; nothing can change our salvation status after we die. In other words, we need to make a decision about Christ before we die.

The unsaved are lost forever; there is no purgatory to get a second chance. The saved are saved without any additional suffering; however, we should realize that 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 indicates that there are degrees of rewards for believers. Those individuals who are saved, but did very little for the cause of Christ, will miss out on a lot of rewards—even though such people are saved and still have a great reward. Even the person who is saved “by the skin of his teeth” (e.g., a deathbed convert) will be in Heaven.

Roman Catholic eschatology is amillennial. It also teaches that there is no Rapture. (It would conflict with Catholicism’s notion of purgatory, which is variable in length.)

Note that we cannot judge people’s hearts. There are people who believe in Christ, but may believe in purgatory. This isn’t to say that such people aren’t saved, but it is a very dangerous position to reject the notion that Christ paid it all. Christ did pay it all. Any other belief distorts Biblical Christianity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Were there false Christs in the years prior to 70 AD?</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Matthew 24:24 For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible.</td>
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</table>

Dispensationalist Position

Historical evidence suggests that there were a few false prophets in the years between Christ and 70 AD; however, there were no false Christs, i.e., people who claimed to be the Messiah [LaHaye & Ice, 2003].

Preterist Position
| Topic/Question | How does our understanding of earthquakes, famines, plagues, etc., tie into Revelation? Isn’t it true that these events are occurring with increasing frequency in the world today, and therefore, these are signs of Christ’s soon appearing?
Are the earthquakes mentioned in Revelation symbolic, or literal? |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dispensationalist Position</strong></td>
<td>In recent decades, the number of earthquakes seems to be increasing, and seismology seems to confirm this. Little tremors may have gone unnoticed many years ago, but major tremors would not. There are many plagues and famines throughout the world, and probably many more to come, given the rapidly increasing population throughout the world. The earthquakes mentioned are literal earthquakes because specific numbers are given about the number of people killed in some of the earthquakes. For example, Revelation 11 says that 7,000 people were killed in one specific earthquake, and that one-tenth of the city fell. Furthermore, historians like Josephus (writing about events circa 70 AD) did not write about earthquakes such as those described in Revelation—probably because they didn’t occur. Earthquakes occurred in Jerusalem or at the Temple in: 30 AD (at Christ’s death), 33 AD, and 48 AD. There were no earthquakes to report in 70 AD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preterist Position</strong></td>
<td>There have always been earthquakes, famines, plagues, etc. The dispensationalists’ argument about the increasing frequency of earthquakes is not really an issue. Keep in mind that during the plague years in Europe, hundreds of years ago, people may have thought the same thing, that is, that the world was coming to an end. Probably every generation has thought that theirs was the last generation! It is not clear whether the earthquakes are literal or symbolic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>In Daniel 12:4, circa 600 BC, Daniel was told to seal up the book or prophecy “until the time of the end”, when many will go “here and there to increase knowledge”. What does this mean?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Dispensationalist Position** | It referred to the distant future—when travel and knowledge would greatly increase. This Scripture is being fulfilled in modern times.
**Preterist Position**

Daniel 7:14 is a parallel to Jesus coming on the clouds, as described in Matthew 24. Matthew 24 was fulfilled in 70 AD; therefore, Daniel 7 was fulfilled. Also, Daniel 9 is a fulfillment of the 3½ years before Christ’s death, and the 3½ years after it.

The book of Revelation is *not* to be sealed up because the people of the day needed to hear the message, and take flight before the destruction of both Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD. In fact, Revelation says to the first century audience, “the time is near”.

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**Topic/Question**

What is Heaven going to be like? What will our resurrected bodies be like? Where is Heaven? (Compare this section to an earlier section entitled “Is hell a real place?”)

**Both Positions Share the Same View**

In Heaven, we will have real, physical, recognizable bodies, not subject to death or decay. There will be no physical or emotional ailments, handicaps, etc.

Hank Hanegraaff says that Heaven is not only a place, but a “person” and a “relationship”. Our body is, obviously, a physical entity. Upon death, the soul leaves the body to go to be with the Lord (for believers), and our physical body decays. Upon resurrection, however, our body is rebuilt (yes, it is a real, physical body), and the soul comes back to the body. After the resurrection, Heaven is the current universe but it is restored and perfected, that is, evil and sin are purged forever.

Before the bodily resurrection, Heaven is not a “place”. Upon death, the soul of a believer goes to be with the Lord. (The soul is a non-physical entity.) In this regard, we can say that Heaven is a “person”—namely Christ. There is continuity between the body that we have, and the body we’ll get. Note that that the spirit lives on after our death, but there is a period of time between death and resurrection where we do not have living/physical bodies.

Although we can’t be dogmatic about it, it is quite possible that we’ll have bodies in the prime of youth. For example, many people have died as babies or fetuses; so, it would more realistic to expect a young adult appearance, rather than the “state” that a person was at, just before death. Furthermore, as people get older, the body tends to break down in various ways, so it’s unlikely that a perfected body would be one that is quite old in appearance.

Hank Hanegraaff notes that we’ll definitely be able to recognize our loved ones “from both a metaphysical and a physical standpoint”. This is not at odds with Isaiah 65:17 because that verse implies that...
sin, mourning, pain, etc. will pass away. We’ll know our loved ones from a deeper, non-physical, but more intimate perspective.

The DNA that we currently have will be perfected. Today, there are many imperfections in our DNA—imperfections that have existed since Adam & Eve sinned (i.e., since the “fall” of creation). Having said all this, we need to take care of our current bodies, no matter what they look or feel like. We are to regard our bodies as God’s “temple”.

So, what will Heaven be like? The Bible teaches that it will be a real universe, containing a real Earth, and real people. We will have a purposeful existence, and of course, we will be living with God in a universe without sin or suffering of any kind. Perhaps we will all have stories (biographies) to tell.

Hanegraaff comments that we won’t instantly “know everything” once we get our resurrected bodies; otherwise, Heaven could very well be boring. We’ll be continually learning and exploring the depths of God’s wisdom, love, holiness, and creation. Imagine playing golf and getting a hole-in-one, on every shot. Under these circumstances, argues Hank, even Tiger Woods would become bored and give up the game.

We will never come to an end of exploring the Creator’s creative handiwork. The universe will literally be our playground. Even if we were capable of exhausting the new heaven and the new earth, God, of course, could create brand new vistas for us to explore. ... Our ability to appreciate one another will be enhanced exponentially. ... Imagine being able to love another human being without even a tinge of selfishness. Well, will heaven be boring? Absolutely not! We will learn without error, but make no mistake about this: We will learn. We will grow. We will develop in heaven ... Far from being dead and dull, heaven will be an exhilarating, exciting experience that will never come to an end. Now if that’s true, we should fix our eyes not on passing vanities, but rather on eternal verities. We should have an eternal perspective. [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man, February 18, 2009]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Were the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks prophesied in Scripture?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>Not specifically. These are just signs that we are living in increasingly “perilous times” with “wars and rumors of wars”. Indirectly, they point forward to a time when many nations will move against Israel (Ezekiel 38-39), when all nations will move against</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Israel at Armageddon (Revelation 16:16), when the cities of the nations will fall (Rev. 16:19-20), and so on. God will eventually rescue Israel from these tribulations.

Tim LaHaye [LaHaye, 2007] argues that the security issues we’ve seen will ultimately lead to:

- a single world government (eventually under Antichrist), as implied by Daniel 7 and Revelation 13
- a common world religion that opposes Israel and the God of the Bible
- Jerusalem becoming “a burdensome stone” (Zechariah 12:2-3; Joel 3:2). We expect an increase in the number of United Nations resolutions about Israel/Jerusalem, with Israel being blamed for the lack of peace.

- Thomas Ice argues that only an understanding of Bible prophecy will give people the background information they need to make sense of September 11th [Ice, 2007]. This event is a “wake-up call” to churches today.

It is interesting to note that September 11, 1683 was a defeat for Islam in Europe (Vienna). Some prophecy teachers do not think that the choice of date (September 11th) for the attack on the World Trade Center was coincidental.

Dave Hunt argues that the seeds for discontent between Muslims and Jews began in the tents of Abraham [Hunt, 2001; Hunt, 2006]. The root of sin, however, goes back to Satan and the fall of man in the Garden of Eden.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
<th>No. Again, these are just signs that we are living in increasingly “perilous times”.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>When did “all nations” (Joel 3:2) come against Israel in the past?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>They didn’t—ever. LaHaye and Ice write:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How can preterists state that Zechariah 12:3 has been fulfilled, saying that “all the nations of the world” came against Jerusalem when the Lord returned in A.D. 70, when only Rome came against Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and conquered it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... But when did God destroy all the nations that came against Jerusalem? (Zechariah 12:9). Never—it is still a future event!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Did the Jews, as a nation, turn to Christ in A.D. 70 as Zechariah 12:10 promises? No—that is a yet future event.

Where is the evidence that two-thirds of the Jews were killed and one-third accepted their Messiah in A.D. 70, as required by Zechariah 13:8?

Zechariah 14:1-4 says the Mount of Olives will split in two at Christ’s return. But that didn’t happen in A.D. 70.

... And the list goes on! For example, when was Babylon destroyed “in one day” (Revelation 18:8), putting an end to the pagan religions that began in Babylon? Or when did the kings of the earth mourn over the death of Babylon? Or when was Satan bound in the bottomless pit for 1,000 years? And weren’t most of those years when he supposedly couldn’t tempt anyone known as “the dark ages”? How could the world become so void of Christianity and the light of the gospel while Satan was bound?

... We know that 109 Old Testament prophecies of Jesus’ first coming were fulfilled literally, and that is one reason we know without question that He is the Messiah. It stands to reason, then, that the 321 prophecies regarding His second coming will also be fulfilled literally. [LaHaye & Ice, 2003]

Dave Hunt [Hunt 2001; Hunt 2006] writes that Jerusalem was in a state of ruin during the time of Zechariah; however, Zechariah (and Joel) indicated that Jerusalem would be the focus of worldwide attention, and that its neighbours would be united against Israel/Jerusalem. The climax will be at Armageddon, when the nations of the world gather for war in Northern Israel at a place called Har [mount of] Megiddo “which in the Hebrew means Armageddon” (Revelation 16:16). Jerusalem, incidentally, means “city of peace”—yet more wars have been fought over Jerusalem than any other city on Earth; however, when Christ returns, then true peace will come out of Jerusalem (because of Christ).

What is the message conveyed by these evil spirits through their host of willing oracles? [Revelation 16:13-14] It is this: “Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near, let them come up: Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat” (Joel 3:9-12).

And so they come, heading towards Jerusalem ... there are great multitudes, both of professional warriors and untrained (but angry) civilians assembling in the great chain of plains and valleys on the east of Jerusalem. In desperation they are eager to do battle with Almighty God, knowing Christ and his heavenly army will shortly come to earth near Jerusalem, and He is the one
responsible for their awful sufferings. Having rejected Him as their Savior, their only hope is to destroy Him before He becomes their Judge. [Morris, 1983, pp. 313-314]

Regarding the state of war and evil, Jeremiah 17:9 accurately characterizes what seems to be every generation since Adam, and especially today: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”

Preterist Position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is meant by the term “mystery” in Scripture?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>It means something that was hidden (or a “secret”) in the past—and which God is now revealing (at the time of writing). One such mystery concerns the Rapture:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

> 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep [die], but we will all be changed [transformed, Raptured]—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 

When used as a synonym for the word “die”, the word “sleep” is only used of believers, and not unbelievers [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. In fact, we get our English word “cemetery” from the early Christian term meaning “sleeping place” [Jeffrey, 1990].

Another mystery is that of the Church: the Church was hidden or unknown in Old Testament Scriptures, but was revealed in the New Testament. The Church is the “body of Christ” (i.e., Christianity). In the end times, the Church will be taken out of the picture (i.e., raptured) prior to the 70th week of Daniel.

It was no mystery that God was going to provide salvation for the Jews, nor that Gentiles would be blessed in salvation. The fact that God was going to form Jews and Gentiles alike into one body was never revealed in the Old Testament and forms the mystery of which Paul speaks in Ephesians 3:1-7; Romans 16:25-27; Colossians 1:26-29. This whole mystery program was not revealed until after the rejection of Christ by Israel. [Pentecost, 1958, p. 201]

J. Dwight Pentecost contrasts Israel to the Church; many contrasts are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distinction</th>
<th>Israel</th>
<th>Church</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extent of Biblical Revelation</td>
<td>4/5 of the Bible</td>
<td>1/5 of the Bible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Divine Purpose

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Divine purpose</th>
<th>Earthly promises in the covenants</th>
<th>Heavenly promises in the gospel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seed of Abraham</td>
<td>Physical seed</td>
<td>Spiritual seed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth</td>
<td>Physical birth</td>
<td>Spiritual birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headship</td>
<td>Abraham</td>
<td>Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covenants</td>
<td>Directly related to the Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic, and New Covenants</td>
<td>Indirectly related to the same</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Nationality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>One nation</th>
<th>From many nations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Divine Dealing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Divine Dealing</th>
<th>National and individual</th>
<th>Individual only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Dispensations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dispensations</th>
<th>Seen in all ages from Abraham</th>
<th>Seen only in the present age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Ministry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministry</th>
<th>Israel only; no missionary activity</th>
<th>A commission to fulfill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Death of Christ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Death of Christ</th>
<th>Guilty nationally</th>
<th>Perfectly saved by it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Governing Principle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governing Principle</th>
<th>Mosaic law</th>
<th>Grace</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Christ’s Earthly Reign

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christ’s Earthly Reign</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Co-reigners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Priesthood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priesthood</th>
<th>Had a priesthood</th>
<th>Is a priesthood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marriage</th>
<th>Unfaithful wife</th>
<th>Bride of Christ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Judgments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Judgments</th>
<th>Must face judgment</th>
<th>Delivered from all judgments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Preterist Position

**Topic/Question**: When did the “times of the Gentiles” begin, and when will they end?

**Dispensationalist Position**

The period began when the Babylonian army took the Israelites captive in 606 BC, and will end with the Glorious Appearing (physical return) of Jesus Christ.

The “times of the Gentiles” has been defined by the Lord as that period of time in which Jerusalem was under the dominion of Gentile authority (Luke 21:24). This period began with the Babylonian captivity when Jerusalem fell into the hands of Gentiles. It has continued until the present time and will continue through the tribulation period, in which era the Gentile powers will be judged. The dominion of the Gentiles ends at the second advent of Messiah to the earth. [Pentecost, 1958, p. 315]

An argument can also be made for the period starting when Christianity was taken to the Gentiles following the ascension of Jesus Christ (circa 30-32 AD, beginning around the Day of Pentecost) and ending with the Rapture. The book of Acts describes how the primary focus of Christ’s message was first the Jews, and after the Jews rejected the message, it was actively proclaimed among the
Samaritans, followed by the Gentiles. The Gentiles comprise most of the Christian Church today. The apostle Paul was instrumental in bringing the Church to the Gentiles.

David Levy says that the times of the Gentiles began in 586 BC when the exile began (under Nebuchadnezzar), and will end at the Second Coming of Christ, rather than at the Rapture.

Luke 21:24 “… Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”

Revelation 11:2-3 But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months. And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.”

From the latter verse (which lies chronologically between the 6th and 7th trumpet judgments), the implication is that the times of the Gentiles will end at the return of Jesus Christ at the Battle of Armageddon (i.e., at the “glorious appearing”).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What significance in eschatology, if any, does the Holocaust during World War II have?</td>
<td>According to the Bible, there are two reasons for this universal hatred of Jews and Israel. First of all, the Jews, as God’s chosen people, are under His judgment for their rebellion against Him and the rejection of their Messiah. Secondly, anti-Semitism is inspired of Satan—a being whose existence many ‘educated’ people deny. The reason is obvious. It was foretold that the Savior of the world, who would rescue mankind from Satan’s control, would be a Jew. Satan’s only hope to escape eternal doom, therefore, was to destroy those whom God chose ‘to be a</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What significance in eschatology, if any, does the Holocaust during World War II have?</td>
<td>Dave Hunt states that the Holocaust and its fallout (i.e., how nations throughout the world refused to help the Jews during a dark time in their history, and continue to do so today) is “sufficient proof that the God of Israel exists and that the Bible is His infallible Word.” [Hunt, 2006]. Hunt argues, “The whole world is guilty.” Jeremiah 17:9 states: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” Numerous Scriptures explain how curses would fall upon the Jews because of their unbelief and rebellion; however, Romans 11 indicates that, in the future, Israel will be restored/blessed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.’ Had Satan been able to destroy the Jews before the birth of the Messiah, he would have prevented his own defeat.

The Bible contains hundreds of prophecies that, although God would severely punish Israel for her sins, He would preserve a remnant and bring the scattered Jews back into their own land. That prophecy, too, is undeniably in the process of being fulfilled in our own day. [Hunt, 2006, pp. 45-46]

Hunt summarizes:

Nor does God even encourage, much less cause, anyone to seek to destroy Israel. He allows this hatred against Israel to be vented in order for the truth about the human heart to be revealed. He also allows it as part of His judgment upon Israel. That Judgment is clearly spelled out in the prophecies given by Israel’s own inspired prophets. ...

The entire history of the Jewish people and of the nation of Israel is foretold by the Hebrew prophets under inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We have been able to look at only a small fraction of those amazing prophecies and the ongoing fulfillment-in-process of some of them today. When He brought the Israelites into their land, God warned that if they forsook Him for pagan gods, He would scatter them to the ends of the earth. They would be hated, persecuted, and killed like no other people. He would not, however, forsake them completely. A remnant would be preserved. In the last days He would bring them back into their own land again. At that time, God would make Jerusalem a cup of trembling to the neighbors surrounding her—and a crushing burden to the whole world. [Hunt, 2006, p. 263]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is significance of the passage in Luke 21 that speaks of men’s hearts failing them for fear in the days before Christ’s return?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Luke 21:25-28</td>
<td>“There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has this prophecy been fulfilled? Also, what is meant by “your redemption is drawing near”?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Dispensationalist | In general terms, the Scripture above speaks of a time when |
Persecution will be great, and the Second Coming of Christ is very close.

Note that there will be signs in the sky, suggesting that this is more than just a metaphor.

Here is another powerful reason to reject the preterist interpretation of the Olivet Discourse: No great cosmic signs like this ever occurred in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. [MacArthur, 2003b, p. 110]

The oldest extra-biblical Christian document known to exist is The Didache, which is a simple distillation of Bible doctrine from the early church. Most scholars believe it was written near the close of the first century, most likely after A.D. 80. It was certainly used and cited in the early centuries by many church fathers (as well as by the historian Eusebius). So its early existence is well documented. The full text of The Didache was rediscovered little more than a hundred years ago, in a codex found in Constantinople in 1873. This document proves that those who actually lived through the events of A.D. 70 regarded Matthew 24:29-31—and the entire Olivet Discourse—as yet-unfulfilled prophecy.” [MacArthur, 2003b, p. 112]

For the first time in history, modern man is able to destroy the entire human race. For example, suitcase-sized nuclear bombs in the hands of terrorists can destroy a city. Surely, we need Christ to return to save and judge mankind, both of which He will surely do, as indicated by Scripture.

As Christians, we should be going about doing the Master’s business, while looking for the return of Jesus Christ.

As for preterists’ claims:

If Christ had returned in A.D. 70, then why didn’t the nations see the sea and the waves in physical upheaval? And, why didn’t the whole world see Him coming in His messianic power and glory? How was Christ’s great glory manifested if He simply returned to earth spiritually as some preterists say? What’s more, in Luke 21:35, Jesus makes it clear He is speaking about a terrible global tribulation that is going to take place: He says it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of the earth.”

In Luke 21:28, Jesus said, “When these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” (verse 28). What redemption took place in A.D. 70? Can anyone honestly say this really happened in the sense of people truly experiencing redemption, as preterists argue? [Couch, 2003, p. 287]
failing them for fear” (e.g., 70 AD, wars, the Holocaust, and even the persecuted church); however, shortly before Christ returns, there will be especially difficult times. As Christians, we should be prepared for such times of persecution, to strengthen and evangelize people, with the hope of winning as many souls to Christ as possible. It is wrong to assume that we will be taken to Heaven before such times occur.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Does Moses have anything to say about eschatology?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>Deuteronomy 4:25-31 After you have had children and grandchildren and have lived in the land a long time—if you then become corrupt and make any kind of idol, doing evil in the eyes of the LORD your God and provoking him to anger, I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you this day that you will quickly perish from the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess. You will not live there long but will certainly be destroyed. The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and only a few of you will survive among the nations to which the LORD will drive you. There you will worship man-made gods of wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or eat or smell. But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, then in later days you will return to the LORD your God and obey him. For the LORD your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your forefathers, which he confirmed to them by oath.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thomas Ice interprets the above passage, as follows:

In the process of Moses’ exhortation to the nation of Israel, he provides in Deuteronomy 4:25-31 an outline of what will happen to this elect nation once they cross over the Jordan River and settle the promised land. A summary of these events would be as follows:

1) Israel and her descendants would remain long in the land.
2) Israel would act corruptly and slip into idolatry.
3) Israel would be kicked out of the land.
4) The LORD will scatter them among the nations.
5) Israel would be given over to idolatry during their wanderings.
6) While dispersed among the nations, Israel would seek and find the LORD when they search for Him with all their heart.
7) There would come a time of tribulation, said to occur in the latter days, during which time they would turn to the LORD.
8) “For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them” (Deuteronomy 4:31).
If the first five events have happened to Israel—and no evangelical interpreter would deny that they have—then it is clear from the text that the final events will also occur to the same people in the same way as the earlier events. This is most clear from the context. The Bible does not “change horses in midstream” so that suddenly Israel, who has received the curses, is dropped out of the picture and the church takes over and receives the blessings. Despite various systems of the theology, the Bible nowhere teaches that God has forsaken Israel (cf. Rom. 11:1). [Ice, 2000]

| Preterist Position |

| Topic/Question | Is America in prophecy? The United States, arguably the most powerful nation in Earth’s history, does not appear to be mentioned in end times prophecy. |
| Dispensationalist Position | Is the USA in prophecy? Many scholars have pondered this question. There really isn’t any Scripture verse that applies directly to the United States. Indirectly, the passages most frequently quoted in a discussion on whether or not America is in prophecy include the following [LaHaye, 2009a]: |
|  | • Revelation 17-18—which discusses the judgment of Babylon. Some authors think that there are parallels between New York City and ancient Babylon, especially the parts about Babylon being a center of world trade that would be destroyed “in one hour”. |
|  | • Ezekiel 38:13-14—which states that “Sheba and Dedan and their young lions” will be protesting the invasion of Gog and Magog into Israel. The connection here is that Sheba and Dedan are seafaring nations that settled in the British Isles, which in turn played a part in founding some of the nations in the West. |
|  | Prophecy students have yet to come up with a good explanation of why the United States is NOT mentioned in end times prophecy. Most assume it is because we will cease to be an end-time player in the game of global politics. It does not guarantee of course that the USA will not still be in existence when our Lord comes to rapture His church, after which the Antichrist will appear as he finalizes his global government. Certainly the sudden removal of the largest contingency of believers in the world (80 million, according to the Gallup poll), or over forty percent of the population (plus children), could render this country so helpless she could not resist his overtures, rendering the U.S. the non-participant in what seems prophetically to be a |
European and Middle Eastern event. The sudden removal of forty percent of the population could leave America in such chaos she could be rendered helpless to the blandishment of the Antichrist, allowing him to make America a colony of Europe. [LaHaye, 2000a]

Elsewhere, LaHaye writes:

America’s foreign policy of protection for Israel could change. That would remove God’s hand of blessing on this country for being good to the Jews and result in the judgment of God on our nation as never before.

[American politicians may] turn the control of the United States over to the United Nations, using the vast resources of this country to implement the One World Government that they envision as the only hope for “peace” in this world. [LaHaye, 1999]

Mark Hitchcock writes:

Why, for example, do the prophets seem strangely silent regarding the role of America in the end-times? Could it be that the U.S. taking military action against Iran to debilitate its nuclear capacity pushes Iran into executing a final, possibly even a nuclear, blow against the U.S.? …

… we know from Scripture that after the Rapture, the Antichrist will come to Israel’s side and make a seven-year treaty with her (Daniel 9:27). But where is America in that scenario? Why aren’t we around as Israel’s great protector?

Evidently, the Antichrist and his European empire will replace America as Israel’s chief ally and as the major world power (see Daniel 2:44-45; 7:23-25). … This strong presence of Europe indicates to me that something will have happened to America that shifts world power back to Europe.

… Think about it: If the Rapture were to happen today, if all the true believers in Jesus Christ were whisked away to heaven in a split second, America would be devastated beyond comprehension. [Hitchcock, 2006, pp. 118, 127]

Hitchcock continues:

… here are seven general conclusions I’ve reached about America’s future role.

1. America is not mentioned in the Bible.
2. America is Israel’s main defender.
3. America must remain strong until the end times to continue her defense of Israel.
4. The Scriptural silence concerning America in the end times indicates that America will fall from her position of world prominence.
5. World power in the end times is centered in the Reunited Roman Empire (Europe) …
6. European prominence can only be explained in light of U.S. decline.
7. The U.S. will suffer her decline, her fall, at the Rapture of the church.

… But in our troubled, uncertain world, we can rest in the knowledge that the ultimate destiny of America and every nation is in God’s hands. [Hitchcock, 2006, pp. 129-130]

Ron Rhodes writes:

My assessment is that America is not mentioned in Bible prophecy at all. Using proper Hermeneutics and sound exegesis, I cannot find America in any of the verses so often suggested by prophecy buffs. If I am correct in this belief, the key question becomes, why isn’t America mentioned in Bible prophecy?

… the United States is the world’s single remaining superpower and also happens to be Israel’s principal ally … So again, why no reference?

America may eventually implode due to ever-escalating moral and spiritual degeneration. Lots of statistics show the trouble this country is in morally and spiritually ...

Perhaps the United States will be destroyed or at least greatly weakened by nuclear weapons and so will play no significant role in the end times. … The United States could certainly be attacked with nuclear weapons at some point in the future. Harvard professor Graham Allison has written a book titled Nuclear Terrorism in which he affirms that a nuclear attack on U.S. soil within the next ten years is “more likely than not.”

… Perhaps the United States will become incapacitated due to an EMP attack. One scary but realistic scenario involves a foreign power—such as Iran—launching an electromagnetic pulse (EMP) attack against the United States. This is not a sensationalistic speculation of prophecy fanatics. It is a potential, realistic scenario documented in a report issued in 2004 by a blue-ribbon commission created by Congress—“Commission to Assess the Threat to the United States from Electromagnetic Pulse Attack.” Based on this report, U.S. Representative Jim Saxton lamented that the ‘technology is now here’ to bring America’s way of life to an end.

… [Rhodes, quoting Timmerman] In one test, the United States detonated a 1.5-megaton weapon at an altitude of 248 miles over Johnston Island in the Pacific. “Eight hundred miles away in Hawaii, street-lights went out within seconds … Fuses failed on Oahu, telephone service was disrupted on Kauai, and the power system went down on Hawaii itself. What caused it was the high-powered electromagnetic pulse set off by the nuclear explosion, which hit Hawaii like a lightning bolt.”
... Starvation and disease could ultimately result following an EMP attack. Dr. Lowell Wood (of the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, and member of the EMP Threat Commission) warned in testimony before the U.S. Congress that an EMP attack could reduce to a pre-Industrial Age the United States’ transportation options and ability to provide vital food and water to the general population. A report published by United Press International makes this warning:

Imagine the only people you could communicate with are those within your visual range or within the sound of your voice. Imagine the only way you could travel was to walk or ride a bike. Imagine no electricity, working telephones or computers; no fuel or cars or airplanes, no running elevators, no heat or light for houses and buildings, no running water and after a few days, no food. Imagine that you had to live under these conditions for weeks, months or even years ... An electromagnetic pulse attack could inflict this catastrophic scenario across the entire United States.

[Rhodes, 2008, pp. 121-125]

Chuck Missler conjectures that there may be three end-times scenarios concerning America: (a) there may be an EMP (electromagnetic pulse) attack against America, rendering it largely powerless in the end times, (b) America may be neutralized through the Magog invasion (e.g., “fire” on the coastlands or those who dwell “carelessly” in the isles), and (c) America is severely weakened by the impending financial and monetary crisis, and gradually withdraws from actively being engaged in the international scene [Missler, 2008]. (A fourth scenario may be that the Rapture will occur before then.)

Missler asks a related question: “Why hasn’t God judged America [yet]?” He then provides some myths about America:

- We are the wealthiest nation on Earth. (No, we’re bankrupt.)

- We’re a representative republic. (No, we’re a democracy rather than a republic, and 50% plus one is a majority. We have a manipulated press, and the media is the “prince of the power of the air”.)

- There is freedom of speech in America. (Important voices are being silenced. The Bible isn’t taken seriously by many, and God is being pushed out of schools, workplaces, etc.)
David Reagan comments on the United States in Biblical perspective, as follows [Reagan, 2008]:

- “God establishes nations and defines their boundaries.
- God determines when a nation will cease to exist.
- God has a purpose for each nation, both general and specific.
- God blesses and disciplines nations in accordance with their obedience to Him and their treatment of the Jewish people.
- God holds nations in contempt because of their pride and rebellion and because they serve as idols.
- God forgives and blesses a nation when its people repent.
- God destroys a nation when its rebellion becomes entrenched, reaching a point of no return.”

Reagan also explains how God deals with a rebellious nation:

- “He raises up prophetic voices to call the nation to repentance.
- He places remedial judgments upon the nation.
- He delivers the nation from judgment to destruction.”

God raised up this nation with the purpose of using our great natural resources and technical ingenuity to spread the Gospel all over the earth. As we fulfilled His purpose, He poured out blessings upon us—blessings like unparalleled freedom and prosperity and immense power and worldwide influence. ... Money became our God. Greed became our motivator. We kicked God out of our schools. We legalized abortion. We became the moral polluter of the earth. [Reagan, 2008]

2 Chronicles 36:15-16  The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked God’s messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.

Chuck Missler adds: “We have become the primary exporters of all that God abhors.” [Missler, 2005]
assigned you the same number of days as the years of their sin. So for 390 days you will bear the sin of the house of Israel. "After you have finished this, lie down again, this time on your right side, and bear the sin of the house of Judah. I have assigned you 40 days, a day for each year.

Dispensationalist Position

This is a hard prophecy to pinpoint. Various interpretations have been suggested. For example, the 390 years was conjectured to be the time between:

... Solomon’s death, with the subsequent division of the kingdom, to the termination of the Kingdom of Judah at the hand of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia in 586 BC ... It has been shown that the context of Ezekiel 4:4-8 and 35:5 with regard to the 390-year segment of the history of the Hebrew people confirms the exact interval derived by summing the reignal years of all the kings of Judah and removing the two small overlapping periods mentioned at the onset of this subject thereby fixing precisely the duration of the period of the divided monarchy ... Having independently discovered these facts, this author was most gratified years later to learn that other workers had come to the same conclusions (or very nearly so), especially with regard to the significance of the 390 years of Ezekiel. ...

Several others of notable eminence and ability considered the 390 years to be taken from the ninth year of Zedekiah when Nebuchadnezzar began the final siege of Jerusalem (about 18 months before the final fall ... Sir Isaac Newton determined that, rather than the 390-year span defining the duration of the Judaic kingdom, it marked the interval from the Death of Solomon with the ensuing emergence of the divided kingdoms to the year Nebuchadnezzar initiated the siege.” [Jones, 2004].

In particular, Jones writes that the years of the Kingdom of Judah are 975 BC to 586 BC, and the years of the Kingdom of Israel are 975 BC to 721 BC.

Another possible interpretation is as follows. Israel was conquered by the Babylonians starting in 606 BC, and (eventually) the Jews were scattered throughout the world. The prophets Jeremiah and Daniel write:

Jeremiah 25:9-13 I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon," declares the LORD, "and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin. I will banish from them the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, the sound of millstones and the light of the lamp. This whole country will become a desolate
wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. “But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt,” declares the LORD, “and will make it desolate forever. I will bring upon that land all the things I have spoken against it, all that are written in this book and prophesied by Jeremiah against all the nations.

Daniel 9:2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years.

Three times in Leviticus 26, God warns the Israelites:

Leviticus 26:18 "'If after all this you will not listen to me, I will punish you for your sins seven times over.

Leviticus 26:18 "'If after all this you will not listen to me, I will punish you for your sins seven times over.

Leviticus 26:23-24 "'If in spite of these things you do not accept my correction but continue to be hostile toward me, I myself will be hostile toward you and will afflict you for your sins seven times over.

Leviticus 26:27-28 "'If in spite of this you still do not listen to me but continue to be hostile toward me, then in my anger I will be hostile toward you, and I myself will punish you for your sins seven times over.

Consider the following dates (the dates were reverse engineered to correspond to a specific day in the Gregorian calendar—see below):

August 10, 606 BC: Israel is taken captive by Babylon

July 17, 587 BC: The Babylonian army destroys Solomon’s Temple (i.e., the first Temple)

May 14, 1948: Israel gains independence (i.e., “becomes a nation” again)

June 7, 1967: Israel regains sovereignty over Jerusalem

Considering the above Scripture passages, one explanation—albeit complicated—is as follows:

- Ezekiel lay on his side for a total of $40 + 390 = 430$ days.
- “A day for each year” (i.e., 430 years in all).
- Leviticus 26 warns about Israel’s unfaithfulness and about a penalty of “seven times”.
- Towards the end of the 70 year period of captivity in Babylon, Daniel wonders if Israel will be restored after these 70 years. God says “no”. When we factor in Ezekiel’s prophecy (Ezekiel 4:4-6), this leave 430-70 = 360 years, left.
- A penalty of “seven times” 360 years is 2520 years.
- The (original) 70 years + 2520 years (to come) = 2590 years
- 2590 years @ 360 days/Biblical year = 932,400 days
- When reverse engineered, May 14, 1948 less 932,400 days (note that 1 AD to 1 BC is only 1 year) works out to July 17, 606 BC (or very close to it) when accounting for leap years.
- Also, we note, when reverse engineered, that June 7, 1967 less 932,400 days works out to August 10, 587 BC (or very close to it), when accounting for leap years.
- Is July 17, 606 BC the date when the Babylonian exile began?
- Is August 10, 587 BC the same as Av 9 in the Jewish calendar—i.e., the day when the Babylonian army destroyed Solomon’s Temple?

Might this be an explanation of the passages, and hence fulfilled prophecies? Obviously, we can’t be dogmatic about this; but, the idea is interesting. Note that even though Israel built the Second Temple and dedicated it in 515 BC, Israel was not a sovereign nation at the time—that is, until 1948. Then, in 1967, Israel regained the original Temple Mount.

| Preterist Position | There is no modern-day significance to the 430-year prophecy; it was likely fulfilled before Christ. We shouldn’t read any more into it; so, don’t bother speculating. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Was Christ crucified on Good Friday? How do these dates map to the Jewish calendar?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>Jones summarizes the key events of Crucifixion Week [Jones, 2004]:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nisan 10 (Sunday—i.e., from Saturday night 6pm to Sunday night 6pm): The Triumphal Entry: Christ enters Jerusalem on a donkey (on Sunday), allowing Himself—for the very first time—to be declared publicly as the Messiah.</td>
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<td>Nisan 11 (Monday): Jesus curses the fig tree; He cleanses the Temple</td>
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<td>Nisan 12 (Tuesday): The fig tree is dead; scribes, elders, and chief priest plot to kill Jesus; Satan enters Judas</td>
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<td>Nisan 13 (Wednesday): “The Silent Day”; the disciples make Passover preparations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nisan 14 (Thursday): After 6pm on Wednesday, Jesus and His disciples eat the Passover supper. This is “The Last Supper”. Judas betrays Christ. Jesus is arrested. On Thursday during the daytime, Jesus was crucified. This is also the day that Jews celebrate the Passover supper.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nisan 15 (Friday): This is the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the Jewish calendar of Holy days.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nisan 16 (Saturday): This is a regular Sabbath day.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nisan 17 (Sunday): This is the day of the Feast of Firstfruits. Jesus rose from the dead.</td>
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</table>

Note that Jesus was dead for 3 days (part of Thursday afternoon, all of Friday afternoon, and all of Saturday afternoon), and for 3 nights (all of Thursday night, all of Friday night, and all of Saturday night). This echoes the time that Jonah was in the belly of the great fish, i.e., 3 days and 3 nights.

(Many Bible teachers, however, believe that Jesus Christ died on Friday afternoon.)

| Preterist Position | (same general idea as above, but Christ likely died on Friday) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is the relationship among the Virgin Mary, the Marian apparitions, and the end-times woman of Revelation? What is meant by the prostitute in Revelation?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>The Virgin Mary has a special place in Scripture because she is the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ. As a virgin, she conceived Christ through the Holy Spirit; however, she had other children (brothers and sisters of Christ) after Christ (her firstborn). As a sinner, she</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
needed a Saviour, just like we do. There is no evidence from Scripture to suggest that she reappears before Jesus Christ’s Second Coming.

Some evangelical authors express concern about the growing trend of interest in apparitions (appearances, images) of Mary that encourage people to worship or follow Mary. This is wrong. Scripture makes it clear that no one is to be worshipped except Christ (God):

John 14:6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

The Old Testament is filled with goddess worship, and there appears to be a connection between a woman/goddess and the apostasy of the end times.

Fatima (“daughter of Mohammed”) is one of the visions of Mary that millions around the world claim to see.

Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and other pilgrims regularly worship at famous Roman Catholic shrines to the Virgin Mary. They drink holy water, light votive candles, and pray fervently to the Madonna. [Tetlow, et al., 2006, p. 36]

“Jesus specifically states that only the Lord is to be worshipped—we are to fall down at God’s feet alone. Yet we know that Jesus allowed His followers to worship Him (Matthew 14:28-33), thereby establishing that He is God. However, no creature, not even Mary, is to be worshipped. Our Creator, our Owner, our Life, deserves our complete devotion. Of course the true Mary of the Bible would not contradict the Word of God. Therefore these manifestations of the Queen of Heaven cannot be the Blessed Virgin Mary of Nazareth.” [Tetlow, et al., 2006, p. 63]

“Not once in the Bible do we find an obedient follower of the Lord making a graven image to venerate or bow or pray to. Not once. At many apparition sites, statues of Mary are carried and venerated in public processions. Marian followers even crawl to the statue of Mary on their knees (often bloody knees)—a show of reverence and worship toward the Queen of Heaven.” [Tetlow, et al., 2006, p. 65]

Revelation 17:4-6 The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. This title was written on her forehead: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. I saw that the woman
was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.

When I saw her, I was greatly astonished.

Many Bible commentators believe that this wicked woman represents the apostate church of the last days. Because the true church is called the bride of Christ, the false church would rightly be called a harlot. The apostle Paul reminds true followers of Christ that they have been espoused to Christ as “a chaste virgin”. [Tetlow, et al., 2006, p. 78]

Revelation 17:1-3 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries." Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries.

This woman, who is called a harlot (whore), has made the inhabitants of the earth intoxicated with the wine of her fornication. What woman, in the last days seduces and lures her followers to commit spiritual fornication? The Greek word for fornication (Gk. porneuo) used here could also be translated idolatry. [Tetlow, et al., 2006, p. 79]

The golden cup may refer to the instrument of the Eucharist [communion]. It is full of abominations because the Eucharist denies the finished work of Christ on the cross and perpetuates the atonement by re-sacrificing Christ over and over again during every Mass. This false gospel is an abomination to God because it denies the finality of Christ’s once-for-all atoning work of the cross. The golden cup full of abominations also suggests idolatry, which is often encouraged by the apparition of Mary. Not only does she encourage her followers to bow down to statues of her, but she also requests that they bow before and worship the Eucharist. [Tetlow, et al., 2006, p. 82]

Some “goddesses” that have been worshipped throughout history, in defiance of God Almighty, include the “Queen Mother of the West”
(Taoism), and “Our Lady of Fatima” (Roman Catholicism). The “desire of women” (Daniel 11:36-37) may well speak about goddesses. The “mother and child” legend beginning with Babylon’s Semiramis and Tammuz seems to be common among ancient civilizations in the Middle East. G.H. Pember mentions more of these goddesses:

She is the Beltis, or Mylitta, of the Babylonians; the Ishtar of the Assyrians; the Astarte of the Phoenicians; the Queen of Heaven mentioned by Jeremiah; the Tanata of the Persians; the Isis of the Egyptians; the Shing Moo, or Holy Mother, of the Chinese; the Aphrodite of the Greeks; the Artemis, or Diana, of the Ephesians; the Venus of the Romans ... and the Virgin Mary of the Eastern and Western Catholics. This is the goddess of whom we have so often heard as Our Lady of La Salette, Our Lady of Lourdes—to whom it seems there are temples erected even in China ... [Tetlow, 2006, p. 109]

The Greek word translated fornication is porneuo which can be translated idolatry. As we already noted, God often equates idolatry with spiritual unfaithfulness, because His people are married to Him. [Tetlow, 2006, p. 111]

Jezebel, a Sidonian princess and the wife of King Ahab, is referred to in Scripture as an evil woman, as noted here in Christ’s letter to the Church of Thyatira, in the book of Revelation:

Revelation 2:18-29  "To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first. Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): Only hold on to what you have until I come. To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations—'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery'—just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning
star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Tim LaHaye writes:

Thyatira comes from two words meaning “sacrifice” and “continual”; this introduces the central heresy that has produced other false doctrines. That is, the church of Rome denies the finished work of Christ but believes in a continual sacrifice which produces such things as sacraments and praying for the dead ... a concept that causes man to try to earn his own salvation by works, penance, indulgences, and many other satanically conceived ideas labelled by our Lord in Revelation 2:24 as ‘the depths of Satan.’ ... The teaching of the false prophetess, Jezebel, took two forms: (1) ‘to seduce (and lead into false teaching) my servants to commit fornication,’ which is a symbol of the idolatry brought in during this period, and (2) ‘to eat things sacrificed to idols’ ... [Tetlow, 2006, p. 114]

Therefore, the lady of kingdoms of Isaiah 47, the wicked woman of Zechariah 5, the harlot queen of Revelation 17 and 18, and the woman of Matthew 13 are obviously wicked, and their actions and intents are sinister.

Also, recall that the woman in Zechariah’s vision is called “Wickedness” (Zechariah 5:7-8); The lady of kingdoms in Isaiah’s prophecy has trusted in her “wickedness” (Isaiah 47:10); And the leaven which the woman hides represents “wickedness” (1 Corinthians 5:8).

Furthermore, the woman in Matthew 13 hides the leaven in “three measures of meal” (v. 33). Three measures equal exactly one ephah—which is what the Zechariah 5 wicked woman is concealed or hiding in—this woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah” (v. 7).

In addition, three measures of meal turns out to be the exact amount customarily used in a meal offering to God (Genesis 18:6; Judges 6:19; 1 Samuel 1:24). Any student of the Old Testament knows that leaven has absolutely no place in a meal offering. This fact offers further evidence that the woman is infusing corruption into the pure meal. [Tetlow, 2006, p. 121]

Hank Hanegraaff writes:

The application of the historical principle of [exegetical eschatology], however, demonstrates that this is a clear case of mistaken identity. In biblical history only one nation is inextricably linked to the moniker ‘harlot.’ And that nation is Israel! Anyone who has read the Bible even once has flashbacks to the graphic images of apostate Israel when they first encounter the great prostitute of Revelation. From the Pentateuch to the Prophets, the image is repeated endlessly. Perhaps the most gut-wrenching portrayal of Israel as prostitute is found in Hosea.
Hosea’s marriage to the prostitute Gomer is a poignant parallel to God’s wedding covenant with Israel. Though Gomer repeatedly whores after other lovers, Hosea doggedly pursues reconciliation and relationship with his bride. Hosea’s love for Gomer is emblematic of God’s love for this prostituted bride. Verse by verse, the painful picture of a people who prostitute themselves with pagan deities emerges. It culminates in Hosea’s lament over a people who ‘love the wages of a prostitute at every threshing floor’ (Hosea 9:1). The image is pregnant with meaning. Not only was the threshing floor a place of intimacy in which the kinsman redeemer spread the corner of his garment over Ruth, but the very temple itself was built on the threshing floor (2 Chronicles 3:1-2). Unlike Ruth, however, the prostituted bride had little interest in seeking intimacy with God in his temple. Instead, she craved intimacy with foreign gods on the threshing floors of perverse temples.

As with Hosea, apostate Israel plays the part of a prostitute in Jeremiah. [Jeremiah 2:20-24; 3:2-3]...

The portrayal of Jerusalem as a prostitute is even more brazen in Ezekiel. Indeed, says Ezekiel, the prostitution of Jerusalem made that of her sisters, Samaria and Sodom, look insignificant by comparison. [Ezekiel 23:14-16, 18-20]...

The similarities are striking! In both Ezekiel and Revelation, the prostitute commits adultery with the kings of the earth; she is dressed in splendor and glitters with gold and precious jewels; and she is drunk with the blood of the righteous. And that’s just a glimpse of her unveiling. Throughout the Old Testament, the harlot prostitutes herself with imperial rulers—with kings of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon. Likewise, in Revelation she is in bed with imperial Rome. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 119-123]

Hank adds:

The harlotry of Jerusalem resulted in civil war, division of the kingdom, and ultimately the Assyrian exile of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC, as well as the Babylonian exile of the southern kingdom of Judah in 597 BC. [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 193]

Anyone who has read the Bible even once must surely have flashbacks to the graphic images of apostate Israel when they first encounter the great prostitute of Revelation. From the Pentateuch to the Prophets, the image is repeated endlessly. The biblical link between Ezekiel 16 and Revelation 17 in itself is enough to preclude misidentification. Had LaHaye interpreted Scripture in light of Scripture, the Roman Catholic Church would hot have suffered yet another gratuitous broadside. [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 235]

As a side note, the prophet Hosea (circa 750 BC) was to the northern kingdom (Israel) what the prophet Jeremiah (circa 600 BC) was to the
southern kingdom (Judea)—during the time when Israel and Judea were split. The Northern Kingdom was apostate. Hosea spoke to that condition.

Although not a preterist, Chuck Missler nicely summarizes the message of Hosea [Missler, 2005]:

- God suffers when His people are unfaithful to Him
- God cannot condone sin
  - “Although a loving and caring God had provided their abundance and prosperity;
  - Their sin, disloyalty and abandonment of Him will force Him to vindicate His justice with judgment.
  - Thus, God is going to use their enemies [the Assyrians] as His instrument of judgment.”
- God will never cease to love His own; consequently, He seeks to win back those who have forsaken Him.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What are the “Signs of the Times”, that is, indicators that we are in a unique position (compared to previous generations) that may see the return of Jesus Christ, in our lifetime?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>There are many prophecies in Scripture which could not have been fulfilled in the past; however, in our modern generation, these prophecies have been realized, or are capable of being realized. Here are some Scriptures and examples, in no particular order [Tetlow, et al., 2006, pp. 50-53]:</td>
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</table>

1. The neutron bomb:

   Zechariah 14:12  This is the plague with which the LORD will strike all the nations that fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths.

   This appears to be a description of a neutron bomb: an atomic weapon capable of destroying flesh, but leaving buildings intact. This suggests that the times we are living in (with nuclear technology) may be shortly before the return of Christ.

2. Mankind would be capable of destroying all life. Jesus Christ said:

   Matthew 24:21-22  For then there will be great
distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.

Recent generations have, for the first time in history, been able to witness weapons of mass destruction.

3. Global communications:

Revelation 11:9-10 For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.

Revelation 17:8 The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because he once was, now is not, and yet will come.

4. The possession of Jerusalem would be at the center of international turmoil:

Joel 3:2 I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will enter into judgment against them concerning my inheritance, my people Israel, for they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land.

Zechariah 12:3 On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves.

5. The fact that God once flooded the earth (the Flood of Noah’s day) would be denied:

2 Peter 3:5-6 But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed.

6. Asia would be capable of deploying a 200-million man army during Earth’s final days:

Revelation 9:14-16 It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels
who are bound at the great river Euphrates."
And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number.

Revelation 16:12 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East.

Note that no army of this size has been deployed in the history of the world; nor has any army killed “a third of mankind.” Therefore, this passage must apply to the future.

7. Financial systems would depend on marks and numbers, rather than “cash”, in a prophecy that’s almost 2000 years old:

Revelation 13:16-18 He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name. This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.

8. Men would mock the warning signs of the end of the age, saying that these signs have always been around:

2 Peter 3:3-4 First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."

Be aware that a lot of end-times prophecy occurs after the Rapture. Many Scripture passages such as Revelation, Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah have a lot to say about topics such as the Tribulation, the return of Jesus Christ, and the Millennium.

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<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
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<td>Does Scripture sometimes have a double fulfillment: a short term fulfillment, and a long term (the main/intended) fulfillment?</td>
<td>Scripture sometimes has double fulfillments. An example of this is Antiochus Epiphanes (short term), and the Antichrist (long term), both in Daniel 11. Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the Second Temple (a short term fulfillment of “the abomination that causes desolation” (Daniel 11:31)), with the long term fulfillment being</td>
</tr>
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</table>
when the Antichrist desecrates the future, rebuilt Temple (Daniel 9:27 and Matthew 24:15-16).

Some of the most important Messianic prophecies are from the book of Isaiah (e.g., Isaiah 9:6-7; 53:1-10). Of the books in the Bible, only the Psalms have more Messianic prophecies than Isaiah.

Isaiah 9:6-7  For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

Note that the “son” is Jesus Christ; but, because He was rejected by the Jews, the fulfillment of “the government will be on his shoulders” is postponed—it is still in the future. Christ did not yet sit on David’s throne, nor did he take part in government. Jesus Christ is indeed God. He is the “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”. He will indeed rule the world, bring peace, and be physically present on Earth during the Millennium ... and, of course, for all eternity.

Preterist Position

Stephen Sizer writes:

Christian Zionists assume that the Old and New Testaments run parallel into the future, the former speaking of Israel and the latter speaking of the church; however, this is not the way the New Testament interprets, fulfills, and completes the Old. For example, Jesus annulled the Levitical food laws when He said, “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him ‘unclean’? For it doesn’t go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body. (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)” (Mark 7:18-19).

The book of Hebrews explains the progressive movement of biblical revelation more fully. The Old Testament revelation from God often came in shadow, image, and prophecy. That revelation finds its consummation and fulfillment in the New Covenant (i.e., Testament) in Jesus Christ. The writer to the Hebrews, then declares, ‘By calling this covenant ‘new,’ he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear” (Heb. 8:13). He insists later, “The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship” (Heb. 10:1). [Sizer, 2006, p.36]

Colossians 2:16-17  Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with
regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Scripture says that many people rose from the dead in the days following Christ’s resurrection. Is this a real event, or is it a metaphor?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matthew 27:52-53 The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus’ resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
<th>It is a real event. In his book <em>Heaven: The Last Frontier</em>, Grant Jeffrey comments that Christian writings around 32 AD spoke about the Matthew 27:52-53 passage, when graves were opened and the resurrected people walked into Jerusalem [Jeffrey, 1990]. Writings external to the Bible claim that over 12,000 such people walked through Galilee and Jerusalem for 40 days. They ascended into Heaven when Christ ascended into Heaven.</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A little background information is valuable here. During Passover in Jerusalem, the population increased to many times the normal population, with many of these people being guests in fellow Israelites’ homes. Jewish males were required to make three pilgrimages to Jerusalem every year: at Passover, at Pentecost, and at the Feast of Tabernacles. With this being the Feast of Passover, the point was that many, many people would have been able to see the miracle of the firstfruits resurrection.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>It was this hope that gave the martyrs something to die for. They were singing to the death. They did not fear death.</td>
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<td>Several documents claim that Simeon [Luke 2:25-32] who held baby Jesus in the temple, was resurrected at the time of Christ's resurrection, along with two of Simeon's sons. They were well known to the Sanhedrin because they were priests. The Sanhedrin, by the way, was the highest ruling body in Judaism, and it was going to investigate what was going on.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>These records in the Ante-Nicene library claim that during the investigation, each of the sons of Simeon was separately and simultaneously interrogated. They both told the same story, namely that Christ had appeared to them in Hades, preached to all, and that those who had earlier responded to God were miraculously given new bodies and resurrected when Christ rose</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Preterist Position | Hank Hanegraaff says that the passage in Matthew 27:52-53 does not refer to people who rose from the dead. We should not be taking this literally. It would be a stumbling block for some people, preventing them from taking the Bible seriously. This would have been a “huge, huge event”, yet little is written extra-biblically.

**Topic/Question** | In the Second Temple, at the time of Jesus’ death, was a huge curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place (also known as the Holy of Holies). Was the curtain actually torn from top to bottom, supernaturally?

Matthew 27:50-51  And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split.

Mark 15:37-38  With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

Luke 23:44-46  It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.

Dispensationalist Position | Yes, it was torn from top to bottom. The Most Holy Place was sacred, and only the high priest would be permitted there, and only once per year. Israel’s high priest made atonement there on behalf of the people. The tearing of the curtain indicates that people no longer needed a high priest to offer sacrifices for them; rather, they could approach God directly (through prayer) and claim forgiveness of sins through Christ’s shed blood (i.e., His atoning sacrifice).

In Old Testament times, the high priest made an atoning sacrifice, and sprinkled incense and blood around the Ark of the Covenant to make atonement for the sins of the nation, and for himself, once per year. It was a most solemn event, taking place on Yom Kippur each year. Only the high priest was allowed behind the veil. It was taken so seriously that tradition has it that the high priest had a bell roped around his leg, so that if he died while inside the Most Holy Place (where the Ark of the Covenant was) for whatever reason (e.g., impure thoughts, errors in the protocol), then he could be removed, even if he had died.

Preterist Position | Hank Hanegraaff says “no”. This is apocalyptic and symbolic
It would most certainly have been written about in extra-biblical sources. It is a metaphor indicating that Christ, through his death and resurrection, is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, and we no longer need a high priest to offer sacrifices on our behalf; rather, we can approach God ourselves, via prayer, to ask for forgiveness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Where is the Ark of the Covenant? Where is the location of the Holy of Holies (with the respect to the Temple Mount), where the Ark used to be kept?</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Dispensationalist Position | The Ark of the Covenant is sometimes called the Ark of the Testimony, because that is where the tablets of the law (i.e., the ten commandments, written on stone with “the finger of God”) were located. The Ark was housed in a tabernacle, sometimes called “the tent of meeting” during the years of the Exodus. There is a heavenly tabernacle and a heavenly Ark of the covenant. Moses created the earthly version of the Ark of the Covenant based on what God revealed to him on Mount Sinai. The Ark has even been the subject of a series of movies (e.g., “Raiders of the Lost Ark”) by director Steven Spielberg.

As one of the most sacred and powerful object in history, God’s Shekinah glory dwelt above the gold mercy seat. It contained the tablets of the Law, a bowl of manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded with almonds. It was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold, within and without. Wherever the Israelites travelled during the 40 years in the wilderness following the Exodus from Egypt, the Ark (and the rest of the Tabernacle) moved with them. The Levites were given very specific instructions on how to transport/carry the Ark.

The men of Beth Shemesh opened the Ark, and over 50,000 people died. King David made the mistake of forgetting how to carry the Ark, thus showing a lack of respect for the Ark, God’s holiness, and God’s specific instructions to the Levites. King Solomon finally brought the Ark into the Temple Mount, amid great celebration. Over 120,000 sheep were sacrificed that day.

Chuck Missler provides additional insight to the conjecture that the Ark of the Covenant is being secretly stored in Ethiopia [Missler, 2005]. Tradition has it that the Ark was taken to Ethiopia (via Egypt) for safe storage by the Egyptian king, Pharaoh Neco, after the Levites sought protection from the evil Judean king, Manasseh (2 Kings 21). Pharaoh Neco, incidentally, was Ethiopian. According to this hypothesis, the Ark was to be held by the Ethiopians, and be presented to the Messiah on Mount Zion (Isaiah 18:7; Zephaniah...
3:10). An interesting conjecture is that perhaps the Ethiopian treasurer under Queen Candace (Acts 8:26-40) had been on his way to Jerusalem to see if it was the time to present the Ark to the Messiah (Jesus Christ). When the Ethiopian got to Jerusalem, however, he found out that the Messiah had been killed, and so the treasurer left in confusion. On his way home, the Holy Spirit moved Philip the evangelist to meet him on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. The Ethiopian happened to be reading Isaiah (possibly Isaiah 53) at that time. Philip then explained the mission of the Messiah, and the Ethiopian rejoiced because of what he had heard, and the fact that the Messiah was going to come back.

Zephaniah 3:10 From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering.

Could the Ark be in Ethiopia today? Grant Jeffrey was one of the first to popularize this conjecture [Jeffrey, 1988]. He reports that the majority of the northern Ethiopians have Semitic background, and that the Ethiopian orthodox Coptic church traces its origin back to the times of King Solomon. We hear very little of the Ark of the Covenant after the time of Solomon. Recall that the Queen of Sheba travelled to meet King Solomon (1 Kings 10; 2 Chronicles 9). Jeffrey thinks there may be a connection between the Ark, King Solomon, and the Queen of Sheba. Legend has it that the Queen of Sheba bore a son by Solomon. Incidentally, her palace is located near the Church of Zion in Aksum, Ethiopia.

As a bit of trivia, recall that Moses married an Ethiopian woman (Numbers 12:1), and that an Ethiopian river, the Gihon, flowed through the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:13).

King Josiah makes reference to the Ark in 2 Chronicles 35:3. The last we hear about the Ark in the Old Testament is the story of Hezekiah when, during the night, the Angel of the Lord struck down 185,000 Assyrians (and Sennacherib, the King of Assyria, never came against Jerusalem again). After the Babylonian captivity, there is no record of the Ark. Furthermore, although the Second Temple existed from about 515 BC to 70 AD, there is no evidence to suggest the Ark was there, and there is no evidence to suggest that God met with the high priest in this Temple.

David Hocking reminds us that “God isn’t in the box”. As far as rebuilding the Temple goes, it doesn’t matter whether the Ark is found. After all, the Ark was not present for the Second Temple.

The precise location of the Holy of Holies in present-day Jerusalem is
unknown (because there is no Temple today). It may have been just
north of the Temple Mount in the area of the Dome of the Spirits.
Regardless, the Temple Mount and its surrounding areas are among
the most prized and contested portions of real estate in the world.

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<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is meant by the term “prophet”?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both Positions</td>
<td>Prophets received messages from God in various ways, including visions, dreams, and even hearing God’s voice. Likewise, prophets used various means to deliver their messages, including a simple proclamation of the message in a sanctuary, speaking face-to-face with an individual, and acting out a message (see Jeremiah 19). Isaiah even went barefoot and naked for three years to demonstrate his people’s shame (Isaiah 20:2-3). Regardless of the means the prophets used to deliver the message, the people were expected to hear and obey.</td>
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... when Nebuchadnezzar (the uncontested ruler of the world at that time) carried Ezekiel and other Jews into exile in Babylon, Ezekiel started to speak a new message—words of hope and comfort, teaching that God would regather His people from the ends of the earth (bringing all those bones back together again and resurrecting Israel from the dead—Ezekiel 37) and that a new temple would one day be built (chapter 40). He tried to give the people something to look forward to. At the same time, however, Ezekiel spoke of a horrendous invasion into Israel that would take place in the end times, an invasion that God Almighty would deliver them from (Chapters 38-39). [Rhodes, 2008, p. 132-133] |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>How does the fall of mankind, by Adam &amp; Eve in the Garden of Eden, relate to the present condition of the world? How does this relate to eschatology?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>Mankind and indeed all of creation have fallen because of the choices made by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Initially, all of God’s creation was “very good”. However, God gave mankind the freedom to choose between good and evil. There was no death of mankind (or animals) until Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit.</td>
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God cursed the ground (creation) following their sin. For example, earthquakes, tornados, animals killing each other, the death of animals, the death of man, and even the degeneration of DNA (e.g., errors in DNA) are all results of the fall of Adam and Eve. |

Here we are today, 6 billion-plus little egos, reaping the awful consequences of our own selfishness. We cannot blame God for today’s world but only ourselves. This is not the world God made but the one we have made in our defiance of Him. [Hunt,
Creation will be redeemed following the 1000-year Millennium period that begins with the establishment of Christ’s ministry on Earth following His return. Even under Christ’s leadership, there will be those during the Millennium who will choose to reject Christ. This shows that even during an environment of “perfect rule”, man’s heart will still be rebellious and wicked. The rebels will be destroyed following the very last attempt to attack Jerusalem. Following this, Christ will create “new heavens and a new earth”—restoring the universe to perfection. Following this event, there will be no possibility of sin, as the devil and his followers and all unbelievers will spend eternity separated from God.

Genesis 3:17  To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you ...

Revelation 20:2-3  He [an angel] seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

Revelation 20:7-21:1  When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth--Gog and Magog--to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed
away, and there was no longer any sea.

Isaiah 65:17  "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.

Revelation 22:3  No longer will there be any curse.

### Preterist Position

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<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Given the different views on eschatology, who’s right? Are the other parties presenting heretical views?</th>
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</table>
| Dispensationalist Position | Ron Rhodes nicely summarizes the situation from a pre-trib perspective, and from the perspective of a post-rapture (and pre-tribulation or early-tribulation) Magog invasion against Israel (i.e., the fulfillment of Ezekiel 38-39):

When will Russia lead the northern military coalition to invade Israel? Before the tribulation period? During or in the middle of the tribulation period? Toward the end of the tribulation period? After the tribulation period? During the millennial kingdom? This is one of the most controversial questions pertaining to Ezekiel 38-39.

At the outset, remember that to be dogmatic and unbending on this issue is unwise. ... Many fine scholars have debated this issue back and forth through the centuries, and that fact alone calls for humility in the face of this interpretive difficulty. All of us should examine the issue and come to our own conclusions, but we should show grace to those who hold to different positions.

This brings to mind something John F. Walvoord once told me. We were talking about the timing of the rapture, and even though he was a thoroughly convinced pretribulationist (who believed the rapture will occur before the tribulation period), he commented, “Anyone who thinks his or her prophetic position has no problems simply hasn’t studied prophecy very carefully.” His point was that even our own position has problems (though, in our humble estimation, our position has fewer problems than the other positions). [Rhodes, 2008, pp. 165-166]

To be sure, extremists have taken unhealthy paths as a result of their understanding of prophecy. To avoid such extreme decisions, I’ve always advised people to live their lives as if the rapture could happen today but to plan their lives as if they’ll be here their entire lifetime expectancy. That way they are prepared for time and eternity.

Scripture says we should seek to be accurate observers of the times. Of course, some people today utterly ignore biblical prophecy. Other people have been misled by anti-prophecy
Christians (preterists) who teach that most biblical prophecies were fulfilled in the first century and that we should not look for any future fulfillments of Bible prophecies relating to the tribulation or the rapture. This viewpoint is as unfortunate as it is unbiblical. Scripture indicates that just as biblical prophecies about the first coming of Christ were fulfilled in a quite literal way (see, for example, Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:2; Zechariah 12:10), so the prophecies about the second coming (and related events, like the Ezekiel invasion) will also be literally fulfilled. In view of this, we do well to stay aware of what Scripture teaches about the end times, and to be accurate observers of the times. We shouldn’t be sensationalists or alarmists, for such behavior is not becoming of our God (1 Peter 4:7-10). But we should be accurate observers of the times.” [Rhodes, 2008, pp. 199-200]

| Preterist Position | Hank Hanegraaff frequently comments that “iron sharpens iron”, and that we can choose to disagree on non-essential doctrines within Christianity without dividing over them. Healthy debate and rigorous study is profitable for growth. Salvation issues, including the deity of Christ, however, are non-negotiable issues. (Such issues are well-accepted by both classical dispensationalists and preterists.) |
| Topic/Question | Regarding acts of terrorism, killing “in the name of God”, acts of brutality committed by God-fearing groups (mentioned in the Bible), etc: Didn’t Christians act savagely during the Crusades? How about the Israelites as they killed or kicked out the Canaanites during the time of Joshua? How are these forms of brutality different than that of modern terrorist groups, who also act in the “name of God”? I mean, shouldn’t we be taking a look in the mirror before judging religious extremists? |
| Both Positions Share the Same View | Christians should follow Christ’s examples and teaching, as commanded in the Bible: |

Matthew 22:36-40 “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Dave Hunt writes:

... a true Christian is called to spread his faith by love, by charitable example, and by appealing to reason—helping people
face the fact that the penalty for sin was paid in full by Jesus Christ on the Cross and salvation is offered as a free gift to “whosoever will”.

Everyone is free to make up his own religion if he so desires. ... It is deceitful for anyone to call himself a Christian who does not follow the teachings and example of Jesus Christ—just as it is deceitful for anyone to call himself a Muslim who doesn’t follow the teachings of the Qur’an and the example of Muhammad as recorded in the hadith. That much is axiomatic.

Dave Hunt also writes:

It is indisputable that today’s Islamic terrorism may not honestly be blamed upon “extremists”. This is true Islam as it always has been from the beginning! Terrorists are sincere Muslims following both the teaching and example of Muhammad, the obedient example set by his loyal followers, and Islam’s scriptures, which command the take-over of the entire world and death to all who will not convert ...

The scriptures and history of any religion are a matter of permanent public record that cannot be disputed, much less reinvented. Both those who attempt to do so (whether with Christianity or Islam) and those who accept and pass on their lies are guilty of the same deceit.

While terrorists are genuine Muslims who follow Muhammad and the Qur’an, the Crusaders were not biblical Christians. They followed Rome, not Christ and His Word. The popes had their own agenda of world conquest by force. Crusaders waved the Cross but denied Christ by killing His brethren, the Jews, wherever they went. Attempting “in the name of Christ” to retake the “Holy Land” from the atrocity-committing Islamic invaders violated Christ’s declaration to Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world [or else] would my servants fight” (John 18:36).

Yes, Israel was commanded to wipe out the Canaanites, a particular people in a very small part of the world with clearly defined borders—to execute God’s judgment upon their unspeakable wickedness and perversion. Israel was not told to “convert” them or anyone else with the sword nor to take over the world by violence—as both the Qur’an and Muhammad (claiming an edict from Allah) declared from the beginning to be Islam’s mission. This fundamental teaching of Islam cannot be changed without renouncing Islam. [Hunt, 2007b]

The disastrous fact is that the first thing the jihad “martyr” discovers after his suicide is that he is not in heaven but in hell (as his own conscience must have told him) and that instead of being rewarded, he is being punished for the death and destruction caused in this final act of his life. What a tragedy that so many are being deceived in this way. [Hunt, 2006]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Why is there evil in the world? Why doesn’t God just wipe out pain and suffering?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both Positions Share the Same View</td>
<td>Numerous apologists have noted that God does not <em>cause</em> evil to happen; rather, he <em>permits</em> it. It is important to note that consequence is tied to behaviour:</td>
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God may use evil to bring people to Himself. Not only can God use evil in people’s lives for their character development, but He also can use it to help them find Him. ...

God may use evil to punish wickedness. The Bible is clear that God didn’t create evil, but it also seems to indicate that God uses evil events and persons to bring retribution against wickedness. For example, in Jeremiah 25:8-14 the Lord is said to have brought tribes from the north to punish Israel for her wicked idolatry. Babylon did, indeed, “punish” Israel, and God allowed this nation to do so. It’s not that He *caused* evil things to happen to His people, but He can and does *allow* such things to happen to them. Wickedness does need to be dealt with, and whether sooner or later (or both), one way or another, either in this life or in the next, it will be. [Meister, 2007a]

It was this freedom of will that, while a blessed gift from God, nevertheless allowed for evil to arise in the world. ...

For people to be morally responsible for an action, they need to be able to choose either to commit the act or not to commit the act. (They need what is sometimes called “natural freedom of self-determination”—the ability to choose otherwise than they do. This is real “choice.”)

Suppose, for example, I designed and programmed a robot—let’s call him “Bill”—to crush the next person who walked into the robot factory showroom. If Bill crushes the next person who walks in, would he be guilty of murder? Of course not. Why not? Because Bill could not choose to do otherwise—Bill has no free will. It’s the programmer (me) who would be held morally responsible. If the jury traced back the causal series to determine who was guilty of the crime, they would stop at the person who freely caused the evil deed, not the person (or thing) who could not choose otherwise.

If God is the predetermining cause of all events, and people thus are simply acting out His divine program, then God turns out to be the author of evil. The problem here is that there is no qualitative difference between being the author of evil and being evil. [Meister, 2007b]

Most apologists, including Meister, agree that God gave mankind the freedom to choose, that is, freedom to make decisions (good and bad)
that affect not only the individual himself, but also others. Without freedom of choice, there is no reciprocal love. God does, however, hold people accountable.

I am appalled by the way people have been treated in life, and I’m sure you are, too. Surely, there must be a God and there must be a judgment. Consequences are tied to behaviour. It’s been said, “What goes around, comes around.” Indeed, in many instances, people reap the consequences of their evil—perhaps not immediately, but later in life. Barring that, people will reap the consequences of their evil (at judgment time), either by being sent to hell for eternity, or by receiving a reduced reward (if the person is saved) as suggested by 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 (see below).

Galatians 6:7  Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

Matthew 22:36-40  “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

1 Corinthians 3:11-15  For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

We’ve all seen cases where people seem to escape the consequences of their evil in this life; however, God Almighty holds people to account at judgment day. Scripture (e.g., Luke 10:12-14; Luke 12:47-48; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15) tells us that there are different degrees of punishment for the evil that unrepentant people have done, just as there are different degrees of reward for believers who try to do what is right and make a difference in life. Thus, rather than seeking “revenge” when someone doesn’t come to justice in this life, we should turn the problem over to God:

Romans 12:19  Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.
Hank Hanegraaff comments on the origin of evil, and on why God permits evil (for the time being):

A lot of people think that there are all kinds of answers to that question, but in reality, there are only three basic answers: pantheism, philosophical naturalism, and theism. Here’s what I mean. Pantheism denies the existence of good and evil because, in pantheism, God is all, and all is God. Philosophical naturalism (and that’s the worldview underlying evolutionism) supposes that everything is a function of random processes. So, in that worldview, there is no such thing as good and evil. Only Christian theism can answer the question [of evil] satisfactorily. Christian theism acknowledges that God created the potential for evil because God created humans with freedom of choice. We choose to love; we choose to hate; we choose to do good; we choose to do evil; and the record of history demonstrates that what God created as a potential, human beings have actualized. Now, without choice, love would be rendered meaningless. So, if God did not give us the opportunity to sin or to do evil, then there could be no such thing as meaningful love. Instead, he grants us the freedom of choice. And without that freedom, we’d be little more than pre-programmed robots. And that freedom that God created, will ultimately lead to the best of all possible worlds—a world in which there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain. So, only Christian theism gives a satisfactory answer by saying that God creates the potential for evil by giving us freedom of choice. We actualize that evil; and yet God, in His sovereign love, still provides a way for us to be reconciled to Him, and that, in turn, will bring out the best of all possible scenarios, with a new heaven and a new earth, in which we will forever be able to not sin. [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man, February 18, 2009]

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What role does the economy have in the end times? For example, does inflation come into play in eschatology?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>The third horseman of the apocalypse spells out that a day’s wages would be required to purchase one person’s daily food supply (e.g., 2000 calories in one quart of wheat)—or, for the same day’s wages, three quarts of barley:</td>
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Revelation 6:5-6  When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a day’s wages, and three quarts of barley for a day’s wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!"

The latter instruction to not damage the “oil and the wine” may be a
reference to indicate that the wealthy will still have access to select foods. But the first part seems to suggest inflation, and that a typical person would have no money to spend on other things, that is, he/she would be working all day just to pay for food.

Is this happening around the world today? Over the past few decades, real-world inflation (experienced by typical families, which takes into account housing, insurance, food, entertainment, taxation, service charges, etc., and measured by organizations such as the Shadow Statistics group) is consistently above the US government’s “official” inflation rate. This leads many to conclude that costs have been rising, while incomes have been falling (in real terms). In fact, the savings rate for many families is already negative: we spend more than we earn.

**Preterist Position**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Do the financial/banking/mortgage/stock market crises in the United States have any bearing on Bible prophecy? How do these crises relate to the Biblical term “dishonest weights and measures”? Is there a tie-in to eschatology?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dispensationalist Position</strong></td>
<td>The Bible indicates that the borrower is a slave to the lender. Many people in Western cultures (especially) have been living a life of greed and materialism, and this is condemned in Scripture. The amount of financial fraud and deception in the 1990s and 2000s (e.g., the “dot-com” years, or NASDAQ bubble, with its “pro-forma” earnings and inflated executive pay/stock options, and the housing/financial/mortgage crisis in the United States) are examples of this. One wonders how long God can bless a nation for practices that violate economic principles laid out Scripture. The Biblical term “dishonest weights and measures” comes to mind in many of these cases.</td>
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**Leviticus 19:35-36**  
"Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity. Use honest scales and honest weights, an honest ephah and an honest hin. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt.

**Deuteronomy 25:13-14**  
Do not have two differing weights in your bag--one heavy, one light. Do not have two differing measures in your house--one large, one small.

**Micah 6:10-13**  
Am I still to forget, O wicked house, your ill-gotten treasures and the short ephah, which is accursed? Shall I acquit a man with dishonest scales, with a bag of false weights? Her rich men are violent; her people are liars and their tongues speak deceitfully. Therefore, I have begun to destroy you, to ruin
you because of your sins.

1 Timothy 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

1 Timothy 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.

Some researchers believe that the financial crisis is a prelude to the socialization of the world, which paves the way for the Antichrist coming on to the world stage—whereby all nations come experience economic, political, and religious control (global socialism or “practical communism”) under the rule of Antichrist [Franz, 2008]. For example, the Bretton Woods agreement of 1944 is collapsing, largely due to an excessive level of debt (printing of money, easy credit) in the United States and abroad. The financial crisis may be a prelude to the coming judgment of “Commercial Babylon” described in Revelation [Franz, 2001]. Franz notes the following steps in “Babylon’s financial dialectic” that appear to be repeated in failing world powers, including the modern-day United States:

1. Devalued currency (inflation)
2. Artificial rise in investment values
3. Debt bubble that collapses
4. Investment values collapse (deflation)
5. Real wages decrease
6. Debtors default on loans (bankruptcy)
7. Lenders foreclose and confiscate borrowers’ assets (i.e., socialism—the government now owns the assets)

Here are some Scriptures that give at least a weak analogy to the financial crisis in the United States in the year 2008. I say “weak” because some of the principles are worthy of consideration to practical living today, although the verses most likely have application to a future, and more direct, end-times meaning:

Isaiah 1:21-23 See how the faithful city has become a harlot! She once was full of justice; righteousness used to dwell in her—but now murderers! Your silver has become dross, your choice wine is diluted with water. Your rulers are rebels, companions of thieves; they all love bribes and chase after gifts. They do not defend the cause of the fatherless; the widow’s case does not come before them.

Revelation 18:10-17 Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry: "Woe! Woe, O great city, O Babylon, city of power! In one hour your doom has come!" The merchants of the
earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more—cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble; cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and bodies and souls of men. "They will say, 'The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your riches and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered.' The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will stand far off, terrified at her torment. They will weep and mourn and cry out: "'Woe! Woe, O great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls! In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!' "Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off.

Amos 8:4-6 Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land, saying, "When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat?"—skimping the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales, buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, selling even the sweepings with the wheat.

The word “merchants” used four times in Revelation refers to wholesalers in international commerce, who trade large quantities of items [Morris, 1983]. The 28 items of cargo mentioned may be representative of all trade on the earth since $28=7\times4$. Seven is the number of completion and four is the number of the expanses of the whole earth (north, east, south, and west).

Numerous financial experts have commented that gold and silver (and certain other “real” or “hard” assets) are commodities that retain their value over time. Gold and silver are frequently referenced in the Bible as items of value; however, there is no explicit claim that these (or other commodities) are the safest and most desirable assets to own. Gold tends to retain its value in terms of purchasing power over time, but note that gold does not pay dividends or interest.

Fractional reserve banking, and a departure from the gold standard, have allowed money to be created “out of nothing” leading to inflation. Inflation means “an increase in the money supply”, and is usually associated with rising prices (or equivalently, a decrease in the value of the currency, since more dollars chase the same goods).
A case can be made that fractional reserve banking and a departure from the gold standard are forms of “dishonest weights and measures”. For instance, the Coinage Act of 1792 stated that an American dollar was 412.5 grains of silver or 1/42 of an ounce of gold [Franz, 2001]. Today, there is very little silver or gold backing a U.S. dollar, especially as dollars continue to be printed en masse.

Needless to say, the level of modern-day taxation and the paycheque-to-paycheque status of many of the working poor and middle-class cause us to reflect on these verses, and on what the future might hold as we approach the end-times. This broken financial model was certainly not God’s plan for mankind, but rather is coming about because of:

- the poor choices that we, as a society and as individuals, have made—especially in terms of ethics and other Biblical values
- a departure from God
- our culture’s obsession with consumption (i.e., living beyond one’s means)
- an obsession with money, stock markets, and various forms of financial instruments, including derivatives
- an entitlement culture necessitating excessive taxation
- the lack of a work ethic
- the drug trade and problems with the justice system
- excessive litigation
- excessive debt levels (which are a form of bondage)
- using one’s home as a “three-bedroom ATM” to withdraw cash from “equity” to spend as we see fit
- supernatural elements (e.g., Satan) behind the scenes trying to bring the world into bondage, as the time of Christ approaches

Franz writes:

“[D]uring the sixteen months prior to the [1929] crash, the Fed increased the money supply by 62%. Investors borrowed money to buy stocks, which pushed stock prices artificially high. During the rise in prices, the financial insiders (Rockefellers, Warburgs, Mellons, Rothschilds, etc.) coaxes small investors into the stock market with the prospects of doubling or even tripling their money in a short period of time. As more and more small investors clamored to but stocks at the higher prices, the insiders, who owned the low-priced stocks, sold off to them.

“The, the insider-controlled Fed shut the money supply off and the market crashed. ...”

“The central bank’s increase of money supply to inflate market
prices, followed by a decrease in money supply to crash prices is what Thomas Jefferson warned us of when he said:

> If the American people ever allow private banks to control the issue of their currency, first by inflation and then by deflation, the banks and corporations that will grow up around them, will deprive the people of all property until their children wake up homeless on the continent their father occupied.

The Fed kept the money supply tight, which bankrupted the U.S. government and pushed the whole world into the depression of the 1930s. This led to the next and greatest transfer of wealth, when President Roosevelt confiscated privately-owned gold under Executive Order 6102. During this time, the insiders, who had all the money from the 1929 crash, forged new financial empires by buying up real estate, manufacturing plants, and just about everything else.” [Franz, 2001, pp. 96-97]

Some analysts have commented that excess debt, stock options, greed, and derivatives go hand-in-hand, leaving the economy in bad shape. Franz, not a fan of the United Nations, adds:

> “Simply put the derivatives market is the atomic bomb of the world’s debt bubble that will most likely trigger the collapse of the entire world’s financial system. When that happens, the globalists plan to roll ownership of the entire world over to themselves in one gigantic debt-for-equity swap.” [Franz, 2001, p. 132]

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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Who are “the kings from the east” mentioned in the book of Revelation? Are they coming to the Battle of Armageddon? Do they comprise the army of 200 million mentioned in Revelation 9?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Revelation 9:13-16</td>
<td>The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before God. It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, &quot;Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.&quot; And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. The number of the mounted troops was <strong>two hundred million</strong>. I heard their number.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Revelation 16:12-14</td>
<td>The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of</td>
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the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.

Revelation 16:16 Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

Dispensationalist Position

Many authors have assumed that the “kings from the east” or the “kings from the rising of the sun” include China, India, and other Asian countries; however, the Bible does not specifically state which countries or ethnic backgrounds represent this group of people. China has been mentioned most often, simply because it is one of the few countries in the world that can field an army of this size [Jeffrey, 1988]. Also, in Isaiah 49, the name “Sinim” in the KJV has the same root from which the word “China” gets its name [Missler, 2006]:

ISA 49:12 Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.

We should draw a distinction between the mounted army of 200 million in Revelation 9 (6th trumpet judgment) and the “kings from the east” in Revelation 16 (about four years later at the 6th bowl judgment). From the descriptions given, the former appears to be an army composed of demonic beings, whereas the latter is a human army. The four angels who were bound at the Euphrates River in Revelation 16 appear to be separate from the class of demons led by Abaddon from the Abyss in Revelation 9:1-11 [Morris, 1983].

Revelation 9:16-20 The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number. The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur. A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury. The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood--idols that cannot see or hear or walk.

Morris believes that the 200 million “man” army of Revelation 9, which is mounted on horses, is supernatural. In other words, they are 200 million demons:
Like the scorpion-locusts under the preceding trumpet, this will be a demonic legion of nightmarish animals indwelt by evil spirits, hitherto bound up in the Euphrates with their four evil overlords. It must be that these frightful “horses” and “horsemen” are demon-possessed creatures whose bodies are specially created by God for the awful judgment which they are thereby enabled to inflict upon mankind. Their bodies are real physical bodies, capable of generating physical fire and brimstone and causing the physical death of those men and women whom they attack. This suggests that the bodies are specially created right at the time of the release of the unclean spirits from their prison, and are then immediately taken over by the ascending spirits. ...

They are not horses, but their bodies are “like” horses, and their heads are said to be “as” the heads of lions. ...

Whether they are then herded back to some pit in Hades or allowed to roam the earth as disembodied spirits through the remainder of the tribulation has not been revealed.

But the human carnage left in their train is almost incredible. One-third of the world’s population at the time will be dead. Even with all the previous judgments, this undoubtedly means that about 1.2 billion people are slain, averaging about six victims per horseman. [Morris, 1983, pp. 169-170]

Also, consistency in the usage of the term “east” in Scripture would call for a Mesopotamian (Babylonian) origin, rather than an origin from China, especially given the Antichrist’s power base in Babylon [Fruchtenbaum, 2004].

A parallel passage appears in Joel 1-2, and again, the army described does not appear to be human.

To summarize why these two hundred million are demons and not Chinese, four things should be noted: first, they are led by four fallen angels; second, the location of the army is stated to be the Euphrates, where Babylon is located (which in the future will be the headquarters of the counterfeit trinity); third, the description given in the text rules out this army’s being human; and fourth, the kings of the east are not connected with this at all. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 229]

For ages they [nations of the far east] have been dominated by religions (Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, and others) which are fundamentally evolutionary religions. That is, they all envision an eternal universe, with no concept of a transcendent, omnipotent, personal God who created all things. Their emphasis is solely on present behaviour. To them history consist mostly of interminable cycles, without beginning or ending.

Associated with these pantheistic systems was (and is) always the
worship of spirits. Whether these are understood as spirits of ancestors or as the spirits of trees and other natural objects, such worship is in reality worship of demons, or fallen angels. Such religions thus are also commonly associated with idolatry. This eastern religion—whatever specific form it may assume in a particular time or place—is essentially the same old worship of idols which God’s prophets continually condemned. Comprising a monstrous complex of evolutionary, pantheistic, polytheistic, idolatrous, astrological, animistic humanism, it is merely a variant of the primeval religion introduced by Nimrod at Babel and promulgated throughout the world by the confusion of tongues and subsequent worldwide dispersion from Babel.

By its very nature, it lends itself to control of its devotees by demonic influence. Nevertheless, through the centuries, many have been won to Christ out of these pagan religions, much gospel seed has been sown, and it is probably that a great harvest of souls will be gathered from them to Christ during the tribulation times.

Those who are not so converted, however, will become more subject to demon influence and manipulation than ever, and will quickly follow the evil spirits to Armageddon when the time comes. [Morris, 1983, pp. 310-311].

Some authors do, however, equate the 200 million troops in Revelation 9 with the armies of the kings from the east in Revelation 16. Shoebat and Richardson argue that we don’t even have to go to the far east to find an army capable of fielding 200 million people:

Some scholars think China is “the Kings of the East,” with its 200 million-man army invading Israel. ...

This interpretation, of course, isolates the text without exploring the rest of Scripture regarding literal nations from the east. In all of Scripture, not a single passage connects “Kings of the East” with China. The real connection is rarely considered. “Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,” (Matthew 2:1). We know that these wealthy kings of the east were from the regions of Babylonia and Persia. Why not consider this option? Westerners argue that the reason the Kings of the East in Revelation come from China is the staggering number of soldiers—a 200-million-man army. But Islam can easily muster them if you consider Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Indonesia east of the Euphrates ... [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008, p. 286]

Nevertheless, the kings from the east are likely to come from the eastern side of the Euphrates River.

Preterist Position
Arnold Fruchtenbaum summarizes the events [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]:

- The first stage is the gathering of the armies of Antichrist, the “kings from the east”.

- The second is the destruction of Babylon, as per Isaiah 13:1-5. It may well be that the announcement of Babylon’s destruction is made while the Antichrist is at war in Israel:

  Daniel 11:40-45  "At the time of the end the king of the South will engage him in battle, and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood. He will also invade the Beautiful Land. Many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand. He will extend his power over many countries; Egypt will not escape. He will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt, with the Libyans and Nubians in submission. But reports from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many. He will pitch his royal tents between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.

- The third stage is the attack on Jerusalem.

  Zechariah 12:2-3  "I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling. Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem. On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves.

  Zechariah 14:2  I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city.

- The fourth stage includes the events at Bozrah:

  Jeremiah 49:13-14  I swear by myself,"
declares the LORD, "that Bozrah will become a ruin and an object of horror, of reproach and of cursing; and all its towns will be in ruins forever." I have heard a message from the LORD: An envoy was sent to the nations to say, "Assemble yourselves to attack it! Rise up for battle!"

- The fifth stage includes national repentance and pleading for the Messiah to return, so that all (surviving) Jews will be saved.

- The sixth stage is the return (Second Coming) of Jesus Christ, first to Bozrah (Isaiah 34:6; Isaiah 63:1), and then to the Mount of Olives.

Isaiah 63:1 Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save."

Habakkuk 3:3 God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran [both near Bozrah]. Selah His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth.

Zechariah 12:7 "The LORD will save the dwellings of Judah first, so that the honor of the house of David and of Jerusalem's inhabitants may not be greater than that of Judah.

With His return to the Remnant of Israel in Bozrah, He will indeed save the tents [NIV: dwellings] of Judah first, before saving the Jews of Jerusalem, as Zechariah 12:7 predicted ... The term tents points to temporary abodes rather than permanent dwellings. The fact that Judah is living in tents shows that Judah is not home in Judah, but is temporarily elsewhere. That elsewhere is Bozrah. Since the Messiah will save the tents of Judah first, this, too, shows that the initial place of His return will be Bozrah and not the Mount of Olives. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 350-351].

- The seventh stage is the battle in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and in particular, the Kidron Valley by the eastern walls of Jerusalem.

- The eighth stage is the conclusion of the battle on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:3-4). The world’s greatest earthquake will occur. Massive hailstones will fall. Jerusalem will split into three parts. The Mount of Olives will
split into two parts, creating a valley from west to east (Zechariah 14:3-5; Revelation 16:17-21).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Who or what are the 12 tribes of Israel? Why is the tribe of Dan (one of the 12 sons of Jacob) left out in Revelation 7? (Dan is the only one of the 12 tribes that is left out in Revelation 7.)</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| **Dispensationalist Position** | The 12 tribes/sons of Jacob are listed 20 times in Scripture. The 12 sons of Jacob are: Gad and Asher (both born by Zilpah); Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun (all born by Leah); Joseph and Benjamin (both borne by Rachel); and Dan and Naphtali (both born by Bilhah).

Dan is absent from the book of Revelation. This is a mystery. Some conjecture that it is because of the tribe of Dan’s unwillingness to go to battle, and instead “linger by the ships” in a time of trouble (Judges 5:17). Others speculate that the Antichrist may come from the tribe of Dan (though this is unlikely—see the section about “the gods of his fathers”). Nevertheless, Dan is present in the list of tribes in the Millennial division of lands in Ezekiel 48. We shouldn’t read much into the absence of Dan since there is no other mention of it in Scripture and, as mentioned, the tribe of Dan appears in the Millennium [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. |

| Preterist Position | |
8:12; and Joshua 10:13 where the sun stood still and the moon did not rise).

- The leader in each book is a military commander who comes to take claim of the land from its occupiers (Jesus Christ in Revelation, and Joshua in the book of Joshua).
- The name Joshua is a variant of the name Yeshua (Jesus).

### Preterist Position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What are the parallels between the Bride of Christ and the role of Israel as the wife of God?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>Ariel Canada’s Statement of Faith at its Web site <a href="http://arielcanada.com">http://arielcanada.com</a> states:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We believe that God called a people to Himself who are the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; that Israel is the Wife of Jehovah, unfaithful in the past, divorced in the present, and to be reunited in the future; that God has made four unconditional covenants with this elect nation that have remained unfulfilled; that God intends to fulfill all His promises to Israel in a literal way just as His warnings and judgments were fulfilled in a literal way; that in Israel’s history of unbelief there has always been a believing remnant according to the election of grace; that there will be a national regeneration of Israel at which time all of the provisions of the unconditional covenants will be fulfilled, including the seed, land, and blessing aspects.

Furthermore:

Dispensationalist Arnold Fruchtenbaum has summarized the Old Testament picture of Israel as the wife of the Lord involving the following phases: (1) the marriage contract (Deut. 5:1-3; 6:10-15; 7:6-11; Ezek. 16:8), (2) the great adultery (Jer. 3:1-5; 31:32; Ezek. 16:15-34; Hosea 2:2-5), (3) the separation (Deut. 24:1; Isa. 50:1), (4) the divorce (Jer. 3:6-10), (5) the punishment (Jer. 3:11-18; Ezek. 16:35-43, 58-59; Hosea 2:6-13), (6) the remarriage with restored blessings (Isa. 54:1-8; 62:4-5; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 16:60-63; Hosea 2:14-23). [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007, p. 37]

Isaiah 54:5-9 For your [Israel's] Maker is your husband—the LORD Almighty is his name—the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth. The LORD will call you back as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit—a wife who married young, only to be rejected," says your God. "For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back. In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion.
on you," says the LORD your Redeemer. "To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
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</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>When, in history, were the judgments of the seven seals, trumpets, and vials (bowls) fulfilled?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>They weren’t. The judgments are still future. These events couldn’t have been fulfilled in 70 AD, for a number of reasons. Did all eyes see Christ? Did He defend Jerusalem? Did He defend the armies? Did they look on Him whom they have pierced? The answer is clearly “no” to all of the above. Furthermore, many of the seal, trumpet, and vial (bowl) judgments of Revelation have specific, quantitative effects, such as the largest earthquake in history, a war that wipes out one-quarter of mankind, and three plagues that destroy another third of the population. When did these events occur in history? They didn’t.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preterist Position</td>
<td>To study the issue, Gary DeMar recommends the book by Ken Gentry entitled Before Jerusalem Fell. We know that the Temple fell in 70 AD. In Revelation, John is told to measure the Temple. Is this a future Temple? The dispensationalists believe so; but, nowhere in the New Testament, including Revelation, is there any writing about the fallen Temple, or any mention about a rebuilt Temple. Thus, the Temple was still standing when John was told to measure it. Thus, Revelation must have been written before 70 AD. And if Revelation was written before 70 AD, then the judgments are symbolic, and are therefore fulfilled.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is the relative timing of the midpoint of the Tribulation, that is, with respect to the seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls (or vials) of God’s judgment in Revelation? Are the seals, trumpets, and bowls sequential, or are they concurrent (i.e., in parallel)?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>God’s wrath is displayed in the entire seven-year Tribulation. One of the purposes of God’s wrath is to bring people to repentance; and thus, salvation. The 21 judgments appear to be sequential and non-overlapping [Morris, 1983]. Note in particular that the seventh seal judgment contains the seven trumpet judgments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, it is important to note that there are other events taking place in Revelation besides the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments. This is one reason why there is some confusion about the ordering of the events in Revelation. For example, because earthquakes are associated with the 6th seal, 7th trumpet, and 7th bowl, some authors believe that the judgments may be concurrent. As a second example, events that take place during the first half (or so) of the Tribulation, and which are concurrent with many of the seal judgments include: the government system (ten kings); the 144,000 Jewish witnesses and the accompanying worldwide revival; the ministry of God’s two special witnesses; and the religious system called Ecclesiastical Babylon [Fruchtenbaum, 2004].

The opening of the first seal releases the false Messiah. The first five seal judgments appear to take place during the first half of the Tribulation. The sixth seal seems to occur at the time of the Abomination of Desolation, which also marks the midpoint of the seven-year Tribulation and the start of the Great Tribulation. The remaining seals, and all the trumpet and bowl judgments, take place during the second half of the Tribulation. Matthew 24:4-41 refers to the Tribulation, but verses 4-14 refer to the first half of the Tribulation, and parallel the first five seals [LaHaye & Ice, 2003]. Other authors believe that the first half of the Tribulation includes the seven seals and the first six trumpets (which are part of the seventh seal) [DeHaan, 1946; Fruchtenbaum, 2004].

The two witnesses in Revelation are described between the opening of the fifth and sixth seals, even though Revelation 11 (which describes the two witnesses and their mission) appears after the sixth trumpet. The two major viewpoints held by futurists about the timing of the Rapture are: (a) after the fifth seal (but before the sixth); and (b) after the sixth trumpet (but before the seventh). Incidentally, mid-tribulation rapture adherents often associate the Rapture with the sounding of the seventh trumpet and the catching up of the two witnesses [Pentecost, 1958]. The claim is that the Church goes through part of the Tribulation, and that the Rapture is not imminent.

The bowl judgments come late in the Tribulation, and seem to focus on unbelievers [Pentecost, 1958].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Judgment</th>
<th>Scripture</th>
<th>Effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Seal</td>
<td>Rev. 6:1-2</td>
<td>False Messiah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Seal</td>
<td>Rev. 6:3-4</td>
<td>War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Seal</td>
<td>Rev. 6:5-6</td>
<td>Inflation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Seal</td>
<td>Rev. 6:7-8</td>
<td>Sword, famine, plagues, &amp; wild beasts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Scripture</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Seal</td>
<td>Rev. 6:9-11</td>
<td>Souls of the slain crying for justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Seal</td>
<td>Rev. 6:12-17</td>
<td>Great earthquake, signs in the heavens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Seal</td>
<td>Rev. 8:1</td>
<td>Silence in Heaven for ½ hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Trumpet</td>
<td>Rev. 8:7</td>
<td>Hailstones, fire, &amp; blood; one-third of the Earth, trees, &amp; green grass are burned up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Trumpet</td>
<td>Rev. 8:8-9</td>
<td>Meteor (?) goes into the sea; one-third of the sea turned to blood, one-third of the sea creatures die, &amp; one-third of the ships are destroyed (possibly by a tsunami?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Trumpet</td>
<td>Rev. 8:10-11</td>
<td>Ball of fire (meteor?, nuclear event?) goes into the springs and rivers; “Wormwood” event: many people die from the “bitter” waters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Trumpet</td>
<td>Rev. 8:12</td>
<td>One-third of the day, and the night, without light (i.e., sun, moon, and stars affected)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Trumpet</td>
<td>Rev. 9:1-11</td>
<td>Locust-like creatures (demons) from the Abyss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Trumpet</td>
<td>Rev. 9:14-19</td>
<td>Four angels that were bound at the Euphrates River are released to prepare the way for the kings from the East; a 200 million-man army; one-third of mankind dies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Trumpet</td>
<td>Rev. 11:15-19</td>
<td>Worship in heaven; thunder, rumblings, lightning, earthquake, &amp; great hailstorm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Bowl</td>
<td>Rev. 16:2</td>
<td>Ugly and painful sores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Bowl</td>
<td>Rev. 16:3</td>
<td>Everything in the sea dies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Bowl</td>
<td>Rev. 16:4</td>
<td>River and springs affected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Bowl</td>
<td>Rev. 16:8-9</td>
<td>Intense heat of the sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Bowl</td>
<td>Rev. 16:10-11</td>
<td>Darkness in kingdom of the Beast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Bowl</td>
<td>Rev. 16:12-16</td>
<td>Euphrates River dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East to enable them to come to Armageddon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Bowl</td>
<td>Rev. 16:17-21</td>
<td>Thunder, lightning, etc.; the world’s greatest earthquake; hailstones of one hundred</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The final three trumpet judgments are called "the woe judgments" because they are severe. The first two are demonic invasions, whereas the third contains the bowl judgments. Note that the results of the seventh trumpet are the same as the results of the seventh bowl; thus, the bowl judgments are contained in the seventh trumpet judgment [Fruchtenbaum, 2004].

The 4th bowl judgment may cause the ice caps and glaciers to melt, and facilitate the 6th bowl. In particular, the headwaters of the Euphrates River are in the mountains of Ararat, and there may be no snow/ice left. It is interesting to note that the 5th bowl compares God (light) to Satan (darkness).

For completeness, we also consider the seven thunders:

> Revelation 10:4  And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down."

It remains to be seen, during the Tribulation, what the seven thunders might be. Suffice it to say that they must have some significance; otherwise, God would not have made reference to them.

As a side note, the pre-wrath rapture model (not classical dispensationalism) places the Rapture at the opening of the seventh seal [Rosenthal, 1990]. Under this model, the Day of the Lord begins with the seventh seal, which is also when “God’s wrath” begins. In particular, the final seven years are broken into: “the beginning of sorrows” (3.5 years), the Great Tribulation (half of the remaining 3.5 years), and the Day of the Lord (the second half of the remaining 3.5 years). Thus, the dividing line between the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord is the pre-wrath Rapture, under this model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What’s the point in studying Bible prophecy?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both Positions</td>
<td>In the book of Revelation, Christ promises a special blessing to those who study it:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Revelation 1:3  Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prophecy is a confirmation of God’s Word. It is an important part of apologetics (i.e., giving reasons for the “hope that we have” or, in other words, providing credible “evidence” for the confirmation of Scripture and existence of God).

As the Book of Genesis is the foundation of God’s written Word, so is the Book of Revelation its capstone. ... It is small wonder that the great Enemy of God’s truth has directed his most intense attacks against Genesis and Revelation ... [Morris, 1983]

Fulfilled prophecy has confirmation in numerous forms of documented history, including archeology and extra-Biblical sources (e.g., ancient Babylonian records). Because of the accuracy of fulfilled prophecies, Christians confidently know that currently unfulfilled prophecies will also be fulfilled some day.

Prophecy is extremely relevant for today, especially in light of all the problems in the world, and the number of people who do not follow God. Not only is Bible prophecy evangelistic, but it is a wake-up call to Christians to take their faith seriously (and to look for the Coming of the Lord). It is also a wake-up call to the unsaved world to come to salvation in Jesus Christ—before it’s too late.

The easy optimism of the past generation has been shattered by two world wars, depression and inflation, with the accompanying social and moral evils. ... Realism has taken the place of optimism, and men have been forced to turn to eschatological considerations as the source of hope for a sin-cursed world. The Bible and the revelation it contains proves to be the one source of hope and confidence for the future, and men are turning more and more to it for light in the present darkness. [Pentecost, 1958, p. vii]

Non-Christians have become interested in Bible prophecy, and have become saved, through prophecy ministries. Also, many Christians have grown closer to the Lord by studying prophecy. By realizing the relevance of prophecy, believers are encouraged during dark times. For example, the persecuted church around the world is given an extra measure of hope. Heaven is what Christians all over the world look forward to.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Because the book of Daniel is so accurate in its prophecies, some unbelievers question the authenticity of the book. Is it possible that the book of Daniel was written after the prophecies came true? When was the book of Daniel written?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>The book of Daniel was written well before the prophecies came true. Daniel is the most authenticated book in the Bible for a number of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
reasons: (1) the accuracy of the many prophecies that have now been fulfilled, (2) evidence from archeology, (3) secular writings from Babylon, and (4) the fact that Jesus confirmed that Daniel was a prophet (Matthew 24:15). Reason number (4) should settle the matter. “If you believe in Jesus Christ, you have no problem about the authenticity or the reliability of the book of Daniel. If you don’t believe in Jesus Christ, then you got bigger problems than the authenticity of the book of Daniel.” [Missler, 2005]

Matthew 24:15-16  “So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel--let the reader understand--then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Rob Lindsted says that if you want to prove to anyone that the Bible is the Word of God, then direct that person to the book of Daniel. There is plenty of evidence to confirm the fulfilled of prophecy [Lindsted, 1989].

Daniel was written well before most of the events were fulfilled. The Septuagint was written about 300 years before Christ. It is the Greek translation of the (Hebrew and Aramaic) Old Testament, and the translation took place in Alexandria, Egypt, beginning around the time of Alexander the Great. At this point, many of the prophecies of Daniel were still unfulfilled, but later became fulfilled. Thus, Daniel was not written “after the fact”.

By the way, the prophet Isaiah mentions King Cyrus by name (Isaiah 45:1,13) about two hundred years ahead of time (even before the book of Daniel was written):

Isaiah 44:27-28 who says to the watery deep, 'Be dry, and I will dry up your streams,' who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, "Let it be rebuilt," and of the temple, "Let its foundations be laid."'

Isaiah 45:1  "This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut:

ISA 45:4  For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen, I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me.

Isaiah 45:11-13 "This is what the LORD says--the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker: Concerning things to come, do you question me about my children, or give me orders about the work of my
hands? It is I who made the earth and created mankind upon it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts. I will raise up Cyrus in my righteousness: I will make all his ways straight. He will rebuild my city and set my exiles free, but not for a price or reward, says the LORD Almighty."

**Time of Writing of the Book of Daniel:** It was completed around 530 BC, but was probably written starting around 587 BC. For example, Chapter 9 was written around 539-538 BC.

**Languages:** Aramaic was used in chapters 2-7; otherwise, the language used was Hebrew. Aramaic was the Gentile language of that part of the world, at that time. The rest of the Bible is written in Hebrew (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament).

**Writers:** Daniel (chapters 1-3, 5-12), King Nebuchadnezzar (Chapter 4). Note that Chapter 4 is King Nebuchadnezzar’s personal testimony; some scholars believe that he will be in Heaven.

**Chronology of the Chapters:** 1-4, 7, 8, 5, 9, 6, 10-12

**Key Fulfilled Prophecies:** interpretation of dreams and visions, unfolding of Babylon’s history, description of future world empires, Antiochus Epiphanes, first 69 of the 70 “weeks” of years (i.e., up to the time of Christ—500-600 years into the future)

**Key Unfulfilled Prophecies:** 70th week of Daniel (Tribulation), including rise of Antichrist, Abomination of Desolation, fall of Antichrist

Here are the prophecies of world empires, as per Nebuchadnezzar’s dream about the statue, and Daniel’s visions and interpretations [Lindsted, 1989; Missler, 2005]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statue (Dan. 2)</th>
<th>Empire</th>
<th>Beasts (Dan. 7)</th>
<th>Beasts (Dan. 8)</th>
<th>Identification/Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gold (head)</td>
<td>Babylon (606 BC to 539 BC)</td>
<td>(Winged) Lion</td>
<td>Ram with two horns (Persian empire was dominant)</td>
<td>Nebuchadnezzar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver (chest and arms)</td>
<td>Media &amp; Persia (539 BC to 332 BC)</td>
<td>Bear that was raised up on one side</td>
<td>Darius, Cyrus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronze (belly and thighs)</td>
<td>Greece (332 BC to 68 BC)</td>
<td>Leopard (emphasizing speed)</td>
<td>Goat from the west; (four horns grew up in</td>
<td>Alexander the Great</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following his
| Iron (legs) | Rome, Phase I (68 BC to 476 AD) — no one conquered it; it fell apart. The eastern leg of the Roman Empire (Byzantine) lasted longer (68 BC to 1450 AD). | Terrifying Beast | 168 BC: Antiochus Epiphanes is a type of the future Antichrist. |
| Iron Mixed with Clay (feet and toes) | Rome, Phase II (future) | | 284 AD: Diocletian divides the empire into two. |
| | | | 312 AD: Constantine moves the capital to Byzantium. |
| | | | 476 AD: The empire breaks into pieces. |
| | | | 183 AD: Diocletian divides the empire into two. |
| | | | 1054 AD: Pope Leo IX wound up splitting the Roman Empire religiously into two parts: Roman Catholicism in the West, and Orthodoxy in the East. |

Dave Hunt notes that the 4th kingdom had two legs, which signified the division of the Roman Empire when Constantine moved his headquarters to Constantinople (now known as Istanbul). This event left the Popes in charge of Rome. Furthermore, in 1054 AD, Pope Leo IX wound up splitting the Roman Empire religiously into two parts: Roman Catholicism in the West, and Orthodoxy in the East.

Here are some eschatological types [Missler, 2005] to consider from the book of Daniel, with respect to Nebuchadnezzar’s image of gold, and the fire that Daniel’s three friends were thrown into:

- Nebuchadnezzar erects a 60 x 6 cubit statue of himself, and people had to worship the image or be put to death. The king has exalts himself above God.—Analogy: the Antichrist
• Fire is a type of testing (a process of refinement), tribulation, or judgment.—Analogy: the Tribulation
• Daniel’s three friends were untouched in the fiery furnace (except that their bindings were burned away), and surprisingly, a fourth person appeared in the fire (perhaps a Christophany, i.e., pre-incarnate Jesus Christ?)—Analogy: the Rapture
• Daniel seems to have been removed from the situation somehow (perhaps on a trip?); otherwise, he surely would have protested the fiery furnace ordeal.—Analogy: the Rapture

There were actually several phases to the return of the Babylonian exiles [Missler, 2005]:

• In 538 BC, under Zerubbabel, about 50,000 returned to Israel.
• In 515 BC, under Ezra, the Temple was rebuilt. (We frequently call the rebuilt Temple the “Second Temple”.)
  o In 458 BC: About 2,000 Jews returned, again under Ezra.
• In 445 BC, under Nehemiah, the walls and streets of Jerusalem were rebuilt. It is this event which is associated with the start of the 69 “weeks” of years.

Genesis 49:10 The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.

The above verse written by Jacob, applies to the Messiah. In 7 AD, the Romans took away the authorization for capital punishment (i.e., the death penalty: “the scepter”) from the Sanhedrin (the Jews’ highest ruling council) in Judea. The Babylonian Talmud states that the high priest at the time put on sackcloth and ashes, and exclaimed, “Woe unto us for the scepter has departed from Judah and the Messiah has not come!” Chuck Missler states, “They thought the word of God had been broken. They actually thought that. What they didn’t know was that up in Nazareth, in a carpenter’s shop, was a young boy growing up ... He [the Messiah: Jesus Christ] had come” [Missler, 2005].

Furthermore, since Daniel 9:24-27 says that the Messiah will be “cut off” and the city (Jerusalem) will be destroyed, this implies that Christ had to come before 70 AD. Thus, the Jews could look back and reckon that Jesus Christ was the Messiah.

Preterist Position (same as the dispensationalist position, except for the eschatological types, and the future “revived Roman Empire”)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Who, or what, is the “little horn” in the book of Daniel?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daniel 7:7-11</td>
<td>&quot;After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast ... It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns. &quot;While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. ... &quot;Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel 7:19-26</td>
<td>&quot;Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying ... I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell--the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom. &quot;He gave me this explanation: 'The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time. &quot;'But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
<th>The “little horn” represents two people: Antiochus Epiphanes (circa 168 BC), and the Antichrist (still future). Thus, it has both a short-term and a long-term fulfillment. The little horn is one of the four horns of the fourth beast (describing the Roman Empire). It uproots three of the other horns (of Alexander the Great’s Greek kingdom). The first few verses of Daniel 7 describe the four empires following Babylon, and are confirmed by history. The little horn also appears in the context of the end times (compare Daniel 7:19-26 (above) to Revelation 17:12):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Revelation 17:12  "The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast.

**Preterist Position**

| Topic/Question | An equidistant letter sequence (ELS) is an embedding of a text message (sequence of letters) into the body of a larger text, where the letters in the sequence appear every \( k \) letters in the body of the text (i.e., the Bible), where \( k \) is a positive or negative integer (other than 0 or 1). (See [Witztum, 1994] for the original, scientific paper.) In other words, for some sets of Bible verses in the original Hebrew, every \( k \)-th letter in the body of that text spells out some word, name, or phrase. For example, consider the ELS “Read the code” that is found embedded in the following quotation at skip sequence \( k=4 \): “[Dr. Eliyahu] Rips explained that each code is a case of adding every fourth [or twelfth or fiftieth] letter to form a word.” [Missler, 2005; quoting Michael Drosdin]

Some people call ELSs “hidden Bible codes” that give evidence of supernatural authorship, especially non-trivial ELSs. Other people think that the appearance of these “codes” is coincidental and can be found in any large body of text; therefore, we should just ignore them.

Are the “Bible Codes” for real? Why are they of prophetic interest?

**Dispensationalist Position**

| Dispensationalist Position | The significance of equidistant letter sequences in Scripture is controversial. There seems to be evidence that numerous ELSs are not random occurrences in the Bible. If this is the case, and assuming the ELSs were not placed in the text after the fact, then one can argue that the Bible has God’s “fingerprints” or “signature” all over it [Jeffrey, 1996]. This would provide additional evidence for the supernatural authorship of the Bible.

Although it is true that many ELSs are found embedded by chance in any large body of text such as a book, magazine, or newspaper, there are many non-trivial ELSs in the Bible, and—this is the important part—they seem to be clustered in both proximity and correlated meaning. So, even if the words that are embedded in the text are accounted for by random chance, the fact that they are clustered together semantically in strategic portions of the text is surely not a coincidence [Missler, 1999; Missler, 2005].

For examples of some ELSs clustered in Scripture, and why this has
prophetic interest, consider Isaiah 53:1-12 written around 600 BC. Intersecting or embedded in this passage, in Hebrew, for various values of $k$, are at least 27 phrases including:

- Yeshua is my name
- Messiah
- Caiaphas
- Let Him be crucified
- From the Atonement Lamb
- Disciples mourn

Also, embedded in these same 12 verses are the names of 40 people who were believers and accompanied Christ (e.g., disciples, those at the foot of the cross) including:

- the disciples Peter, Matthew, John, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Simon, Thaddaeus, Matthias, Salome, Joseph
  - Note, however, the absence of the only other disciple of Jesus: Judas (who betrayed Jesus)
- James (two occurrences; there was a third—the brother of Jesus—but he didn’t become a believer until later on)
- Mary (three occurrences; there were three Marys)

In the creation account in Genesis 2, there are 27 names of trees encoded at various skip sequences in the text [Missler, 2005].

It is only in the last few decades because of computers that we have reached the stage where we can efficiently search large quantities of text for ELSs. (This is too tedious to do by hand.) Although we cannot dogmatically assert it, might the advent of computers be a fulfillment of Daniel 12:4?

Daniel 12:4  But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge.”

Deuteronomy 29:29  The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.

| Preterist Position | Equidistant letter sequences are a form of “magic apologetics”, and should be avoided. There is sufficient information in the surface Scripture without having to go “deeper” into the text. Many of the “hidden codes” are there purely by chance. Don’t waste your time. |
Aside from the issue of equidistant letter sequences (above), are there any messages in the plain, surface text that hide a deeper meaning, and which might be suggestive of supernatural authorship?

The Bible appears to be a distributed message system, with embedded redundancy to prevent “hostile jamming”—in the words of Chuck Missler. There also appear to be some very cleverly designed passages whose surface reading hides a deeper meaning. Examples are found in [Missler, 1999; Missler, 2005]—one of which is the genealogy of Genesis 5:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Meaning of Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>Man (is)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seth</td>
<td>Appointed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enosh</td>
<td>Mortal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenan</td>
<td>Sorrow; (but)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahalalel</td>
<td>The Blessed God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jared</td>
<td>Shall come down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enoch</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methuselah</td>
<td>His death shall bring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamech</td>
<td>The Despairing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noah</td>
<td>Comfort, Rest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that the right hand column can be read as a sentence, describing the gospel message of Jesus Christ.

As another example, Salus reports a literal interpretation of the names of the twelve tribes listed in Revelation 7:5-8 [Salus, 2008]. The ordering in Revelation is unusual because the names of the leaders of the twelve tribes are not listed in order of their birth. Perhaps God did this to encode a message, conjectures Salus. The ordering of the tribes in Revelation is: Judah, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin.

The tribe of Judah is listed first in Revelation 7:5, however, in birth order, Judah was the fourth son. Similarly, the Bible lists the other tribes out of order in Revelation 7:5-8. An astute student of the Word watches for these abnormalities within the scriptures and, as such, is always encouraged to dig deeper in order to discover what the Holy Spirit intends for him or her to understand relative to the text.

THE MEANINGS OF THE NAMES:

*Judah* (Praise God), *Reuben* (behold a son), *Gad* (good fortune), *Asher* (happiness), *Naphtali* (my wrestling), *Manasseh* (God has caused me to forget), *Simeon* (hearing), *Levi* (joining or adhesion), *Issachar* (God hath given me my hire, or man for hire), *Zebulun* (God hath given me my hire, or man for hire), *Joseph* (adding or increaser), *Benjamin* (son of the right hand).
THE MESSAGE OF THE NAMES:

Praise God! Behold! a son of good fortune and happiness. My wrestling God has caused me to forget. Hearing of our joining, God hath given me my hire and elevated dwelling increased by the son of the right hand. [Salus, 2008, pp. 76-77]

Preterist Position

Topic/Question

Aside the issue of equidistant letter sequences (above) and messages that are hidden in the surface text (also above), are there any mathematical structures or numerical patterns in the Bible that might be suggestive of divine authorship? What is gematria? Is it worth studying?

Not necessarily specific to any position

This is a sensitive area, but it is interesting, and may bear more fruit with future research. Although I won’t say too much about the numerical patterns in Scripture, or the significance of any mathematical structure, it is important to note that God is a God of order and perfection. Jesus Christ said that His words (the Bible) will never pass away (Matthew 24:35). The fact that He said that not one “jot or tittle” will ever disappear from the Word of God suggests that it is perfectly written in its original form. Also, it is important to note that there are so many important messages in the surface text (i.e., plain reading) without ever needing to turn to mathematics; consequently, there is no reason for most people to go beyond the plain reading of Scripture.

Unlike English, the Hebrew and Greek alphabets attach numbers to each of the letters. For example, the Hebrew alphabet has 22 letters, and the number attached to each letter, in order, is: 1, 2, ..., 9, 10, 20, ..., 90, 100, 200, 300, and 400. For example, the letter aleph has value 1, bet has value 2, ..., and taw has value 400. Furthermore, five of the intermediate letters have dual values (i.e., kaph can be 20 or 500, mem can be 40 or 600, nun can be 50 or 700, pe can be 80 or 800, and tsadik can be 90 or 900)—see Wikipedia. A person can sum the values of the letters in a word, phrase, sentence, etc., and come up with a number that is associated with the word(s). This field of study is called gematria.

“Numbers in the bible have a definite meaning” [DeHaan, 1946, p. 173]:

- 1 is the number of sovereignty and represents unity (e.g., the Godhead)
- 2 is the number of division and trouble
• 3 is the number of divine completeness
• 4 is the number of the earth
• 5 is the number of grace
• 6 is the number of man, created on the 6th day
• 7 is the number of divine perfection
• 8 is the number of new beginnings
• 9 is the number of judgment
• 10 is the number of testimony
• 11 is the number of apostasy
• 12 is the number of the nation of Israel, and may refer to a form of administrative completeness as well (e.g., tribes of Israel; disciples; spies staking out Canaan; gates, foundations, and scale of measure in the New Jerusalem)
• 13 is the number of rebellion

Let’s take a look at a few other numbers from Scripture that have numerical significance. These examples are taken from [Harrison, 1994]:

• “7” appears frequently in the Bible. It speaks of completeness or perfection:
  • 7 days of creation
  • Jacob worked 7 years for his wives
  • 7th day is the Sabbath day
  • 7th year is a Sabbath year
  • 7 Biblical feast days or holy-days
  • 7 times around the walls of Jericho
  • 7-year Tribulation
  • 7 seals, 7 trumpets, and 7 bowls—judgments in Revelation
  • 7 churches, 7 spirits, 7 candlesticks, 7 stars, 7 lamps, 7 horns, 7 angels, 7 thunders, 7 heads, 7 crowns, 7 plagues, 7 mountains, and 7 kings in Revelation

• “70” is another number that comes up often in the Bible:
  • 70 original nations (Genesis 10)
  • 70 Hebrews moved to Egypt (Exodus 1:5)
  • 70 years of exile in Babylon
  • 70 weeks of years (Daniel 9:24-27)

• In John 21:11, exactly 153 fish were caught during Jesus Christ’s post-resurrection visit with the disciples. This seems like an arbitrary number that bears no significance upon first reading; however, 153 is an unusual number:
1. The sum of the cubes of its digits is equal to the number itself, that is, $T(n) = n$. In other words $T(153) = 1^3 + 5^3 + 3^3 = 1 + 125 + 27 = 153$.

2. 153 is the sum of these five factorial numbers: $1! + 2! + 3! + 4! + 5! = 1 + 2 + 6 + 24 + 120 = 153$.

3. 153 is the sum of the first 17 positive integers: $1 + 2 + \ldots + 17 = 153$. By the way, the 17th day of the Jewish month Nisan is the anniversary date of these major “resurrection” or “firstfruits” events in history: it is the day that Noah’s Ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat, the day that the Israelites passed through the Red Sea on dry land during the exodus from Egypt, the day that Israel ate the firstfruits upon entering the Promised Land, and the day that Jesus Christ rose from the dead [Jeffrey, 1988].

Is there a connection between Jesus and the catch of exactly 153 fish? Some people think that the number of fish represents the number of nations that will exist at the time of Christ’s return; however, this is just conjecture.

- The name “Jesus” in the Greek has the sum of its letters as the numeric value 888. “8” appears in Scripture as the number of new beginnings:
  
  1. If the 1st day of the week is Sunday, then the 8th day marks the 1st day of the new week.
  2. Jews circumcise boys on the 8th day.
  3. The post-Flood world started with only 8 survivors from the pre-Flood world (i.e., a subset of Noah’s extended family).

The sum of the names of Daniel and his three friends Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego) in the Hebrew is 888. Recall that the book of Daniel was originally written in Hebrew (and Aramaic), not Greek. The New Testament books were all written originally in Greek. Other than Daniel, the Old Testament books were all originally written exclusively in Hebrew.

- The word “Antichrist” in the Greek has numeric value 666. Revelation 13:18 says that the mark of the beast is 666.
Interestingly, names associated with Satan have 13 as one of their factors. For example, “Satan” in the Hebrew is 364 = 13 * 28, “Satan” in the Greek is 559 = 13 * 43, “serpent” in the Hebrew is 1300 = 13 * 100, “serpent” in the Greek is 780 = 13 * 60, “tempter” in the Greek is 1053 = 13 * 81, “Belial” in the Greek is 78 = 13 * 6, “murderer” in the Greek is 1820 = 13 * 140, “Beelzebub” in the Greek is 611 = 13 * 47, “devil” in its original spelling in the Greek is 195 = 13 * 15, “dragon” in the Greek is 975 = 13 * 75, and “beast” is 247 = 13 * 19. (By the way, the name “Lucifer” appears nowhere in Scripture, except for one occurrence in the King James Version of the Bible. Isaiah 14:12 (morning star) was first translated “Lucifer” in the Latin, and it comes to 156 = 13 * 12.)

Why 13? 13 appears to be the number of rebellion, which implies sin. The name of the world’s first dictator, Nimrod, means “we rebel”. The first use of thirteen also appears in Genesis 14:4:

Genesis 14:4 For twelve years they had been subject to Kedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled.

In Genesis 32:14, Jacob and Esau exchanged 220 and 284 goats, respectively, as gifts to regain each other’s friendship. Mathematicians call the pair of integers 220 and 284 “friendly numbers” because they have an interesting property: the sums of their respective proper divisors equal each other. For 220, the integers 1, 2, 4, 5, 10, 11, 20, 22, 44, 55, and 110 are the only integers that divide 220 (evenly), and the sum of these divisors is 284; and, for 284: the sum of 1, 2, 4, 71, and 142 all divide 284, and sum to 220. (“Proper” means exclude the full number itself.) Numbers with these properties are rare, and the properties weren’t discovered by mathematicians until about 500 BC, long after Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, and about 1500 years after Jacob and Esau gave each other the goats. (The next pair of friendly numbers after 220 & 284 is 1184 & 1210.)

As a mathematics major and computer scientist, I am intrigued by the numerical patterns that appear in Scripture.

For an interesting study of numerical patterns in Scripture, including a brief study of gematria, the interested reader is referred to [Harrison, 1994; Missler, 1999]. The bottom line is that
mathematical patterns and ELSs in Scripture are interesting. It wouldn’t surprise me if many more patterns will be discovered, confirming that the Scriptures were authored by supernatural inspiration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What are the parallels between the lives of the prophet Jonah and Jesus Christ? In what ways was Jonah’s ministry prophetic?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Dispensationalist Position | The parallels [Missler, 2005]:  
- 3 days and 3 nights (Jonah in the big fish, Christ in Hades)  
- Death and resurrection (Some scholars think Jonah may have died in the big fish, and was resurrected)  
- Jonah’s ministry was to the Gentiles—a foreshadowing of Christ’s ministry post-resurrection  
- Jonah preached repentance  

Unlike Israel, the king of Ninevah ordered the people to repent. They did at that time, and were spared. Like Israel, Jonah was out of his own land and disobedient to a heavenly commission, yet was still a witness to God.  

Israel was seeking a sign:  

Luke 11:29–30  As the crowds increased, Jesus said, “This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation.”  

Jonah was swallowed by a big fish. Ironically, the people of Ninevah worshipped Dagon the fish god. |

| Preterist Position |  |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What are the parallels between the lives of Joseph (in Genesis) and Jesus Christ? In what ways was Joseph’s ministry prophetic?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Dispensationalist Position | The story of Joseph is one of my favourite stories in the Bible. It has some fascinating parallels to the ministry of Christ, and to eschatology—and this is not by accident. In the following table, I itemize and paraphrase some points that have been highlighted by several authors, including William MacDonald [MacDonald, 2000] and M.R. DeHaan [DeHaan, 1966].  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Joseph</th>
<th>Jesus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characteristic</td>
<td>Bible References</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was a shepherd (Genesis 37:2)</td>
<td>Is the great “shepherd” (Matthew 2:6; 26:31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposed evil (Genesis 37:2,18)</td>
<td>Exposed evil (Matthew 9:4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greatly loved by his father (Genesis 37:3)</td>
<td>Beloved of the Father (Matthew 3:17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreamt of wheat sheaves, sun, moon, and stars bowing down to him (Genesis 37:7-10)</td>
<td>All will bow before Him (Psalm 22:27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejected by his brethren</td>
<td>“A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house.” (Matthew 13:45; see also John 19:15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His brothers said to him, “Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?” And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said. (Genesis 37:8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sent on a special mission by his father (Genesis 37:13)</td>
<td>Sent on a special mission by the Father (Matthew 21:37-38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Went to Shechem which is where his brothers were last seen (Shechem means “fellowship”), but the brothers had moved from Shechem to Dothan (which means “law”). (Genesis 37:12-17) ... and later showed grace when forgiving his brothers.</td>
<td>Adam and Eve broke fellowship with God in the Garden of Eden, and the Israelites lived under the dispensation of law (the Torah, given to Moses). Christ took us from living under law (Old Testament) to living under grace (New Testament).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His brethren plotted to kill him. (Genesis 37:18)</td>
<td>His brethren plotted to kill Him. (Matthew 26:4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stripped of his robe of many colours (Genesis 37:23)</td>
<td>Stripped at the crucifixion: “…They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.” (John 19:23-24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sold for 20 pieces of silver (Genesis 37:28)</td>
<td>Sold by Judas for 30 pieces of silver (Matthew 26:15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was a man of integrity (Genesis 39:7-12)</td>
<td>Was a man of integrity (sinless)—(Hebrews 4:15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falsely accused (Genesis 39:17-20)</td>
<td>Falsely accused (Luke 23:10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose to a high position of honour, after initially encountering resistance (Genesis 41:40-41)</td>
<td>Rose to a high position of honour (Mark 16:19), after initially encountering resistance; [Future] will be honoured greatly publicly (Matthew 26:64; Philippians 2:9-11; Revelation 5:13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Named Zaphenath-Paneah (“revealer of secrets”) by Pharaoh (Genesis 41:45)</td>
<td>Is the revealer of secrets (Colossians 2:2-3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose to power at age 30 (Genesis 41:46)</td>
<td>Began his ministry around age 30 (Luke 3:23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took a Gentile bride in Egypt (Genesis 41:50)</td>
<td>Took a Gentile bride (the Christian church, comprised of believing Gentiles and Jews since the time of His first coming)—(Luke 5:34-35; Revelation 19:7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-year famine in Egypt (Genesis 41:54)</td>
<td>7-year Tribulation in Israel (Daniel 9:27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides the world with bread/grain during the 7-year famine (Genesis 41:56-57)</td>
<td>Is the bread of life (John 6:51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was a blessing to the Gentiles, saving Egypt and other nations from starvation (Genesis 41:57)</td>
<td>Is a blessing to the Gentiles, bringing salvation (Luke 2:32; Acts 13:46-48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not recognized by his brothers (Genesis 42:8)</td>
<td>Not recognized as the Messiah by Israel (Luke 19:44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receives a confession of guilt and sin from his brothers (Genesis 42:21-22; 45:5)</td>
<td>Receiving confessions of guilt and sin from us (1 John 1:9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had a great reunion with his brethren, and was finally accepted by them (Genesis 45:1-4)</td>
<td>[Future] Will have a great reunion with his brethren, and will finally be accepted by the remaining brethren (Isaiah 63:1-3; Zechariah 12:10; 13:6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgive and forget attitude (Genesis 45:5)</td>
<td>Forgive and forget attitude (1 John 1:9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.” (Genesis 50:20)</td>
<td>Came to die for our sins (John 1:29; Mark 15:39; Hebrews 9:22; John 3:16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Preterist Position

Same as the dispensationalist position, except for the Rapture/tribulation part.

Joseph’s life pointed forward to the greater reality of the antitype: Jesus Christ. Most significantly, he purchased redemption for those held in bondage in Egypt, which pointed to the ultimate redemption from the bondage of sin. Furthermore, the land of Israel is a type of Heaven; and the city of Jerusalem looked forward to its ultimate
fulfillment in Jesus. Communion is an antitype of the Passover supper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>How reliable are Josephus’ writings when it comes to interpreting Scripture?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Dispensationalist Position | Josephus was a Jewish *historian* whose works are respected on an international scale; however, as Randy Price reports, he should not be relied upon to interpret scripture accurately:  

The writings of Josephus, while generally considered accurate in most details, such as architectural and cultural descriptions, are famous for their Roman political bias and openly antagonistic attitude to the aspirations of Jewish nationalism. Josephus’s involvement in the Great War was primarily on the side of the Romans, a fact that caused him to be regarded as a traitor by his own Jewish nation. ...  

In keeping with his rejection of Jewish nationalism, Josephus scorned popular movements, especially messianic movements whose hopes included an earthly kingdom for Israel. ...  

This lack of eschatological hope evidently influenced Josephus to make unwarranted historical compromises and concessions. For example, despite the fact Josephus accepted the Maccabean interpretation that Antiochus IV Epiphanes fulfilled a prophecy of Daniel concerning the “abomination of desolation” in the Temple, when he wrote his history of the Roman conquest of Jerusalem, he abridged this view to “make room” to incorporate Titus and the Romans as “also” fulfilling Daniel’s prophecy. Such an abuse of the historical data, however, since it agrees with the preterists’ position, is hardly scrutinized for eschatological bias. This understanding of Josephus’ anti-eschatological bias must be taken into consideration when preterist R.C. Sproul says that “Josephus’s account of many preliminary events reads like a chronicle of fulfilled biblical prophecy. He refers to the rise of false prophets, a massacre in Jerusalem, the slaughter of Jews in Alexandria, and the invasion of Galilee.” Given that Josephus denied a future national redemption for Israel, the heart of the messianic hope, and recast Jewish prophecies as being fulfilled in the first century through the Romans, is it any wonder that preterists are attracted to Josephus as a moth to a flame? [Price, 2003a, pp. 357-358] |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
<th>Will babies be born during the Millennium? How about after the Millennium (i.e., after God creates a “new heavens and a new Earth” as per Isaiah 65:17)?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>Babies will be born post-Second Coming, during the Millennium, but only to those people who have non-resurrected bodies at that point in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The living saints who go into the millennium in their natural bodies will beget children throughout the age. The earth’s population will soar. These born in the age will not be born without a sin nature, so salvation will be required (Jer. 30:20; 31:29; Ezek. 47:22; Zech. 10:8). [Pentecost, 1958, p. 489]

Those who were raptured received resurrected bodies at the Rapture. Those who have died since then (but are believers) will get resurrected, perfected bodies after the Second Coming, but before the Millennium. It appears that neither of these two groups will have children during the Millennium or beyond.

Following the Millennium, when God creates the new heavens and the new earth (as per Isaiah 65:7), all non-resurrected believers get a resurrected body (like those at the earlier Rapture and premillennial judgment), but no more children are created. Jesus said:

Matthew 22:30 At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.

**Preterist Position**

Same as the dispensationalist position, but the physical bodies will be obtained after the Second Coming of Christ, rather than at some alleged pre-trib rapture.

**Topic/Question**

What are the characteristics of the Millennium? In other words, what will the Millennium be like?

**Dispensationalist Position**

J. Dwight Pentecost highlights some of the characteristics of the Millennium [Pentecost, 1958]:

- Peace
- Joy
- Holiness
- Glory
- Comfort
- Justice
- Full knowledge
- Instruction
- Removal of the *curse* (Genesis 3:17-19; Revelation 22:3)
- Removal of sickness
- Healing of the deformed
- Protection
- Freedom from oppression
- No immaturity
- Reproduction by the people
- Labor
- Economic prosperity
- Increase of light
- Unified language
- Unified worship
- Manifest presence of God
- Fullness of the Holy Spirit
- Perpetuity of the millennial state
- Theocratic government
- Jesus Christ is King
- David is regent
- Nobles and governors reign under David
- Many lesser authorities will rule, also
- Jerusalem will become the “center” or focus of the Earth
- Fertility and productivity of the land
- Abundant rainfall

The Second Coming of Christ, and the start of the Millennium, will fulfill the words of the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:10, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven”.

Henry Morris comments on the events leading up to and during the Millennium, beginning shortly after Christ returns to the Earth at Armageddon:

Thus the only ones left on earth are those followers of the beast who were not in the armies at Armageddon and who had not already perished in the plagues, as well as those who had managed somehow to escape the beast’s executioners while still refusing to receive his mark. These are evidently the goats and the sheep, respectively.

... The “sheep,” on the other hand, had been both compassionate and courageous, rendering such help as they could to these persecuted “brethren” of the Son of man, at the risk of their own lives.

... The “brethren” of whom the Lord had spoken could only be the persecuted tribulation martyrs, both Jew and Gentile. ... 

From each nation, with Israel at the head, will thus come a remnant to rebuild their devastated countries. Even though the initial population of each nation will be small, the conditions and incentives will be present to encourage large families, and the populations will grow rapidly. Furthermore, antediluvian longevity will be restored. “There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an
hundred years old shall be accursed” (Isaiah 65:20). This may be accomplished partially by the restoration of antediluvian climatological and agricultural conditions and partially by new technologies developed by millennial scientists. In fact, scientific and technological research will thrive as never before, as mankind seeks as never before to fulfill its primeval commission to “subdue the earth” (Genesis 1:28).

Israel, of course, will be the chief nation of the world during the millennium. “And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the world of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Micah 4:2).

Other nations will be expected to honor Israel and to center their worship there: “And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain” (Zechariah 14:16,17). A great temple will be established in Jerusalem, as described in Ezekiel 40-46, and a form of the ancient worship instituted again, complete with priestly orders and sacrificial animal offerings.

... In every dispensation, salvation is offered only by the grace of God on the basis of the substitutionary death of Christ for sin.

... In the days of His glory, it will be difficult to remember and believe in His humiliation and death, and yet it is still as important as ever that men and women understand and believe that they are sinners and can only be saved through the substitutionary death of Christ for their sins. Thus, the animal sacrifices will be a memorial and reminder of the great saving work of Christ, and thus will also serve both as an aid and evidence of faith. [Morris, 1983, pp. 415-417]

Preterist Position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is the relationship that will exist between the resurrected people and the earthly (unresurrected) people during the Millennium?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>The resurrected people entering the Millennium include those who were raptured, and the Old Testament saints.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a precursor to our discussion, note that Jesus Christ freely associated with the disciples (and others) following His resurrection. He even ate with them.

Although the resurrected individuals have an active part in the Millennium, they are not subjects of the King’s reign [Pentecost,
The New Jerusalem, during the Millennium, is described as follows:

Revelation 21:10-14 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Thus, we see, in the New Jerusalem, individuals from these three classes: the Old Testament saints, the New Testament saints, and the angels.

Preterist Position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is meant by the term “the kingdom of Heaven” or “the kingdom of God”?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>J. Dwight Pentecost states that these two terms are often used interchangeably.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The millennial kingdom is declared to be a literal, earthly kingdom over which Christ rules from David’s throne in fulfillment of the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7:8-17; Matt. 1:1; Luke 1:32). This kingdom is the subject of Old Testament prophecy (2 Sam. 7:8-17; Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-16; Jer. 23:5; 33:14-17; Ezek. 34:23; 37:24; Hosea 3:4-5; Micah 4:6-8; 5:2; Zech. 2:10-12; 8:20-23; Psalm 2:6,8-10; 72:11,17; Mal. 3:1-4). This kingdom was proclaimed as being “at hand” at Christ’s first advent (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:5-7); but was rejected by Israel and therefore postponed (Matt. 23:37-39). It will again be announced to Israel in the tribulation period (Matt. 24:14). It will be received by Israel and set up at the second advent of Christ (Isa. 24:23; Rev. 19:11-16; 20:1-6). [Pentecost, 1958, p. 142]

He adds that the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 13:11) are similar, but not the same entity.

Preterist Position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What are the crowns that are awarded in Scripture?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>These are victors’ crowns:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In the New Testament there are five areas in which specific
mention is made of a reward: (1) an incorruptible crown for those who get mastery over the old man (1 Cor. 9:25); (2) a crown of rejoicing for the soul winners (1 Thess. 2:19); (3) a crown of life for those enduring trials (Jas. 1:12); (4) a crown of righteousness for loving his appearing (2 Tim. 4:8); and (5) a crown of glory for being willing to feed the flock of God (1 Pet. 5:4). These seem to suggest the areas in which rewards will be bestowed. [Pentecost, 1958, p. 225]

Their crowns suggest that they [the elders in Rev. 4:4,10] represent the church. These twenty-four are not wearing monarch’s crowns (diadema) but victor’s crowns (stephanos), which had been won in a conflict. They therefore have been both resurrected, for a spirit would not be wearing a crown, and judged, for they could not receive a crown as a reward apart from judgment. Further, the judgment must have only recently taken place, for they are seen in the act of casting their crowns at Christ’s feet (Rev. 4:10). [Pentecost, 1958, pp. 256-257]

The crowns likely were awarded to the elders at the Judgment Seat of Christ, which occurs after the Rapture. The fact that the elders are described in Revelation 4, and that the Tribulation events are mentioned in Revelation 6 and beyond, lends support to the notion of a pretribulational rapture. More generally, it implies the ordering: Rapture, Judgment Seat of Christ, Tribulation, and Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

Why 24 elders?

Nowhere else in Scripture is the term [elders] used to describe celestial or angelic beings. This term is used of humans in positions of authority either in the synagogue or church.

The figure 24 is probably taken from I Chronicles 24, where David divided the Tribe of Levi into 24 courses to represent the whole. Since the Church is a kingdom of priests, these 24 elders represent the Church as a whole. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 165]
from the curse of the law. The linen in the Tabernacle spoke of His righteousness[;] the brass, of the judgment He bore; the gold, of His deity; the silver, of His blood; the wood, of His humanity. [DeHaan, 1946, p. 297]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What, or who, are the four living creatures of Revelation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revelation 4:6-7</td>
<td>Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dispensationalist Position**

Henry Morris conjectures that the greatest of the wild animals is the lion, the greatest of the domestic animals is the ox, the greatest of all creatures is man, and the greatest of the birds is the eagle [Morris, 1983]. The six-winged living creatures in Revelation are similar to the four-winged cherubim in Ezekiel 1 and the six-winged seraphim in Isaiah 6. Morris adds, “Though these cherubim/seraphim [both are angels] are no doubt the most gloriously beautiful of all God’s creatures (the fallen cherub, evidently Satan, of Ezekiel 28:11-19 was said to have been originally ‘full of wisdom and perfect in beauty’), they give all glory to God.

**Preterist Position**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>The four horsemen of the Apocalypse are mentioned in Revelation 6:1-8. Who is the first horseman?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dispensationalist Position</strong></td>
<td>The first horseman rides a white horse, and is traditionally said to be the Antichrist—who goes out to conquer. A minority of scholars (e.g., [Morris, 1983]) have argued that the first horseman is Jesus Christ ... because he is the only horseman wearing a crown, and it is the victor’s crown (stephanos in the Greek). The first horseman may be a symbolic introduction to Christ, since Christ is again riding a horse in Revelation 19:11,19 when he returns at Armageddon. The fact that this horseman goes out “to conquer” is why many scholars equate the rider to the Antichrist. However, Morris points out that the word “conquer” is the same as the word “overcome” used in Christ’s comments to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The second horseman rides a red horse and appears to initiate wars in the end times.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The third horseman rides a black horse and seems to initiate food</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
shortages and inflation in the end times. Many people will be working all day just to pay for very basic food supplies.

The fourth horseman rides a pale horse and seems to bring death by sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts. Approximately one-quarter of the earth’s population is affected by the fourth horseman.

### Preterist Position

#### Topic/Question
Is there a “God gene”? Are some people “higher on the spirituality curve” than others? What are their genetic make-ups? Some scientists think there’s a particular gene that affects people’s brain chemistry (e.g., very small changes in brain chemistry can be detected in people in intense prayer, using a brain scan). Some scientists think that spirituality may have been passed down through genetics. Would this mean that only some people can be saved?

#### Both Positions
Hank Hanegraaff calls the notion of a “God gene” nonsense. “Everything in the world cannot be reduced to genetic make-up and brain chemistry. If that is true, then ... choices are not free; they are fatalistically determined on the basis of genetic factors.” It would contradict the teachings of Scripture about free choice.

#### Topic/Question
Regarding “spiritual warfare”, Scripture says that there are battles in the heavens about our lives on Earth and the destiny of our souls. Comment on the spiritual battles behind the scenes (e.g., Ephesians 6, Daniel 10, 2 Kings 6).

Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

#### Both Positions
There is a lot of spiritual activity going on behind the scenes—activities that we know little about, but about which we would probably have a different attitude in our day-to-day lives, if we were to know the details.

Prayers are being listened to, and answered, albeit in ways we may not fully appreciate and understand until we get to Heaven.

The lessons of Daniel 10, for example, provide several lessons for us:

- Daniel carefully searched the Scriptures and realized that the Babylonian captivity of the Israelites (i.e., the 70 years of exile) were coming to an end, and he approached the Lord about it via prayer and fasting.
• There was a delay in the answer to Daniel’s prayer. Similarly, there may be a delay in the answer to our own prayers, and this delay may be due to spiritual warfare, as it was in Daniel’s case.

• There are real spiritual forces acting behind the cities and countries in the world (e.g., the prince of Persia and the prince of Greece ... see Daniel 10:20).

I’m reminding of the “reveal codes” example that I first heard Chuck Missler give back in the 1990s. In a word processing program, there are all kinds of tags (font names, font styles, font sizes, underline options, spacing, margins, justification (centering), etc. These tags are typically hidden within the underlying source file document, and are necessary in order to format/render the document in the manner the user wants. On some word processors, like WordPerfect, you can press a key like F11 to “reveal codes” or “show codes” ... and then you can see all the tags surrounding your typed text (i.e., with your actual text sandwiched between all these tags). If these tags were displayed all the time, they would be annoying and distracting to the author composing the document. Thus, we rarely want to see the special codes for the tags; we’re happy if they’re there in the background doing their job, and we don’t think too much of them.

The context of Chuck’s “reveal codes” analogy was a story about Elisha in 2 Kings:

2 Kings 6:15-17 When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" the servant asked. "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

What is the analogy to our own lives? Well, there is a lot of “action” going on behind the scenes, and it has significance. Our spiritual lives are at stake, and God is actively interested in our well-being. Frank Peretti, a popular Christian fiction author, bases some of his books on spiritual battles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What does the Bible say about the use of drugs in the last days?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both Positions</td>
<td>Revelation 9:20-21 The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood--idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their **magic arts**, their sexual immorality or their thefts.

Revelation 18:23 The light of a lamp will never shine in you [Babylon] again. The voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world’s great men. By your **magic spell** all the nations were led astray.

“Magic arts” and “magic spell” are translated “sorceries” in the KJV Bible. Henry Morris writes:

Every nation in every age has been contaminated with drunkenness ever since the primeval sin of Noah (Genesis 9:20,21). We can be certain that, in the wicked and terrifying days of the tribulation, ungodly men will turn to intoxicants and drugs far more than ever in history. That drugs are also a major item is evident from the reference to “sorceries” in verse 23. As noted before (Revelation 9:21), this term is a translation of the Greek word from which we transliterate the English word “pharmaceutics.” The great demand for intoxicants and drugs in these coming days will surely be further stimulated by the ungodly and covetous merchants who profit so greatly from them.

... the “sorceries” actually involve inducement of religious visions and states of altered consciousness by use of drugs. The Greek word translated “sorcery” and “witchcraft” is **pharmakeia**, meaning “drug” or “potion” or “medication.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is meant by the following description of the Antichrist:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daniel 11:37</td>
<td>He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any god, but will exalt himself above them all.</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
<th>Arnold Fruchtenbaum provides some good commentary on this matter:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The phrase “God of his fathers” [in the KJV translation] allows for a wider interpretation. For instance, he could be a person who had Christian parents but rejects their God in this sense. It could refer to a Roman Catholic or a pagan just as easily as to a Jewish person ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                            | Any student of Hebrew would see from the original text that the correct translation should be [and is in the NIV translation, among others]: “the gods of his fathers,” and not “the God of his
fathers.” ... The very fact that the plural form of the world “god” is used in a context where the singular is found in the majority of cases makes this a reference to heathen deities and not a reference to the God of Israel. ... If anything, this passage implies that the Antichrist will be a Gentile rather than a Jew.  [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 208-210]

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>With respect to recognizing and acknowledging Christ, Israel failed the first time. Scripture says that they’ll acknowledge Him the second time (i.e., at His Second Coming). Are there other patterns of initial “failures” in Scripture, that may be types of Christ’s mission?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are several times in Scripture when God’s plan went ahead on the “second try” [Missler, 2005]:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Abraham didn’t leave home the first time; he merely moved up river. After his father died, only then did Abraham leave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The brothers of Joseph didn’t recognize him during their first trip to Egypt during the famine. It was only the second time that he was recognized for whom he was—and then only after Joseph explicitly told them so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Moses was not accepted as the leader of the Israelites in Egypt. Instead, he went away, and returned about 40 years later. Then, he was accepted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The tablets of the law (ten commandments) were written on stone by the “hand of God”, but those tablets were broken after Moses came down from Mount Sinai and saw the rebellion. God had to make a second set.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Israelites didn’t enter the Promised Land under the leadership of Moses during the Exodus from Egypt, due to disobedience. It was only 40 years later, under the leadership of Joshua, that Israel finally entered the Promised Land.</td>
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Selected Bibliography

I have read numerous works on prophecy, and have many volumes in my library. Here are some of the volumes that were most influential in the construction of this document. If some of the URL links are no longer hosted by the specified Web site, you can probably still find the document by querying Google.


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