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

Major Keywords: Bible Prophecy, Revelation, Eschatology, Dispensationalism, Preterism, Christ’s Second Coming, End Times

Search for Keywords or Phrases in this Book (e.g., “place of the dead” or “life of Joseph”) using the PDF “find” or “search” feature on your computer.

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Introduction

**Eschatology** is the study of “last things” or “the end times”. This book is about a fascinating debate going on in evangelical Christian circles regarding the book of Revelation (and other books of the Bible that have eschatological themes). In my opinion, the eschatological model that is the most consistent with the Bible is the **dispensationalist** position. This view states that most of the events in the book of Revelation are in the future. It interprets Scripture literally, wherever possible. Furthermore, many future events in the Old Testament including passages from the books of Daniel, Zechariah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, etc. line up with key passages in the book of Revelation. In fact, from Genesis to Revelation, the books of the Bible fit together wonderfully to provide a complete panorama of human history including God’s future plans for mankind.

An opposing viewpoint that has gained some popularity is the partial **preterist** position. The word “preterist” in Latin means “past”. Preterists believe that most, or all, of the events in the book of Revelation have already taken place, with most preterists applying the fulfillment mainly to 65-70 AD. This viewpoint implies that many key prophecies need to be understood symbolically.

This book will give the best arguments for both preterism and dispensationalism. In my opinion, the evidence greatly favors the dispensationalist position. It is the view that best harmonizes the Scriptures, facts, and doctrines. It is supported by archeological and historical evidence confirming past fulfillments of prophecy; consequently, we have strong reasons to believe that unfulfilled prophecy will also be fulfilled. Just as the first coming of Christ was literal, so will be the Second Coming.

This book addresses questions about the Bible such as: Is the book of Revelation to be taken literally? Is Revelation mostly historical—or is it mostly about the future? Is the Antichrist (1 John 2:18) a real human being who will appear on the world stage prior to the Second Coming (i.e., Revelation) of Jesus Christ? Will there be a cashless society? On the doctrine of imminence (Latin: “any moment”): Could Christ rapture (remove) the Church at any time? Will there be a pretribulational rapture? Is the “70th Week of Daniel” (prophesied circa 540 BC) a literal 7-year Tribulation period immediately preceding the return of Jesus Christ? Could this happen in our lifetime? Is a European superpower part of a revived Roman Empire described in the book of Daniel? Is there a literal, 1000-year Millennium, when Jesus Christ rules on Earth, and the Earth is transformed—while Satan is restrained for 1000 years ... just prior to his final release and destruction? Is Heaven a real place? What happens after we die?

Prophecy is not written to scare us; but, rather, to prepare us [Hindson, 2012b]. The word “Revelation” comes from the Greek word meaning “to reveal”.

Do not be put off by long words such as **eschatology**, **dispensationalism**, and **preterism** used in this book. They will be defined fully as we progress. A summary of the major definitions used in this book is available below in the section entitled, “The Four Major
Views of Revelation. As a preview, the four major views or models of eschatology relate to timeframes, and some of their major claims are as follows:

1. **Preterist**—Most of the events of Revelation are in the *past*, with most fulfillments having occurred by 70 AD.
2. **Historicist**—Most of the events of Revelation are in the *present*. The current church age is the Tribulation period. The 2300 days mentioned in Daniel, and the 1260 days mentioned in Revelation are years, not days. There is no Rapture. Armageddon and the Second Coming are still to come.
3. **Futurist** (of which the most popular position is that of dispensationalist)—Most of the events of Revelation are in the *future*.
4. **Idealist**—Revelation is largely symbolic and represents the timeless battle between good and evil; it is not meant to be taken literally.

This book is primarily a summary of the two most popular positions in Biblical prophecy: dispensationalism and (partial) preterism.

**Dispensationalism**—A system of theology that interprets Scripture literally and from the perspective of God’s interaction with humanity through successive ages. This view of biblical history maintains one plan of salvation in which God reveals Himself to man and deals with humanity in different ways in each successive period of their relationship or economy (dispensation) of time. [LaHaye, 2001b].

Dispensationalists believe that history is broken into dispensations or eras:

1. **Innocence** (Creation to the Fall of Adam & Eve, Genesis 1:1 to 3:7)
2. **Conscience** (Fall of Adam & Eve to Noah’s Flood, Genesis 3:8 to 8:22)
3. **Human Government** (Noah’s Flood to Abraham, Genesis 9:1 to 11:32)
4. **Promise or Patriarchal Rule** (Abraham to Moses, Genesis 12:1 to Exodus 19:35)
5. **Law** (Moses to the Day of Pentecost, Exodus 20 to Acts 2:4)
6. **Grace** (Day of Pentecost to Christ’s Second Coming, Acts 2:4 to 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 20:4-6)

Dispensation (7) is followed by the 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.

*Classical dispensationalists* are: (a) *pretribulational*, meaning that they expect Christ to *rapture* them to Heaven prior to a 7-year period of time called the Tribulation—a time of God’s wrath on Earth coinciding with the temporary reign of Antichrist; and (b) *premillennial*, meaning that they expect Christ to return to Earth (at Armageddon), and establish a 1000-year earthly kingdom under the reign of Jesus Christ—a time of great peace and prosperity. Thus, classical dispensationalists hold to two stages in the coming of Christ: (1) a pretribulational rapture, and (2) the Second Coming (or Revelation) of
Jesus Christ seven or more years later. Dispensationalists are sometimes called *pretribulational premillennialists*. Most, but not all, dispensationalists are pretributional; however, all dispensationalists are premillennialists [House & Price, 2003]. Furthermore, they believe in a consistent distinction between Israel and the church throughout history. For the purposes of this book, we’ll use the term *dispensationalist* as a synonym for classical dispensationalist.

What is the purpose of having these dispensations?

The word [dispensationalism] means “administration” or “stewardship” ... Dispensationalism teaches that there are successive dispensations throughout history and each one involves a test or responsibility, which man fails, followed by God’s judgment. Thus, God’s grace through Jesus Christ becomes the only basis of hope for mankind. The present dispensation is known as the “age of grace” or the “church age.” The previous dispensation was called *law* or *Israel*. There are two peoples of God, Israel and the church. However, God’s plan for Israel is not yet finished, and He will return to deal with them during the seven-year tribulation and the thousand-year millennium.

Dispensationalism is characterized by: (1) a consistent (from Genesis to Revelation) literal interpretation of the Bible, (2) a distinction between Israel and the church, (3) the glorification of God as His main purpose for the world. Dispensationalism is a theology deduced from the Bible that emphasizes the glory and grace of God.” [Ice, 2011a]

Hank Hanegraaff (not a dispensationalist) summarizes:

Dispensationalism is distinctive for its teaching that the Church will be “raptured” from the earth in the first phase of Christ’s second coming so that God can return to his work with national Israel, which was put on hold after Israel’s rejection of Messiah. God’s renewed working with Israel is thought by many dispensationalists to include a seven-year period of tribulation under the Antichrist in which two-thirds of the Jewish people will be killed, followed by the second phase of Christ’s second coming in which Christ and the martyred “tribulation saints” will rule for a thousand years ... [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 272]

The term *preterism* is derived from a Latin word for “past”. Preterism claims that at least some—if not most—of the prophecies in the book of Revelation were fulfilled during and before 70 AD. Historically, the label *preterism* referred to what we would call partial preterism or mild preterism today [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007].

An essential component of preterism is the acceptance of an early writing of Revelation, that is, before 70 AD. Dispensationalism, on the other hand, assumes that Revelation was written around 90-95 AD, with 95 AD being commonly accepted [Hitchcock, 1995].

I will try to update this book when corrections or revisions are in order. I believe that certain aspects of *both* of dispensationalism and preterism are correct; however, in my opinion, the dispensationalist position fits much better with the Scriptures (i.e., the books of the Bible). Prophecy sometimes has a double fulfillment: near term (smaller fulfillment) and far term (larger fulfillment). There are just too many “coincidences” to think otherwise.
Because of the Bible’s track record regarding the literal fulfillment of prophecy, we can trust the Bible. Mark Hitchcock writes:

> Even the most skeptical person can put the Bible to the test by noting the literal, precise fulfillment of past prophecies. ... Think about it: If hundreds of biblical prophecies have been meticulously and accurately fulfilled, then it stands to reason that what the Bible has to say about other things—such as the nature and character of God, creation, the nature of man, salvation, and the existence of heaven and hell—are 100 percent accurate as well. [Hitchcock, 2010, pp. 8-9].

The book of Revelation is highly prophetic, and is relevant to every age—especially to today! Where I differ from 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. Since the prophecies of Christ’s first coming were literally fulfilled, it stands to reason that the prophecies of His Second Coming will be literally fulfilled. Furthermore, often the past event is a foreshadowing of a much greater fulfillment in the future. 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).

Regarding the time in which we live—a time that is getting very close to the return of Christ, Chuck Missler writes:

> We are being plunged into a period of time about which the Bible says more than it does about any other period of time in history, including the time that Jesus walked the shores of Galilee or climbed the mountains of Judea. [Missler, 2003a]

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 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 essential doctrines include: original sin (Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden), Noah’s 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.

One may summarize the Bible as a drama in four acts—**creation, fall, redemption, and restoration**:

> 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]

There appears to be substantial 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.

Why do Christians have different views on eschatology? Many 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.

All Scripture is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16-17), and is inerrant in the original manuscripts. About 27% of the Bible is about prophecy (i.e., 8,352 verses out of 31,124 verses in the whole Bible) [House & Price, 2003]. There are 1,845 references to Christ’s Second Coming in the Old Testament, and 318 references in the New Testament. Compare that to the 109 declarations in the Bible about His first coming [LaHaye, 2012].

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.

The table on the following page lists the “books” of the Bible, and the approximate dates when these books (scrolls, parchments) were written. There are 39 books in the Old Testament, and 27 books (some of them as short as a page or two) in the New Testament. The Old Testament Scriptures are the same as those used by the Jewish people. The New Testament means “New Covenant”; it begins with, and ends with, the story of Christianity, that is, the life, testimony, and teachings of Jesus Christ the Messiah (also known as “the Anointed One” or “Saviour” or “Son of God”). Christ was the fulfillment of what the Old Testament prophets had prophesied about, for many hundreds of years. The Jewish people largely rejected Christ, and are still looking for the (first) appearance of the Messiah. Christ made it clear that: (a) He is the Messiah, and (b) He is coming back.

How do we know that the Bible is the Word of God? Hank Hanegraaff uses the acronym MAPS to provide proof of the Bible’s Divine Inspiration [Hanegraaff, 2011]:

- **Manuscript C-O-P-I-E-S**
  - **C**opyist Practices—very careful copying of manuscripts
  - **O**ral Culture—memorization was stressed, before the print age
For example, the ancient manuscripts, of which there are many, confirm the integrity of the Scriptures. There are very minor differences among some of these parchments, often just small copying mistakes (e.g., a spelling mistake or an omitted word, and these are only in a small number of manuscripts rather than all of them, so that the original can be confirmed by the majority). Archaeology continues to reveal historical, buried artifacts and even buried towns—some of which had not been confirmed by documentation external to the Bible—until recently. Thus, the historical and chronological writings of the Bible stand the test of time, and can be relied upon. Furthermore, there are many fulfilled prophecies in the Bible—prophecies that could not have been fulfilled by chance. Many such prophecies are listed throughout this book. Also, the synergy of the Bible is amazing: it is a series of interwoven messages that together explain God’s complete, sufficient, and saving message to mankind.
The Books of the Bible

... are listed here in their order of appearance in most modern translations (e.g., [NIV, 2002]). The authors wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (i.e., under the direction of God); hence, the Bible is acknowledged to be “the Word of God”. The Old Testament is the same as the Hebrew Scriptures (i.e., the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Testament (39 books)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Book</strong></td>
<td><strong>Author(s)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genesis</td>
<td>Moses</td>
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<td>Exodus</td>
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<td>Leviticus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Numbers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Deuteronomy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Joshua</td>
<td>Possibly Joshua and Eleazar, a son of Aaron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judges</td>
<td>Possibly Samuel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Samuel</td>
<td>Unknown (possibly Jashar, David, Samuel, Nathan, and/or Gad)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Samuel</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Kings</td>
<td>Possibly Samuel</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Kings</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Chronicles</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Chronicles</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ezra</td>
<td>Possibly Ezra</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nehemiah</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Esther</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psalms</td>
<td>Various (including David, Asaph, the sons of Korah, singers, and musicians)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proverbs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecclesiastes</td>
<td>Solomon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Song of Songs (also known as Song of Solomon)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isaiah</td>
<td>Isaiah</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jeremiah</td>
<td>Jeremiah</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lamentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ezekiel</td>
<td>Ezekiel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>Daniel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hosea</td>
<td>Hosea</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joel</td>
<td>Joel</td>
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<td>Amos</td>
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<td>Obadiah</td>
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<td>Jonah</td>
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<td>Micah</td>
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<td>Nahum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Habakkuk</td>
<td>Habakkuk</td>
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<td>Zephaniah</td>
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<tr>
<td>Haggai</td>
<td>Haggai</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zechariah</td>
<td>Zechariah</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malachi</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Testament (27 books)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Book</strong></td>
<td><strong>Author(s)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Apostle Matthew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>John Mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Apostle John</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts</td>
<td>Luke</td>
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<tr>
<td>Romans</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Corinthians</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Corinthians</td>
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<tr>
<td>Galatians</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ephesians</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philippians</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Colossians</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Thessalonians</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Thessalonians</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Timothy</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Timothy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Titus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philemon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrews</td>
<td>Possibly Barnabas or Apollos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>James: probably the oldest brother of Jesus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Peter</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Peter</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 John</td>
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<td>2 John</td>
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<td>3 John</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jude</td>
<td>Jude (also known as either the Apostle Judas or Judas the brother of Jesus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelation</td>
<td>Apostle John</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Timeline of the Books of the Bible

… listed by their approximate date of writing [AiG, 1995+; Hitchcock, 2005; Jones, 2005; NIV, 2002]. This list is subject to revision, as more reliable information becomes available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Book</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000-1800 BC</td>
<td>Job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1446-1406 BC</td>
<td>Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1400 BC</td>
<td>Joshua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1400-1050 BC</td>
<td>Judges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1015-897 BC</td>
<td>1 Kings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000 BC</td>
<td>Psalms, Ruth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000-686 BC</td>
<td>Proverbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>990-970 BC</td>
<td>Song of Solomon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>960-940 BC</td>
<td>1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, Ecclesiastes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>897-562 BC</td>
<td>2 Kings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>890-840 BC</td>
<td>Obadiah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>830-810 BC</td>
<td>Joel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>782-753 BC</td>
<td>Jonah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>760-750 BC</td>
<td>Amos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>760-681 BC</td>
<td>Isaiah</td>
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<tr>
<td>760-740 BC</td>
<td>Hosea</td>
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<tr>
<td>735-700 BC</td>
<td>Micah</td>
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<tr>
<td>664-654 BC</td>
<td>Nahum</td>
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<tr>
<td>630 BC</td>
<td>Zephaniah</td>
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<tr>
<td>628-585 BC</td>
<td>Jeremiah</td>
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<tr>
<td>609-605 BC</td>
<td>Habakkuk</td>
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<tr>
<td>607-534 BC</td>
<td>Daniel</td>
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<td>593-573 BC</td>
<td>Ezekiel</td>
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<td>588-575 BC</td>
<td>Lamentations</td>
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<td>536-440 BC</td>
<td>Ezra</td>
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<tr>
<td>520 BC</td>
<td>Haggai, Zechariah</td>
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<td>500-460 BC</td>
<td>Esther</td>
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<td>454-430 BC</td>
<td>Nehemiah</td>
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<tr>
<td>450 BC</td>
<td>1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles</td>
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<tr>
<td>441 BC</td>
<td>Malachi</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37-50 AD</td>
<td>Matthew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-49 AD</td>
<td>James</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-53 AD</td>
<td>1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59 AD</td>
<td>Mark</td>
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<tr>
<td>50-60 AD</td>
<td>Galatians</td>
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<tr>
<td>50-63 AD</td>
<td>Luke</td>
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<tr>
<td>54-59 AD</td>
<td>1 Corinthians</td>
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<td>55-59 AD</td>
<td>2 Corinthians</td>
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<tr>
<td>57-60 AD</td>
<td>Romans</td>
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<tr>
<td>60-61 AD</td>
<td>Philemon</td>
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<tr>
<td>60-63 AD</td>
<td>Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-66 AD</td>
<td>Acts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62-63 AD</td>
<td>1 Timothy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63 AD</td>
<td>Titus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63-64 AD</td>
<td>1 Peter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64-66 AD</td>
<td>2 Peter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64-68 AD</td>
<td>Hebrews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-69 AD</td>
<td>John</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66 AD</td>
<td>Jude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66-85 AD</td>
<td>1 John, 2 John, 3 John</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67 AD</td>
<td>2 Timothy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95 AD</td>
<td>Revelation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Percentage of Prophecy in Each Book of the Bible

LaHaye, et al., estimated the percentage of each book of the Bible that was prophetic at the time of its writing [LaHaye, 2001b]. The percentage is based on the total number of verses in each book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Testament</th>
<th>New Testament</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Book</strong></td>
<td><strong>Prophecy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genesis</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exodus</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leviticus</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deuteronomy</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joshua</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judges</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Samuel</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Samuel</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Kings</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Kings</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Chronicles</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Chronicles</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezra</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nehemiah</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esther</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psalms</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proverbs</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecclesiastes</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Song of Songs (also known as Song of Solomon)</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaiah</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremiah</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamentations</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezekiel</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosea</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joel</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amos</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obadiah</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonah</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micah</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nahum</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habakkuk</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zephaniah</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haggai</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zechariah</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malachi</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Acts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Romans</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Corinthians</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Corinthians</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galatians</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ephesians</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippians</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colossians</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Thessalonians</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Thessalonians</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Timothy</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Timothy</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titus</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philemon</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrews</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Peter</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Peter</td>
<td>41%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 John</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 John</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 John</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jude</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelation</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Translations of the Bible

There are many translations. The original documents are called the autographs. Obviously, they are the oldest and most reliable documents; however, we don’t have them. With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (1947), we have Old Testament documents that now go back about 2000 years, i.e., circa 100 BC to 100 AD. The documents are essentially identical to our previously known, oldest documents—hundreds of years later. With confidence, we can get a good idea of what the autographs are, based on examining the thousands of copies over the centuries. A (usually minor) copyist error may appear in a document, but not in all documents. Thus, there will be substantial agreement among the copies, inferring the content of the original documents. This is a positive apologetic for Christianity.

Originally, the Old Testament was written almost entirely in Hebrew except for parts of the books of Ezra and Daniel, which were written in Aramaic. The New Testament was written entirely in Greek. All authors of the books of the Bible (e.g., Moses, Paul) were men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write down the original manuscripts.

By 200 AD, the Bible had been translated into 7 languages; by 500 AD, 13 languages; by 1400, 17 languages; by 1800, 537 languages; and by 1980, 1100 languages [Rose, 2005; referencing The World Christian Encyclopedia].

Differences and preferences among translations are often due to using a word-for-word translation as opposed to a thought-for-thought translation. Paraphrase versions of the Bible are subjective, but are quite useful in conveying most of the thought and spirit underlying the original documents. Furthermore, some Bible versions are easier to read than other (see the grade levels below).

On a scale from Word-for-Word translations to Thought-for-Thought translations, we have the following spectrum, going from Word-for-Word (top) to Thought-for-Thought (bottom) [Brimmer, 2014; Rose, 2005; Rose, 2008]:

*This End of the Spectrum: Translations that are Closest to Word-for-Word*

- Original Manuscripts (circa 1500 BC – 100 AD)
- Early Copies: Codex Alexandrinus (circa 425 AD), Codex Vaticanus (circa 350 AD), Codex Sinaiticus (circa 350 AD)
- Various modern interlinear versions (i.e., Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek manuscripts ... with English or other languages given alongside these words on each page)
- New American Standard Bible (NASB, 1971 & 1995, Grade 10 reading level)
- Amplified Bible (AMP, 1965, Grade 11 reading level)
- English Standard Version (ESV, 2001, Grade 8 reading level)
- Revised Standard Version (RSV, 1952, Grade 10 reading level)
- King James Version (KJV, 1611 & 1769, Grade 12 reading level); New King James Version (NKJV, modernization using the same manuscripts, 1982, Grade 9 reading level)
• Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB, balanced between word-for-word and thought-for-thought, 2004, Grade 7 or 8 reading level)
• New Revised Standard Version (NRSV, 1990, Grade 8 reading level)
• New American Bible (NAB, official version of the Catholic Church, 1970 & 1986, Grade 6 or 7 reading level)
• New Jerusalem Bible (NJB, by Catholic scholars, 1966 & 1985, Grade 9 reading level)
• New International Version (NIV, 1978, Grade 7 reading level)
• Today’s New International Version (TNIV, modernization of the NIV, 2001 New Testament)
• God’s Word (GW, 1995, Grade 5 reading level)
• New Century Version (NCV, 1987, Grade 5 or 6 reading level)
• New Living Translation (NLT, a revision of The Living Bible, 1996)
• New International Reader’s Version (NirV, simplified NIV: Grade 3 or 4 reading level, 1998)
• Good News Translation / Today’s English Version (GNT, 1976, Grade 6 reading level)
• Contemporary English Version (CEV, 1989, Grade 5 or 6 reading level)
• The Living Bible (TLB, paraphrase, 1971)
• The Message (paraphrase by Eugene Peterson, 2002, Grade 6 reading level)

This End of the Spectrum: Bible Translations or Paraphrases that are Closest to Thought-for-Thought
The Four Major Views of Revelation

Futurist (or Dispensationalist)

Futurists believe that almost all of the events in Revelation, including the “70th week of Daniel” (the Tribulation) are still in the future. This view includes the following branches with respect to the timing of the Rapture: pretribulational view, midtribulational view, pre-wrath view, and posttribulational view. Note that it is possible to be a futurist, yet believe in a late Rapture—for example, a Rapture that is simultaneous with Christ’s Second Coming. Nevertheless, the pretribulational view is the most common, and is called classical dispensationalism. In terms of hermeneutics (the art and science of Biblical interpretation), futurism tends to take the Bible more literally than other approaches.

Futurism is the result of a consistent application of the grammatical-historical hermeneutic popularly known as the literal interpretive approach. The other three approaches use the grammatical-historical method to some extent, but they all allegorize the text to a large degree and in various ways to support their overall notions of when and how Revelation would be fulfilled. I believe futurism is the result of interpreting the book of Revelation literally, understanding that there are symbols, figures of speech, and various literary devices that the author intended in conveying the meaning of his message. [Ice, 2010b, p. 6]

Historicist

Historicists believe that all of the events in Revelation are historical, except for a few events such as Armageddon, Christ’s Second Coming, and possibly the Millennium [Ice, 2010b; LaHaye, 2001b]. They equate the present church age with 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 believe that since that time, most of the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments of Revelation have occurred. They also believe that “Babylon” is a code word for Rome. Thomas Ice remarks that “the historicist system is largely dead, except for advocacy by some cults” [Ice, 2009e].

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 (i.e., between God and Satan). Thus, by definition, the idealist camp doesn’t pay attention to timing issues. Evangelicals who are not in the futurist camp are more likely to move towards idealism rather than towards preterism (described next).

Preterist
**Full preterists** (sometimes called hyper-preterists) believe that all prophecy in Revelation—including the Second Coming of Christ—was fulfilled at, or before, the fall 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 still in the future. Thus, full preterism is a heretical position.

**Partial preterists** believe that some passages of Revelation are in the future, but most passages have already been fulfilled (e.g., 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, they believe that the 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, words about Christ “coming on the clouds” do not necessarily imply a literal event about Christ “riding” on a cloud in the sky. Rather, they argue that the term “coming” is symbolic of “judgment”: it refers to Christ exercising judgment on Jerusalem in 70 AD. Christ gave a similar 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 (i.e., 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]. In this book, we will use the term *preterist* to mean *partial preterist*. Some argue that preterists might be better labeled as postmillennial historicists or futurists [Sproul, 1998].

A key difference between preterists and dispensationalists is the notion of the Rapture: partial preterists believe that *rapture and resurrection are the same event* (and they both occur simultaneously upon Christ’s return, rather than being separated in time). Oddly enough, preterists believe in a rapture (i.e., meeting the Lord *in the air*, as per 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18), but where they differ from dispensationalists is with respect to the *timing* of the Rapture.

Hank Hanegraaff argues that a *simultaneous* rapture and resurrection had been the belief of the church until the 1800s when Darby popularized the notion of a pretribulational rapture. Until about 1827, the dispensationalist view was *not* held by the majority of Protestants.

In summary, here are some of the views of preterists (but *not* of dispensationalists, other than the two views specifically identified below) [LaHaye & Ice, 2003]:

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

The Rapture is “the ‘catching up’ of the living saints ‘to meet the Lord in the air.’ [Dispensationalists agree with this, but not with the next statement.] 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].)

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

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. I’m somewhat reluctant to classify him as a partial preterist. He claims not to adhere to any of the above four major models of eschatology (i.e., futurist, historicist, idealist, or preterist). For classification into one of these four models, I am including him here, largely because: (a) many of his arguments
are shared by partial preterists, and (b) he strongly disagrees with most of the positions put forth by dispensationalists. He also has some idealist viewpoints.

- He adheres to an early dating (pre-70 AD) of the book of Revelation (as do preterists); however, dispensationalists adhere to a late dating (90-95 AD) of the book of Revelation.
- He does not agree to any of the millennial positions: amillennial, premillennial, or postmillennial; and he does not hold to the literal interpretation of Revelation [Hanegraaff, 2003+].
- He considers full preterism heretical.
- He believes that certain events in Revelation: (a) have been fulfilled during 65-70 AD; (b) point to a literal, future fulfillment, such as Christ’s Second Coming, the physical resurrection, the judgment, and the renewed universe; and (c) were written using a style of writing called apocalyptic language. The events in (c)—of which there are many—are not to be taken literally (which rules out the dispensationalist viewpoint); and furthermore, those events did not take place in the past (which rules out the preterist viewpoint) [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man, August 30, 2010]. Note that events in (a) are shared with the preterist camp, and events in (b) are shared with the dispensationalist camp (and actually, the partial preterist camp).
- With respect to the label “partial preterist” and modern-day attempts to interpret fulfillments in prophecy, Hanegraaff argues that partial preterists have a history book in one hand, and a Bible in the other; whereas futurists (e.g., dispensationalists) have a newspaper in one hand, and a Bible in the other. Instead, he argues for the notion of exegetical eschatology (E2), 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. He argues that the style or genre of writing needs to be taken into account when trying to understand passages in Revelation—and for that matter, elsewhere in Scripture. Rather than holding to any particular model of eschatology, Hanegraaff prefers the:

> ... plain and proper meaning of a Biblical passage ... in light of its literary, grammatical, historical, typological and broader context. ... [A]s with any literature, a thorough understanding of the Bible cannot be attained without a grasp of the basic rules that govern the relationships and usages of words in language (including syntax, style, and semantics). [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 272-273]

- Gary North
- R.C. Sproul

**Classical Dispensationalism (i.e., Pretribulational Futurism)**

The notion of a pretribulational 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 dispensationalist position is that most of Revelation has not yet been fulfilled. Although some short-term prophecies were fulfilled in the years between Christ’s ascension and the years leading up to and including 70 AD, those 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. Dispensationalists believe that most of Revelation will be fulfilled in the future, perhaps the near future.

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

With respect to terminology: 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. Normally, these two terms are interchangeable, although in some contexts, Scripture refers to the physical land of Israel (e.g., Zechariah 13:8-9).

Dispensationalists divide history into seven dispensations, that is, time periods when God dispensed grace and “salvation” in different ways (see “dispensations or eras” above). The Old Testament believers indirectly looked forward to Christ’s atoning sacrifice on the cross.

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 describe 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 means Christ’s Second Coming is not imminent; however, the Rapture is imminent, that is, it could occur at any time—even today.

This question [imminence] is much more than just a theological, ivory tower debate. There is a great deal at stake depending on which view is biblical. Think about it. If the rapture occurs in our lifetime, your future will be very different depending on which of these views is correct.

... Only those who believe in a pre-trib rapture can honestly say, “Jesus may come today.” Since the tribulation period has not started yet, for mid-tribbers the rapture must be at
least 3½ years away, for pre-wrathers it must be at least 5½ years away and for post-tribbers it is at least 7 years down the road. [Hitchcock, 2011c]

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—with Christ—over the remaining people on Earth for a period of 1000 years. Before the start of the Millennium, the Antichrist and the False Prophet (the Antichrist’s “Minister of Propaganda” [LaHaye, 2001b]) are 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.

Belief in the timing of the Rapture has nothing to do with one’s salvation. Premillennialism (sometimes called millennialism from the Latin word for “a thousand years”—or chiliasm from the Greek, meaning “one thousand”) is the belief that Jesus Christ will literally and physically return at the Battle of Armageddon, and set up a 1,000-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. Premillennialists are futurists, and are divided into at least five camps according to their understanding of the timing of the Rapture, the three most common of which are: pretribulational (the most common view), midtribulational, and posttribulational. Some futurists, such as Walid Shoebat, take no particular position on the timing of the Rapture; so, this would be a fourth camp. A small number of others (e.g., Marvin Rosenthal) hold to a “pre-wrath” Rapture—a fifth camp.

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]. Thus, the present age merges into the Millennium because of the propagation of the Gospel [House & Price, 2003].

Lastly, amillennialism does not take Revelation literally, equates the Millennium with the current Church age (i.e., the time between Christ’s first and second comings), believes that Satan is currently bound, believes that the Rapture occurs at the same time as the Second Coming, and believes that a general judgment will occur at Christ’s return. Thus, the Rapture (translation and perfection of physical bodies) will occur as a posttribulational event—when Christ will resurrect and judge mankind, and establish the
eternal order. Furthermore, worldwide evangelism and the conversion of Israel will take place, via the Church, before Christ’s return.

In summary, the dispensationalist view is that of a pretribulational rapture and a premillennial return of Christ. The Millennium is literal. The Church and Israel are two distinct entities (although Jewish believers in Jesus Christ become part of the Church).

Tim LaHaye claims that 85% of Christians hold the dispensational view of eschatology, whereas Timothy Weber thinks it’s closer to 33% [Weber, 2004]. Dispensationalism is in decline at the academic level, but remains fairly strong with the evangelical public. Unfortunately, history has shown that what gets taught in academia is what filters through to the next generation [Ice, 2011f (Q&A)].

**Some Popular Dispensationalists** (in alphabetical order):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gleason Archer</th>
<th>Jack Hibbs</th>
<th>Paul Lalonde</th>
<th>Charles Ryrie</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donald Grey Barnhouse</td>
<td>Ed Hindson</td>
<td>Peter Lalonde</td>
<td>C.I. Scofield</td>
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<td>J.R. Church</td>
<td>Mark Hitchcock</td>
<td>Hal Lindsey</td>
<td>Francis Schaeffer</td>
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<td>J.N. Darby</td>
<td>David Hocking</td>
<td>Rob Lindsted</td>
<td>Chuck Smith</td>
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<td>M.R. De Haan</td>
<td>Dave Hunt</td>
<td>Greg Laurie</td>
<td>Thomas Spurgeon</td>
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<td>Charles Feinberg</td>
<td>Noah Hutchings</td>
<td>John MacArthur</td>
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<td>Jerry Falwell</td>
<td>Thomas Ice</td>
<td>J. Vernon McGee</td>
<td>Chuck Swindoll</td>
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<td>Arnold Fruchtenbaum</td>
<td>Harry Ironside</td>
<td>Chuck Missler</td>
<td>Jack Van Impe</td>
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<td>Norman Geisler</td>
<td>Grant Jeffrey</td>
<td>Henry Morris</td>
<td>John F. Walvoord</td>
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<td>Billy Graham</td>
<td>David Jeremiah</td>
<td>J. Dwight Pentecost</td>
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<td>John Hagee</td>
<td>Tim LaHaye</td>
<td>Ron Rhodes</td>
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Comparisons between Dispensationalism and Preterism

Note: Throughout this book, Scripture words that are in bold font, or that are underlined, or that are in italics 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 from Zondervan [NIV, 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 books of Ezra and Daniel) and Greek (i.e., all of the New Testament).

Free, online copies of the Bible, in various, fine translations and in many foreign languages, are available at numerous Web sites, including the BibleGateway project found at URL http://www.biblegateway.com, the Blue Letter Bible project found at URL http://www.blueletterbible.org, the Bible Logos project found at URL http://bible.logos.com, and the popular YouVersion set of Bibles (numerous translations) for mobile apps. The BibleGateway project, in particular, has numerous foreign language translations. Some of these sites also include specialized search features, Bible study resources (e.g., Hebrew/Greek word analysis), the provision of multiple translations of a verse displayed simultaneously, and audio Bibles that you can play on your computer (using common Internet browsers).

95% of the world’s population has the Bible in whole or in part, in their respective languages [Reagan, 2014a]. Around 2010, there were 2,100 translations of at least some part of the Bible. There are about 1,900 translations in progress that apply to language groups having less than 100,000 people each. Worldwide, Christianity is growing at 3 times the rate of population growth. In 1900, there were about 10 million Christians in Africa; today, there are about 516 million. In 1900, there were about 50,000 Christians in Latin America (including Central America and South America); today, there are about 60 million. China had about 700,000 Christians in 1949; today, it has about 70 million. Muslim sources state that about 6 millions Muslims convert to Christianity each year.
Chapter 1: General Topics in Prophecy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is meant by the term “prophet”?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both the Dispensationalist and Preterist Positions Share the Same View</td>
<td>In Biblical terms, a prophet can either <em>foretell</em> or <em>forth tell</em>. The first term implies that a prophet conveys a message about the future, and its fulfillment proved that the prophet was genuine. False prophets were stoned, under Old Testament law, even if only one part of their prophecy was false. It is claimed that only God knows the future, and, in fact, this is a hallmark of the God of the Bible. Most of the prophecies in the Bible are sufficiently detailed and unambiguous. The second term implies that a prophet is a messenger who takes existing Scripture and tells people about it. 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. ... 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]</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is the point of studying Bible prophecy? Doesn’t it suffice to believe in Jesus Christ—and to live life to the fullest, and let prophecy be fulfilled in its time?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Both Positions</td>
<td>In the book of Revelation, Christ promises a special blessing to those who study it: 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. 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).</td>
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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.

Matthew 16:26 What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

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>How important is eschatology to apologetics?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both Positions</td>
<td>It is important because all the parts of the Bible fit together to provide an integrated message. Dispensationalism and preterism have different viewpoints of eschatology, but both agreed that eschatology is part of the big thread that weaves all of Scripture together.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Does Scripture sometimes have a double fulfillment, that is, both a short-term fulfillment and a long-term (main/intended) fulfillment? For example,</th>
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in the context of Revelation, might there be a short-term fulfillment in 65-70 AD, and then a long-term fulfillment in the 21st century or later?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
<th>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 (more formally cited as Antiochus IV Epiphanes) desecrated the second Temple (a short term fulfillment of “the abomination that causes desolation” (Daniel 11:31)), with the long term fulfillment being when the Antichrist desecrates the future, rebuilt Temple (Daniel 9:27 and Matthew 24:15-16). Hosea 11:1 states, “… out of Egypt I called My son.” The context speaks of the Exodus; however, Matthew uses this Scripture to refer to Jesus returning from Egypt after the death of King Herod. Recall that King Herod wanted to kill all the boys aged two or younger, to prevent a future king from taking his throne—after Herod was informed by the Magi (wise men) from the East about a newborn King of the Jews.</th>
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<tr>
<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. Nevertheless, the primary fulfillment is in the future. The New Jerusalem, the scope of the plagues, a cashless society, etc., can only be applied to a future generation beyond a 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).</td>
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<td>It is also interesting to note that the plagues in Revelation may be a re-visititation of some of the plagues in Exodus. For example, the plagues in Egypt during the time of the Exodus involved God vs. Satan in ten supernatural judgments, including plagues of pestilence, boils, hail and fire, locusts, darkness, death, and water being turned to blood. The plagues in Egypt were real, and not symbolic; therefore, we should take the plagues in Revelation as being real, too [Hitchcock, 2014b]. Although some of the plagues were on all the people of the land, God drew a distinction between the Hebrews and the Egyptians for some of the other plagues. God will draw a distinction in Revelation too (Revelation 9:4). God will get attention from the world. One would hope that people everywhere will heed the call and repent; but, sadly, many will not (Revelation 9:20-21 and Revelation 16:9,11).</td>
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<td>There are cases where a prophetic vision contains two or more “similar” prophecies that are widely separated in time [House &amp; Price, 2003]. A term used to describe this is “prophetic telescoping”. Examples include:</td>
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<td>• Isaiah 9:6-7—the first and second advents of Christ</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Isaiah 11:1-10—the first and second advents of Christ</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Isaiah 61:1-2 and Luke 4:18-21—the first and second advents of Christ</td>
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Daniel 2:37-45—the succession of world empires, including the final world empire (when Christ returns)
Joel 2:28-3:1 and Acts 2—the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, and references to a far-future fulfillment (e.g., Tribulation and Millennium)
Malachi 3:1-5—the ministry of John the Baptist and Christ’s first advent, and also His second advent

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
Most of Revelation is historical. From the partial preterist viewpoint, no second fulfillment is needed or expected (e.g., other than Heaven, and the single rapture/resurrection that occurs when Christ returns). 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,
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>Did Satan sin before Adam and Eve? When did Satan fall with respect to the creation of the earth?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both Positions</td>
<td>Satan fell before Adam and Eve did; otherwise, he couldn’t have tempted them in the Garden of Eden. The timing of Satan’s fall with respect to the creation of the heavens is uncertain. Arnold Fruchtenbaum writes:</td>
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“...It is agreed by most Hebrew scholars that Genesis 1:2 describes a chaotic state. The issue boils down to: Did God create it in a chaotic state and then bring order to it? Or, did some event cause it to become chaotic? The author prefers the second option because of Isaiah 45:18 and because terms used in Genesis 1:2 are used elsewhere in the Hebrew text describing divine judgments. Also, the new earth in Revelation 21:1-22:5 compares favorably with Ezekiel 28:13, showing that the new earth will look much like the old earth prior to the covering by seas in Genesis 1:2.”

“The earth became waste and void, although it was not originally created that way (Is. 45:18). ... Some time after this came the six days of creation recorded in Genesis one. The oceans were partially removed to allow dry land to appear, but the effects of Satan’s judgment are still here in that most of the earth is still covered by oceans. The effects of the fall of Satan will not be fully removed until the creation of the new heavens and the new earth, which will not have any oceans (Rev. 21:1). [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 555-556]

Donald Grey Barnhouse conjectures that the pre-Adamic stage in Eden didn’t necessarily have trees and other vegetation [Barnhouse, 1965]. Rather, Satan and all angels experienced a place of rare mineral beauty (Ezekiel 28, Isaiah 14), which ultimately finds its redemption in Revelation 21:19-20. It is interesting to note that Revelation describes the future environment as being a place of not only mineral beauty (e.g., streets and foundations of the New Jerusalem), but also trees, vegetation, water, etc. Barnhouse thinks that the pre-Adamic world may have been the subject of destruction due to the fall of Satan and his angels (now demons). In particular, he thinks Genesis 1:1-2’s description of the earth being “without form and void” (KJV) could be translated “waste and void”:

Somewhere back before the chaos of the second verse of Genesis there was a great tragedy and a terrible catastrophe. [Barnhouse, 1965, p. 18]

Satan’s pride stimulated his envy, but as yet he saw nothing to excite his jealousy, for all these birds and animals had body and life but no spirit,
and he know that there was no creature here that could challenge the power and authority which he yet possessed in this domain.

But on the sixth day, God created man in His own image. ... There must have been an almost instant awareness in the mind of Satan that here was his rival at last. For man awoke to find himself a creature of noble beauty and wisdom, and to be informed that he was to have dominion over the whole of the renewed earth, over all that he could see around him. ...

Although we are interested here in man only insofar as he is a part of the invisible war, he is such an important weapon in that war that it is necessary to understand the nature of his creation. God was choosing man as the arm which would defeat Satan, both in bringing him to naught and in replacing him in the scheme of the government of the universe. It was to be out of man that Christ would come, and it would be through certain chosen members of the human race that God would proclaim the defeat of Satan (Ephesians 3:10).” [Barnhouse, 1965, pp. 72-73]

<table>
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<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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</table>
| Dispensationalist Position | 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. 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, 2008a, p. 3]

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.

Douglas Hamp believes that Isaiah 65:17 takes place at the beginning of the Millennium because other verses following Isaiah 65:17 describe natural man living on the Earth under Millennium conditions (e.g., wolf and lamb feeding together, people living to at least 100 years of age—believed to be the upper age of accountability before making a decision for Christ) [Hamp, 2014b]. Thus, if the verses of Isaiah 65 are to be taken chronologically, we have an argument for an “early” “new heavens and a new earth”. What about the seemingly parallel passages in Revelation 21-22? Hamp argues that Revelation is not a chronological book, but rather a thematic book.

| Preterist Position | Similar to the dispensationalist position, but some have different viewpoints about the Millennium. |
### Topic/Question
The earliest prophecy about a coming redeemer is given in Genesis 3:

> Genesis 3:15 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."

Who—or what—does the “seed” refer to?

### Dispensationalist Position
The “seed of the woman” is unusual since “seed” usually refers to a man. Thus, we already see a prophecy of Christ’s virgin birth.

Whenever “seed” is used singularly, it refers to the Messiah; in the plural, it refers to a group of people [Fruchtenbaum, 1998].

It is interesting to see that Eve took the prophecy to heart, and had assumed that her firstborn, Cain, was the promised deliverer [Fruchtenbaum, 1998]. In Genesis 4:1, when considering the literal Hebrew, Eve said, “I have gotten a man: Jehovah”. She was right about there being a future redeemer/deliverer; however, she didn’t get the timing right. The timing wouldn’t be fulfilled until the advent of Jesus Christ, thousands of years later.

Even righteous Enoch, who was raptured, may have thought that the redeemer was to come from his son Methuselah which can mean either, “When he dies it will come”, or because there is no neuter in Hebrew, “When he dies he [Messiah] shall come” [Fruchtenbaum, 1998]. Methuselah fathered Lamech, who fathered Noah, whose name means “comfort”. Perhaps Lamech thought that the Messiah would be his son. Arnold Fruchtenbaum remarks that Lamech would have been 56 years old when Adam died; hence, Lamech could have gotten first-hand information about the events in the Garden of Eden and the promise of a Messiah.

### Preterist Position
The “seed” is Jesus Christ.

### Topic/Question
What are the parallels between the life of Joseph (in Genesis, circa 1700 BC) and the life of Jesus Christ? In what ways was Joseph’s ministry prophetic?

### Dispensationalist Position
The story of Joseph is one of my favorite historical narratives in the Bible. It has some fascinating parallels to the ministry of Christ. It also has eschatological implications—and this is not by accident. We say that the life of Joseph is a type of (i.e., points to, models, or is a pattern of) the life of Christ.

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. De Haan [De Haan, 1966].
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Joseph</strong></th>
<th><strong>Jesus</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was a shepherd (Genesis 37:2)</td>
<td>Is our 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>
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<tr>
<td>Greatly loved by his father (Genesis 37:3)</td>
<td>Beloved of the Father (Matthew 3:17)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dreamed that wheat sheaves, sun, moon, and stars all bow down to him (Genesis 37:7-10)</td>
<td><em>All</em> will bow before Him (Psalm 22:27)</td>
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<td>Rejected by his brethren: “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>Rejected by some of His brethren: “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>
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<tr>
<td>Sent on a special mission by his father to check up on his brothers (Genesis 37:13)</td>
<td>Sent on a special mission by God the Father (Matthew 21:37-38), whereby Christ, as God, came to Earth as a baby, lived among us (i.e., became one of us), and finally died as the only possible acceptable sacrifice to redeem mankind from sin. His life, death, and resurrection are what the Old Testament sacrifices and lessons pointed to.</td>
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<td>Went to Shechem which is where his brothers were last seen (<em>Shechem</em> means “fellowship”), but the brothers had moved from Shechem to Dothan (which means “law”) [De Haan, 1966]. (Genesis 37:12-17)</td>
<td>Adam and Eve broke <em>fellowship</em> with God in the Garden of Eden, and the Israelites lived under the dispensation of <em>law</em> (the Torah, given to Moses). Christ took us from living under the law (Old Testament) to living under <em>grace</em> (New Testament). Through Jesus Christ, we have been restored to fellowship with God.</td>
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<td>Later, Joseph showed grace (unmerited favor) when forgiving his brothers, realizing that he had been placed in this position to physically save them (Genesis 50:20). Fellowship was restored.</td>
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<tr>
<td>His brethren originally plotted</td>
<td>His brethren plotted to kill Him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Genesis Reference</td>
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<td>to kill him.</td>
<td>37:18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stripped of his robe of many colors</td>
<td>37:23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sold for 20 pieces of silver</td>
<td>37:28</td>
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<td>Was a man of integrity</td>
<td>39:7-12</td>
</tr>
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<td>Falsely accused</td>
<td>39:17-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose to a high position of honour, after initially encountering resistance</td>
<td>41:40-41</td>
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<tr>
<td>Named Zaphenath-Paneah (“reveal of secrets”) by Pharaoh</td>
<td>41:45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rose to power at age 30</td>
<td>41:46</td>
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<tr>
<td>Took a Gentile bride in Egypt</td>
<td>41:50</td>
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<tr>
<td>7-year famine in Egypt</td>
<td>41:54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provided the world with bread/grain during the 7-year famine</td>
<td>41:56-57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was a blessing to the Gentiles, saving Egypt and other nations from starvation</td>
<td>41:57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was not recognized by his brothers when, many years later, they came to Egypt in search of food during the 7-year famine</td>
<td>42:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Waited for his brethren to admit their rejection of him (Genesis 42:19-20)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received a confession of guilt and sin from his brothers (Genesis 42:21-22; 45:5)</td>
<td>Will receive a confession of guilt and sin from his brethren; regularly receives confessions of guilt and sin from Christians (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 them (Isaiah 63:1-3; Zechariah 12:10; 13:6; Romans 11:25-26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had a “forgive and forget” attitude (Genesis 45:5)</td>
<td>Still has a “forgive and forget” attitude: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob (renamed “Israel”) thought that Joseph was dead, but later learned that he was alive. Jacob later saw Joseph in the flesh. (Genesis 45:26; 46:30)</td>
<td>Much of Israel thought that Christ was dead, but will later see that He is alive, and will see Christ in the flesh. (Zechariah 12:10; 13:6)</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>The world intended to harm Him. He came to die for our sins, so that our souls would be saved, and so that we can enter into eternal life (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* (the future, final fulfillment that the *type* pointed to): Jesus Christ. Significantly, Joseph gained redemption for those held in bondage in Egypt, which pointed to the ultimate redemption from the *bondage of sin*. Note that the antitype is always more significant than the type.

Communion is an antitype of the Passover supper. The land of Israel is a type of Heaven. The Temple is a type of Christ. Also, the city of Jerusalem looked forward to its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus.
<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>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both Positions</td>
<td>The parallels [Missler, 2005]:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 3 days and 3 nights (Jonah in the big fish, Christ in Hades)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Death and resurrection (Some scholars think Jonah may have died in the big fish, and was resurrected)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Jonah’s ministry was to the Gentiles—a foreshadowing of Christ’s ministry, post-resurrection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Jonah preached repentance, as did Christ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Will there be two “Second” Comings of Jesus Christ, or just one?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Dispensationalist Position | There will be two *phases* to the Second Coming, rather than two physical comings. First, Christ comes *in the air* to meet the raptured saints (i.e., to take out Christian believers who are alive at the time). This event is called the *Rapture*. Second, Christ comes to Earth at the Battle of Armageddon, and subsequently sets foot on the Mount of Olives in Israel. Christ’s return will be an event that is seen all over the world likely through telecommunications (e.g., satellite, Internet). This second event is sometimes called the “Second Coming” or the “Glorious Appearing”.

Preterists often complain that dispensationalists have two “Second Comings”, that is, at least a 7+ year separation between the Rapture and the Second Coming is not in the Bible. However, note that even preterists believe in two phases: one in 70 AD (i.e., a “coming” in judgment upon Israel/Jerusalem), and a future appearance. Mark Hitchcock argues that preterists have an even wider separation of years (70 AD to now) between the two phases than dispensationalists do (i.e., 7 or more years between the Rapture and the official Second Coming) [Hitchcock, 2006b]!
### Hitchcock's View

Hitchcock likes to call the Rapture “the final post-resurrection appearance of Jesus Christ” before His Coming in power and great glory at Armageddon. There have been at least 16 post-resurrection appearances so far. The previous appearance was to the Apostle John on the Isle of Patmos.

### Preterist Position

There will just be one “Second Coming” of Jesus Christ: when He returns to the Earth in judgment and great glory. Unlike what dispensationalists say, Christ does not have a “secret” coming (Rapture) seven or more years prior to His Second Coming.

### Topic/Question

**Did Moses have anything to say about the order of prophetic events in Israel’s far future?**

### Dispensationalist Position

Yes, consider one of the oldest books of the Bible:

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.

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]

David Reagan and J. Dwight Pentecost mention the following details from other passages in Deuteronomy [Reagan, 2005; Pentecost, 1958]:

- Affliction will come upon the Jews while still in the land—because they will not be faithful to God’s covenants. (Deuteronomy 28:15-60)
- Israel will be taken captive. (Deuteronomy 28:32-39,48-57)
- Israel will be few in number. (Deuteronomy 28:62)
- Israel will be dispersed. (Deuteronomy 28:64; Leviticus 26:33)
- Israel will be persecuted by others because of their rebellion. (Deuteronomy 28:65)
- Israel will become desolate—the land and the cities. (Deuteronomy 29:22-23)
- Israel will be preserved—God said He would preserve the Jews as a separate people, even if they rebelled. (Deuteronomy 28:44-45; Isaiah 49:16)
- Israel will repent in the future. (Deuteronomy 28:40-41; 30:1-3)
- The Messiah will return. (Deuteronomy 30:3-6)
- Israel will be converted as a nation. (Deuteronomy 30:4-8)
- The Jews will be restored to the land. (Deuteronomy 30:5)
- Israel’s enemies will be judged. (Deuteronomy 30:7)
- The nation will then be greatly blessed. (Deuteronomy 30:9)

Reagan argues that, “God used World War I to prepare the land for the people. He worked through World War II to prepare the people for the land.” [Reagan, 2005, p. 380]

Furthermore, there will be the following events (some of which may refer to the Millennium):

- Restoration of the Land
  - Isaiah 35:1-7; Joel 2:21-26; Ezekiel 36:35
- Revival of the Language
  - Zephaniah 3:9
- Regaining Military Strength
  - Zechariah 12:6
- Prediction of Israel as a nation in the end times
  - Isaiah 11:10-12; Ezekiel 36:22-28; Isaiah 66:7-8;
Zechariah 12:3-6

Preterist Position
The preterist position is similar to the dispensationalist position, except for the latter parts about finding the Lord in the distant future (“the latter days”) after a time of tribulation. Many preterists do not believe that God has a separate plan for Israel, and because we are living in the church age, there is no separate plan for Israel.

Topic/Question
What is the significance of Ezekiel 4:4-6 in terms of Bible prophecy?

Ezekiel 4:4-6 "Then lie on your left side and put the sin of the house of Israel upon yourself. You are to bear their sin for the number of days you lie on your side. I have 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 regnal 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 hypothetical explanation—albeit complicated—is (approximately) 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 leaves $430 - 70 = 360$ years, left.

• A penalty of “seven times” 360 years is 2,520 years.

• The (original) 70 years + 2,520 years (to come) = 2,590 years

• 2,590 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
<th>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.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>In Daniel 12:4, circa 530 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>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daniel 12:4</td>
<td>But you, Daniel, close up and seal the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>It refers to the distant future—when travel and knowledge would greatly increase. This Scripture is being fulfilled in modern times, in numerous ways, including travel, commerce, population, computing, etc. [Reagan, 2014a]. For example, consider the use of computers and the Internet—and the amount of information available today (the growth is exponential). Secondly, it’s been estimated that the number of people who died in all the wars from the time of Christ (circa 30 AD) up to the end of the 19th century (1899) was about 40 million; however, in the 20th century alone, about 110 million people were killed in warfare [Reagan, 2014a]. Reagan gives numerous other examples of exponential growth including weapons, law-breaking, disobedience, natural disasters, and debt. There is also exponential growth in the number of Christians (despite serious persecution in various parts of the world), Bible translations, Scripture distribution, and availability of Bible resources on the Internet. Some scholars believe that the word “knowledge” is better rendered as “the knowledge” or “this knowledge” implying that knowledge about the Scriptures, including Daniel’s prophecies, would increase [Missler, 2004].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preterist Position</td>
<td>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”. “Near” refers to a time in their lifetimes, not to a time in the far future, say the 21st century.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic/Question</td>
<td>How reliable are Josephus’ writings when it comes to interpreting Scripture?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Positions</td>
<td>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. ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Given the different views on eschatology, who’s right? Are the other parties presenting heretical views?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Dispensationalist Position | Ron Rhodes nicely summarizes the situation from a pretribulational perspective, using Ezekiel 38-39 as an example:  

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

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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 readily accepted by both dispensationalists and preterists.

Like all students of prophecy, Hanegraaff encourages us to continue loving, memorizing, and mining (studying, parsing, and seeking answers in) the Word of God. |
|---|---|

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Have any prophecy teachers switched from dispensationalism to preterism, or vice-versa?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comment</td>
<td>Both groups claim that the “whole” of Scripture supports their position. In other words, both groups claim that the Bible weaves a tapestry or thread through all of Scripture, and the result is a beautiful explanation of God’s actions in history and His plan for the future.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dispensationalist Position**

The more that dispensationalists learn about prophecy, the more strongly convinced they are about the credibility of dispensationalism. Imminence stresses hope. World events seem to unfold in the light of Scripture. In fact, the very nature of Israel’s existence, its pivotal role in Bible prophecy, and the geopolitical events surrounding it, seem to suggest that we are rapidly advancing towards the time that many of the Bible prophets have spoken about. We should recognize the “signs of the times”, and be living in daily expectation of the return of Christ. This is the blessed hope.

**Preterist Position**

Steve Gregg is an example of someone who used to be a pretribulational dispensationalist teacher, but has now changed his position to that of a partial preterist. Gregg says that he evolved his views after considering the whole of Scripture, but adds that he’s not 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. (This is a great goal for all prophecy lovers.) Gregg 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). All Christians are the “seed of Abraham”. There is no distinction, at this point, between Israel and the Church. Even during the exodus from Egypt, it was a mixed group. The covenant that was made with the people that came out of Egypt was for “Israel”, and this included the Gentiles that left Egypt. They all became part of “Israel”. The “new covenant” spoken of in Scripture includes all people who are faithful to the covenant, that is, people who believe in God, and in particular, those who are followers of Jesus Christ [Steve Gregg, *Bible Answer Man*, November 8, 2011].

Hank Hanegraaff adds that, in the Old Testament, non-Jews became Jews (e.g., Rahab in the book of Joshua; people from many nations, as described in the book of Esther, who became Jews). Why did they become “Jews”? Because they believed in God.

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>Who is the Antichrist? Is he a real person? If not, what is meant by the term “Antichrist”?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<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>
</tr>
<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 the antichrist—he denies the Father and the Son.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 John 4:2–3</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 John 1:7</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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). Because of the wording in 1 John 2:18 (i.e., “the antichrist is coming”), most evangelical scholars believe the Antichrist had not yet appeared in Paul’s time. Although some scholars equate the Antichrist with “the man of lawlessness” or the beast of Revelation, neither Paul nor John (in Revelation) specifically uses the term “antichrist”. However, one definite conclusion about the term “antichrist” is that “he” denies that Jesus Christ is Lord. Many early Church fathers like Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian and Jerome believed that the term “antichrist” indeed refers to a person [Sproul, 1998]. Furthermore, the Greek prefix *anti-* can be translated as either “against” or “in place of”:

> It is not necessary to choose between these nuances of the prefix. It is possible, if not probable, that the concept of antichrist contains both elements. At the very least the antichrist is one who stands and works “against” Christ. If, however, he also seeks to be a substitute for Christ, then the link to the man of lawlessness is even more enticing.

> Again the question of time-frame becomes critical. Was Paul speaking of a first-century person who would soon be made manifest and then be destroyed by the judgment-coming of Christ in A.D. 70? Or was Paul speaking of one who, though already at work in the first century, would not be fully revealed until sometime near the end of history as precursor to the coming of Jesus? [Sproul, 1998, pp. 178, 181]

> 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
• Spoken of in Isaiah 14:9-14

Some of the names of the Antichrist include the following [Jeremiah, 2013]:

• “The little horn” in Daniel 7—an insignificant ruler, at first
• “The king of fierce countenance” in Daniel 8
• “The prince that shall come” in Daniel 9
• “The willful king” in Daniel 11
• “The abomination of desolation” in Matthew 24
• “The Antichrist” in 1 John 2
• “The beast” in Revelation 13

Some additional contrasts are found in [LaHaye & Hindson, 2004]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christ</th>
<th>Antichrist</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holy One</td>
<td>Lawless one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son of God</td>
<td>Son of Satan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Shepherd</td>
<td>Worthless Shepherd (Zechariah 11:17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exalted on high</td>
<td>Cast down to hell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Humbled Himself</td>
<td>Exalted himself</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cleanses the Temple</td>
<td>Defiles the Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slain for the people</td>
<td>Slays the people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lamb</td>
<td>The beast</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Preterist Position

The term “antichrist” refers to literal persons or organizations. Anybody, or any institution, that denies that Jesus Christ has “come in the flesh” is an antichrist. In other words, anyone who denies that Jesus Christ is God and that He came to earth as a human being to be the sacrifice to reconcile mankind to God is an antichrist. There is no single “Antichrist” who appears during the end times in a manner described by dispensationalists.

Hank Hanegraaff argues that Christians today should not be playing the “Pin the Tail on the Antichrist” game [Hanegraaff, 2003+]. It is a waste of time trying to identify who the Antichrist is. In any century, there have been “antichrists”, that is, people who are against Christ.

Nero was the personification of evil: he killed Peter and Paul, and numerous Christians. He’s archetypical of other personifications of evil who stand
against the message of Christ, and this includes Hitler, Polpot, Saddam Hussein, etc. He claimed deity (i.e., he claimed to be a god), and expected to be worshiped. Not only was Nero Caesar’s name “666”, but his whole personality was evil. Furthermore, the man to whom “666” applies had to be a contemporary of John.

(For more discussion on this subject, search for the phrase “man of sin” in this book.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
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</table>
| What is meant by the terms “last days”, “latter days”, and “latter years”? | 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.  

The term “latter years” is used only once in the Old Testament—that being in the Magog invasion passage in Ezekiel 38:8. Since verse 16 mentions the “latter days” (and some other translations use “last days”), we can assume that all these terms are synonymous [Ice, 2009e].  

The Apostle Paul wrote about the last days:  

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.  

Some scholars think that we are living in “the last of the last days”. |

| Preterist Position | Are we living in the last days? Yes, any time after Christ is a wide window of time that is 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.  

Preterists refer to the last days as the time between the advent of John the Baptist and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD [Sproul, 1998]. Scriptures that may be used to support this include 1 Corinthians 10:11 and 1 John 2:18:  

1 Corinthians 10:11  These things happened to them as
1 John 2:18 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.

John (the writer of Revelation, and not John the Baptist) was one of the last apostles to die. That timeframe is part of the last days—and it extends to today.

Every generation thinks it’s the “last” generation [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man, August 25, 2010]. However, there is nothing in Scripture to conclude that.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What are the major covenants in the Bible?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>There are five major covenants: Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic, New Covenant, and Mosaic. The first four covenants are eternal; the latter covenant is temporal.</td>
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<td>There are two types of covenants: conditional (Mosaic) and unconditional (the other four), sometimes called unilateral and bilateral, respectively. 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.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. The Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3)</td>
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<td>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]:</td>
</tr>
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<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In order to reaffirm the covenant to Abraham concerning the seed and the</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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 alone passed through the animal parts while Abraham was asleep; thus, it is an unconditional covenant. The covenant remains in effect today.

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]

The Palestinian (also called the Land or Deuteronomic) covenant establishes Israel’s ownership of the land.

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]

The restoration of Jerusalem mentioned in Jeremiah 31:38-40 will be fulfilled during the Millennium because of the language used, and the fact that this Scripture has not been fulfilled yet.

5. The Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 19:5ff, Deuteronomy 28:1-68) made at Mount Sinai during the exodus from Egypt, in the days of Moses.

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

Some scholars contend that the Abrahamic covenant was fulfilled during the time of Joshua:

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). [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 178]

Andy Woods argues:
... the extended context indicates that the land promises were not completely satisfied in the days of Joshua (13:1-7; Judges 1:19, 21, 27, 29, 30-36). In addition, the land that Israel attained in the conquests was only a fraction of what was found in the Abrahamic Covenant. Also, the land promises could not have been fulfilled in Joshua’s day since Israel had not yet conquered Jerusalem (Josh. 15:63). The conquest of Jerusalem would have to wait another four hundred years until the Davidic reign (2 Sam. 5).

Although Solomon gained a large percentage of the land, his empire only extended to the border of Egypt (1 Kgs. 4:21) rather than to the promised river of Egypt (Gen. 15:18) according to what God initially promised Abraham ...

Furthermore, if the land promises were satisfied in Joshua’s or Solomon’s day, then why do subsequent prophets treat these promises as if they are yet to be fulfilled (Amos 9:11-15)? Certainly the New Covenant’s promise of God writing His laws upon the hearts of Israel has never been fulfilled. [Woods, 2012b]

Amos 9:11 makes reference to the rebuilding of “David’s fallen shelter” or the Tabernacle of David.

The New Covenant will be fulfilled at the end of the Tribulation (i.e., after the Second Coming of Christ), and through the Millennium.

Preterist Position

The Abrahamic covenant was fulfilled during the time of Joshua (see above [Hanegraaff, 2007]).

The Davidic and New Covenants have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. There is no special race of people (e.g., Jews) that God focuses on with favoritism (e.g., land deals). Rather, all believers are “one” in Christ.

The bottom line is that there is no future Millennial age of 1,000 years where mortals live with immortals, and where sin exists. After the general resurrection and judgment, God restores all things.

<table>
<thead>
<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 28:18 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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dispensationalist Position

This is likely the seven-year peace treaty (or the strengthening of an existing agreement, possibly between Israel and its neighbors), 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 death. It is not a covenant of Heaven, but a covenant of Hell. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004].

| Preterist Position | n/a |

| Topic/Question | 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”? |

| Dispensationalist Position | “The Day of the Lord” usually refers to the time of God’s wrath and judgment in the end times, but it has been used to describe other major judgments by God. A significant part of the book of 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, at which point it had only been poured out on about 120 people (Acts 1:15)); 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.” [De Haan, 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, and refers to a period of wrath and judgment from the Lord. Some believe that the Day of the Lord refers specifically to the seven-year Tribulation. Some believe that it refers only to the latter half of the Tribulation (i.e., the Great Tribulation beginning with the Abomination of Desolation mentioned in Daniel 9:24-27).

The prophets Jeremiah and Daniel referred to the Tribulation:

Jeremiah 30:7  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.

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.

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]. However, there is some debate among other authors about whether the Millennium should be included. 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]

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 Judgment, 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
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, the Millennial reign of Christ, the Great White Throne Judgment, and goes on for eternity. This appears to be the best explanation (i.e., Rapture and beyond). 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. [KJV]

The Day of the Lord is mentioned in the book of Joel, and mention is made of an army. Is this Armageddon? Are 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
Zechariah 14:1-5  

A day of the LORD is coming ... I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it ...  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.

Preterist Position  

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, through the early church, beginning at the Day of Pentecost:

Acts 2:14-21  

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "... this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: "'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 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.'"
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<tr>
<td></td>
<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>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.</td>
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<td><strong>Dispensationalist Position</strong></td>
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<td>God owns the land, but He gave it to Israel to manage. 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>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.” 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 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.</td>
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<td>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 ...</td>
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|          | 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”.

It is argued that America is great because it has sided with—and blessed—the Jews. Similarly, England greatly increased as a world power when it showed favor to the Jews (1600s); but, the opposite happened when it withdrew support in the second half of the 20th century [Watson, 2015].

… most of the American Evangelical community is pro Israel.

Genesis 12:3 records God’s promise to bless those who bless Abraham and his descendants (i.e., Israel). The Abrahamic covenant is directed to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants. It is repeated to them about twenty times in Genesis … Does this promise still stand or has it been changed? If these biblical promises are to be taken literally and still applies to Israel, and not the church, it should not be surprising to anyone that such a view leads one, such as myself, to Christian Zionism. Zionism is simply the belief that the Jewish people have been given the land of Israel by covenant promise to God and have a current right to occupy that land. Christian Zionists are Christians who agree with this belief. [Ice, 2003]

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 (i.e., the second, and most intense, half of the 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. This passage speaks of the Millennium, which follows the return of Jesus Christ.

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. Hunt 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 2,520 years (when using 360 days as 1 Biblical year, and excluding the 70 years of the “Servitude of the Nation” between 606 BC and 537 BC) [Missler, 2000; Watchman, 2012]. The “Desolations of Jerusalem” comes into play as another 2,520-year period, this time between the destruction of the first Temple in 587 BC via Nebuchadnezzar—less 70 years for the Desolations of Jerusalem—until June 7, 1967 when Israel regained the city of Jerusalem, and in particular, the Temple Mount.

The 70 years of time called “the Servitude of the Nation” from the conquest of Judah by Babylon’s King Nebuchadnezzar in 606 BC to the time of King Cyrus’ decree allowing a remnant to return ... is not the same as the 70 years of time called “the Desolations of Jerusalem” beginning with Nebuchadnezzar’s 3rd and final siege of Jerusalem in 587 BC up to the decree by Darius I in 518 BC to rebuild Jerusalem.

The Promised Land was not geographically fulfilled in the time of Joshua or elsewhere in the Old Testament. Some dispensationalists encourage Jews to return to Israel to hasten the return of Christ; however, fulfillment of the Promised Land may have to wait until the Millennium—in which case, promotion and acceleration become a non-issue:

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."

Joel 3:18: 'In that day the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water. A fountain will flow out of the LORD'S house and will water the valley of acacias.

The reality is that there will be a time of judgment for all the nations (Joel 3:2; Zechariah 12:3,9). This will be followed by the Millennium—a 1000-year period of time of tremendous blessings and rebuilding on the Earth that includes the events depicted in Isaiah 19:23-25 and Joel 3:18.

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]

1 Thessalonians 5:3 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.

Chuck Missler draws an interesting and ominous parallel between the current geopolitical events in Israel with that of Czechoslovakia prior to World War II [Missler, 2003a]. France, Britain, Russia, and the West “guaranteed” Czechoslovakia’s borders. However, via a propaganda campaign, Germany claimed that Czechoslovakia was “occupied territory”, and that the Czechs were the obstacle to peace. Britain and France urged Czechoslovakia to turn over land for peace. Hitler accepted the arrangement; but, Czechoslovakia felt badly betrayed. Britain’s Neville Chamberlain declared, “I believe it is peace in our time.” However, shortly thereafter, Hitler invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia, the West and others did nothing, and World War II broke out.

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 favor (pity) of the world. In other words, 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."

Bill Salus writes:

World War I prepared the Promised Land for the Chosen People, and World War II prepared the Chosen People for the Promised Land. [Salus, 2014, p. 141]

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.

The “river of Egypt” is taken to be the eastern branch of the Nile River in the Nile Delta, and corresponds to where the Suez Canal is today [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. It is not the same as the “brook of Egypt” which, for most of the year, is a dry river bed called the Wadi-el-Arish which from south to north in the central Sinai Peninsula. David Hocking also believes that the “river of Egypt” specifically refers to the Nile [Hocking, 2013].

Only a third of the land was claimed by Israel in the time of Joshua [Fruchtenbaum, 2013b]. Judges 1 provides examples of this. Furthermore, Jerusalem belonged to the Jebusites until David conquered the city.

Joshua 21:43-45 So the LORD gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their forefathers, and they took possession of it and settled there. The LORD gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their forefathers. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the LORD handed all their enemies over to them. Not
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. This implies that the anniversary date of Israel’s independence—May 14th—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, including 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, and they are 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 [Hanegraaff, 2007]. 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, stating 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 the issues of land and 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! Indeed, God promised blessings to “Abraham”; but in the New Testament, Paul says that Gentiles are included under the umbrella of Abraham, alongside the Jews [Berg & Hanegraaff, 2012]. Recall that Scripture says that Abraham is the father of many nations:

Genesis 17:4-5  “As for me, this is my covenant with
you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations.

Romans 4:17-18 As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

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 gentile 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 who long for a peaceful two-state solution with Israelis and Palestinians having equal rights, living peacefully together in the land. Gary Berg states that many innocent Palestinian people have been uprooted, and have lost everything [Berg & Hanegraaff, 2012]. He adds that many evangelical Christians need to re-evaluate their position of unconditional support for the Israelis. Many such evangelicals are Christian Zionists who 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. They denounce those who criticize the State of Israel as “replacement theologians”.

Berg says that the New Testament turns the reader away from a single-minded focus on Israel and Jerusalem and causes the reader to focus on the entire world. Because of Christ, blessings are offered to all people who practice faithfulness and justice—and not just to a (largely secular) Israel. Covenant faithfulness goes back thousands of years to the time of Abraham. Even if someone believes that we are living in the last days, Berg argues that God’s blessings are dependent on justice and relationships.

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

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 infants and children in fire, in the arms of an idol like Molech). The land of Canaan was at the point of no return, and Israel would be the instrument that God chose to carry out the order for capital punishment [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man, December 9, 2011]. God gave the order to destroy the Canaanites, their idols, and their possessions.

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, Girgasites, 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), on the Tigris River. Ninevah was founded by Nimrod—the world’s first dictator. It was a very large city, with perhaps a population of 150,000. The inner city was surrounded by a wall that had a circumference of 8 miles, was 100 feet high, and was wide enough to allow three chariots to race on it, side by side [Hitchcock, 2010].

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. (The prophet Nahum warned about its destruction about 150 years after Jonah.) 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 Hanegraaff.

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]
Hank Hanegraaff adds:

“Those who presumptuously appeal to the words of Moses—“I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse” (Genesis 12:3)—as a pretext for unconditionally supporting a secular state that prohibits the advance of the gospel while simultaneously disregarding the plight of the Palestinians should, according to their own hermeneutical standard, heed the words of the prophet Jeremiah:

... if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your forefathers for ever and ever. [Jeremiah 7:6-7] [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 226]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Should we support Jacob’s descendants more so than Esau’s descendants? In other words, should we support Jews more than Muslims (e.g., Israelis more than Palestinians)?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>A blessing is promised to those who bless the Jews; however, Christ commands us to treat all people well.</td>
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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.)

Many Bible commentators point out that already the land is being “divided up”, and is likely to result in more trouble and terrorism, pushing Israel even closer to Armageddon.

| Preterist Position | We should not take sides, especially when it comes to race. 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]

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. The land provided temporal rest for the physical descendants of Abraham; but the Lord provides eternal rest for the spiritual descendants of Abraham. In other words, Christ’s kingdom knows no boundaries. The land was just a type of the promise of the final future [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man, December 29, 2011].

Hanegraaff says that Israel needs to be fair to the Palestinians, and not throw them out of the land. It’s not about the land. The land belongs to the Lord, and not to Israel.

Most Israelis today are secular, and their behaviour to their neighbors 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 already people (including very poor people) living in the land of Israel. A similar analogy applies today with the Palestinians.

| Topic/Question | Is the return of the Jewish people to Israel (i.e., regathering in unbelief) a fulfillment of Bible prophecy, and especially an indicator of Christ’s soon |
Dispensationalist Position

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), Africa, Europe, and numerous nations throughout the world.

According to author and historian Joan Peters, the vast majority of Arabs had lived in Israel for less than one generation when Israel became a nation again in 1948 [Ice, 2016a].

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 36:22-24 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes. '"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
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. The first regathering is before the Tribulation, but there are two viewpoints regarding the timeframe in question: (a) the return from exile in Babylon [Fruchtenbaum, 2004], and (b) the return in modern-day times [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007]. The second regathering is after the Tribulation.

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, O shameful nation, before the appointed time arrives and that day sweeps on like chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD comes upon you, before the day of the LORD’S wrath comes upon you.

Isaiah 11:9-12 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 Babylon, 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.

Let us consider the first viewpoint. Babylon was used to discipline Israel and resulted in the first dispersion of Israel. The Jews started returning to Israel 70 years later. The second dispersion is a broader one, and occurred via the Romans, in years leading up to 70 AD. We are awaiting the second regathering—some of which has already started to take place.

Let us consider the second viewpoint. The Babylonian exile was not a *worldwide* return. Furthermore, mostly Judah (the two southern tribes) returned, and not the ten northern tribes.

In contrast, the return during the 1900s was a return from the dispersion all over the world—and is still going on today. While the Israelites were out of the land, and as late as the early- to mid-1900s, the land was largely barren and unproductive. In recent decades, Israel is blooming and productive. In this first regathering, the Jews have largely been returning in *unbelief*. In fact, the majority are atheists or agnostics [Hindson, 2017]. The second regathering will be at the end of the Tribulation when the Jews will return in
belief/faith, in preparation for Christ’s Millennial kingdom.

The Second World War and Nazi Germany’s heinous, despicable treatment of the Jewish people created worldwide sympathy and a favorable environment for the Jewish people. Hitler’s atrocities actually provided the greatest momentum for the establishment of a national homeland for the Jews. With United Nations approval, British control of the land ended on May 14, 1948. It was then a nation was reborn. At that time, Israel was given five thousand square miles of territory. It had a population of 650,000 Jews and several hundred thousand Arabs.

Since that historic day, further waves of immigrants have poured into Israel from all over the world, most notably from Ethiopia and the Soviet Union. By 2002, 37 percent of the 12.2 million Jews in the world were back in the land of Israel. [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007, p. 152]

Here is a summary of the verses which imply two end-time gatherings of the Jews to Israel: (a) before the Tribulation, but in unbelief: Isaiah 11:11-12; Ezekiel 20:33-38, 22:17-22, 36:22-24; 38-39; and Zephaniah 2:1-2 ... and (b) before the Millennium, but in belief: Deuteronomy 4:29-31, 30:1-10; Isaiah 27:12-13, 43:5-7; Jeremiah 16:14-15, 31:7-10; Ezekiel 11:14-18; Amos 9:14-15; Zechariah 10:8-12; and Matthew 24:31 [LaHaye, 2001b].

| 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. Today, there may be more Jews in New York City than there are in Israel. There may be more Jews in Russia than in Israel. Some people (in 2004) would even 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 in the news, have anything to do with the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. |

| 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 a synonym for the Year of Jubilee [Wagner, 2002].

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
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<tr>
<td>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).</td>
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<td>It represents freedom, restoration, and renewal. The Year of Jubilee occurs every 50 years (on Yom Kippur, the 10th day of Tishri, which is the Day of Atonement). The next Jubilee will be the 40th Jubilee since the birth of Christ. Christ proclaimed a Year of Jubilee when he started his ministry in 27 AD, when he read a passage from the scroll of Isaiah (i.e., Isaiah 61:1-3) [Jones, 2004]. 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” form interesting patterns in the Bible.</td>
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<td>When Christ read the Isaiah 61 passage, 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., because it dealt with His Second Coming).</td>
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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”.

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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 was 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. [De Haan, 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. [De Haan, 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!

Although it is interesting to note that the next Year of Jubilee will be the 40th Jubilee since Christ (and the 120th Jubilee in the young earth creation model), some prophecy scholars do not believe that a Year of Jubilee has any implications for the fulfillment of Bible prophecy, especially the timing of future events.

| Preterist Position | The Year of Jubilee has little significance post-Christ. Christ is our ultimate source of jubilee and liberation. Like other holy days, festivals, and special events, the Year of Jubilee was fulfilled spiritually by Christ (Colossians 2:16-17). He came to restore things, and to provide practical rules for people to live by that didn’t shackle people with the old laws that they found impossible to obey. Christ freed us from the Law, but gave us many principles to live by (e.g., Matthew 22:36-40).

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.

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." |

| Topic/ Are angels real? How was (or is) Christ’s body similar to that of angels? |
Both Positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Did Christ appear in bodily form in the Old Testament?</th>
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<tr>
<td>There are 2 kinds of divine appearances in the Old Testament: theophanies (appearances of the Father), and Christophanies (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.) A side note: the high priest “Melchizadek” in the Bible is very likely Jesus Christ, preincarnate (e.g., Genesis 14:18; Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 7:1) [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man, August 23, 2011].</td>
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Jesus is not the manifestation of God—He is the fullness of the deity in bodily form (Colossians 2:9). God the Father is a spirit being.

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.

Angels are created beings, 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. At this point in history, the “good” angels cannot fall.

Angels are non-physical beings; they are spirits. They don’t have locality or bodies. This area of study is called ontology: 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 color “blue” taste like?’”

Our culture pictures the devil as a guy in red, with horns and a pitchfork ... and 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 book: “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!

What are some characteristics of angels? [Bates, 2012]

- They are spirits (Hebrews 1:14)
- They are always of the male gender (Genesis 19:1; Luke 24:4)
- There are at least hundreds of millions of them (Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 5:11)
- Some names of angels: Gabriel, Michael, Lucifer
- Kinds of angels:
  - Cherubim (Genesis 3:27; Ezekiel 10:1-20)
  - Seraphim (Isaiah 6:2,6)
  - Watchers (Daniel 4:17)
- They interact with humans (e.g., Genesis 16:9)
- They are powerful and can kill many people (Exodus 12:23; 2 Kings 19:35)
- They can appear in human form (Genesis 18:1-16)
- They are not to be worshipped (Revelation 19:10)
- They were created on Day 1 or Day 2 of Creation week (Exodus 20:8-11, Job 38:4-7)

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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>The word nephilim means “fallen ones”. Are they fallen angels (i.e., demons)? Are they a special class of demons that had sexual relations with humans? Are they the offspring of a human-demon relationship? Are they giants? Were there any giants in the land?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 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.

Numbers 13:32-33 And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them."

Jude 6 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.

2 Peter 2:4-5 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others;

| Dispensationalist Position | The Nephilim are a puzzle to evangelical scholars. There are several viewpoints about the Nephilim [Missler, 1997; Hitchcock, 2013a; Hanegraaff, 2013+]. The following comments are not necessarily part of the dispensationalist position, but they help to highlight some activities in “the invisible war” behind the scenes (i.e., spiritual warfare). This warfare involves both good and bad angels. Some scholars believe that a certain class of fallen angels was involved in sexual sin with humans before the Genesis Flood, and these beings had crossed a boundary line set by God. Therefore, God intervened. That class of fallen angels is now being held for judgment—and is no longer permitted to interfere with, or influence, mankind. Other demons, however, still factor in the affairs of mankind. Some people identify the Nephilim as those particular fallen angels. More often, however, the Nephilim are identified as the offspring of those human-demonic relationships. Yet others believe that the Nephilim have no demonic connection, are 100% human, but are giants, that is, larger-than-normal human beings—perhaps more than 9 feet tall. Historical accounts—including extra-biblical accounts—imply that Goliath may have been 9 feet tall, and King Og of Bashan may have been even taller. Douglas Hamp argues that the Anakim (Numbers 13:33), Rephaim (Deuteronomy 2:10-11,20-21), Emim (Deuteronomy 2:10-11), Zamzummim |
(Deuteronomy 2:20-21), Og king of Bashan (Deuteronomy 3:11,13), Sihon king of the Amorites (Numbers 21:26), and Goliath (1 Chronicles 20:5-6,8) were connected to—or equated with—the Nephilim [Hamp, 2014].

The term “sons of God” in Hebrew is bene ‘elohim—and usually refers to angels. This is confirmed in the book of Job. Some Bible translations (e.g., Septuagint, New English Translation) actually state “angels”. Some scholars believe that the term means “sons of Seth”; however, if this were the case, then why would the text not say so directly? The term “Sons of Seth” is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible.

Hamp argues that the term “sons of God” implies that these beings were created by God Himself, rather than being descendants of the human race: “Who else would they be sons of?” After all, many—if not all—of the Ante-Nicene fathers and the Qumran scholars believed that the bene ‘elohim were angels, and that their offspring were unnatural [Hamp, 2014]. The writings of Josephus and Baruch are extra-biblical references, and these men, too, believed that there was a race of unnatural giants in the land.

The New English Translation translates the opening verses of Genesis 6 as follows:

Genesis 6:1-4 [NET] When humankind began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of humankind were beautiful. Thus they took wives for themselves from any they chose. So the LORD said, “My spirit will not remain in humankind indefinitely, since they are mortal. They will remain for 120 more years.”

The Nephilim were on the earth in those days (and also after this) when the sons of God were having sexual relations with the daughters of humankind, who gave birth to their children. They were the mighty heroes of old, the famous men.

To add to the puzzle, note from Genesis 6 [NIV] that the Nephilim were on the Earth “in those days—and also afterward”—but it is not clear what “those days” specifically refer to. Furthermore, there is a quotation from some of the Israelites in Numbers 13—long after the Flood—that mentions the Nephilim again (the only other time in Scripture): “We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.” It’s not clear if those who are making the comment are simply exaggerating out of fear, or if there really were giants in the land in those days.

These offspring (the Nephilim) may have tried to “thwart the plan of God”—and more specifically, “interrupt God’s plan of redemption” at various times in history: before the Flood, in the days of Abraham, and in the time of Joshua [Missler, 1997]. The latter case may explain why God commanded the Israelites to destroy the inhabitants of Canaan.
In Jude 6 (above), 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) and after the judgment of Satan.

Perhaps the demons released from the bottomless pit during the fifth trumpet judgment in Revelation 9 are the demons referred to in Jude [De Haan, 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 word 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.” ... 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 it 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].

Note that Genesis 6:1-9, 2 Peter 2:4, and Jude 6 appear to draw reference to a
single, grievous sin. Why did God draw attention to this specific sin? Was
this the reason that He sent a worldwide flood? Might Satan have planned to
wipe out the human race at that time? Recall that only 8 people on Earth
were found “righteous” (plus Enoch, who was raptured before the Flood).
Furthermore, consider the reference to blamelessness or “purity” of Noah, in
Genesis 6:9. Might this indicate that much of the human race had been
corrupted by demons having taken on human form (i.e., because “the sons of
God” went to the daughters of men and had children by them)? It would
certainly account for sending that class of fallen angels to Tartaros. It would
also give interesting insight for why God brought about Noah’s Flood.

That said, is there a message here for us, when pondering Christ’s words
about the distant future: “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the
coming of the Son of Man”?

Douglas Hamp poses some interesting questions. If almost all of humanity
were genetically contaminated in the days of Noah, would this be a major
reason—or the reason—for bringing on the Flood—when only 8 people were
saved [Hamp, 2014]? What about God’s command to wipe out the
inhabitants of Canaan—an area where the Nephilim or giants were believed
to be present? Would such a command have been justified? Furthermore, it
may have been Satan’s intent to destroy “the image of God”, to corrupt the
line of the Messiah, or to make sure that the Messiah wasn’t born. These are
interesting questions to ponder—but nothing to be dogmatic about.

Some might argue that angels and demons are spirit beings and cannot take
human form—and in particular—cannot create life [Hanegraaff, 2003+].

Matthew 22:30  At the resurrection people will neither
marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the
angels in heaven.

However, this may only apply to the angels in Heaven, and it doesn’t address
the issue of embodiment [Missler, 1997]. Demons are immaterial beings that
seek embodiment in a host, and this was true even in the days of Christ (e.g.,
Christ casting out demonic spirits when healing people, as per Matthew 8:28-
34, 9:32-33, 12:22, 15:22-28, 17:14-18; Mark 1:32-34, etc.) Furthermore,
even angels sometimes take on human form, and have even been mistaken as
humans, as evidenced in the narratives of Abraham (Genesis 18), Sodom and
Gomorrah (Genesis 19), and the early church:

Hebrews 13:2  Do not forget to entertain strangers, for
by so doing some people have entertained angels without
knowing it.
This begs the question: Are spirit beings still seeking embodiment today?

While the Flood wiped out the material beings, it did not necessarily wipe out the spirit beings. Jude 6 and 2 Peter 2:4-5 seem to suggest that those demons are now confined and can never again take on human form. However, is it possible some of the demons who did not experience judgment and confinement in the days of Noah, were active in embodiment beyond that time? Or has God established new boundaries which cannot be crossed by supernatural beings even today? If so, then no demon could embody someone and pretend to be the Messiah. On the other hand, Christ did say, “As it was in the days of Noah...” (Use your computer to search for other references to the “days of Noah” in this book.)

The identity of the Nephilim and the corresponding relationship between material and immaterial beings remain as interesting, controversial, and open questions among Bible scholars.

### Preterist Position

The Scriptures in Genesis 6 and Jude 6 are not about sexual sin. Angels could not have sex, or pass on DNA. Humans, animals, plants, etc. reproduce according to their own kind. Angels cannot take physical form. For example, after Christ’s resurrection, some people thought He might be a spirit being, but He said, “a ghost [or spirit, in some translations] does not have flesh and bones” (Luke 24:39).

Augustine of Hippo argues that they could not be angels. He argues that the “sons of God” are really the sons of Seth, and the “daughters of men” came from the race of Cain [Hamp, 2014].

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” [Hanegraaff, 2003+]. Angels do not have creative power; but, God does.

In Greek mythology, angels/gods were having sex with women. However, 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 on humanity via Noah’s Flood.

Could fallen angels today produce offspring that are part demon, part human? No. The Biblical worldview does not allow that, argues Hanegraaff.

### Topic/Question

<p>| Topic/Question | How do UFOs fit into the end-times? Are “aliens” demons? |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>With respect to Christ’s return, what is meant by the term “coming on the clouds”?</th>
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</table>
| Dispensationalist Position | It refers to Christ coming *physically*—because of the Scripture referring to Christ’s ascension:  

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.”  

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 phrase “coming on the clouds” is written in 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].  

Furthermore, any Old Testament passages such as Isaiah 19:1 that preterists claim speak about God coming in judgment do not specifically say that that people would actually see the event, whereas the Second Coming of Christ refers to an event that people will actually see—and that no one can miss. However, most of the early Church missed the “coming” in 70 AD. The *Didache* is perhaps the oldest extra-Biblical Christian document. It was |
| Preterist Position | Hank Hanegraaff states that fallen angels cannot take on *form*, since they don’t have creative power. During 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.  

There is no evidence from science or the Bible that there are other living forms in the universe, or that there are other “universes”. Some people claim that 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. |
likely written after 70 AD, or even after 80 AD, and bears testimony to the
notion that the early church “missed” the “coming”:

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]

| 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 either 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.

> Isaiah 19:1  An oracle concerning Egypt: See, the LORD
> 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.

“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]

The great tribulation that follows Christ’s coming on the clouds is the
destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, which occurred in 70 AD. In the Old Testament, prophets like Ezekiel, Joel, and Isaiah use similar language. Ezekiel said that the Day of the Lord is near. Joel referred to the Day of the Lord as a time of clouds and darkness.

When the disciples asked Jesus about the end of the age, they were not asking about the end of the world, but rather they were asking about the end of the current corrupt age [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man, May 22, 2015].

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**Topic/Question**  
Should we be using the Bible to help interpret current news events regarding Israel, the Middle East, Europe, the United Nations, America, etc? Should we be connecting some of these events to Bible prophecy?

**Dispensationalist Position**  
Certain types of news have been indicating that Biblical, prophetic events 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. Also, 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 neighbors
- the prophecy in Revelation 13:16-17 about mankind requiring a mark (perhaps a computer chip?) in the right hand or forehead to buy and sell (i.e., conduct 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 a biochip 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). If this interpretation about “the mark of the beast” is correct, then by warning people about this prophecy, the good news is that some people may refuse to accept such the mark, and therefore their souls will be saved. We don’t know specifically what technology, if any, will be
employed to implement the mark of the beast; however, the mark clearly appears to be some form of discrimination between believers and non-believers.

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
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<td>Many prophecy enthusiasts have been “prostituting the text”, that is, trying to read current world events into Bible teachings [Hanegraaff, <em>Bible Answer Man</em>, May 25, 2009]. Hanegraaff argues that many such people are Biblically illiterate. For example, he 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?”</td>
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<td>He 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 [Hanegraaff, 2007]. Instead, 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. He 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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Furthermore, the mark and number of the beast were mentioned to a first-century audience—at a time when there were no barcodes, computer chips, etc. “No amount of wisdom, no amount of insight would have enabled a first-century audience to calculate the number of a twenty-first-century beast” [Hanegraaff, <em>Bible Answer Man</em>, August 2, 2011]. Revelation was written to a first-century audience of churches in the province of Asia. In it, Christ told His readers that they would be able to determine the number of the beast (i.e., Nero). Revelation is still applicable to all of us today—the message is timeless—but the specific prophecy of the mark and number of</td>
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the beast was first and foremost directed to the audience of the day.

Similarly, when God seals the 144,000 in Revelation 14:1 and writes His name on their foreheads, He is not using a “Magic Marker” to do so; rather, this is symbolic language telling the readers of the Bible that God has set aside and protected a large group of believers. The Old Testament provides lots of references to symbols such as these.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Y2K: Is it a key part of end time prophecy?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>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 90s, since the many billions of dollars spent on the problem helped to avoid the undoubtedly catastrophic consequences of an unfixed Y2K problem.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preterist Position</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Were the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks prophesied in Scripture?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>No. 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 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:</td>
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<td>• a single world government (eventually under Antichrist), as implied by Daniel 7 and Revelation 13</td>
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<td>• a common world religion that opposes Israel and the God of the Bible</td>
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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]. Jewish-Arab and Jewish-Muslim struggles begin with two children of Abraham: Ishmael and Isaac. God said He would bless the descendants of Ishmael. Today, 5.3 million square miles of land in the Middle East belong to the Arab nations. God’s promises however, will flow through Isaac and his son Jacob (renamed Israel). Today, Israel has 8,000 square miles of land. The struggle continues today with the Jewish-Muslim conflict. Note that many Arabs are Muslim, but the largest Muslim nations in the world today are not Arab at all: Indonesia and Iran (Persians are not Arabs). Islam began with Mohammad, circa 700 AD. Someday, however, the nations of Israel, Egypt, and Assyria (modern-day Syria and Iraq) will join together to worship the God of the Bible—in a time of tremendous blessing and peace—probably during the Millennium:

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."

The root of sin, however, goes back to Satan and the fall of man in the Garden of Eden.

| Preterist Position | No. Again, these are just signs that we are living in increasingly “perilous times”.

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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Does Islam believe in a Messiah-like figure in the Last Days? How does Islamic eschatology relate to Biblical eschatology?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>The <em>Hadith</em> is a collection of writings about Mohammad, and is a major</td>
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Islam’s Antichrist is known as the *Dajjal*. The Dajjal will come on the scene before the *Mahdi* (Islamic Messiah, whom many in Islam claim will be a descendant of Mohammad). The Hadith suggests that the Dajjal will be a Jew born in Iran.

The six major signs of end-time Islamic prophecy are as follows [Reagan, 2010]:

- The appearance of the Dajjal
- The appearance of the Mahdi after the Dajjal
- The return of Jesus (who will, at some point, submit to the Mahdi)
- The reign of Jesus (upon the death of the Mahdi)
- The day of resurrection called “The Hour”. Both the saved and the unsaved will be resurrected together just prior to judgment day.
- The day of judgment, when Allah will descend from Heaven, and will weigh the deeds of each person on a scale

Reagan disagrees with writers such as Joel Richardson who put the appearance of the Mahdi before the Dajjal (with the Dajjal appearing at the end of the 7-year tribulation). Richardson believes that the Mahdi and the false prophet/Jesus together will unite the Middle Eastern Islamic world, revive the Ottoman Empire, conquer Israel, and establish the headquarters of the Caliphate in Jerusalem; but their rule will come to an end with the fulfillment of Ezekiel 38 and 39. Islamic eschatology states that the Dajjal will appear before the Mahdi; therefore, if someone claims to be the Mahdi before the appearance of the Dajjal, he would be rejected by much of the Islamic world. Richardson states that the Mahdi’s jurisdiction will be a regional one (i.e., revived Ottoman Empire) rather than a worldwide one, yet both the Bible and Islamic eschatology claim the opposite. In particular, the books of Daniel and Revelation both refer to world empires. Furthermore, Nebuchadnezzar’s dream about a statue, in Daniel 2-3 makes no reference to an Ottoman Empire; neither does the succession of empires listed in Revelation 17. More importantly, Daniel 9:26 mentions that the world leader (Antichrist) will come out of the people (Romans) that destroyed the Second Temple (in 70 AD).

Two of the strongest arguments against a Muslim Antichrist are as follows. First, no Muslim would claim to be God, as required by 2 Thessalonians 2:4:

2 Thessalonians 2:4  He [Antichrist] 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.
Secondly, Israel would never leave its security in the hands of a Muslim leader, especially since no Muslim leader would want to be on the line for committing peace and security to Israel (i.e., he would be rejected by the Muslim world, such as Anwar Sadat of Egypt was).

For more information about Islamic eschatology, see [Reagan, 2009a; Reagan, 2010].

Some other points are worth mentioning, in part because of the worldwide attention being given to Middle East issues. According to the UK Telegraph (January 14, 2006), “‘Divine Mission’ Driving Iran’s New Leader”:

“All streams of Islam believe in a divine saviour, known as the Mahdi, who will appear at the End of Days.”

“Iran’s dominant ‘Twelver’ sect believes this will be Mohammed ibn Hasan, regarded as the 12th Imam, or righteous descendant of the Prophet Mohammad.”

“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.”

“This is similar to the Christian vision of the Apocalypse. Indeed, the Hidden Imam is expected to return in the company of Jesus.”

Mark Hitchcock writes:

“According to Islamic teaching, he [the Mahdi] 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 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]

A grave concern is the possible 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]

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]

Finally, here is some background on Islam and its two main divisions: Shiite and Sunni:

Today, the word “Islam,” which also means “peace,” is defined by the derivative word “submission,” and twenty-one percent of the world’s population (1,449,000,000)—making Islam the second largest religion in the world behind Christianity—attempts to practice a life of such submission, primarily in North Africa, the Middle East, South-Central Asia, and Indonesia. ...

On June 8, AD 632, Muhammad died, and immediately following his death, two major traditions emerged, divided over who should succeed the great prophet who had united all the once warring tribes of the broad plans of Arabia, around the city of Mecca, near the banks of the Red Sea in what today is known as the Arabian Peninsula. ...

Shiites agree with Sunnis in most areas of Islamic theology, including Muhammad as the final prophet, the Qur’an as God’s final book replacing what came before it, and Islam as God’s final and perfect religion. ...
Sunnis are by far the largest group, making up approximately ninety percent of Islam, where as the Shiites make up ten percent.  

Sunni Islam argues that the true successors to Muhammad do not need to be descended from the immediate family of Muhammad.  Sunni Islam emphasizes tradition in religious life, the way the Prophet and his followers lived.  Thus, the Qur’an is the fundamental authority, along with the Hadith and the consensus of the community.  Saudi Arabia, including Mecca, is the center of power for Sunni Islam.  

Shia Islam argues that the true successors to Muhammad descend directly from Muhammad’s family.  ... Although there is disagreement within Shiism on the number of Imams and their exact progression, most Shiites assume that the spiritual power of the Imams works through and guides Shiite leaders.  They assume that the last Imam will return to restore true Islam and inaugurate a new age in world history.  Most Shiites are found in Iran, Pakistan, and Iraq, with minority Shia groups in most Muslim countries.  

All Muslim theology holds to a return of Christ and of Muhammad, when Christ will return, marry, have children, destroy all crosses and pigs, deny His crucifixion, His deity, and the Trinity, and then will die.  Iranian Shiites, however, believe that the twelfth Imam, the Mahdi, was removed by God at the age of four or five in AD 873 and is in a miraculous state of hiddenness.  Occasionally he appears and speaks with special people.  Following much conflict and war he will reappear with Christ.  The return of Christ and the return of the Mahdi are very close in concept.  As noted above, many believe that Ahmadinejad wants to stir this conflict and bring the Mahdi back sooner.  [Cate & Mayhall, 2009]  

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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What significance in eschatology, if any, does the Holocaust during World War II have?</th>
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</table>
| Dispensationalist Position | 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.  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 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]

| Preterist Position | There is no connection between the Holocaust and the end times. The Holocaust is just one example, albeit horrific, of how evil man’s heart has become. Society badly needs to embrace Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, and repent.  
God is not a racist, and obviously He does not condone any violence among any people group. |
---|---|
| Dispensationalist Position | What is meant by the term “mystery” in Scripture?  
It means something that was hidden (or a “secret”) in the past—and which God is now revealing (at the time of writing). In particular, it is an event or entity that was not written about in the Old Testament, but was revealed in the New Testament. One such mystery is the Rapture:  
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 or metaphor 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].

The soul continues without the body—and the soul is conscious. Examples of Scripture passages that point to this include Luke 23, Acts 7, 2 Corinthians 5, Philippians 1, and Revelation 6. At the Rapture/resurrection, the soul is reunited with the body—albeit a perfected body.

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>
<tr>
<td>Divine purpose</td>
<td>Earthly promises in the covenants</td>
<td>Heavenly promises in the gospel</td>
</tr>
<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>
<tr>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>One nation</td>
<td>From many nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divine Dealing</td>
<td>National and individual</td>
<td>Individual only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispensations</td>
<td>Seen in all ages from Abraham</td>
<td>Seen only in the present age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry</td>
<td>Israel only; no missionary activity</td>
<td>A commission to fulfill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Death of Christ | Guilty nationally | Perfectly saved by it
--- | --- | ---
Governing Principle | Mosaic law | Grace
Christ’s Earthly Reign | Subjects | Co-reigners
Priesthood | Had a priesthood | Is a priesthood
Marriage | Unfaithful wife | Bride of Christ
Judgments | Must face judgment | Delivered from all judgments

Another mystery is that of **Babylon**, especially in the book of Revelation.

The mystery is not Babylon itself, nor is the mystery the fact that Babylon was the originator and center of idolatry; this is already known from the Old Testament. The mystery is the fact that Babylon will develop into a one-world unified religion, and will rule the world religiously for the first half of the Tribulation. It will be headquartered and based in the city of Babylon; it will be supported by the governments of that day; and it will be the primary persecutor of believers who will not submit to its religious authority. All of this was totally unrevealed in the Old Testament.

... the world government during the first half of the Tribulation is that of ten kings ruling co-equally over ten kingdoms. In the middle of the Tribulation, all the other kings will turn their authority over to the Antichrist, who will then rule the world for the second half of the Tribulation. The Antichrist’s rule will terminate with the Second Coming. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 688-689]

Yet another mystery is that of the man of lawlessness: the Antichrist.

This revelation will be signaled when the Antichrist assumes control of the Jewish Temple and commits the Abomination of Desolation, an event that will happen in the middle of the Tribulation ... The worship of the Antichrist will replace the worship of Mystery Babylon as the world religious system, and this new world religious system will be the religion of the second half of the Tribulation.”

Preterist Position

A “mystery” in the Old Testament means something that was hidden in the past—and which God is now revealing (at the time of writing). In particular, it is an event or entity *that was not written about in the Old Testament*, but was revealed in the New Testament. The “church” is the classic example of a “mystery”. Since Christ, there is no distinction among Jews and Gentiles—all need to come to faith in the same way: through Jesus Christ. The church is the “true Israel”. God desires that all Jews and Gentiles come to salvation, being gathered together in one spiritual body, that is, united in the name of Jesus Christ.

Contrary to what dispensationalists say, the Rapture is not something that is “revealed” in the New Testament. Preterists do not believe in a secret, pretribulational Rapture; they just believe in a Rapture that occurs simultaneously with the return of Jesus Christ.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Was Christ crucified on Good Friday?  How do these dates map to the Jewish calendar?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>Jones summarizes the key events of Crucifixion Week, 30 AD [Jones, 2004]:</td>
</tr>
<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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<tr>
<td>Nisan 11 (Monday): Jesus curses the fig tree; He cleanses the Temple</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<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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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nisan 13 (Wednesday): “The Silent Day”; the disciples make Passover preparations. After 6pm on Wednesday (this is the start of Thursday for the Jewish people), Jesus and His disciples eat the Passover supper. This is “The Last Supper”. Judas betrays Christ. Jesus is arrested.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nisan 14 (Thursday): On Thursday during the daytime, Jesus was crucified, starting around 9 AM. Jesus died around 3 PM. Between 3 PM and sundown, the Jews prepared Jesus for burial, by putting him in the tomb before sundown. This is also the day that Jews celebrate the Passover supper. This particular day is April 4, 30 AD using the Gregorian equivalent.</td>
<td></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. It is considered a special Sabbath day.</td>
<td></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. The Feast of Firstfruits deals with harvest—representative of the great harvest of souls in resurrection.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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, and it is consistent with Scripture:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew 12:40  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.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note, however, that many Bible teachers believe that Jesus Christ died on Friday afternoon. For example, we have the holiday “Good Friday” to mark the day when Christ died for our sins. Some scholars, such as Chuck Missler, believe that Christ actually died on the Wednesday [Missler, 2005].

Leviticus 23 describes the feasts or festivals or Holy days or holy convocations of the Lord. It is not coincidental that many of the anniversary days of the Jewish holy days have a connection with Christ’s first coming [Jeffrey, 1988]. For example, the date Nisan 17 in the Jewish calendar is the Feast of Firstfruits, and it represents a theme of resurrection or new life: it is the same day on which Noah’s Ark came to rest on Mount Ararat; it is the same day on which the Israelites passed through the Red Sea during their exodus from Egypt; it is the same day that the Israelites ate the firstfruits of the Promised Land (Israel) forty years later; and, it is the same day that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Nisan 14/15 is the Passover—recall that Christ was our “Passover lamb”—the ultimate sacrifice, with the creator of the universe dying in the place of sinful man. Sivan 6 is the day that Moses was given the Law (Torah) on Mount Sinai, and it is also the day on which the Holy Spirit was given to the Church (at Pentecost) following Christ’s ascension.

It would be interesting to see if the remaining three feast/holy days (i.e., the ones in the month of Tishri) have significance to Bible prophecy, that is, in terms of future fulfillment. For example, perhaps the final three holy days (which occur in the Fall) have to do with the end of the Tribulation, the Battle of Armageddon, a time of national repentance immediately preceding the Revelation of Jesus Christ, and the start of the Millennial Kingdom.

Some additional thoughts about fulfillments of the Jewish holy days are as follows [Jeffrey, 1988; Tsarfati, 2008; and other sources], but first we consider the 10th day of the first month of the Jewish calendar, Nisan, as an introduction to the feasts/festivals/holy days:

- The Passover lamb was sanctified (set aside for a holy purpose) on Nisan 10 (“Palm Sunday” in the Christian calendar), which is also the day when Jesus Christ rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. This marked the start of Passion Week: the week in which Christ was killed. On Nisan 10, Jesus allowed Himself to be declared Messiah, publicly, for the first time. People waved palm branches, laying them before the donkey, shouting “Hosanna” (meaning “He saves”), as they ushered their King into Jerusalem. Many of the Jewish people had great hope that Jesus was the promised Messiah, who was going to lead them triumphantly over their enemies and establish His kingdom of peace, prosperity, and righteousness. Only 4 days later, however, other Jews demanded his death, and Christ was crucified.
o In some cultures, when a king entered a foreign city on a majestic horse, he did so to indicate authority over the residents, in a conquering role. When a king, however, entered on a donkey, he indicated that he was coming in peace.

o Traditionally, the Jewish people selected an unblemished lamb, brought it into their home for 4 days, and then killed the lamb. This is symbolic of Christ, who was innocent, but was killed 4 days later. John the Baptist spoke of Jesus, as the start of Christ’s ministry (3½ years beforehand): “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” [John 1:29] Indeed, Jesus was our “Passover lamb”.

o Nisan 10 is not one of the 7 feasts, but it serves as an introduction to the following feasts or holy days:

1. The Passover Supper takes place on Nisan 14, and commemorates the event preceding the Israelites’ Exodus from Egypt, during the time of Moses. It was called “Passover” because the Hebrews were to sacrifice an unblemished lamb, and sprinkle some of its blood on the doorposts of their homes in Egypt, so as to have the angel of death “pass over” their home; otherwise, the family’s firstborn son would die (which was the case for the Egyptians who refused to do participate in the Passover).

2. The Feast of Unleavened Bread starts on Nisan 15, and lasts for 7 days after Passover night, to commemorate the Jews’ exodus from Egypt, many centuries before. In the Bible, yeast (leaven) is a symbol of sin. As our unblemished lamb, Christ was without sin, yet He was “one of us” (humans).

3. The Feast of Firstfruits starts on Nisan 17, and as mentioned above, it is the day when the Israelites passed through the Red Sea during their Exodus from Egypt. On its anniversary day, many years later, Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

4. The Feast of Weeks (or Shavaot) takes place on Sivan 6. During the Exodus from Egypt, the Israelites gathered around Mount Sinai and received the Law (Torah). The Jewish Talmud says this occurred on Sivan 6. Shortly after Christ’s death and resurrection, this anniversary day marked the formal start of the Christian church, and is called the Day of Pentecost in the Christian calendar.

The Feast of Weeks takes place 7 Sabbaths (i.e., Saturdays) plus one day after Passover, which is why it occurs on a Sunday. (In the
Jewish tradition, the Feast of Weeks occurs 50 days after the 2nd night of Passover. Pentecost means “fifty”).

5. The **Feast of Trumpets** takes place on Tishri 1. Silver trumpets were used to gather the people together and to announce something important, such as, directing their movements in the days of the Tabernacle (Numbers 10:2).

Will there be a future fulfillment of this event in the Christian calendar? That remains to be seen. Amir Tsarfati conjectures why two trumpets were used [Tsarfati, 2008]. Two trumpets represent two groups of people, or two witnesses, for God: Jews, and Christians—both of whom are responsible for sounding His message on earth. The “last trumpet” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18) may connect these two trumpets with the Rapture, symbolically.

The Feast of Trumpets is the first of the Fall feasts, which appear to tell of Christ’s Second Coming.

6. The **Day of Atonement** (or Yom Kippur) takes place on Tishri 10. It is the Holiest day in the Jewish calendar. In the days of the Tabernacle during the Exodus from Egypt, and for some time thereafter, Israel’s high priest entered the Holy of Holies (once per year, and only on this day), to make atonement for Israel.

Will there be a future fulfillment of this event in the Christian calendar? That remains to be seen. Some believe this represents the day of Israel’s national salvation (i.e., after the physical return of Christ).

7. Lastly, the **Feast of Tabernacles** (or Succoth, or the **Feast of Booths**) takes place on Tishri 15. This event commemorates the Israelites’ days of wandering in the wilderness during the Exodus from Egypt.

Will there be a future fulfillment of this event in the Christian calendar? Again, that remains to be seen. It may refer to a future event that marks the beginning of a time when the Lord will physically dwell (“tabernacle”) with us:

> Revelation 21:3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

The Feast of Tabernacles symbolizes that our earthly dwellings and bodies are just temporary abodes, and that the future speaks of both a permanent residence and everlasting life.
In summary, the feasts of the Lord have the following themes [FOI, 2016]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feast of</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passover</td>
<td>Redemption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unleavened Bread</td>
<td>Sanctification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firstfruits</td>
<td>Resurrection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks</td>
<td>Mystery of the Church (both Jews and Gentiles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trumpets</td>
<td>Regathering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Day of] Atonement</td>
<td>National salvation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tabernacles</td>
<td>Fulfilled kingdom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Preterist Position *(same general idea as above, excluding some of the commentary on the last 3 feasts)*

**Topic/ Question**

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?

**Dispensationalist Position**

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 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 (Greek: “departure”) in 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:

According to tradition, Nimrod, the leader of the rebellion at the Tower of Babel (Gen. 10:8-9), and his wife Semiramis became the founders of the mystery religion known as the Mother-Child Cult. Their son Tammuz born through an alleged miraculous conception was killed by a wild animal and miraculously raised to life. This event led to the worship of the mother (Semiramis) and the child (Tammuz). When God confounded the languages at Babel, consequently ushering in multiple ethnicities (Gen. 11:1-9), this Mother-Child Cult was exported into every culture that followed. Although the names of the mother and the child were changed from culture to culture, these religions still epitomized the same idolatrous religious system that began at Babel. In Assyria, the mother was Ishtar and the child was Tammuz. In Phoenicia, it was Astarte and Baal. In Egypt, it was Isis and Osiris or Horus. In Greece, it was Aphrodite and Eros. In Rome, it was Venus and Cupid. [Woods, 2012a]

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]

Preterist Position

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]
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 not 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, and argues that its message has parallels to America today [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 Assyrans] as His instrument of judgment.”
- God will never cease to love His own; consequently, He seeks to win back those who have forsaken Him.

Hanegraaff believes that dispensationalists are making a mistake when they link Mystery Babylon with the Roman Catholic church. Instead, Hank Hanegraaff says that Jerusalem is Mystery Babylon because of its rejection of traditional biblical values and because its residents embraced foreign gods and philosophies, over its original true love: the God of the Bible.

Hosea’s marriage to the prostitute Gomer is a poignant parallel to God’s wedding covenant with Israel. Through 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 his prostituted bride. ...

As with Hosea, apostate Israel plays the part of a prostitute in Jeremiah. Once again the language is chilling and explicit.
“Indeed on every high hill and under every spreading tree you lay down as a prostitute ...” (Isaiah 2:20)

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’s depiction of apostate Israel as an insatiable prostitute is particularly insignificant in light of the self-evident parallels to Revelation. Indeed, Revelation is a virtual recapitulation of Ezekiel from the four living creatures (Ezekiel 1//Revelation 4) to the mark on the foreheads of the saints (Ezekiel 9//Revelation 7); from the eating of the scroll (Ezekiel 3//Revelation 10) to the measuring of the temple (Ezekiel 40//Revelation 11); from God and Magog (Ezekiel 38//Revelation 20) to the river of the water of life (Ezekiel 47//Revelation 22) ...

In Ezekiel 16 we encounter Jerusalem as a discarded baby kicking about in her nakedness and blood. Had the Kinsman Redeemer not passed by and cared for her, she most surely would have died. Instead, like Ruth, she became the object of the Lord’s affection. ... In return she sacrificed her children to idols and prostituted her beauty to entice the kings of the earth to commit adultery with her. She engaged in prostitution with the Egyptians. Even the Philistines were shocked by her lewd conduct. She engaged in prostitution with the Assyrians, too, because she was insatiable. Then she increased her promiscuity to included Babylonia, a land of merchants, but even with this she was not satisfied (vv. 15-29) [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 120-122]

<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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<tr>
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<td>How do these signs relate to the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24?</td>
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<td>Matthew 24:3 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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| Dispensationalist Position | First of all, as will be demonstrated in numerous places throughout this book, there are no prerequisites to Christ’s return. Christ’s return is imminent, that is, it can happen at any time. Furthermore, God does not want us to ignore the possibility of Christ’s return. There are about 500 prophecies in the Old Testament that refer to Christ’s Second Coming; and, one out of every 25 verses in the New Testament deals with the return of Christ [Reagan, 2011]. Secondly, God always provided warnings before sending judgment on a place [Reagan, 2011]. For example, in the days of Noah, God warned the people of pending judgment for 120 years. In the days of Sodom and |
Gomorrah, God gave warnings through Abraham. Similarly, Jonah warned the great city of Ninevah; the people repented, and God relented. Then, 150 years later, the prophet Nahum was sent to warn a future generation of Ninevites. Similarly, God has been warning the world ... and has given many signs that we are in the general timeframe of the return of Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, even though we don’t know the date of Christ’s return, there are signs that suggest His coming is near. For example, 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 many such signs, given in no particular order, but are categorized for convenience [Reagan, 2011; Tetlow, et al., 2006, pp. 50-53]:

1. **Signs of Israel**

   a) The fact that Israel is back in the land again is surely a fulfillment of prophecy, and in particular, Ezekiel 36-37.

   b) Israel is compared to a fig tree, symbolically, in Scripture. Because Christ was largely rejected by Israel at His first coming, judgment came upon Israel; however, Christ said that in the future the once-cursed fig tree would once again blossom. The generation seeing this would be at the door of Christ’s Second Coming:

   Matthew 21:18-19 Early in the morning, as he [Jesus] was on his way back to the city [Jerusalem], he was hungry. Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, "May you never bear fruit again!" Immediately the tree withered.

   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.

   b) Jerusalem would be the center of international turmoil. In 1967, Jerusalem returned to Israeli hands. Passages such as Daniel 9:27, Matthew 24:15, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, and Revelation 11:1-2 make reference to a future Jewish Temple, which implicitly assumes Israeli control over Jerusalem.

   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
c) There would be hatred between Israel and many other nations. In fact, already many nations blame Israel for the lack of peace in the Middle East, which has spin-off effects throughout the world.

Zechariah 12:6-9 “On that day I will make the leaders of Judah like a firepot in a woodpile, like a flaming torch among sheaves. They will consume right and left all the surrounding peoples, but Jerusalem will remain intact in her place. "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. On that day the LORD will shield those who live in Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the Angel of the LORD going before them. On that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem.

2. Signs in Nature

Such signs include: earthquakes, famine, pestilence, and signs in the heavens—which have always occurred, but Jesus described them in terms of birth pangs—increasing in frequency and intensity. For example, in the first thousand years after Christ, only about 5 major earthquakes were recorded. 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]. Recently (2011), tsunamis have been another disaster, albeit related to earthquakes. Floods and tornados are other natural disasters making the news.

Luke 21:11 There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven.

Luke 21:25-28 "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.”

3. Signs in Society
There will be increased lawlessness; love of self; love of money; love of evil; immorality; and materialism. This certainly describes the modern age. For example, consider the propagation of evil relentlessly in our daily lives through television, movies, the Internet, and other media.

Isaiah 5:20  Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

4. Spiritual Signs

 Such signs include apostasy, cults, persecution of believers, and false Christs. In particular:

a)  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."

b)  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.

5. Signs of Increases in Knowledge, Travel, Communications, and Technology

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."

a)  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.

This may well be a microchip implant. Certainly, the rise of computers, the Internet, global communications, cell phones, electronic commerce, identity theft, rising lawlessness, and various kinds of electronic fraud come into play here. Clearly, it would not have been possible to implement the “cashless society” concept of Revelation 13:16-17 without these converging factors.

b) A prophecy in the book of Zechariah (circa 520 BC) 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.

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.

c) Mankind would be capable of destroying all life. Jesus Christ said:

Matthew 24:21-22 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.

Recent generations have, for the first time in history, been able to witness weapons of mass destruction.

d) Global communications (satellites, fiber optics, television, cell phones, CNN, Google, YouTube, etc.)

Revelation 11:9-10 For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies [i.e., two special witnesses] 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 13:14-17 Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast,
he [the False Prophet] deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast [Antichrist] who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. 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.

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.

6. Geopolitical Signs, including War

a) The lining up of nations in the Middle East, against Israel, seems to suggest that Ezekiel 38-39’s fulfillment is not that far away.

b) There will be more wars and rumours of wars. “Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom”:

Matthew 24:6-8 You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.

Such unrest will be accompanied by famines and earthquakes. Arnold Fruchtenbaum analyzed the Old Testament verses that refer to the phrases “nation against nation” and “kingdom against kingdom”, and concluded that these phrases refer to a worldwide conflict. It is interesting to note that a worldwide conflict did not occur before World War I. (Recall that the Babylonian invasion of Israel, circa 606-586 BC, was a localized event.) Famines and earthquakes followed, including a very large increase in the number of earthquakes of significance [Fruchtenbaum, 2004].

David Reagan adds that “nation” is translated from the Greek word ethnos which refers to internal strife: an ethnic group, rather than a nation [Reagan, 2005]. In the world today, we see much internal unrest among ethnic groups in individual nations.
c) 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.

As a side note, water is obviously precious in the Middle East, and the Euphrates and Tigris rivers are a major source—even more so given that the populations of Iraq and Syria have increased from about 9 million in 1980 to 23 million in 2013, in Syria; and from 14 million in 1980 to 33 million in 2013, in Iraq. Turkey houses the headwaters of these rivers, and since the 1970s, Turkey has been constructing 22 dams on them. These dams are capable of cutting off most of its flow. The Scripture passage above suggests supernatural intervention, but might the dams be an avenue of implementation?

Finally, be aware that a lot of end-times prophecy occurs after the Rapture. Many Scripture passages especially parts of Revelation, Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah have a lot to say about topics such as the Tribulation, the return of Jesus Christ, and the Millennium.

Preterist Position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
<th>There are no prophecies that need to be fulfilled before Christ’s Second Coming. He could appear at any time.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Prophecy “experts” who think that there are many events that will occur prior to Christ’s appearance, are mistaken. Christ will return; however, there are no signs that specifically indicate how close we are to Christ’s Second Coming. Jesus said that His return would be similar in occurrence to the time of judgment (i.e., the Flood) in the days of Noah—when no sign was given. Each day, we’re one day closer to when the Lord returns. He could come in the next second; or He might not come for 100 or more years. The point is: we need to be prepared at all times. If we knew what events had to occur before He would return, then we could live carelessly, instead of in eager expectation of His return.</td>
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Jesus said, “As it was in the Days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man” (i.e., at the return of Jesus Christ). So, what were the Days of Noah like?

Matthew 24:37-39  *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.

Luke 17:26-30  "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed.

Genesis 6:11-13  *Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence.*  God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth.

"The Days of Noah” were characterized by conditions such as: (a) unpreparedness, indifference, complacency, and apathy; (b) lawlessness, including much violence; (c) continual evil thoughts, including a lack of sexual integrity; and (d) demonic activity. Some scholars conjecture that there could have been 7 billion or more people on the Earth in those days, due to long lifespans and the exponential growth of global population.

First, the people of Noah’s day were *unprepared*. They had been warned about the Flood, but failed to pay attention to God’s salvation message issued through Noah, who was a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5, KJV). In fact, judgment was preached by Noah for 120 years, yet only 8 people heeded the call. For most people, it was “business as usual”, that is, life went on as normal, until the Flood came. By comparison, note that the message of the gospel includes the notion of *imminence*, that is, of always being ready for the return of the Lord. Unfortunately, complacency has also entered the church.

Second, the Days of Noah were marked with lawlessness. God said that the earth was “full of violence”.

Third, very few people were righteous—just 8 people in all: Noah, his wife, his sons, and his daughters-in-law. There was a lack of sexual integrity, and no shame—a clear parallel to today’s culture, as revealed through television,
movies, music, and the Internet. Mankind’s thoughts were constantly evil. Evil is “entertainment” today; we laugh at wickedness instead of being appalled by it.

Fourth, it was likely a time of great demonic activity. If only 8 people were righteous, then that small number alone should indicate the extent to which dark spiritual powers had dominated the world. Furthermore, although this is an area of debate among evangelical scholars, one of the reasons for the Flood may well have been to wipe out the Nephilim referred to in Genesis 6:1-13, Jude 6, and 2 Peter 2:4-9.

Genesis 6:1-13 When men began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God [probably fallen angels] saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. ...

The Nephilim ["fallen ones"] 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.

The LORD saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth--men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air--for I am grieved that I have made them." But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth.

Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth.

Jude 1:6 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. [See also “Tartaros”, elsewhere in this book.]

2 Peter 2:4-5 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others;
Recall that neither Noah nor (later on) Abraham’s nephew Lot went through the “trial”; rather, they were spared from a time of destruction. Both were taken to a physical place of safety. This pattern is suggestive of a pretribulational rapture. In other words, these events may well be types of Christ’s future relationship with the Church.

The book of Second Peter has eschatological overtones. Peter was undoubtedly familiar with Paul’s writings. Like Jesus and Paul, Peter mentions that the Day of the Lord will come as a “thief in the night”. This analogy of a thief is not present in the Old Testament or in other Jewish literature. This suggests that Paul and Peter probably drew from Christ’s words [Hart, 2011]. 1 Thessalonians 5:2-4 (written by Paul) and 2 Peter 3:10 (written by Peter) both speak of the “Day of the Lord” as coming like a thief in the night. This imagery supports a pretribulational argument in two ways. First, it refers to the sudden coming of Daniel’s “70th week”, that is, the onset of the Day of the Lord. Second, it can refer to the Tribulation when faithful Jews will be awaiting the Messiah, whereas others will not be.

Like the days of Noah and Lot, the words of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:3 relate to imminency and unpreparedness:

1 Thessalonians 5:3 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.

However, only a few verses later, Paul remarks to his audience that Christians need not be taken by surprise:

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.

Pretribulationists appropriately recognize that Paul’s teaching of a peaceful and secure world that precedes the day of the Lord cannot easily be harmonized with John’s portrait of the end of the tribulation when the world will gather its armies in war against the coming Christ (Rev. 16:13-16; 19:19). [Hart, 2011, p. 21]

Since the apostle Paul declared that the church is delivered by rapture before the tribulation wrath (1 Thess. 5:9-10; cf. Rev. 3:10), and in Peter’s typology the ark represents the church (i.e., everyone who is joined to Christ by Spirit baptism), then the deliverance of Noah and his family in the ark logically typify the pretribulational rapture of the church and deliverance from the coming day of the Lord. [Hart, 2011, pp. 21, 23]

| Preterist Position | The “days of Noah” were characterized by lawlessness and unpreparedness—a state that will describe much of the world upon Christ’s return. One might argue that it also describes much of human history, post- |
Noah. However, it is not meant to describe a time of “tribulation” that occurs after a pretribulational “Rapture” and that occurs 7 or more years prior to Christ’s Second Coming.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Is America in Bible prophecy?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>Many scholars have pondered this question. There really isn’t any Scripture verse that directly supports the argument that America is mentioned in Bible prophecy. This may be surprising given that the United States is probably the most powerful nation in history. Many scholars are of the opinion that the absence of the US in prophecy implies that America is no longer a world power by the time that the 70th week of Daniel comes about, and therefore is not a key/direct participant in the end times timeline.</td>
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Indirectly, the passages that are most frequently quoted in a discussion about whether or not the U.S. 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” (or in some translations: “Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish”) will be protesting the invasion of Gog and Magog into Israel. There is some dispute over which modern-day nations are “Sheba and Dedan”. Some writers (e.g., [Hitchcock, 2009]) believe that they are Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf states; and that “the merchants of Tarshish” could refer to Spain or the British Isles (either of which would agree geographically with the westward flight of the prophet Jonah). Some scholars believe that the “young lions” could also refer to the spin-off nations in the British Commonwealth such as the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, etc.

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 ... 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:

… 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]

When the United States is forced to abandon its role as the most dominant power in the world, the balance of power will shift quickly to Europe and the Middle East, just as the Bible predicts. These parts of the world will not be affected nearly as dramatically by the Rapture. The minimal impact of the Rapture on Europe, where biblical faith has seriously eroded, will leave the European Union poised to lead the Western world. Power will shift dramatically away from the United States.

Could America fall before the Rapture? No one on earth knows the final answer to this question. But it appears to me that America will remain a key player up until the Rapture. Why do I say that? Think about it. America is Israel’s key ally. If it weren’t for the strong support of the United States, Israel would have been wiped out decades ago. And we know from the Bible that Israel will be a viable nation when the Tribulation begins. [Hitchcock, 2009, pp. 114-115]

… it is probable that the United States will be in some form of alliance
with the Roman ruler. ...

If the end-time events include a destruction of Russia and her allies prior to the final period of great tribulation [e.g., Ezekiel 38-39], this may trigger an unbalance in the world situation that will permit the Roman ruler to become a world ruler. In this event, it should be clear that the United States will be in a subordinate role and no longer the great international power that it is today. [Hitchcock, 2009, pp. 156-157]

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]

In summary, one reason for why the US may no longer be a world power is that the Rapture occurs; and following the Rapture, the US has little economic, military, political, or spiritual leadership left. This is a very possible scenario, perhaps in combination with some of the other reasons given in this section.

Chuck Missler conjectures that there are at least three (other) end-times scenarios concerning America: (a) an EMP (electromagnetic pulse) attack against America, rendering it largely powerless in the end times; (b) the neutralization of America through the Magog invasion (e.g., “fire” on the coastlands or on “them that dwell carelessly in the isles”—Ezekiel 39:6 [KJV]); and (c) the weakening of America by a financial and monetary crisis, and America’s subsequent withdrawal from active engagement in the international scene [Missler, 2008a]. The Hebrew word for “carelessly” is betach and the expression “dwell carelessly” can mean “living in false confidence”.

Other possibilities that could be added to Chuck’s list include: US public opinion from the media, political lobbying groups, and voters forces the US government to abandon its support for Israel; the US can no longer afford to be the world’s policeman, especially when engaging in foreign battles is a no-win situation; terrorist activities against the US; etc.

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]

Mark Hitchcock comments:

A partial answer [to the question of why America hasn’t been judged yet] may be found in the fact that the United States of America, in spite of its failures, has nevertheless been a source of major Christian testimony in the world and has done more to promote the missionary cause in terms of money and men than any other nation. Although the United States
numbers only five percent of the total world population, in the last century probably more than fifty percent of the missionaries and money spent has come from America. In view of the fact that it is God’s major purpose in this present age to call out Jew and Gentile to faith in Christ and to have the Gospel preached in all nations, the prosperity which has been true of America has made possible this end and may have been permitted by God to accomplish His holy purposes.

Another important reason for delay in divine judgment upon America is the Abrahamic promise concerning his seed, “I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee” (Genesis 12:3, KJV). [Hitchcock, 2009, p. 158]

It is claimed that Genesis 12:3 is the focus of much of the book of Genesis, and the promises of Genesis 12:3 remain in effect to this day; thus, God is a “Zionist” [Ice, 2012a].

Preterist Position America is not mentioned in Bible prophecy. We shouldn’t try to read something into Scripture that is not there. The Bible gives general descriptions of how society will degenerate without Christ, but this is true all over the world:

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.

The United States, however, is not singled out explicitly or implicitly in Scripture. Unbelieving society (including many Americans) is implicitly described in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 (above).

<table>
<thead>
<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>Both Positions</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 independently by organizations such as John Williams’ Shadow Government Statistics group (http://www.shadowstats.com)) 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.

<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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<tr>
<td>Dispersationalist Position</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 are examples of this (e.g., consider the “dot-com” years during the NASDAQ bubble with its “pro-forma” accounting and questionable stock options, and also the housing/financial/mortgage crisis in the United States). 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 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 * 4 and, symbolically, 7 is the number of completion and 4 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 US 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

“[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.

“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]

| Preterist Position | While it is true that many Biblical principles, including ethics and fair weights and measures, have been abandoned by many people around the world, we are not to read any “prophecy” into these shortcomings. It does not necessarily mean that we are on the verge of Christ’s Second Coming. We shouldn’t read anything into it. Instead, we should heed the words of 1 Timothy, and not make money our focus:

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. |

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<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 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.</td>
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<td>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.</td>
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<td>“Magic arts” and “magic spell” are translated “sorceries” in the KJV Bible. Henry Morris writes:</td>
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<td>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</td>
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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.”

Avoid mind-altering drugs.

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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>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?</th>
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</table>
| 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."

Galations 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]

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<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 cause evil to happen; rather, he permits it. It is important to note that consequence is tied to behaviour:</td>
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<td>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. ...</td>
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<td></td>
<td>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.</td>
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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 (if unsaved), or by receiving a reduced reward (if saved) in accordance with 1 Corinthians 3:11-15.

Galations 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.

Thus, after our salvation status is determined, we will be judged according to the quality (1 Corinthians 3:13), quantity (Luke 12:48), and motivation (1 Corinthians 4:5) of our works [Reagan, 2005]. Judgment will depend on the gifts, resources, health, difficulties, etc. that we have received on Earth, and worked with in our lives. Faith will be rewarded. You may not have led someone to Christ, but you may have been a faithful witness. Life is not a popularity contest.

Scriptures indicative of rewards for faithful service include the parable of the ten minas (Luke 19:11-26) and the parable of the talents (or bags of gold) (Matthew 25:14-29). “Well done, good and faithful servant.” The rewards involved ruling over a number of cities.

Other Scriptures involving judgment and rewards include:

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.

Matthew 5:11-12 “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Luke 14:12-14 Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

We have 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 undergirding 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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Were there false Christs in the years prior to 70 AD?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>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.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Matthew 24:30-31 &quot;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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</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; Ice, 2012c]. The signs of the end of the current age, and the start of the Messianic age, will include the rise of false Christs and the initiation of both local wars and world wars. Matthew 24:30-31 tells of Christ’s Glorious Appearing, that is, His physical return to earth, when all the nations of the earth will see Him. (This is to be contrasted with the Rapture, which occurs at least seven years earlier.) The “elect” are the saved Jewish brethren from all over the world who are being gathered prior to the start of the Millennial Kingdom. This is the final regathering of Israel spoken of in Isaiah 43:5-7, Jeremiah 23:3-4,7-8, and Amos 9:14-15 [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. The emphasis is on permanency and the rebuilding of the land. They will not be uprooted again; but, this occurs only after a time of tribulation (see Amos 9:8-15). Furthermore, note Mark 13:27, which suggests that regathered Israel will include not only the earthly dwellers in their natural bodies, but also the resurrected Jews in their perfected bodies:  

*Mark 13:27*  And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.*

Abraham was promised the land, yet he never actually possessed it (Genesis 12:7; 13:14-17); therefore, it seems to be a future fulfillment after Abraham’s resurrection. The term “elect” refers to “Israel”, the “Church”, or both. The context determines which [Ice, 2016]. The terms “elect” and “saints” are used throughout the Bible to refer to saved individuals—Old Testament or New Testament; however, the terms “Church”, “Bride”, and “in Christ” refer to New Testament believers (i.e., Christians) only. Once the Church is removed from the Earth at the time of the Rapture, the elect or saints are people on Earth who become Christians, post-Rapture. |
| Preterist Position | The gathering of 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 because the rapture and resurrection take place *simultaneously*. There are not going to be multiple resurrections. |

| Topic/ | In Matthew 25, the parable of the ten virgins is about five foolish virgins and |
**Dispensationalist Position**

This is one of the more difficult parables in the Bible. The theme of the parable seems to be *preparedness* for the return of Jesus Christ. Does it refer to the Rapture, the Marriage of the Lamb, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, or some other event?

J. Dwight Pentecost writes:

> 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 [after Christ’s return] to which the five wise virgins will be admitted and the foolish excluded. [Pentecost, 1958, p. 283]

Arnold Fruchtenbaum argues that the virgins in this parable are not part of the Church because this event does not take place prior to the Rapture; however, the five wise virgins are saved. He explains:

> In the Jewish wedding system, when the marriage was to be consummated, the bridegroom would go to the home of the bride to fetch her and bring her to his home. As he approached his own home, he would be met by a procession of virgins who would conduct the bride and groom for the marriage ceremony to be followed by the marriage feast. This is the background of this parable.

> When the *bridegroom*, the Messiah, returns to earth with His Bride—the Church—for the marriage feast, the *virgins* will be responsible for both watching for His return, and being ready to light the lamps upon His return. The five *virgins* who were wise will be the ones who are believers; hence, they will be both ready and watching. They are the ones who have the *oil*, a common symbol of the Holy Spirit. Only the wise ones enter the marriage feast, the common symbol for the Messianic Kingdom. Because the Messiah is pictured as already with His Bride, the Church which had been raptured, these who have the *oil* are people who became believers during the Tribulation. They are saved and invited to the wedding feast as guests. The five foolish virgins will be the unbelievers and, therefore, will be neither ready nor watching. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 645]

**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.

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**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
**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 this will not be the case 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.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum, on the other hand, remarks that the usual scriptural symbol for Israel is a *vine* rather than a fig tree. The blossoming fig tree is just an indication that Christ’s return is near. Fruchtenbaum links the fig tree with the generation that will see the clear sign that Christ’s return is very near—namely the Abomination of Desolation (Matthew 24:15-16). It is this very sign that will allow the Jews to count down the 1,260 days (Daniel 12:1-13; Revelation 12:3-6) until Christ’s return. Thus, it is not the generation that sees Israel return to the Land (in 1948), but rather, the generation that sees the Abomination of Desolation. Since this is during the Tribulation, these passages should give the Jews some comfort as they anxiously await the return of the Messiah.

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.

Matthew 23, which obviously comes one chapter before Matthew 24, sets the timeframe for “this generation”—namely, it is the generation that says, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”, which did not happen in 70 AD:

Matthew 23:39  For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

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.

Luke 21:24 "... Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

Although the final fulfillment of Luke 21:24 is in the future, Jerusalem was trampled on by the Gentiles in the period 66-70 AD. Jews had the opportunity to heed Jesus’ warnings to flee from Jerusalem, and to save their lives. Unfortunately, many did not heed His advice; consequently, 1.1 million Jews were killed, and the city and the Temple were destroyed. Note that Israel was not “rescued” after 70 AD. In particular, Zechariah 12 could not have been fulfilled in 70 AD since Jerusalem was defeated rather than victorious.

We conclude that the prophecies in Revelation were not fulfilled in the first century. Take note of the phrase, “until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled”. It implies that Gentile rule over Jerusalem will end at some point, to be taken over by Jewish rule.

After Jerusalem was destroyed, there were no more prophecies that had to be fulfilled before the Rapture [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]—which is imminent.

| Preterist Position | The fig tree that Christ cursed in Matthew 21:19, and which quickly withered, is not a sign of the restoration of Israel. Christ used the fig tree and the other trees as an analogy to talk about the nations in the last day. It was |
not the time for figs. He was using the analogy as a way of explaining that judgment is coming to those who have an “appearance” of fruit, but are otherwise empty in terms of their faith [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, January 15, 2015].

**Topic/Question**

What is the significance of the passage in Luke 21 that speaks of men’s hearts failing them for fear in the days before Christ’s return?

Luke 21:25-28  "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."

Has this prophecy been fulfilled? Also, what is meant by “your redemption is drawing near”?

**Dispensationalist Position**

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]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
<th>There have always been difficult times when “men’s hearts [were] 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.</th>
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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>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?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
<th>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.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Preterist Position

There have always been earthquakes, famines, plagues, etc. In the last century, for example, there hasn’t been a year where a war of some sort wasn’t going on, somewhere in the world. Similarly, weather patterns have been changing. 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, but as all these signs continue, we’ll certainly see who is for Christ, and who is not.

How about persecution? The church has always been persecuted in some parts of the world since the days of Christ. North Americans have been fortunate in not having been persecuted, but in many nations of the world, persecution of Christians is occurring. Christ warned that persecution would increase before His return.

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?

Both Positions (various opinions)

The significance of equidistant letter sequences in Scripture is controversial. There seems to be some 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 may 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 the following [Missler, 2005]:

- 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.

Author authors argue that Equidistant Letter Sequences are a form of “magic apologetics”, and should be avoided [e.g., Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man,
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.

### Topic/Question
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? 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?

### Dispensationalist Position
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, Bill 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 (elevated or elevated dwelling), 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]

In terms of numerical patterns, this is a sensitive and debatable area; but it is interesting, and may bear more fruit with research in years to come. 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 (without ever needing to turn to mathematics), that 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)

• The name “Jesus” in the Greek has the sum of its letters as the numeric value 888.

• The word “antichrist” in the Greek has the numeric value 666. Recall that “6” is “man’s number”.

• 153 is the number of fish caught by the disciples, when they met the resurrected Christ at the Sea of Galilee. The fishermen had caught nothing all night, but when Christ instructed them to cast their nets on the opposite side of the boat, they caught 153 fish. Is this number significant? If not, why did the Holy Spirit mention it?
Harrison remarks that the integer 153 has interesting numerical properties:

- It is equal to the sum of the cubes of its digits: \( T(153) = 1^3 + 5^3 + 3^3 = 1 + 125 + 27 = 153 \).
- 153 is the sum of these five factorial numbers: 1! + 2! + 3! + 4! + 5!
- 153 is the sum of the first 17 positive integers. 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:
  (a) Noah’s Ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat, (b) the Israelites passed through the Red Sea on dry land during the exodus from Egypt, (c) the Israelites ate the firstfruits upon entering the Promised Land, and (d) Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

Some people conjecture that the number of fish represents the number of nations that will exist at the time of Christ’s return—especially since Christ told the disciples, at the start of His ministry, that they should leave their occupation (fishing) and follow Him to become His disciples (i.e., to learn and spread His teachings) and therefore “become fishers of men” (Matthew 4:18-22 and Mark 1:16-20).

Matthew 4:18-22  As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” At once they left their nets and followed him. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

The ages of death of the patriarchs in the family line: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph are as follows [Byl, 2016]:

- Abraham = 175 = 7 * 5^2
- Isaac = 180 = 5 * 6^2
- Jacob = 147 = 3 * 7^2
- Joseph = 110 = 1 * (5^2 + 6^2 + 7^2)

Mathematical and word patterns 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. For now, let’s take them as an interesting puzzle suggestive of design in Scripture.

| Preterist Position | There is no point in looking for hidden messages or “codes” in the Bible. Rather, read the Bible in an ordinary and common sense manner. Study it |
carefully, paying attention to its genres—and especially to the words of Jesus Christ.

| 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) was 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. Examples include the “Prince of Persia” (Daniel 10:13,20), the |
“Prince of Greece” (Daniel 10:20), and the “Prince of Meshech and Tubal” (Ezekiel 38:2-3; 39:1).

I’m reminded 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 embedded, invisible tags: font names, font styles, font sizes, underlining options, spacing, margins, justification (centering), etc. These tags are typically hidden within the underlying source file document, but they are necessary in order to format/render the document in precisely the way 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. Your actual words are sandwiched between those tags. If the tags were displayed all the time, they would be annoying and distracting to the author who is composing the document. Thus, we rarely want to see the special codes for the tags; we’re happy if they are in the background doing their job, and we don’t think too much of them.

A similar abstraction is that of Web-page display tags used by browser markup languages such as HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) and XML (Extensible Markup Language). Most users of Web pages are not interested in the markup/rendering tags behind the Web pages. When one chooses the “View Source” option available in browsers such as Internet Explorer, Firefox, and Chrome, the HTML tags that format that Web page are revealed.

The context of Chuck’s “reveal codes” analogy is 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 application to our own lives? Well, as in Daniel 10’s narrative about the Prince of Persia, 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 between angels and demons that go on behind the scenes in the lives of human beings (e.g., [Peretti, 1986]).
What is the Septa-Millennial theory? What is the tie-in to a young earth and to 2 Peter 3:8:

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.

Dispensationalist Position
Dispensationalists often make reference to a young earth, with the Flood of Noah occurring around 2345 BC.

The Septa-Millennial Theory is an interesting partitioning of the Biblical timeline. It refers to the existence of seven blocks of 1000 years of time. In other words, it represents a “1000 years per day” view of history, divided up as follows [House & Price, 2003]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Block # (in 1000-Year Increments)</th>
<th>Biblical Character near Start of Block</th>
<th>Dispensation</th>
<th>Major Covenant(s) Made during Block</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Adam (circa 4000 BC)</td>
<td>(1) Innocence (from Eden to Adam &amp; Eve’s Fall) (2) Conscience (from the Fall to Noah’s Flood)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Noah (circa 3000 BC)</td>
<td>(3) Human Government (from the Flood to Abraham)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Abraham (circa 2000 BC)</td>
<td>(4) Promise (from Abraham to Moses) (5) Law (from Moses to the Day of Pentecost, i.e., shortly after Christ’s ascension) Abrahamic (unconditional), Palestinian (unconditional), Mosaic (conditional)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 David (circa 1000 BC)</td>
<td>Davidic (unconditional)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Jesus Christ (circa 1 BC/AD)</td>
<td>(6) Grace (from Pentecost to the Rapture or Christ’s Second Coming) New Covenant or “New Testament” (unconditional)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (current)</td>
<td>Grace, continued New Covenant, continued</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 (future)</td>
<td>(7) Kingdom (from Christ’s Second Coming to end of the Millennium) Fulfillment of all covenants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eternity</td>
<td>(future)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Early church fathers that held to the Septa-Millennia Theory include Clement of Rome (30-100 AD), Ignatius (30-110), Polycarp (69-155), Papias (70-155), Justin Martyr (100-165), Irenaeus (130-200), Tertullian (150-220), Hippolytus (170-236), and Augustine (354-430).

Preterist Position

"A day is like a thousand years" simply indicates that God is outside of time, and to Him, a thousand years of time is not long. God is not limited by time. There is not necessarily a future Millennium of 1,000 literal years. After all, when we say that God owns the cattle on a thousand hills, we are not limiting God to 1,000 hills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What are the more difficult questions/topics for dispensationalists to answer/address, from the preterist viewpoint?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>First of all, some prophecies no doubt had both a near-term and a far-term fulfillment. Thus, preterists have a partial case with some of their arguments; however, the events in Revelation are the final, and greater, fulfillment (i.e., days still to come).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In my opinion, the most difficult arguments for dispensationalists to handle include these cases:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. If Revelation were written well after 70 AD (e.g., 95 AD), then why was no mention was made, in Revelation, of the destruction of the second Temple in 70 AD?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Partial answer: John was specifically instructed to write about the things to come, rather than the things that were already fulfilled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. As part of the Olivet Discourse, why did Jesus use the term “this generation” to describe major prophetic events commonly associated with Revelation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Partial answer: Multiple questions were asked by the disciples, and perhaps Jesus implicitly used a generic “you” when thinking of events still far in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Partial answer: Jesus specifically said, in Matthew 24:15-16: “... let the reader understand ...”, suggesting that His words would go into print and be read by others in the future.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Why did Jesus use the term “soon” to describe the events that would take place in Revelation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Partial answer: “Soon” is a relative term, and Jesus wanted every generation to think His Second Coming was imminent.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>b. Also, note that the words in Revelation included the far future: the Battle of Armageddon, the judgment, the Millennium, etc. Surely, these events must be taken into account when considering the scope of the terms “soon” and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“near”. Revelation 1:3 and 22:10 use the Greek word for “near” or “at hand” to encompass the timeframe of the events in the book of Revelation. Revelation 22:10 comes after these major unfulfilled prophecies: the return of Christ, the Millennium, the Great White Throne Judgment, and the new heavens and earth.

4. Why do the “Millennial sacrifices” mentioned in Ezekiel 40-48 appear to be efficacious for the removal of sin?
   a. Partial answer: Like the Old Testament sacrifices which pointed forward to the ultimate and sufficient sacrifice, that is, the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross, the Millennial sacrifices are a memorial, looking backwards.

5. In John 6:44 and 54, Jesus said that he would raise up believers “at the last day”. Doesn’t that imply a resurrection of both believers and unbelievers (i.e., Judgment Seat of Christ and White Throne Judgment, respectively) on the same day?
Chapter 2: Heaven and Hell

This chapter addresses the questions: “Is there life after death?” “Does Heaven exist?” “What is Heaven going to be like?” “Does hell exist?”

The Barna Research Group (2003) reports that 81% of Americans polled believe in an afterlife of some sort; about 9% are not sure; and 10% do not believe that there is an afterlife. About 76% of those polled believe that Heaven exists, either as a state of eternal existence in God’s presence (46%) or as a real place of rest and reward (30%). About 71% of those surveyed believe that Hell exists, either as a state of eternal separation from God’s presence (39%) or as an actual place of torment and suffering (32%) [Missler, 2003b].

Of those people who believe they’re going to Heaven, the Barna Research Group reports that: (a) 43% say they are going to Heaven because, “They confessed their sins and accepted Christ as their savior” [this is the Biblical view]; (b) about 15% say, “They have tried to obey the Ten Commandments”; (c) about 15% say, “They are basically a good person”; and (d) about 6% say, “God loves all people and will not let them perish”.

Chuck Missler points to the confusion, even among born-again Christians: 10% believe that people are reincarnated after death [the Biblical view says “no” to reincarnation], 29% claim it is possible to communicate with the dead [the Biblical view says “no” to communication with the dead]; 50% say that a person can earn salvation because of “good works” [again, this is contrary to the Biblical view]; and many believe that there are “multiple ways” of getting to Heaven [the Biblical view says there is only one way].

Missler comments on the fact that the Bible says we are created in God’s image, and that we have a purposeful existence. There are only two worldviews: (a) we’re an accident of random chance, with no destiny; and (b) we’re the result of a deliberate and purposeful Creation … with a purposeful destiny. He adds that your worldview will determine the answer to questions like:

- Where did I come from?
- Where am I going to?
- To whom am I accountable?

The end result of a believer’s life is to enjoy Heaven, forever, with God.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What will Heaven be like? Is Heaven a literal place? Are believers physically resurrected, that is, will they have real bodies? Will there be animals in Heaven?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Corinthians 2:9</td>
<td>However, as it is written: “What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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. In fact, the oldest book in the Bible—Job—very clearly speaks of a physical resurrection:

Job 19:25-27 I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes— I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

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.

Note that after Job’s trials, God restored to him double what he lost, with a notable exception. Compare the numbers before Satan afflicted Job and thus before Job “lost it all”; and then at the very end, when God rewarded him:

Job 1:2-3 He had seven sons and three daughters, and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East.

Job 42:12-13 The LORD blessed the latter part of Job’s life more than the first. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. And he also had seven sons and three daughters.

The reason that God only gave him seven sons and three daughter, rather than double, is because the others are in Heaven and they will experience a physical resurrection someday. Then, Job—in his flesh—will be with all fourteen sons and six daughters.

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.
If plants will be there, then it makes sense that there will be animals will be there. Furthermore, we know that animals will be on Earth during the Millennium:

Isaiah 65:25  The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the LORD.

Although the souls of animals are qualitatively different from the souls of humans (e.g., the human soul can exist by itself without the body), some scholars such as Peter Kreeft believe that the same animals that were here on earth (e.g., pets) will also be in Heaven [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, 2011].

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. In terms of DNA uniqueness and transformation, your current DNA (minus imperfections) is re-connected with your resurrection body. He argues that your DNA will be perfect, and your body will flourish, as if sin had never entered the world. However, you are still “you” in the sense of continuity. To use an analogy, we use a name like “Mississippi River” to describe the river, even though the water in it changes continuously (inflow and outflow), just like the cells and atoms in our body don’t remain fixed.

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.

Nathan Jones comments on the state of the body between the time of death and the Rapture:

Right after death your spirit will go right to Jesus. Immediately upon death you are ushered into the presence of Jesus by His angels in Heaven. You can find that in Luke 16:22.

When you get to Heaven, you will be given what is called an “intermediate body.” It’s a real body. You are not a ghost. ...

Your intermediate body will also be recognizable. The people who are up there with you will be able to recognize you. We can see examples of that from the Bible, like Samuel when he came back and King Saul
immediately recognized him. Lazarus and the Rich Man in Luke 16 recognized each other. Moses and Elijah when they came with Jesus to the Transfiguration [in Matthew 18], what did Peter say? “Hey, let me build a tent for you guys.” We don’t build tents for spirits. They were clearly in recognizable, physical bodies. And, look the Tribulation Martyrs. When the people who will die in the Tribulation are up in Heaven, what are they wearing? They are wearing white robes. They’ve got physical bodies. So, you too will receive an intermediate body when you die.

You will next experience the Rapture of the Church. If you live in Heaven with Jesus up until the time of the Rapture—that time when Jesus comes for His Church to glorify their bodies and take them to Heaven to be with Him forever—you will be part of that, too. [Jones, 2011]

It is interesting to note that the rich man in Luke 16 made reference to bodily features: “... dip the tip of your [Lazarus’s] finger in water and cool my tongue”, suggesting that there may be an intermediate body between the time of death and the time of the resurrection (still future), although it is possible that this is a metaphor. Secondly, since the Tribulation martyrs are given white robes in Revelation 6:11, this implies they have some kind of a body.

Revelation 19:1-3 implies that those in Heaven “know” that Babylon has fallen, and they rejoice because of it. This suggests that those in Heaven are at least aware of some things on Earth. It’s not clear how much more they know.

Randy Alcorn believes that those who have died but are saved, now have an intermediate body. Conversely, Mark Hitchcock thinks that it is more likely that those who have died are disembodied (i.e., without a physical body) in Heaven—until the Rapture or the Second Coming of Christ [Hitchcock, 2014a]. He bases this on 2 Corinthians 5:1-5:

2 Corinthians 5:1-3 For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Since Christ was not constrained by walls, etc., and moved about freely following His resurrection, it stands to reason that we won’t be constrained either, given that “we shall be like him” (1 John 3:2) [Morris, 1983].
him, for we shall see him as he is.

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.

At resurrection time (i.e., Rapture, post-Second Coming, end of Millennium), the spirit is reunited with the body, but this time (in the case of believers), it’s a perfected or glorified 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; it is the way the universe was before sin entered the world.

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—described in early Genesis). The third heaven refers to the dwelling place of God (e.g., “Our Father Who art in Heaven”); it is where believers’ souls go to upon death. The body “sleeps” in the grave, until the time of resurrection (still future). Most often, the notion of Heaven refers collectively to the whole universe in its perfected state.

Like dispensationalists, Hank Hanegraaff 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 about Heaven in one of his first books—to highlight the modern church’s lack of emphasis on a literal heaven [Jeffrey, 1990]. Jeffrey makes the following comments about Heaven:

- We will do real things—purposeful, interesting activity.
- We will recognize others and build relationships. It will be a place of community—with many people.
- The character we have developed in life will be expressed.
- It lasts forever.
- There is no pain, fear, crying, etc.
- Misunderstandings will be taken away.
- We will understand life, as God understands life.
- Fellowship with friends and family will be restored and richly deepened.

Heaven is also a place of worship. I believe that we’ll be able to see history,
and find out why things have happened in our lives at certain times. We’ll be filled with joy. As a matter of fact, we’ll wish we had done more for the Lord while we were living in our current bodies. In fact, 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 notes that rewards in Heaven are based on what we have built on the foundation (salvation) provided by Jesus Christ. Perhaps there will be (edited) biographies of fellow human beings to read—minus any inappropriate parts.

Heaven is a place of rest, but it is also a place of service, and I believe that it is a place of continuous learning. Malcolm Gladwell reports that it can take a lifetime to become an expert in any one (narrow) field: 10,000 hours of deliberate (effortful) practice [Gladwell, 2008]. Almost any profession on Earth falls into this category: athletics, music, engineering, etc. World-class experts became that way usually through lots of hard work, long hours, and deliberate practice. Golfer Tiger Woods, computer scientist Bill Gates, physicist Albert Einstein, musicians Mozart and the Beatles—are just a few examples of world-class experts.

M.R. De Haan writes:

... 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 act like human beings. Scripture seems to indicate that we will not have to eat, but we will be able to eat. After His resurrection, Jesus ate literal food, and here we can believe that the tree of life is for our pleasure and enjoyment. [De Haan, 1946, pp. 302-303]

Relationships will exist in Heaven (albeit non-sexual ones); but the relationships will be far better than those in our current, broken state. 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.

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.

Heaven will not be an endless church service. It will not be boring or mindless. Rather, Heaven will provide plenty of opportunities for purposeful
activity.

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 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 commanded to regard our bodies as “God’s temple” (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

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 Hanegraaff, 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]

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Will there be memories in Heaven?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both Positions</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>
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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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<tr>
<td>Both Positions</td>
<td>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 <em>spirit</em>, 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, preincarnate?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>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?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Both Positions</td>
<td>It likely means (as per the understanding of the Church Fathers) that Christ claimed victory to the <em>saved</em> dead, and then took their spirits from Abraham’s Bosom (Sheol or Hades, i.e., the realm of the dead) to paradise. Since the</td>
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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,
time of Christ’s death on the cross, the spirits of all believers who die go directly to paradise, and their bodies await a future resurrection (at the Rapture).

There is no “second chance” for salvation:

Hebrews 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

Preterist Position  
The other view is the one that the Reformers held: that Christ preached through his Spirit to the people of Noah’s day [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, January 30, 2012].

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<tr>
<th>Topic/ Question</th>
<th>Resurrected Bodies: Did Moses and Elijah have resurrected (glorified) bodies on the Mount of Transfiguration? Is this event the event that is referred to in Matthew 16:28?</th>
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<td>Matthew 16:28  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.”</td>
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<tr>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
<th>Some dispensationalists believe that Matthew 16:28 was fulfilled at the Mount of Transfiguration:</th>
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<td>Matthew’s stress upon the actual, physical presence of the Son of Man is clearly met in the transfiguration because Jesus was personally and visibly present. Matthew says, “He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light” (17:2). The preterist interpretation does not meet Matthew’s criteria, since Jesus was not personally present at the later destruction of Jerusalem. [Ice, 2003d, p. 88]</td>
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<td>Since Jesus communicated with Elijah and Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration, does this mean that Moses (who had died) was <em>already</em> resurrected? This is not clear. Recall that Old Testament law prohibited communication with the dead [Urban, 2009]. Did he have a temporary body, that is, an intermediate state, prior to his ultimate physical resurrection at Christ’s Second Coming? Will he appear as one of the two witnesses (Revelation 11) in his original, natural body, only to die later (Revelation 11), and then be resurrected?</td>
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| Preterist Position | Hebrews 9:27-28  Just as *man is destined to die once*, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. |
|                   | People do not die, get spiritual bodies, come back to life, and die again.  
|                   | 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, all believers (alive or dead, before or after Christ) will take on changed bodies “in the twinkling of an eye” (i.e., immediately).

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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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What’s the difference between one’s soul and spirit?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Both Positions</td>
<td>The soul consists of the mind, will, and emotions. The spirit gives us the ability to have a relationship with God.</td>
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<td>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],” argues Hank Hanegraaff.</td>
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<td>The soul and spirit are two aspects of the non-physical or immaterial part 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.)</td>
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<td>Upon death, a believer’s soul/spirit (i.e., the non-material aspect of humanity) goes to be with the Lord, whereas the body awaits a future resurrection—at which point the body and the soul/spirit become reunited—in a perfected state.</td>
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<td>One verse that suggests that we have a trichotomous nature (i.e., body, soul, and spirit—distinctly) instead of a dichotomous nature (body and soul/spirit) is as follows [Hamp, 2014b]:</td>
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<td>1 Thessalonians 5:23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.</td>
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<td>However, there are other verses which seem to use soul and spirit interchangeably. For example, compare John 12:27 with John 13:21; Genesis 41:8 with Psalm 42:6; Matthew 10:28; and Revelation 6:9. Perhaps</td>
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For believers, is there only one resurrection event—or are there multiple resurrection events? Will unbelievers be resurrected, too? When do these events occur?

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<tr>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
<th>Scripture seems to indicate that there are several resurrections: two major categories (i.e., saved and unsaved), but the “saved” category will have multiple stages. In particular, not all believers are resurrected at the same time; and all unbelievers face a separate resurrection.</th>
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<td>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.</td>
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<td>The word “order” is a military term indicating a <em>sequential</em> ordering like that in a procession [Fruchtenbaum, 2004].</td>
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<td>A good summary of the relative timing of the various resurrections is provided by Henry Morris:</td>
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<td>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]</td>
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<td>The Tribulation martyrs are those who died for Christ during the Tribulation. They rise from the dead after the Second Coming, but before the Millennium. At this same time, we have the resurrection of the Old Testament saints (i.e., those who died before Christ):</td>
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<td>Daniel 12:1-2  &quot;At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress [Tribulation] such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time [end of the Tribulation] 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.”</td>
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<td>Daniel 12:11-13  &quot;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. &quot;As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will...&quot;</td>
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rise to receive your allotted inheritance."

Revelation 20:5 [KJV] But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

Millennial believers will not die; thus, there is no “resurrection” of the Millennial saints. They will, however, be given perfected or “translated” bodies at the end of the Tribulation—perfected in the qualitative sense of being equivalent to resurrected or glorified bodies.

With respect to the last sentence of Revelation 20:5, Morris notes 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.

Note that after the first resurrection (with its multiple parts), there is a period of one thousand years during which resurrected individuals will be reigning with Christ. This should put to rest any arguments about there being: (a) a single judgment day for all of humanity, and (b) a single resurrection where the saved and the unsaved are both dealt with at the same time.

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” (Rapture) and “gleanings” of post-Rapture believers and believers from pre-Church days (e.g., Old Testament saints) are still to come [Reagan, 2005]. Scripture references include: Leviticus 19:9-10, 1 Corinthians 15:20-24, John 14:1-3, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Revelation 20:4, Daniel 12:2.

The last resurrection is the resurrection of the unsaved. 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 = 2,520 days). There are 3½ years (1,260 days) to the middle of the Tribulation, and then 1,260 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 1,290 days; and then there are another 45
days to make a grand total of 1,335 days. Presumably, the 1,335-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 captial 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 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 from Jacob.

The fact that “Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in” implies a distinction between Israel and the Gentiles. The “times of the Gentiles” began in 586 BC when King Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem and removed the last reigning monarchy from Israel. Israel will have no king until the King of Kings (Jesus Christ) returns. The last Gentile ruler will be the Antichrist.
Anyone can become a follower of Christ, but most people will choose not to. All those who come to Christ, however, are of one 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,

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.

J. Dwight Pentecost summarizes:

[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]

A “new heavens and a new earth” (Isaiah 65:17) seems to be associated with the Millennial Kingdom, where the lion lies down with the lamb, etc.

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.

This state will be followed by yet another renewal: a permanent, new heavens and a new earth (Revelation 21-22). 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 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? Well, nature and creation are currently under the curse (Romans 8:22) because of mankind’s sin. Even space needs to be redeemed, as mankind’s sin reaches there, too (e.g., many years of electromagnetic signals being sent into space, various space programs including Voyager). Also, Satan was the first sinner, and even the non-material, heavenly places to which Satan had access are corrupted/defiled by sin. Thus, even that needs cleansing and restoration.

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 katakoio, “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,
Lastly, creation itself is defiled due to Adam and Eve’s sin, and will be restored:

Romans 8:19-22 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

Preterist Position

There is only one resurrection, not two or more. 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. Also, only at that time is the problem of sin finally and permanently dealt with.

The first resurrection can be thought of as a spiritual resurrection, followed by a physical resurrection later—when Christ returns. An even better explanation is that the first resurrection is not contrasted with a second resurrection; rather, the first resurrection is contrasted with the second death [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man, May 27, 2011].

The following resurrection passages give no indication of an interruption in time, and seem to suggest that “all” the dead will rise, together.

John 5:28-29 “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out -- those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.

Acts 24:15 and I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

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.

All of humanity will stand before the throne of God to be judged. The throne of God is mentioned in Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1,11; and Revelation 4. Gary DeMar states that Jesus is sitting on His throne—the throne of David—right now (i.e., since Christ ascended to Heaven).

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 the dirty robes of our own way. Then, in those respective camps, there are judgments: degrees of rewards for the saved, and degrees of punishment (eternal conscious punishment) for the unsaved.

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. At that point, believers will live in resurrected bodies for all eternity. Following Christ’s return, there is no 7-year Tribulation, no second chance for unbelievers to become believers, and neither will unbelievers (or anyone, for that matter) be born. Furthermore, creation itself will be redeemed, and the curse will finally be lifted.

Dispensationalists argue that many billions of people could exist during the Millennium. But, Scripture suggests that the only people living in the “Millennium” are those who were beheaded for Christ. Note the sequence of events in the following Scripture passages:

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.

<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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<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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| Dispensationalist Position | In his book *Heaven: The Last Frontier*, 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.  
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 people would have heard about the miracle of the firstfruits resurrection.  
It was this hope that gave the martyrs something to die for. They were singing to the death. They did not fear death.  
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.  
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 from the grave. [Jeffrey, 1990, p. 27]  
By the way, Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead during His Earthly
ministry, was probably not raised in a resurrected, perfected body because—presumably, in the absence of other information—he died again. The same comments likely apply to the “many holy people who had died [and] were raised to life” after Christ’s resurrection. Some authors use the term “resuscitated” instead of “resurrected” for these cases [House & Price, 2003] because the term “resurrection” implies perfection—bodies that are no longer subject to death and decay. The former term also applies to the two witnesses in Revelation 11. Resurrection occurs at the Rapture, the Second Coming, and the end of the Millennium.

| Preterist Position | The passage in question is only found in the book of Matthew—not in the other gospels. Matthew is writing to an audience that is familiar with apocalyptic language (e.g., the writings of Isaiah); therefore, they would not take Matthew 27:52-53 literally. Hank Hanegraaff says that this passage 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 apocalyptic event, yet little is written about it extra-biblically; thus, it probably didn’t occur.

If we assume that these people (who came from the tombs) had resurrected, perfected bodies, and didn’t die again, then the story is suspect. They couldn’t have perfected bodies at this time, since the general resurrection of believers won’t take place until some time in the future. |

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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Who is going to occupy and repopulate the Earth following Christ’s return?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>It appears that believers following the Rapture, who are alive when Jesus Christ physically returns, will occupy and repopulate the earth for the first 1000 years (Millennium) of eternity. Raptured believers will likely also have access to the Earth, but it is unclear what their specific role will be. Pretribulationists have an answer for the repopulation question; however, posttribulationists have an unsolvable problem, as Thomas Ice explains: Pretribulationists have no problem explaining how such a scenario will take place. At the rapture, all living church age believers will be evacuated to heaven by the Lord. At that split second in history there will not be one believer upon planet earth. But shortly after the rapture many unbelievers will realize that Jesus is the Son of God and will become believers. Because there will be an interval of days, weeks, months, or years between the rapture and the start of the tribulation, there could be millions of Christian converts even before the tribulation begins. Further, even more will be converted during the tribulation itself, meaning that there could be hundreds of millions of believers by the middle of the tribulation. Even though a high percentage of believers will be martyred during the tribulation, there will still be many that survive this time and are then ready to enter the millennium in their mortal bodies. This issue is not...</td>
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a problem for pretribulationism.

However, for posttribulationism this issue is in my opinion an unsolvable problem. If the posttribulational view that the rapture occurs in conjunction with Jesus’ second coming is accepted, then the rapture event will result in all believers alive at Christ’s return being transformed from their current mortal state to immortality via a translation to heaven. Inasmuch as all unbelievers will be judged or killed at Christ’s return (Matt. 13:30, 36-43, 47-50; 24:36-41; 25:30, 31-45), there will be no mortals left to enter into the thousand-year reign of Christ.

... Scholar Robert Gundry is one of the few to attempt an explanation of how premillennial posttribulationism might handle this biblical issue ... First, he says, “the 144,000 will include both men and women who will populate and replenish the millennial kingdom of Israel ...

Problems with this view start with the problem that Gundry has to make the 144,000, not Jewish men only, as the text demands, but men and women, so that there will be women in order to produce Jewish prodigy in the millennium. Revelation 14:4a says, “these are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste.” The 144,000 must be Jewish men, based upon that passage. [Ice, 2010a, pp. 1,4]

Besides the re-population issue, another major problem with posttribulationism is that adherents say that the Church will be present during the 70th week of Daniel; however, they don’t explain why the Church is absent during the first 69 weeks. According to Daniel 9:24, the 70 weeks of Daniel apply specifically to the Jewish people:

"Daniel 9:24 "Seventy 'sevens' [70 times 7 years] are decreed for your people and your holy city [Jerusalem] ..."

Thirdly, posttribulationalists must deny the teaching of imminency.

Fourthly, they are not able to explain the sheep and the goats judgment of Matthew 25:31-46. It is unnecessary if posttribulationism is true; but it is necessary if pretribulationism is true [Ice, 2014c].

The doctrine of immortality was introduced in Genesis 25:8 where Abraham, upon his death, was “gathered to his people”:

Genesis 25:8 Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people.

| Preterist Position | There will be one simultaneous rapture and resurrection at the end of time, in conjunction with the second coming of Jesus Christ; there will not be a “private” coming/rapture, followed by yet another coming of Christ some time later. |
Is there such a place as purgatory? Roman Catholicism and the Eastern Orthodox church believe that, upon death, people go to “purgatory” 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.

<table>
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<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Both Positions Share the Same View</th>
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<tr>
<td>Is there such a place as purgatory?</td>
<td>The Catholic faith erroneously teaches that there is place called purgatory for people who have died but were not quite good enough to get into Heaven. It is believed that such people will spend an amount of time (in proportion to their sins) in purgatory in order to “purge” their sins before being permitted to enter Heaven.</td>
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There is no such thing as purgatory. It is not in the Bible. For example, the parable of the rich man and the beggar (Lazarus) in Luke 16:22-28 seems to suggest that there is no such state as purgatory.

**Christ paid the full price on the cross.** It is through faith, and by God’s grace (unmerited favor), 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 dying on the cross, He literally meant that His death was paying, 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.

**Acts 4:12** Salvation is found in no one else, for there...
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.

There is also the Catholic notion of praying for the dead or making a payment to the church to reduce the amount of time that a loved one spends in purgatory. This is called an *indulgence*. (This activity has been diminished since Vatican II—the Second Vatican Council [Hitchcock, 2011b].) The reality, however, is that after we die, all of our decisions become finalized; our works are done with, and nothing can change our salvation status. No amount of time can “purge” sins, and no amount of money can free one’s soul. In other words, we need to make a decision about Christ before we die. It is the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross that takes away a believer’s sins; so, in terms of salvation, there is nothing “extra” that a believer has to “pay for” or “purge” after death to ensure entrance to Heaven.

Saved people do not undergo any suffering after death. 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. Similarly, there will be degrees of punishment in hell (e.g., Matthew 10:11-15, 11:20-24; Luke 12:42-48). “God is a God of justice and righteousness. The punishment of sinners will fit the crime.” [Hitchcock, 2011b]

Roman Catholic eschatology is amillennial. It also teaches that there is no Rapture. The Rapture 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.
Position (although Preterists would endorse many of these same points).

House & Price, 2003]. It is:

- a place originally prepared for Satan and his demons (Matthew 25:41)
- a fiery furnace (Psalm 21:9; Matthew 13:41-42,49-50)
- a lake of burning sulphur (Revelation 14:10; 19:20; 20:10; 21:8)
- a place of unquenchable fire (Matthew 3:12; Mark 9:43; Luke 3:17)
- a place of blackest darkness (2 Peter 2:17; Jude 13)
- a place of eternal separation from God (Matthew 25:41)
- a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 13:41-42,49-50)
- a place of thirst (Luke 16:24)
- a place of agony (Luke 16:24)
- a place of identity, memory, and remorse (Luke 16:19-31)
- a place of anger and frustration (Matthew 13:24-30,36-42)
- a place of misery and pain (Revelation 14:9-11)

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.’” Hanegraaff argues that many of the above descriptions of hell are metaphors to describe how awful hell is … and how awful our existence would be, if we were to be separated from God. Christ said that there would be time coming (in the future, on judgment day), when all will rise from the dead and be resurrected—some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting destruction:

John 5:28-29 "Do not be amazed at this, for 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.

If part of your body is “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 a hell, there’s no need for salvation or sacrifice. Christ suffered torment, so that we wouldn’t have to suffer eternal torment.

In a classic sermon, Jonathan Edwards preached vividly on the reality of hell, urging men to repent [Edwards, 1741]. His sermon is believed to be one of the strongest sermons ever preached about hell and man’s evil human nature. Its purpose was to call sinners to repentance, and of course, salvation. He argued that it is only the merciful and sovereign will of God that holds mankind up while he is dangling on a rotting bridge over the fires of hell. Edwards states that God is repulsed by sin, and if God were to withdraw His restraining power, sin would quickly take man away to destruction. The natural inclination of man is to fall into hell because of the choices he’s
made; but, God in His mercy desperately wants to give every man a chance to be redeemed—if only man would turn from his wickedness and unbelief, and call upon God for salvation.

The place of the dead (sometimes called the abode of the dead or the unseen world) is where the souls of human beings go after death (eventually to be followed by physical resurrection). Because our eternal destiny is involved, it is crucial to pay attention to what the Bible says about the afterlife.

In the original Hebrew and Greek, the Bible uses 13 different words to describe the place of the dead [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. Most of these different words are simply translated as “hell” in English translations; but, Greek is a much more precise language than English, emphasizing distinctions in meaning. As an example of this, let us briefly turn to the passage in John 21. The context of the passage is the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus Christ on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, some days or weeks after He rose from the dead. He was speaking with His disciple Simon Peter, encouraging Peter to teach and lead others:

**John 21:15-17** When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

In English, the word “love” is used each time without qualification; however, in Greek, there are at least four words for “love”. Jesus was using the Greek word *agapeo* which refers to an unconditional, Godly kind of love (e.g., to love dearly [Strong, 2016]); whereas, Peter was using the Greek word *phileo* which means a brotherly kind of love (e.g., a love that befriends). Pastor Dan Nicholson loosely refers to these two words as a “100% kind of love” and a “60% kind of love”, respectively [Nicholson, 1993]. Thus, the passage could be paraphrased roughly as follows, which provides more information about the discussion:

"Simon son of John, do you love me with a 100% kind of love?"

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you with a 60% kind of love.” ...
Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me with a 100% kind of love?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you with a 60% kind of love.” …

The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me with a 60% kind of love?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you with a 60% kind of love.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.”

Now, let us examine the Hebrew and Greek words translated, in English, as “hell”.

The KJV translation of the Bible translates the following four words as “hell” [Pentecost, 1958]:

(1) In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word Sheol is used to describe the place of the dead. The Old Testament is the earlier, and larger, portion of the Bible; and it was written in Hebrew, except for parts of the books of Ezra and Daniel, which were written in Aramaic. The New Testament is the second part of the Bible, and was written entirely in Greek, which, as mentioned above, is a very precise language—much more so than Hebrew or English.

Sheol is a place of conscious existence, and the word is used 65 times in the Old Testament: 31 times it is translated in English as “hell”, 31 times it is translated “grave”, and 3 times it is translated “pit”. Sheol is temporary; the souls in it await a future physical resurrection: heaven or hell. Thus, we can probably use the term “grave” as an informal synonym for Sheol. Prior to Jesus Christ’s resurrection, both the saved and the unsaved went to Sheol upon death: the believers to a compartment or partition of Sheol called “Abraham’s Bosom”, and the unbelievers to a separate partition called “Abaddon” or “the Pit” [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. The latter two terms are always used in a negative sense when describing the place of the dead. A great gulf separated the good and bad partitions, and it was not possible to get from one partition to the other (Luke 16:26). This also emphasizes the importance to get right with God in this life. After death, it is too late.

(2) In the New Testament, the Greek word Hades is used 10 times to describe the place of the dead. Hades is equivalent to the Hebrew word Sheol, and Hades is translated in English as “hell” throughout the New Testament, except for one place: 1 Corinthians 15:55 where it is translated “grave”. Because Jesus Christ took the saved souls from Hades (or Sheol) to Paradise upon his death and resurrection, Hades now contains only the unsaved dead, who await the final judgment and resurrection at the Great White Throne Judgment.
Furthermore, since the resurrection of Jesus Christ, when a saved person dies, his/her soul (the immaterial part of one’s body) is immediately taken to Paradise. Paradise is a place of conscious existence. 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 for Christians, this will take place at the Rapture; and for the Old Testament and Tribulation Saints, this will occur after Christ’s Second Coming—or, if you hold to the preterist model of eschatology, physical resurrection takes place on Judgment Day. Thus, we will have real and perfected bodies at resurrection time. Incidentally, saved people who are alive on Earth at Christ’s Second Coming will enter the Millennium in their natural bodies—and they will not become lost (un-saved) during the Millennium.

(3) In the New Testament, the Greek word Tartaros (sometimes spelled Tartarus) is used only once in the New Testament (2 Peter 2:4) to refer to hell and, in particular, to describe the judgment of a class of fallen angels. Many dispensationalists believe that these especially wicked angels from the time of Noah crossed a boundary line established by God (Jude 6), and are being held in Tartaros until Tartaros itself is thrown into the Lake of Fire. (There are other fallen angels (i.e., demons) who are actively promoting evil to this day, under the direction of Satan. They, too, will be judged; but, unlike the Tartaros class of angels, they are not currently chained for judgment.) Although most dispensationalist scholars believe that the occupants of Tartaros will never be released, other than into the Lake of Fire, some dispensationalists think these demons could be the ones released during the Tribulation by Apollyon in Revelation 9.

The oldest, and most widely accepted, view among dispensationalists is that the Tartaros angels are fallen angels of God (Hebrew: bene ’elohim—or “sons of God”, translated “angels of God” in the Septuagint), and more specifically, the angels of Genesis 6 who “intermarried” with human women to try to corrupt the line of the Messiah (Jesus Christ).

A side note: In Greek mythology, Tartaros was the lowest part of the underworld, and was reserved for the most heinous offenders [Hitchcock, 2011a].

(4) In the New Testament, the Greek word Gehenna is used 12 times, and in 11 of those cases, by Jesus. In all cases, it is a geographical term, and it is the final state and location of the unsaved dead. It equates to the term “Lake of Fire” or “second death” in Revelation. Gehenna is synonymous with many people’s traditional or secular
notion of “hell” (e.g., from cartoons, writings, and movies)—although an argument could be made for this secular term encompassing both Hades (post-Christ) and Gehenna. This is the place where both the souls and the resurrected bodies of the unsaved dead go after judgment (still future). Note that Hades and Sheol currently and temporarily house the soul but not the body. Gehenna is a place of fire and eternal punishment. Currently, no one is in Gehenna.

In addition to Hades (Abraham’s Bosom and Abaddon), Tartaros, and Gehenna, Henry Morris conjectures that there may be another compartment of hell called the Abyss, the “pit of the abyss”, or the “shaft of the abyss” [Morris, 1983]. It refers to a future and temporary place of confinement of various fallen angels, excluding the Antichrist and the False Prophet (c.f., Gehenna in Revelation 19:20), but including Satan for 1000 years (i.e., during the Millennium) (Revelation 20:2-3). Unlike Tartaros, the occupants of the Abyss will be released to return to Earth, and only later will they be thrown into the Lake of Fire (Gehenna). As an analogy, imagine if all the world’s worst criminals were simply released into society, all at once [Hitchcock, 2011a].

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 [in Revelation] 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 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.” ... 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]

Here are five Scripture passages that explain when one of the two compartments of Hades/Sheol became Paradise. The passages are all from the New Testament. The first one refers to the parable of the saved beggar and the unsaved rich man that Christ told before He went to the Cross:

Luke 16:22-28 “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 [Hades], 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.'"

The second passage was spoken by Christ on the cross:

Luke 23:43 Jesus answered him [the thief on a cross beside Christ], "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

It is interesting to note that, at Passover time, just before Christ’s crucifixion—and recall that Jesus Christ is what the “Passover lamb” sacrifice in the Old Testament ultimately pointed to—Pontius Pilate offered to release a prisoner of the people’s choice. When the people were given a choice between freeing the criminal Barabbas (which means “son of a father”) or Jesus Christ (who was the Son of the Father), they chose Barabbas. Christ took his—and our—place at Calvary.

Jesus is God in human form. He left Heaven, took the form of a man, and paid the penalty resulting from mankind’s sins—dying on the Cross, in our place. No unholy person or thing can approach the Holy God. Jesus died for His creation—paying the penalty of sin on our behalf. By his substitutionary death, all who believe in Him as Lord and Savior will inherit everlasting life—and will someday live forever in Heaven (and on a restored Earth), with real, physical, perfected bodies. Paradise on Earth was God’s intent right from the beginning; however, to avoid a robotic form of love and obedience, God gave Adam and Eve free will: the choice to obey or disobey. They chose the latter, sin entered the world, and it’s been a struggle ever since—for mankind, animals, nature, etc. The Bible promises that Heaven will include a restored Earth, and the permanent elimination of mankind’s sin nature. There will be no more death, pain, suffering, disease, disabilities, etc., and the peaceful nature of animals and even nature will be restored. As is described elsewhere in this book, Heaven is a real place with real people doing real things (purposeful activity) forever … and it even includes food, fellowship, restored relationships, etc. Think of all the things you could do if you had all the time you wanted, and there was no sin and no death.

Continuing … the third and fourth passages that explain when one of the two compartments of Hades/Sheol became Paradise were stated by the apostle Paul some time after Christ’s resurrection and ascension:

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.)

Finally, the fifth passage was stated by the resurrected Jesus Christ around 95 AD, when it was quoted by the apostle John who wrote the book of Revelation (the final book in the Bible—to complete the Word of God) under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

Revelation 2:7  He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the **paradise** of God.

Paradise is always referred to as “up” in Scripture; Hades is “down”.

When Jesus died, His soul, His immaterial part, descended into the righteous portion of Sheol or Hades. In Matthew 12:40, Jesus predicted that He must go down into the heart of the earth where Sheol or Hades is located. Ephesians 4:9 states that Jesus descended into the lower parts of the earth. First Peter 3:18-19 points out that in His spirit, Jesus preached unto the spirits in prison. These spirits were the unrighteous ones in Hell. Some have misunderstood this verse and taught that since He preached, He preached the gospel to them and gave them a second chance to be saved. However, the Greek word that is used here is not the Greek word that means “to preach the gospel,” but it is a Greek word that simply means “to make a proclamation”.

... When the Messiah ascended into Heaven, He took the souls of the Old Testament saints with Him; he led captivity captive (Eph. 4:8-10). Those who had been captive within the confines of Abraham’s Bosom were now taken out of Abraham’s Bosom. All the righteous souls who had died before the death of Jesus ascended with Jesus into Heaven. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 753-754]

Arnold Fruchtenbaum explains why those who were saved during Old Testament times (i.e., “the Old Testament saints”—in other words, all believers in God, before Christ) did not go directly to paradise, and he draws an important connection to the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament that pointed forward to their ultimate fulfillment in the death of Creator of the universe, Jesus Christ:

**While the Old Testament sacrifices covered the sins of the Old Testament saints, it did not remove their sins (Heb. 10:4). Only the death of the Messiah [the Anointed One of God: Jesus Christ] could do that.** So while the sacrificial system was sufficient to keep them from Hell, it was not able to get them into Heaven. So all who died, both the
righteous and unrighteous, went to a place known as Sheol or Hades. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 517, my emphasis]

The blood of animals did not remove sins; therefore, an Old Testament believer who died could not be ushered into Heaven to be in the presence of the Holy God. The believer had to wait until Jesus Christ purged sin by shedding His own precious blood on the Cross—thereby applying His blood to our sinful lives. Christ only had to do this once, not over and over again—unlike the Old Testament sacrifices which, as mentioned, pointed to Christ—because, as had been planned from the beginning of time, God Himself provided the all-sufficient sacrifice:

Hebrews 9:27-28 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

David Hocking gives a real-life analogy that shows the difference between covering and removing sin. At a dinner function, David accidentally knocked over a gravy container. It made a mess on the white tablecloth. One of the servers placed a white cloth on top of the stain, so that the gravy stain was now out of sight, and now “no one will know”. Thus, the white cloth covered the stain, but it didn’t remove it, even though others may not have known about the spill.

The term propitiation means “the satisfaction of God’s wrath”. Propitiation is also called “penal substitutionary atonement” [Stallard, 2017]. What this means is that Jesus Christ satisfied God’s wrath by laying down His life, in our place, as the ultimate sacrifice for mankind’s sin. The holy nature of God demands penalty for sin because no one unholy can enter into God’s presence. But, God provides both justice and grace (unmerited favor) through Jesus Christ. The animal sacrifices of the Old Testament temporarily satisfied God’s wrath, but these sacrifices pointed to the future—to a time when God Himself would take on the form of a baby (the story of Christmas) and grow into a man, and lay down His Own life for mankind (the story of Easter). Jesus Christ represents the grace of God—a gift given to anyone who wishes to receive Him. (See also Isaiah 53: “the suffering servant”.) Jesus Christ’s death satisfied God’s wrath. He rose from the dead on the third day.

Hebrews 2:17 [NKJV]: Therefore, in all things He [Jesus] had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

Compare an event that foreshadowed the sacrifice of God’s one and only Son, and took place on what is probably the same location as Abraham’s
intended sacrifice of Isaac: on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, just outside the Temple Mount. Jerusalem is one of the most contested pieces of real estate on Earth:

Genesis 22:6-17 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, “Father?”

“Yes, my son?” Abraham replied.

“The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said, “but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together.

... “Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he [God] said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.”

... The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, “I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”

Mark Hitchcock argues that Moses’ presence on the Mount of Transfiguration suggests that Moses’ death did not result in him going to a holding area in Sheol awaiting Christ’s death, but rather he went to Heaven immediately [Hitchcock, 2013a]. Hitchcock offers a similar argument for Enoch and Elijah; but, the scenario is different since they did not actually die. He believes that when an Old Testament saint died, he/she went directly to Heaven: “He was gathered to his people.”

The Old Testament believers (i.e., those who were saved before Christ’s first coming) will not be raptured, but they will be resurrected upon Christ’s Second Coming, and they will inherit the Promised Land. The dead Tribulation saints will also be resurrected after Christ’s Second Coming.

To summarize the plight of the unsaved dead: first, they go to Hades; then they are resurrected; then they appear before the Great White Throne Judgment (at the end of the Millennium); and finally, they are cast into the Lake of Fire (Gehenna). Physical death is the first death; the Lake of Fire is the “second death” (Revelation 21:8).
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”. As mentioned above, a great gulf or chasm separated the two abodes; it was not possible to get from one side 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. Secondly, Abraham and the rich man were having a conversation, suggesting consciousness/awareness after death.)

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 for 1000 years (the starting point of which is still in the future), the Antichrist and the False Prophet are still in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:10). Furthermore, 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, says Hanegraaff. It could be that words like “flames”, “sulphur”, “blackest darkness”, “lake of fire”, etc. are metaphors that describe the state of being shut out from the presence of God for all eternity. Keep in mind that the...
existence of hell is not a metaphor, but the description of hell might be. Hell is being described in strong terms that we can understand. The key points about hell are: (a) it is literal, eternal separation from God; (b) it is unpleasant; and (c) no one should want to go there!

The converse is Heaven: real people, real (perfected) bodies, real relationships (much greater than the best relationships on present-day earth), real things to do; but no pain and no sin—for eternity, in a restored universe, in the presence of God. Christ restores things—to the way they were, or could have been, in a world without sin.

Christ will judge between the living and the dead. When we are in God’s presence, we’ll see things from God’s perspective, and we’ll be satisfied with His righteous judgments (i.e., justice), love, and mercy. The fact that Christ sits at “the right hand of God” means that He is exalted above all.

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 body they are immediately present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). [Morris, 1983, p. 47]

2 Corinthians 5:8-9 We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.

The latter Scripture passage implies the existence of an interim (non-physical body) state between a believer’s current, physical, earthly body and that same believer’s future, resurrected, physical, earthly, and heavenly body. A believer’s soul will later reunite with his/her resurrected body.

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.
According to 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, there are degrees of punishment in hell (e.g., Hitler will 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 his 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 had little knowledge of God’s will (Luke 12:48). [Sper, 1990, p. 24]

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]

In contrast with some of the statements above, dispensationalist 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. They may well be alone. As we saw in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, even people who are sent to hell will not want their family/friends to join them. The rich man wanted someone to go back to the earthly side to convince his brothers not to come to this place. 

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. If that describes you, why not embrace the gift of salvation that Christ offers you—right now? Scripture says: 

Romans 10:9  That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

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) 
- how we respond to the environment where we have been placed (e.g., country, language, culture, and degree of freedom). Note that those of us in the Western world enjoy freedom and many privileges that much of the rest of the world does not have; therefore, we will be
held to a greater degree of accountability.

- the type of resources that we’ve been given this life (e.g., family situation, financial situation, type of job, degree of mentoring)
- how we relate to others (e.g., spouse, family, co-workers, neighbors, friends, and even enemies)

To paraphrase theologian 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."

To summarize: At the time of death, there is a separation between our body and soul. Later, there is a resurrection (where the soul gets a physical body) and a judgment.

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]

Dispensationalist David Levy remarks:

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.
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]

Satan himself will be confined in the Abyss (a temporary holding tank in Hades) for 1000 years. Isaiah 14:9-17 gives a description of Satan when he enters Hades (either the bottomless pit (Abyss) or Gehenna). To paraphrase: The occupants of hell are in disbelief as they see their leader come to naught. They placed their trust in Satan’s indwelled king—the Antichrist—to defeat the work of God. They gambled their eternal destiny—and lost. The occupants of Hades now realize that there is no hope for them.

Also, note below Satan’s five “I will” statements:

Isaiah 14:9-17  The grave below is all astir to meet you [Satan] at your coming; it rouses the spirits of the departed to greet you—all those who were leaders in the world; it makes them rise from their thrones—all those who were kings over the nations. They will all respond, they will say to you, "You also have become weak, as we are; you have become like us." All your pomp has been brought down to the grave, along with the noise of your harps; maggots are spread out beneath you and worms cover you. How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit. Those who see you stare at you, they ponder your fate: "Is this the man who shook the earth and made kingdoms tremble, the man who made the world a desert, who overthrew its cities and would not let his captives go home?"

The passage is rich with metaphor [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. With one exception, “stars” is a metaphor for “angels” in Scripture. “I will raise my throne above the stars of God” indicates that Satan wants to be exalted, claiming authority over all angels. The “mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain” refers to the Millennial Kingdom—a future
time when the Messiah will rule the world. Instead, Satan wants to be that ruler. “Clouds” are a symbol of God’s Shekinah Glory: a visible manifestation of the invisible God, when He makes His presence known. Recall that in Exodus, God showed His presence via a burning bush; in the wilderness via a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire at night; via thunder, lightning, and a thick cloud on Mount Sinai; and via the light above the Ark of the Covenant. Fruchtenbaum adds that the first appearance of the Shekinah Glory may well be the light in Genesis 1:3-5. This light appeared before God created the sun, and it may well be the eternal light for the New Heavens and the New Earth described in Revelation. Genesis also describes the Shekinah Glory in terms of a smoking furnace and a flaming torch—used to confirm the Abrahamic Covenant by God Himself. (Note: In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is God incarnate: God taking on human form. Jesus “tabernacled” (dwelt) with mankind.)

Many people associate “hell” with the Lake of Fire. Revelation 20:14 states that Hades itself (the place holding the unsaved dead) will be thrown into the Lake of Fire. Dispensationalists note that 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. Note, however, that the Antichrist does not appear to have a burial following his defeat at Armageddon:

Isaiah 14:18-20 All the kings of the nations lie in state, each in his own tomb. But you are cast out of your tomb like a rejected branch; you are covered with the slain, with those pierced by the sword, those who descend to the stones of the pit. Like a corpse trampled underfoot, you will not join them in burial, for you have destroyed your land and killed your people. The offspring of the wicked will never be mentioned again.

Revelation 19:20 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.

Dispensationalist John MacArthur writes about the abode of the dead prior to the final judgment:

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 [serious] crime, he is caught and waits in prison for the final adjudication and sentencing. [MacArthur, 2003a, p. 89]

Annihilationists or conditionalists (e.g., John Stott, David Reagan) believe
that the body is consumed in hell (Gehenna); and once consumed, there is no further punishment or existence. Robert Peterson responds:

“... 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]

The Great White Throne Judgment occurs at the end of the Millennium when all the unsaved throughout history will be judged. Their status (i.e., being unsaved) is obvious at this point because the saved don’t take part in this
judgment; instead, it is the *degree of punishment* for each unbeliever that is being determined.

Some might argue that literal flames and a literal body would imply that the body is consumed. However, it is interesting to note that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into the burning furnace, as written in Daniel 3:16-27—yet the flames didn’t consume their body.

Mark Hitchcock believes that annihilationism goes against the nature of God [Hitchcock, 2007]. “Is the punishment too great for the crime?” asks Hitchcock. We need to accept God at His Word, even if we have questions about things we cannot understand. The *only* place where we can find reliable information about hell is in the Bible.

There are three “deaths” in the Bible, says Hitchcock: (a) spiritual death (i.e., spiritual separation from God, such as when Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit), (b) physical death (i.e., the separation of the material from the immaterial—the non-physical aspect of our humanity), and (c) the “second death”, that is, eternal separation from God. “If you’re born once, you’re going to die twice; but, if you’re born twice, you’re going to die once.” The latter phrase implies that those who are “born again” (saved) will have everlasting life, and won’t have eternal separation from God.

Every human being ever conceived, possessing a divinely-created human soul and spirit, will exist forever somewhere. [Morris, 1983, p. 270]

Eternal punishment was the traditional belief of the Christian Church until the 19th century [Hitchcock, 2007]. Exclusivism was also a traditional belief, that is, the fact that Jesus Christ is the *only* way to salvation:

> 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 New Jerusalem* is the final term in Scripture used to describe the future abode of the saved:

> 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."
Revelation 21:1-22:5 describes this city as coming down to Earth following the Millennium, although it currently exists. The dimensions of the New Jerusalem are given in Revelation 21:16: the city is 12,000 furlongs (approximately 1,500 miles or 2,400 kilometres) in height, width, and length. The current geography of the earth would be unsuitable for the placement of the New Jerusalem; but, it is likely that there will be major geographical changes to the earth between now and then.

“One could also say that the New Jerusalem is now in Heaven, but either way they are in the same locale and are more or less synonymous. ... when the new earth is created, Heaven or the New Jerusalem will come down upon the new earth. The eternal abode of the Triune God, the elect angels, and the redeemed men will be in the New Jerusalem on the new earth. If one distinguishes between Heaven and the New Jerusalem, then one can say that [the souls of deceased] believers now go to the New Jerusalem in Heaven [awaiting bodily resurrection], and eventually the New Jerusalem will be placed on the new earth, when the new earth is created after the Messianic Kingdom.” [Fruchtenbaum, 2004].

To summarize: from Adam until the Ascension of Jesus, Paradise was in Abraham’s Bosom. From the Ascension of Jesus until the end of the Millennium, Paradise is in Heaven. Then after the Millennium and for all eternity, Paradise will be in the New Jerusalem on the new earth. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 748]

Lest anyone doubt that the postmillennial world is physical, we turn to the last two chapters of the Bible, namely Revelation 21-22, and see that the postmillennial world (with the New Jerusalem) has: light, nations, food, water, vegetation, time, etc.—in addition to people with real bodies (with perfect DNA, of course). It will be similar to the state of the universe before the fall of: Satan, one-third of the angels, and Adam and Eve.

Revelation 21:22-22:5 I did not see a temple in the city [the New Jerusalem], 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. Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on
their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

The book of Ezekiel also describes this future river:

Ezekiel 47:1  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). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar.

Ezekiel 47:12  Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing."

For emphasis, we point out that rebellion will never resurface:

Revelation 22:3a  No longer will there be any curse. Sheol or Hades will no longer exist, since they are just temporary; however, heaven and hell (i.e., Gehenna) will exist for eternity. Note also that the New Jerusalem is unaffected by the “new heavens and a new earth”, meaning it currently exists, and will survive the events/renewal at the end of the Millennium. The phrase “the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” appears to be a preventative measure since there will be no sickness, death, or imperfection in the postmillennial world.

Let me close this section by emphasizing that Jesus 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 alright; but, He did not need to fight the devil there because Christ already—through His shed blood and death on the cross—provided the necessary sacrifice to redeem mankind. It was what all the Old Testament sacrifices pointed to. Yes, the Creator of the universe died in the place of you and me. It was the only way that a holy and righteous God would accept a sinner. On the cross, just before His death, Jesus Christ said, “It is finished”—tetelestai in the Greek—an ancient accounting term meaning “paid in full” (John 19:30).

Preterist Position  Most of the above discussion applies to both the preterist and dispensationalist positions, except for the dispensationalist descriptions of Tartaros, the fallen angels of Genesis 6, the Rapture, the 7-year Tribulation period, and the Antichrist and the False Prophet. Preterists’ understanding of these topics is dealt with, in detail, elsewhere in this book. Note also that various authors have different opinions about the Millennium. For example, some authors do not believe there will be a literal, 1,000-year, Millennium.

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, according to most preterists.

There are indeed degrees of rewards 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.
Chapter 3: The Mystery of the Church; The Church and Israel

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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>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 (sometimes called fulfillment theology, or supersessionism)? Will all Jews, or all Israel, be saved at some point in the future?</th>
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<td>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: &quot;The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.</td>
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<td>In light of Romans 9-11, just who is “Israel” today? Is it geographic Israel? Is it the Old Testament-believing, God-fearing, Jew?</td>
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<td>(See also the question/section entitled, “What are the major covenants in the Bible?”)</td>
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<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
<th>It is estimated that 30% of today’s Israelis are atheists [Hunt, 2009]. In light of the Scripture “all Israel will be saved”, this begs the question about how to define a member of Israel today. The argument is contentious.</th>
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<td>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 “true Israel”, that is, to all believers of Jesus Christ. Jewish people who accept Jesus Christ become part of “true Israel” which does not discriminate between Jews and Gentiles, male and female, free and bond, etc. When defending their position, scholars embracing replacement theology sometimes emphasize that God is not “racist” or “sexist”. They argue that the nation of Israel is not given “special treatment” by God, and there is no final restoration of (physical) Israel in the Middle East.</td>
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<td>Hebrew Christian Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, in his PhD dissertation, has studied every use of Israel in the New Testament and says, ‘The conclusion is that the Church is never called, and is not, a ‘spiritual Israel’ or a ‘new Israel.’ The term Israel is either used of the nation or the people as a whole, or of the believing remnant within. It is never used of the Church in general or of Gentile believers in particular.’ [Hitchcock, 2009, p. 130]</td>
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<td>In other words, in terms of people groups, Israel, the Church, and the Gentiles are three distinct categories of people. Israel refers to the Jewish people. The Church is the Body of Christ, that is, all believers in Jesus</td>
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Christ. It is one body, without differentiation. The Gentiles are those who are neither Jews nor the Church. It is, however, possible for Gentiles (in their pre-saved condition) to become part of the Church, and for Jewish people to become part of the Church, as well. In fact, the Church is made up of people who were formerly Jews or Gentiles. However, the Church cannot become Israel.

The classical dispensationalist position 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.

Ownership of the land is unconditional; but, enjoyment of the land is conditional [Fruchtenbaum, 2013b].

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”. Hunt 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).”

Mike Vlach states:

> There is little doubt that many theologians of the early church promoted Replacement Theology. Irenaeus (130-200) wrote, “For inasmuch as the former [the Jews] have rejected the Son of God, and cast Him out of the vineyard when they slew Him, God has justly rejected them, and given to the Gentiles outside the vineyard the fruits of its cultivation.”...

> Clement of Alexandria (c. 195) claimed that Israel “denied the Lord” and thus “forfeited the place of the true Israel.” [Vlach, 2010]

Replacement theology has been the dominant view of the church from the third century until the middle of the nineteenth century. The Roman Catholic church has been supersessionist, as were the first generation Reformers,
including Martin Luther and John Calvin [Vlach, 2010]. (The term *supersessionism* comes from the word “supersede”.) Since the mid-nineteenth century, however, replacement theology “has received serious criticism and widespread rejection” thanks to dispensationalism and a more literal understanding of the Old Testament, especially with respect to Israel and the promises made to it. Vlach adds that the Holocaust and the re-establishment of the state of Israel have been significant factors, as well.

Let us look more closely at the book of Romans. Why did Paul write this long letter? The church in Rome in the 50s AD initiated replacement theology: the false assumption that the church has replaced Israel—at least with respect to the benefits. Oddly enough, many replacement theologians conveniently leave out the curses! Paul wrote to dispel the myth of replacement theology.

David 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 [Pawson, 2002].

Pawson argues that Calvinists tend to ignore chapters 10 and 11, and claim that God saves those whom He wants to save, that people have little choice in the matter, and that some people cannot be saved no matter what their intentions. It’s also been said that 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.

A common argument is that God has only ever had one people who worship Him—namely, the set of all believers in the God of the Bible (and in the days before Jesus Christ’s ministry on Earth, this obviously includes those who believe in the writings of the Old Testament, since the New Testament wasn’t written until the years following Christ’s ministry). This is true; however, a problem occurs when people also insist that the Christian Church has replaced Israel with respect to the promises made by God. That is the sticking point. Dispensationalists would argue that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile today: that God accepts all people who believe in Jesus Christ—in fact, they become part of one body of believers. However, at some point in the future, at the Rapture, God will remove the Church, and once again deal with the Jews. The hope is that many Jews will come to Jesus Christ (and some will), even in the early days after the Rapture, let alone waiting until the end of the 7-year Tribulation. We learn from Romans 11:25-26 that Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number
of the Gentiles (Christian Church) has come in—and so all Israel will be saved. Unfortunately, it will take the 7-year Tribulation for (most of) Israel to cry out to the Lord for deliverance, and they will long for the return of the Messiah, and He will deliver all of them that remain at the Second Coming.

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus said, “I will build my church”—and the church hadn’t existed before. The Church was born on the Day of Pentecost (following Christ’s ascension), when the Holy Spirit was poured out on 3,000 people. The Old Testament covenants were not fulfilled in history, but they will be fulfilled.

Matthew 16:18  And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

In summary, the church has not replaced Israel; rather, it has temporarily interrupted God’s past and future dealings with Israel [Woods, 2012f]. 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 a 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. The wild branches represent Gentiles who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. They were grafted in, 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). Another way of stating it is that we (Christians) have been added in to the olive tree.

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, but only revealed in (and 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]

John 18:36 Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."

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 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 sure destruction. Jesus will hear their plea and return from heaven to earth with His entourage of angles [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?
Preterists advocate the replacement of Old Testament Israel with the church often called the “New Israel.” This [system] 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.

... 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.'

The book of Romans speaks of diversity and unity. There are elements of both in the Godhead, the 12 tribes of Israel, and the Church (e.g., different gifts within one body of believers) [Horner, 2009]. “Scripture knows nothing of a future clone-like homogeneity, and especially with the economy of the Millennium.” Horner remarks that this is a strength of premillennial eschatology.

Similarly, the book of Acts speaks of both Israel and the church, simultaneously—implying that there is a distinction [Fruchtenbaum, 2004].

Thomas Ice writes:

When we think about the unprecedented worldwide regathering and reestablishment of the nation of Israel, it should prompt us to ask the question: “Why would God bring the Jewish people back to their homeland, reestablish them as a nation if they have no future in the land? ... Why will Jesus return to Jerusalem at His second advent ...? What about the two witnesses who will minister in Jerusalem for forty-two months ...? [Ice, 2011b, p. 5]

Andy Woods writes:

In fact, the word Israel is found seventy-three times in the New Testament and it always refers to the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Sometimes Israel in the New Testament refers to believing Jews and sometimes it refers to Jews in unbelief. However, the term Israel in the New Testament always refers to those who are physical Jews. The word never refers to Gentiles, the Church, or even a group that is a mixture of both Jews and Gentiles. In other words, the term Israel is a technical
term or a word that means the same thing everywhere it is employed in Scripture. [Woods, 2012g]

In the book of Acts, both Israel and the Church exist simultaneously. The term Israel is used twenty times and *ekklesia* (church) nineteen times, yet the two groups are always kept distinct. [Arnold Fruchtenbaum quoted in [Woods, 2012g]]

... God’s design for the church ... is to evangelize and disciple, or reach and teach, in fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). While it remains appropriate for the church to positively influence fallen culture in some sense (Matt. 5:13-16), she is not called to rule and reign in the present age with kingdom authority. Instead, the church is to await the future, earthly, Messianic Kingdom when Christ will rule and reign with a rod of iron (Ps. 2:9; Rev. 12:5). Until that glorious future day arrives, the world will remain under Satan’s influence (2 Cor. 4:4), and consequently the church will be living as a pilgrim in enemy territory. [Woods, 2015]

Here are some differences between Israel and the Church [Woods, 2012g]:

- Israel gave birth to Christ; however, Christ gave birth to the Church.
- Israel is a nation with borders and a capital; however, the Church is not a nation, but is comprised of people from all nations.
- Israel fought wars with the Philistines and other enemies, including modern-day nations; however, the Church is fighting a spiritual war.
- Israel had a priesthood with priests coming from the Tribe of Levi and the line of Aaron; however, the Church *is* a priesthood (Rev. 1:6).
- Israel will be resurrected at the start of the Millennium; however, the Church is resurrected at the Rapture.
- The gates of the New Jerusalem are named after the 12 tribes of Israel; however, the foundations of the New Jerusalem are named after the 12 apostles.

In summary, all Jews alive when Christ returns will be awaiting the Messiah, and they will all be saved. This parallels the story of the reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers (in Egypt). Like Joseph, Christ was rejected by His brethren, sold for pieces of silver, brought blessings to the Gentiles, and during a very difficult 7-year period, was finally recognized and accepted by His brethren, bringing life to all. 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. Conversely, at the end of the 7-year tribulation period, Christ will gather the Jews, bring salvation, and cause them to enter the promised land in their natural bodies. This promised land is an enlarged Israel, as per the Old Testament covenant. The Millennium period begins at that time.
Preterist Position

Replacement theology is sometimes used as a pejorative term to push the dispensationalist viewpoint that God has two distinct groups of people. Instead of the term “replacement theology”, it is more accurate to use the term “fulfillment theology”. Those who are “in Christ” are the true Israel. In other words, the Church has not replaced Israel; but rather, the church is part of true Israel (1 Peter 2:4-10). This is what the Old Testament pointed to: one body of believers. It is the “mystery” referred to in the New Testament: the two have become one [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man, 2011+].

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?

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,

Hank Hanegraaff believes that “all Israel” includes all believers worldwide, not necessarily Israelis. We’re talking about true Israel. On the Day of Pentecost, many people became Jews. 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.

Hanegraaff strongly argues strongly against both a 7-year tribulation and a pretribulational Rapture. He insists that God will not deal separately with Israel in the future, and the Christian Church will not be removed from the earth at a so-called “Rapture”. Furthermore, there will not be a “rebuilt Temple” because sacrifices and sin offerings came to an end with Jesus Christ’s ultimate sacrifice.

God has only had one covenant community. “God is neither a racist nor a land broker”, argues Hanegraaff [Hanegraaff & Hitchcock, 2007]. “God does not put people on different footings. Throughout the entire Bible, God has one covenant community made from every tongue and tribe and language and people and nation.” In Scripture, there were people from other nations who turned to the God of Israel, and became part of the kingdom of believers. There are many examples, including Ruth, Rehab, many foreigners in the book of Esther (e.g., see Esther 8), many in the time of Christ, etc.
Hanegraaff 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. He warns people that John Hagee, for example, is incorrect in his teaching. Hagee believes that Jews can be saved without coming to Christ. 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.

Hanegraaff adds that dispensationalists could be viewed as replacement theologians because they “replace” the Church with Israel in the latter days!

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).

... 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).

... there is only one distinct plan [for salvation] ... The pretext that God postponed the original plan for Israel and initiated a parenthetical plan for the church that abruptly ends with a pretribulational rapture entirely misses the point.

First, far from the dispensational postponement of God’s original plan for Israel, Scripture reveals the distinct progression of the divine plan to establish through Israel a new humanity (Ephesians 2:15) in a new homeland ...” [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 49-51]

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]

Hanegraaff 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]

He 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]

The land promises that were fulfilled at the height of Solomon’s kingdom will find their permanent expression at the return of Jesus Christ.

Finally, we note that Christians and Jews share the Judeo-Christian heritage that many of us enjoyed in our upbringing. Hank Hanegraaff reminds us that we share common roots:

Jesus, the twelve apostles, and the apostle Paul were all Jewish! In fact, Christians proudly refer to their heritage as the Judeo-Christian tradition. In the book of Hebrews, Christians are reminded of Jews from David to Daniel who are members of the faith hall of fame. In fact, Christian children grow up with Jesus as their heroes! From their mothers’ knees to Sunday school classes, they are treated to Old Testament stories of great Jewish men and women of faith, from Moses to Mary and from Ezekiel to Esther.

The Bible goes to great lengths to underscore the fact that when it comes to faith in Christ, there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile (Galatians 3:38) and that Jewish people throughout the generations are no more responsible for Christ’s death than anyone else. As Ezekiel put it, “The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son” (Ezekiel 18:20). [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 105]

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<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Both Positions</th>
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<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>
<td>There are several times in Scripture when God’s plan went ahead on the “second try” [Missler, 2005]:</td>
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<td>• Abraham didn’t leave home the first time; he merely moved up river. After his father died, only then did Abraham leave.</td>
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- 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.

- 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.

- The tablets of the law (the 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.

- 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.

The dispensationalist view holds that, in the end times, the Israelites will come to salvation in Jesus Christ—they will recognize Jesus at the Second Coming, but only after looking for His return. Blindness will be lifted [Missler, 2012]:

Matthew 23:39  For I tell you, you will not see me [Jesus] again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Hosea 5:15  Then I [the Lord] 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."


Chapter 4: The Olivet Discourse: Signs of Christ’s Return; The Rapture

This chapter deals with several major, controversial doctrines. The Olivet Discourse is that portion of Scripture in which Christ answers the disciples’ questions about when He will return, and therefore, when the Messianic Kingdom would be established. Such questions were being asked because it became clear that most of Israel had rejected Jesus Christ as Messiah. Thus, the Messianic Kingdom was put on hold. The Olivet Discourse is the largest prophetic passage in the New Testament, apart from Revelation [Hart, 2011].

To answer the disciples’ questions, Christ gave numerous signs of events that will precede His Second Coming. That is the purpose of the current chapter.

Chuck Missler sometimes refers to the Olivet Discourse as an “intelligence briefing” by Jesus Christ to His disciples, on the Mount of Olives. It is one of the most important prophetic passages in the Bible. In Matthew 24-25, the Disciples wondered if “now” was in fact the time that Christ’s Kingdom would come. Christ’s Kingdom is the Millennial Kingdom, when He will literally rule and reign on the Earth. It is clearly described in the book of Revelation, but there are also many references to it outside of Revelation, including many places in the Old Testament.

The Rapture is another key term connected with the Olivet Discourse. It refers to the translation of the living believers, that is, the “snatching away of the saints”, when Christ takes believers to Heaven, and instantly gives them perfected/resurrected bodies that are never subject to death or decay. Dispensationalists argue that the Rapture is imminent, and occurs at least seven years prior to the return of Christ at Armageddon. Furthermore, during the 7-year period immediately preceding Armageddon, a major, well-defined event occurs: the Tribulation. Preterists, on the other hand, deny that such a rapture occurs; however, they agree that Christ will indeed return, and that there will be a physical resurrection. In particular, preterists believe that the following events occur simultaneously (or nearly simultaneously): Christ’s Second Coming, the resurrection of both the saved and the unsaved (i.e., the “rapture”), and the judgment of both believers and unbelievers.

Although some churches have divided (split) over the doctrines surrounding Christ’s Second Coming, many dispensationalist and preterist churches believe that we can debate these doctrines, showing respect for each other, but without dividing over these issues. After all, both groups agree that Christ will return; it’s just a matter of when, and of trying to fit the pieces together. Essential doctrines that both groups agree to, include: the notion of original sin; Christ’s virgin birth; His life, death, and resurrection; the fact that He will return; the judgment of the saved and the unsaved; the fact that there is a heaven and a hell; and the fact that the saved will have everlasting life in both physical and spiritual form.
### What specific questions were asked at the Olivet Discourse?

Clarification of the questions asked is paramount to our analysis in the rest of this Chapter.

| Both Positions | The Olivet Discourse took place in the last days of Christ’s life, after Christ left the Temple for the final time. The Second Temple had not been completed yet. As magnificent as the structure was at the time of Christ, it wouldn’t be completed until 64 AD.

The disciples’ three questions can be paraphrased as follows [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]:

1. When will Jerusalem and the Temple be destroyed?
2. What will be the sign of your Second Coming?
3. What will be the sign of the end of this age? |

| Matthew 24-25, Mark 13:3-37, and Luke 21:5-24 contain Christ’s Olivet Discourse—a major set of prophecies concerning the end times, given by Jesus Christ two days before his death. Matthew was written to a Jewish audience; Mark was written to a Roman audience; and Luke was written to a Greek audience. Incidentally, the book of John was written to the Christian Church. Secondly, Mark is not a first name; the author, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, is John Mark.

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: (a) the people of that day (circa 30 AD), (b) the people alive at the (pretribulational) Rapture, or (c) the people alive at the Second Coming of Christ?

Dispensationalists and preterists both agree that the Second Coming of Christ, that is, His physical return to Earth, will be a public event: the whole world will be able to see it; so, the debate seems to be between (a) and (b).

| Dispensationalist Position | There is some debate about the chronology of the events described in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. Some scholars believe the events are chronological, and mirror the order of the events given in Matthew 24:5-9 [Pentecost, 1958].

In general, when dispensationalists encounter the phrase: “This generation will not pass away until ...”, they think of the generation that will be alive to see the “signs of the times” of the days/years immediately prior to the Rapture. Sometimes, “this generation” is understood to be the generation that saw Israel become an independent nation again, in 1948. This is why... |
there is so much excitement among prophecy buffs today. Might the return of Jesus Christ be at hand?

David Hocking believes “this generation” refers specifically to the nation of Israel during the Great Tribulation [Hocking, 2013]. Arnold Fruchtenbaum concurs that it is the generation that says, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”, which occurs just before Christ’s Second Coming [Fruchtenbaum, 2004].

Matthew 23:36-39  I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation. ... For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Dispensationalists believe that the focus of the Olivet Discourse is Israel, rather than the Christian church. Preterists disagree. In fact, there are many controversies surrounding the events in the Olivet Discourse. Let us examine some of those Scriptures.

Matthew 24:3-22  As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.

"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

"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. ... Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. 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.

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.’

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.

“This generation” ... 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]

R.C. Sproul believes that the bulk of the Olivet Discourse, and a large part of Revelation, were fulfilled in 70 AD. Regarding the phrase in Matthew 24: “and then the end will come”, Sproul inquires whether this means the Temple, the end of the world, or the end of the age [Sproul, 1998]. And, if is the latter, does it mean the end of the Jewish age, and hence the start of the Christian age (i.e., the beginning of the age of the Gentiles)? He concludes that it cannot mean just the end of the Temple because, to this day, there are still parts of the world that haven’t heard the gospel; consequently, it must mean the end of the Jewish age. Incidentally, the noted philosopher, mathematician, and atheist Bertrand Russell believed that Jesus Christ was not God because His prophecy about “this generation” [seeing His physical return] never came true.

Consider the passage in Matthew 16:27-28: “there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man [Jesus] coming in His kingdom”. Sproul notes that the passage omits the Greek word parousia for
“coming” or “arrival”; therefore, “coming” must mean something other than the physical return of Jesus Christ—at least in this particular context.

Many commentators see this manifestation in various critical moments of redemptive history, such as Christ’s resurrection, his ascension, or Pentecost, all of which provide some outward manifestation of the kingly glory of Christ. [Sproul, 1998, p. 54]

Sproul concludes that the term “this generation” can only apply to the particular generation that was alive at the time that Jesus Christ (circa 30 AD) gave this prophecy. Christ did come in judgment in 70 AD, thus fulfilling the Olivet Discourse prophecy; however, He will come again.

When studying the Olivet Discourse, a question to ponder is whether or not Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 are parallel passages. Do they refer to the same events—or, might they be referring to similar, but distinct, events? Consider the gospel of Luke:

Luke 21:10-24 Then he [Jesus] said to them: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven. "But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. ... "When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. 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."

Note the words in Luke 21:12: “But before all this”, that is, before the beginning of sorrows (i.e., before false Christs, earthquakes, famines, pestilences, etc.), there would be a desolation of Jerusalem. Given that there was a desolation of Jerusalem in 70 AD, this seems to support both the dispensationalist and preterist camps, assuming that the beginning of sorrows is post-70 AD. (Note: The preterist camp actually has a weaker position because it claims that the beginning of sorrows occurred prior to 70 AD, even though there is no evidence of false Christs, earthquakes, famines, and pestilences—at least not to any significant degree—prior to 70 AD.)

Nevertheless, for both camps, “this generation” could mean the first generation, that is, the generation just after Christ’s death. On the other hand, note the words in Matthew 24: “After this”, that is, after the beginning of sorrows. This passage seems to support the dispensationalist camp only because it implies a desolation of Jerusalem that is well into the future (and
still not occurring to this day). After this time (still future), there would be a desolation of Jerusalem.

Thus, there appear to be two desolations of Jerusalem: one spoken of in Luke 21, and another in Matthew 24 [Missler, 2005b]. Some background information is valuable here: Bible scholars note that the gospel of Matthew was written to a Jewish audience, whereas the gospel of Luke was a chronological, historical account written by the physician Luke to a Gentile audience. The first desolation occurred in 70 AD. Historians such as Josephus estimate that about 1.1 million people died in this desolation of Jerusalem. We assume that many more would have been killed had they not heeded Jesus’ warning to flee from the city when the invading army surrounded the city ... and paused. Thus, Jesus’ advice was life-saving.

Missler argues that most Jews wouldn’t have been reading Matthew anyway (circa 70 AD), but many might be reading Matthew as a handbook during the last days, that is, during the second desolation of Jerusalem just before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. In other words, Matthew is writing to a Jewish audience that would be reading his book long after the Rapture, and that’s why Matthew speaks of watching for the Antichrist (Matthew 24:15) [Reagan, 2005]. These Jews would therefore be the last generation before the return of Jesus Christ. Thus, the words “this generation” could well cover both desolations, and this would still be consistent with dispensationalism. During the Tribulation, many Jews will come to Christ.

Note also that in Matthew 24:3 (and Mark 13:3), Scripture specifically says that a few of the disciples went to Jesus “privately” to ask him about the events, whereas in Luke 21:1-7, the word “privately” is not there. Luke’s version appears to capture Jesus’ discussion in the Temple, where there may have been a larger audience. A possible implication is that Matthew specifically refers to a timeframe that is of interest only to the Jews, perhaps because the Rapture would have taken place [Missler, 2005b], and because the Jews are alone in their land. As mentioned above, the gospel of Matthew was written to a Jewish audience, unlike the gospel of Luke. Furthermore, the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24-25 does not refer to the rapture, but rather to the Second Coming.

In summary, Luke seems to have the best fit with the first desolation of Jerusalem (70 AD), and Matthew likely corresponds to the second/future desolation of Jerusalem (i.e., during the end times).

With respect to the gospel being preached to all nation before the return of Jesus Christ, Thomas Ice argues that Matthew 24:14 and Revelation 14:6-7 are parallel passages that speak of worldwide evangelism, and this event was not fulfilled in the days prior to 70 AD [Ice, 2011g]. Ice argues that the event is truly about global evangelism rather than circa 70 AD “Roman
“Empire” evangelism, as some preterists such as Gary DeMar suggest. In particular, the passages from Matthew and Revelation both point to the middle of the Tribulation, around the time that the “mark of the beast” or “666” prophecy comes into play. The premise here is that before taking the mark of the beast, people all over the world will have an opportunity to hear the gospel and make their own personal decision about Jesus Christ. Furthermore, if DeMar is correct with his end times timeline, then this would water down Jesus’ Great Commission, that is, the fact that He would be with us “even to the end of the age”, which would imply 70 AD.

With respect to Christ having already come “in judgment” in 70 AD, Thomas Ice writes:

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]

As a postscript to this section, we note that the Christian Church is not mentioned in Revelation 4-18. It is mentioned 19 times in Chapters 1-3, but not once in the 12 chapters describing the Tribulation. Why is the Church absent? Dispensationalists argue that the events of Revelation 4-19 are post-Rapture. 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]

| Preterist Position | Preterists believe that “this generation” (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, says Hank Hanegraaff. Recall that Christ told the high priest: “You will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds …” which describes His vindication in 70 AD. “Some of you standing here won’t taste death [before the coming of the Lord].” [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man, 2011+]

Furthermore, Jesus drew reference to “the Days of Noah”—a time when unbelievers were taken away in judgment, and the righteous were left behind. The “Days of Noah” is not a rapture analogy because the believers were not the ones who were taken away. The clear meaning of the text implies the opposite. The Flood was a judgment.

The passage is not talking about the end of the world, or a tribulation of the 21st century; rather, it is talking about the end of the age in 70 AD; and a key part of this is the destruction of the Temple [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man, November 24, 2011].

In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus uses the language of the Old Testament prophets 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. Some authors claim that “this generation” can only be used with great difficulty to mean anything other than the audience of the writer’s day.

We emphasize that this “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 just 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]

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]

Believers all agree that Christ will return. One generation of Christ will not die, but this will occur at the return of Christ. There will not be a secret “Rapture” seven or more years before Christ’s Second Coming. Yes, there will be increasing persecution/tribulation before His return, but the Church will not be exempted from that tribulation. In other words, believers will go through “the Tribulation”.

... “this generation” appears with surprising regularity in the Gospels, and it always applies to Jesus’s contemporaries. In Matthew 11, Jesus asks, “To what can I compare this generation” (v. 16) ...

Jesus left no doubt that he was speaking of particularly those present as he continued his rebuke of the Pharisees and teachers of the law. “The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here” (Matthew 12:42). Jesus concluded his condemnation, saying, “That is how it will be with this wicked generation” (Matthew 12:45). [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 77-78]

Hank Hanegraaff quotes Bertrand Russell about some objections for why he is an unbeliever. These same points are echoed by dispensationalists as being unfulfilled in the first century:

Bertrand Russell, in Paul Edwards, ed., Why I Am Not a Christian: And Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1957), 16. Russell also wrote that “there are a great many texts [in the Gospels] that prove” that Jesus believed he would return within the lifetime of his original hearers, but he cites only two: “I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes” (Matthew 10:23), and “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” (Matthew 16:28; cf. Luke 9:27). ... There is no question that the Lord Jesus indicates in these passages that at least some of his disciples as well as enemies would remain alive until the prophesied events unfolded. What Russell missed through his negligent dismissal of Scripture was a correct understanding of what Jesus actually predicted would happen within the near future: not his bodily return to earth in the second coming, but his coronation as the true King by his death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of God, the manifestation of his kingdom through the power of the Holy Spirit, and climactically his vindication in the judgment on unbelieving Israel. [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 249]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Did Christ fulfill the three roles of prophet, priest, and king during His first coming?</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Dispensationalist Position | During His ministry on earth at His First Coming, Jesus functioned in the office of a prophet. But this ceased at the time of His death. Since His death and resurrection, and until He returns, He is functioning in the office of a priest. This duty will cease at the Second Coming. Jesus has never yet functioned in the office of a king. For Him to do so, there must be the reestablishment of the Davidic Throne upon which He will sit to rule as King over Israel and King of the World. This duty will begin at the Second Coming. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 434]  
During His last days on Earth, when the leaders of the people and many of the people themselves had rejected Jesus Christ as Messiah, Jesus spent most of the remaining time with His disciples. It is at this time that He gave the famous Olivet Discourse, and ate with them at the Last Supper. It was at this time that Christ’s role changed from prophet to priest.  
Following Christ’s Second Coming, and in particular, at the start of the Millennium, Jesus Christ will literally reign as king over all the earth. |
| Preterist Position | Similar to the preterist position |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is meant by the Greek word parousia—a term that is often associated with the End Times?</th>
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</table>
| Dispensationalist Position | Of the four gospels, the word parousia only appears in the book of Matthew, and in particular in Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 where it appears four times (verses 3, 27, 37, and 39) [Hitchcock, 2006b; Hart, 2011]. (The Olivet Discourse appears in three of the four gospels.)  
The leading Greek Lexicon of our day says parousia means “arrival as the first stage in presence, coming, advent,” and “of Christ, and nearly always of his Messianic Advent in glory to judge the world at the end of this age.” The Lexicon cites all four uses of parousia in Matthew 24 as a reference to Christ’s second advent. In fact, the Lexicon does not even recognize [Gary] DeMar’s stated meaning of a “non-presence coming” through the Roman Army as a possible category. The mother of all Greek word study tools, Kittel’s Dictionary, in concert with the Greek Lexicon, tells us that |
The core idea of the word means “to be present,” “denotes esp. active presence,” “appearing”. Kittel’s describes *parousia* as a technical term “for the ‘coming’ of Christ in Messianic glory”. Thus, *parousia* carries the idea of a “presence coming,” contra the preterist notion of a “non-presence coming,” an invisible coming. Our Lord’s use of *parousia* demands His physical, bodily presence. [Ice, 2012c]

The word *parousia* can refer to either the Rapture or the Second Coming of Christ (i.e., the physical return of Jesus Christ to Earth), but it could mean other 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.

*Parousia* always refers to the actual presence of Christ. Thus, a 70 AD “coming” of Christ cannot be what is intended by the text.

Furthermore, preterists claim that Matthew 24:4-35 refers to the past, and that starting with verse 36, it is in the future (i.e., the Second Coming of Christ). But the usage of the Greek word *parousia* is the same in verse 39 as in the earlier verses (i.e., “the coming of the son of man”); so, there should be consistency here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
<th>R.C. Sproul concurs that the word <em>parousia</em> is most closely associated with the physical return of Jesus Christ:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partial preterists make a sharp distinction between (1) the judgment-coming of Christ to the Jews at the end of the Jewish age and (2) his parousia and final coming to the world at the end of history. For the full preterist the great resurrection and the rapture occurred in the past. For the partial preterist they remain in the future. [Sproul, 1998, p. 170]</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is the Rapture? When will the Rapture occur? Who will be raptured? Is the Rapture really pretribulational? If so, where in Scripture is a pretribulational rapture specifically described or inferred? Who will participate in the Rapture?</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>[See the immediately succeeding sections/questions for more explanations about characteristics of—and events associated with—the Rapture.]</td>
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| Dispensationalist Position | The Rapture refers to the sudden, taking-away of believers from Earth to Heaven. This major event takes place seven or more years before Christ’s return to Earth at the Battle of Armageddon. The Rapture is a time of resurrection or bodily translation for believers (dead and alive) in Jesus Christ. The resurrected bodies are eternal—never subject to death, decay, disease, depression, etc. Other believers (i.e., Old Testament believers and post-Rapture believers) are resurrected after Christ’s Second Coming. Thus, the resurrection of the saved takes place in stages. The resurrection of the unsaved, however, takes place in one event at the Great White Throne Judgment. |

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Although Scripture doesn’t specifically refer to a pretribulational rapture, the circumstantial evidence for it 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 in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 to describe the Rapture is *harpazo* which means “forcibly snatch away” or “great snatch” [Missler, 2006]—or simply, “caught up” [Hitchcock, 2010]. The word “rapture” comes from a Latin translation of *harpazo*. Incidentally, the Latin Vulgate was the only Bible used by Western civilization for 1200 years.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 is the strongest passage that supports the Rapture. Let us quote the surrounding verses to give the context:

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep [died]. 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 [Greek: *harpazo*; Latin: *rapiemur*; English: raptured] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.

Note the words “in Christ”, “caught up” (*harpazo*), “we who are still alive”, and “in the air”. The “dead in Christ” refers only to Christians (and not to Old Testament Saints). Thus, this Scripture teaches that there will be a “caught up” or “snatching away” event, which we call “the Rapture”. The big debate among evangelical Christians, however, is not whether or not there is a rapture, but rather, what is the timing of the Rapture. Is the Rapture imminent, as dispensationalists believe—or is it after some well-defined set of events that are still in the future? If it is the latter scenario, does it imply a simultaneous (or near simultaneous) rapture and resurrection? If it is the former scenario, then this implies a pre-70th week of Daniel event, that is, an event that occurs before the start of a major prophetic event (which many evangelical Christians would be able to recognize, if they were on Earth at the time) called “The Tribulation”. Under this scenario, Christ will not return physically to set foot on the Earth until at least 7 years later.

Yet another question is whether or not the Antichrist will take credit for the Rapture—perhaps to gain the obedience of those who are left behind.

Also, note that 1 Thessalonians 4:18 has the words “encourage each other”. The Rapture is meant to be an encouragement to believers—an indicator that they would be spared from the Tribulation, which is part of God’s judgment.
on the world.

1 Thessalonians 1:10  ... Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

1 Thessalonians 5:9  For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Revelation 3:10  Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, 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.

Note in Revelation 3:10, that the “whole world” will be tested. This refers to the Tribulation. Since this passage was likely written around 95 AD, it implies a future time of worldwide trouble—and hence a time in which the Church will kept out of the Tribulation [Ice, 2012c].

Another important Scripture passage that is sometimes quoted as a Rapture passage is 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; but, it does not state whether or not the Rapture is pretribulational. Rather, it simply highlights 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:

1 Corinthians 15:51-52  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 at approximately the start of 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. Secondly, the Corinthians’ “last trumpet” is good news for believers; whereas, the Tribulation’s “last trumpet” signals judgment in a negative sense.

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 last 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]

There is no explicit reference in Scripture to the timing of the Rapture relative to other prophetic events, but there are many Scriptures, if taken in context, that provide strong circumstantial evidence of a rapture event before Christ’s Second Coming at Armageddon. Let us explore the verses that suggest a pretribulational rapture.

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]

The word “house” in the NIV is equivalent to the word “mansion” in the KJV. It refers to a temporary dwelling place, and has a spatial location. (Compare this to the argument that John 14:2-3 refers to receiving the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not have a spatial location, and the Holy Spirit came to the believers at Pentecost, rather than the other way around.) Furthermore, in John 14:1, the Scripture states that Christians are to be comforted with this message. Note, however, that the “rooms” or “mansions” are still future: upon death, believers do not immediately go to these residences; rather, we get these following the Rapture.

As mentioned previously, a strong argument in favor of a pretribulational rapture is the notion of *imminence*, that is, living in expectation of Christ’s coming *at any time*.

*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.*

On the other hand, if we are looking forward to the Tribulation rather than the Rapture, then this ignores the doctrine of imminence. Why? If we know that Christ cannot come back until *after* most of the events of Revelation play out, then we might decide to “coast along”, that is, wait until we see the
events of Revelation unfolding before we take prophecy and evangelism seriously. But, this is the opposite of what Christ commands. Recall that Revelation 1:3 promises a special blessing to those who study the words of Revelation:

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.

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.

Serious support for the pretribulational Rapture lies in the notion of imminence. Many signs precede the Second Coming, but none precede the Rapture. Thus, the Rapture could happen at any time, although not necessarily anytime soon. Preterists have a hard time arguing against imminence.

Here are some verses suggesting that Christ may remove believers from the Earth before the Tribulation, that is, before 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.

This passage was written by the Apostle Paul to the church at Thessalonica.
Most dispensationalists believe that it was written in response to false teachers instructing the Thessalonians that they were currently living in the Tribulation period. That new teaching (posttribulationism) upset and confused them, as it contradicted Paul’s (apparently) earlier teaching that the believers would be raptured before the Tribulation arrived. Paul wrote in response to this situation, that is, to set the record straight that he did not write such a letter.

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 is the Holy Spirit acting through the Church. The Holy Spirit is actively restraining evil. Once the church is raptured, this leaves some serious gaps in society.
  - An analogy: Think of the Church as being the offensive linemen in football. They act as blockers to prevent the defense (opposition) from tackling the quarterback. If the offensive line is suddenly taken out of the way, there will be a huge onrush.
  - The Christian Church acts as a stabilizing influence in society. Church members are by no means perfect; however, they act as “salt” in society to make a difference.
  - Christians are filled with the Holy Spirit; but as we read in Scripture, the filling is a continual process—because we “leak”.
- The lawless one (Antichrist) will be revealed.
- The Day of the Lord occurs.

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 says there could be 25 or more years between the Rapture and the Second Coming [LaHaye, 2009b]. No one, other than God, knows. Many souls could be saved between the time of the Rapture and the start of the Tribulation.

An event which seems to take place after the Rapture but before the start of the Tribulation is the establishment of a power base for the Antichrist, whereby he dominates other leaders from the revived Roman Empire, and is in a position to make and enforce an agreement/covenant with Israel, guaranteeing Israel’s safety.
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 traditions say that Enoch was born on—and later was translated (raptured) on—the Day of Pentecost (Sivan 6). The Day of Pentecost is also called the Feast of Weeks or Shavuot. 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 (i.e., the translation of Christians) on the Day of Pentecost? Note also that the Law was given to Moses on Mount Sinai 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]

Further insight into 2 Thessalonians 2:3 suggests that the apostasy referred to, may actually be an important, single event, as opposed to a lengthy downward slide into apostasy. The terms “apostasy”, “departure”, etc. in the various translations often neglect the important qualification: the word “the”. Thomas Ice and H. Wayne House believe that the Greek word apostasia has been mistranslated in some Bible versions, but properly translated in others. Ice suggests the best translation is “the departure”, and therefore, this

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passage is a rapture passage [Ice, 2014a]. The KJV was one of the first translations to stray away from “departure” mentioned in older translations of the Bible. Here are some words used to translate *apostasia*:

- “departure” or “departing” (used in these Bible translations: Wycliffe (1384), Tyndale (1526), Coverdale (1535), Cranmer (1539), Breeches (1576), Beza (1583), Geneva (1608))
- “a falling away” (KJV)
- “the apostasy” (NASB)
- “the rebellion” (NIV)

For example, here is the translation from the popular New American Standard Bible (NASB):

2 Thessalonians 2:3  Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

Here is the translation from the New King James Version (NKJV):

2 Thessalonians 2:3  Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,

Ice argues that a slow, steady slide into apostasy isn’t the focus here. Several books in the New Testament warn about apostasy being present in the first century. Thus, if the Thessalonians were worried about being in the Tribulation, it wouldn’t make sense if Paul wrote that it (the Tribulation) couldn’t have happened yet because “apostasy” hadn’t occurred. It appears that apostasy had already occurred! Instead, what Paul may have meant was that “the departure” had to occur first. And, this is not a departure from the faith; but, a unique, definite departure event, which we call the Rapture.

Let us take a second look at verses in this context, with comments added:

2 Thessalonians 2:1-8  Concerning the coming [return] of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him [in 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 [the Tribulation] has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day [the Tribulation] 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, 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 [the Holy Spirit working through the Church] 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 that the “man of lawlessness” is referenced three times in this passage: once in verse 3, and twice in verses 7 and 8. Thus, it may well be that apostasia really is “the departure” or “the Rapture”.

J.B. Hixson summarizes and paraphrases 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 as follows:

My Thessalonian brethren—concerning the Lord’s coming to rescue us from the Day of the Lord’s wrath, which I have already told you about in my first letter, I ask you not to be worried or shaken in your faith. I realize that some false teachers are suggesting that the Day of the Lord has already begun and that you are about to face the full force of God's wrath on earth.

But don't believe it! Don't be deceived. Remember, as I said before, the Day of the Lord will not begin until after you depart from this earth! And not only that, but before the Day of the Lord can begin, the man of sin—the antichrist—must be unveiled first.

Since neither of these things has happened—the departure and the revelation of the antichrist—you cannot possibly be in the Day of the Lord. So fear not! And be aware that when the antichrist does come, after you have all been rescued from this present evil age (Gal. 1:4), he will bring terrible deception and lying wonders on the earth and many will perish because they never believed the Gospel. [Hixson, 2014]

Let us take a closer look at the “mystery” of the Christian church. The Christian Church is sometimes referred to as a “mystery” or “mystery Kingdom”, because it is a major part of God’s revelation that was not revealed in the Old Testament. What might be the reasons for this?

The establishment of the Mystery Kingdom came as a result of the rejection of the Messianic Kingdom. The parables of Matthew 13 describe the mystery form of the Kingdom Program.

The timing of the Mystery Kingdom program can be stated generally as falling between the First and Second Comings of the Messiah. But to be more specifically correct, it begins with the rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus by Israel (Mat. 12-13) and ends with the acceptance of the Messiahship of Jesus by Israel (Mat. 23:37-39; 24:1-25:46). [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]

Arnold Fruchtenbaum remarks that the Mystery Kingdom is described in 9 parables. Some Bible translations use the “Kingdom of Heaven is like...” to interpret these parables:
1. The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:3-9,20-23)
2. The Parable of the Seed (Mark 4:26-29)
3. The Parable of the Tares (Weeds) (Matthew 13:24-30,36-43)
4. The Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31-32)
5. The Parable of the Leaven (Matthew 13:33)
6. The Parable of the Hidden Treasure (Matthew 13:44)
7. The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price (Matthew 13:45-46)
8. The Parable of the Fishing Net (Matthew 13:47-50)
9. The Parable of the Householder (Matthew 13:52)

Why did Christ speak in parables?

... the parabolic form of teaching allowed Him to simultaneously conceal and reveal. Christ desired to conceal truth from the nation since they had already rejected the offer of the kingdom (Matt. 12). Such concealment was actually merciful since the disclosure of more truth would have brought first-century Israel into even greater condemnation. Earlier, Christ had explained that greater revelation brings forth greater accountability (11:20-24). The disclosure of more truth to the nation at this point would not have helped Israel but rather would have only increased her degree of discipline since she had already chosen to reject the kingdom offer. [Woods, 2012e]


There have been a number of people who have been raptured in history, and were mentioned in the Bible. Thomas Ice lists them, and summarizes the strength of the Rapture position as follows. I am quoting his work because of its thoroughness:

... 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—Genesis 5
• Elijah—2 Kings 6
• Isaiah—Isaiah 6
• Philip—Acts 8
• Paul—2 Corinthians 12
• Two Witnesses—Revelation 11
• Male Child (Jesus)—Revelation 12

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

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 view[ed] 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 emphasize the rapture as a distinct event, merge it into the 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 covenental 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]

David Reagan comments on the argument of “refining” Christians via the Tribulation:

Some may argue that the Church must be “purged” during the Tribulation to purify it. But to me, this idea is absurd. The blood of Jesus is sufficient to cleanse us of all our sins. That is an accomplished fact for those who have put their faith in Jesus (Eph. 5:26-27).

Furthermore, the concept of purging the Church during the Tribulation converts the whole period into a Protestant version of purgatory.

It also violates the wedding imagery that the Bible uses to describe the relationship between Christ and His Church. Jesus is not going to beat up His Bride for seven years and then marry her! [Reagan, 2009b]

The Rapture will hardly be a secret coming. Non-believers will see the results. Scripture says that the event will be “with a loud command ... with the trumpet call of God” (1 Thessalonians 4:16)—“at the last trumpet” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

What are some of the differences between the Rapture and the Second Coming? Here is a table that provides a summary of differences between the Rapture of the Church and the Second Coming of Christ—two different phases of end-time events [House & Price, 2003; Missler, 2006; Hitchcock, 2011c]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rapture</th>
<th>Second Coming</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imminent (can occur at any moment)—1 Corinthians 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 4:16-18; 5:1-5,12; James 5:7-9</td>
<td>Follows a definite set of predicted signs (70th week of Daniel, i.e., 7 years)—Daniel 9:24-27, Matthew 24:4-29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Is a resurrection (translation) event—1 Corinthians 15:51-52
Christ comes for His own, meaning the Church is removed (i.e., believers (translated saints) are taken away to Heaven)—John 14:2-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17
Unbelievers remain on Earth; however, some (probably many millions) become believers later on, and will enter the Millennial Kingdom in their earthly bodies
Not in the Old Testament (i.e., a “mystery” revealed post-Christ)—1 Corinthians 15:51-52
Before the day of wrath—1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 4:18; 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2; Revelation 3:10-11
Christ gathers the elect (believers) —1 Thessalonians 4:16-17
Only His own see Him
Believers will be taken away quickly—in the blink of an eye—1 Corinthians 15:51-52
He comes in the air (not setting foot on Earth, yet) —1 Thessalonians 4:16-17
Precedes the Bema Judgment Seat of Christ (where rewards are to be given); occurs years before the Battle of Armageddon; occurs years before the Millennial Kingdom
Precedes the Day of the Lord
Tribulation begins

Is not a resurrection (translation) event
Translated saints return to Earth—1 Thessalonians 3:13; Jude 14
Unbelievers are taken away—Matthew 24:37-41; Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet are taken away—Revelation 19:20; 20:1-3
Predicted in the Old Testament—in various places
At the end of the day of wrath
Angels gather the elect—Matthew 24:31
Every eye shall see Him, including all Israel and the Gentiles
The entire world will see him—Matthew 24:27; Revelation 1:7
He comes to the Earth—Zechariah 14:4
Occurs near the end of the Battle of Armageddon; precedes the judgment of Jews and Gentiles; just precedes the Millennial Kingdom—Matthew 25:31-46
Is part of the Day of the Lord—a time of destruction and judgment
Tribulation ends, Millennium begins shortly thereafter

Thomas Ice provides a table of Scripture passages that distinguish between the Rapture from the Second Coming [Ice, 2014c]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rapture</th>
<th>Second Coming</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John 14:1-3</td>
<td>2 Thessalonians 2:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romans 8:19</td>
<td>1 Timothy 6:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Corinthians 1:7</td>
<td>2 Timothy 4:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Corinthians 15:51</td>
<td>2 Timothy 4:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colossians 3:4</td>
<td>1 Peter 1:7,13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Thessalonians 1:10</td>
<td>1 Peter 5:4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Thessalonians 2:19</td>
<td>1 John 2:28-3:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Thessalonians 5:9</td>
<td>Revelation 2:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Thessalonians 5:23</td>
<td>Revelation 3:10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Who will participate in the Rapture? (a) All believers in Jesus Christ—young and old, dead or alive; and probably (b) all people before “the age of accountability” because they have are not able to make a decision for, or reject, Jesus Christ. This latter category includes fetuses and many handicapped individuals. Scripture implies that this category of individuals will go to Heaven; however, it is not clear whether they will actually be taken to Heaven at the time of the Rapture. For example, consider children in a non-Christian family. Those children will presumably be able to make a decision for or against Jesus Christ in the years following the Rapture, but prior to Christ’s physical return.

Most dispensationalists believe that all believers in Christ will be taken up in the Rapture, and not just those who are waiting for Christ’s return. However, some authors believe in a partial rapture, where only those who are waiting and watching for the Lord’s return are raptured.

Matthew 13 gives the parable of the wheat and the tares (weeds). Christ says that the wheat and the weeds will grow in the same field, until the time of the “harvest” (return of Christ). The wheat represents the saved, whereas the weeds represent the unsaved. At Christ’s return (after the Tribulation), the tares will be gathered to be burned; but the wheat will be gathered into the Master’s barn, which refers to the Millennial Kingdom.

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.

The notion that millions of people will suddenly disappear, while the rest of Earth’s inhabitants are left behind, is nonsense, say many non-dispensationalists. This is a fairly new development in the two hundred years that the early church did not share. Authors such as Hal Lindsey and Tim LaHaye have been instrumental in advancing the notion of the Rapture.

Hank Hanegraaff argues that there are no clear Scriptures that indicate a pretribulational rapture. Even Darby, in the 1800s, decided that there are an earthly people (the Jews) and a heavenly people (the Christians). He indicated that the Scriptures should be contextualized according to those Scriptures that apply to the Jews, and those that apply to the Church. Prior to the 19th century, almost all believers believed that the Rapture and resurrection were simultaneous events.

Thomas Ice writes, “No single Bible verse says precisely when the Rapture will take place in relation to the Tribulation or the Second Coming in a way that would settle the issue to everyone’s satisfaction.” Ice goes
on to argue that the teaching in Scripture on the pretribulational rapture is like that of the Incarnation or the Trinity, which are “the product of harmonizing the many passages that relate to these matters.” While he thinks the Scriptures teach “a clear position” on the pretribulation rapture, he acknowledges that this doctrine depends on “four affirmations,” none of which is uncontroversial. Says Ice, “Four affirmations provided a biblical framework for the Pretribulational Rapture: They are (1) consistent literal interpretation, (2) Premillennialism, (3) futurism, and (4) a distinction between Israel and the church. These are not mere suppositions, but rather are important biblical doctrines upon which the doctrine of the Rapture is built” (Thomas Ice, “Why I Believe the Bible Teaches the Rapture Before Tribulation,” http://www.pre-trib.org/pdf/Ice-WhyIBelieveTheBibleTe.pdf [accessed December 30, 2006], emphasis in original). Moreover, Gary DeMar elegantly refutes likening the pretrib rapture to the doctrines of the Incarnation and Trinity: “The incarnate nature of Christ can be proved by citing just two verses: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth’ (John 1:1,14). The Trinity is equally easy to prove: the Father is God (1 Cor. 8:6); Jesus is God (John 1:1); the Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4); and there is only one God (1 Tim. 2:5). Unlike the pretrib Rapture, these two doctrines have been part of church history for centuries” (DeMar, End Times Fiction, 219n4). [quoted in Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 246-247]

Hank Hanegraaff argues that the Scriptures only reveal one chosen people, not two. It includes both Jews and Gentiles—whoever puts their faith in Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:9-10 But you [Christians] are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

As for the Rapture, 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. It’s just that there is no secret rapture beforehand. The early church concurs.

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. When will we meet Him in the air? Upon His return to Earth, that is, upon His first return since His ascension around 30 AD. There will not be a two-phase future return. This is a picture from Old Testament times about people who leave their village to meet an incoming king out in the country, and then lead him into their village.
Furthermore, the event is hardly a secret or quiet event. Scripture says that there will be “a loud command”, “the voice of the archangel”, and “the trumpet call of God”.

Instead, the event is a simultaneous rapture/resurrection event. It focuses on resurrection, not on “the Rapture”. First, the Lord returns; then, the dead rise (i.e., they are given resurrected bodies); and then, we who are alive will also be changed, that is, given resurrected/perfected bodies.

Furthermore, the passage about the “lawless one” in 2 Thessalonians 2 (i.e., the “Day of the Lord” judgment in 70 AD) is not related to the 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 resurrection passage; the latter is in the future.

It is dangerous for dispensationalists to say that there is a pretribulational 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.

In the Matthew 13 passage, note the ordering: first the weeds (analogy: unsaved) were gathered together in bundles to be burned, and then the wheat (analogy: saved individuals) was gathered together. This contradicts the ordering found in a pretribulational rapture. Similarly, with the two men who are in the field: one will be taken, the other left behind. (By the way, the harvesters in the parable refer to angels.)

Secondly, in the Matthew 24 passage, reference is made to the “days of Noah”. In the days of Noah, who were the people who were taken away? They were unsaved individuals. The Flood was a judgment against sin. “Taken” means “taken in judgment”. Thus, it is not a Rapture passage.

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.
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]

Hanegraaff 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 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...
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]

Did the Jews in Old Testament times, or even in the time of Christ, expect two comings of the Messiah? Most didn’t, but the Scriptures speak of both a conquering Messiah and a “suffering servant” type of Messiah. So, how can both of these be reconciled? The answer is: through two comings of Christ. With the New Testament, the case is made clear. The New Testament shines light on the shadows of the Old Testament.

Is there any Biblical evidence of a pretribulational rapture? No.

Will there be reinstituted sacrifices in a rebuilt temple? No.

Will animal sacrifices after Jesus Christ’s death on the cross be efficacious for the forgiveness of sin? No; yet dispensationalists claim that this will happen during the Millennium. The “Millennium”, however, comes from the erroneous, literal interpretation of a 1000-year period (mentioned in Revelation) that should be taken metaphorically.

Is there any Biblical evidence that people can be saved after the Second Coming of Christ? No; but the pretribulational Rapture model with its 7-year Tribulation and 1000-year Millennium says that people can be saved during that 1007-year, or longer, timeframe.

The timing of the Rapture is something that we can vigorously debate in Christian circles, but it is not something that we need to divide over, says Hanegraaff. It may be an important issue to discuss, but it is not an essential issue. Evangelical Christians can agree on the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and, of course, on the fact that Christ will come again, and that there will be a future resurrection and judgment.

<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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>Amillennialism claims that there will be no future Millennial period (of 1000 years) when Christ literally rules and reigns on planet Earth, after His bodily return to Earth. The claim is that the “Millennium” referred to in Revelation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
is a general term given to the Church age: that period of time between Christ’s first and second comings.

Amillennialism was not a view held by the early church (there is no record of it [LaHaye & Hindson, 2004]), but it came on the scene with Augustine (354-430 AD) when he abandoned premillennialism [Ice, 2009f]. Chuck Missler remarks, “Most people are victims of Church history, and Church history is pretty dismal from Augustine on. They did a lot of good things, but they also perpetuated some falsehoods that have become [indoctrinated] into most of the major denominations.” [Missler, 2004] Many Catholics and Protestants today still hold to some of the views of Augustine [Reagan, 2005].

David Reagan grew up in a church that taught amillennialism [Reagan, 2013]. He was taught that Christ would not set foot on Earth again. When young David read Zechariah 14, he was stunned by what he read. Could his pastor be wrong? So, at age 12, he faced his pastor “with fear and trembling”. He was informed that all of the Old Testament prophecies have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, most people in his church only had a New Testament. Even, when a seminary student came to preach, similar words were used. The student told David that passages such as Zechariah 14 were “apocalyptic” and were not meant to be taken literally.

Thus, like many other Christians at the time, David’s formative years gave him a non-literal, allegorical interpretation of Scripture with an emphasis on replacement theology. Some pastors even claimed that it was sinful to pray the Lord’s Prayer because it said, “Thy Kingdom Come”. Finally, around age 30, David read the minor prophets; and again, the book of Zechariah was a turning point. He realized that every one of those prophecies meant what they said … and the same with the rest of the Bible.

Amillennialists “spiritualize” the future role and rule of Christ. For example, they might say, “Christ will rule in our hearts”, implying that Christ will not be returning physically to rule and reign on planet Earth. Dispensationalists, however, believe that Christ will return bodily, and that He will reign: (a) in person (physically) over many people groups during the Millennium, as well as (b) “in our hearts”.

For every prophecy in the Bible about Christ’s first coming, there are eight about His Second Coming [Missler, 2005]. There is every reason to believe that these promises will be literally fulfilled. Millennialism is the view of the first two centuries of the early church. They believed in a tangible, literal, physical, geographical, earthly, moral, and ethical kingdom [Woods, 2013b]. Old Testament writings expressed the same opinion, and the New Testament confirms, rather than refutes Millennial teachings. The Jews of Christ’s day held the same position, and Christ would have corrected their
misunderstanding.

Preterism is a form of amillennialism, since it assumes that most of the prophecies of Revelation are in the past, and that there will not be a future Millennium.

Postmillennialists believe the Millennium has already taken place. Variants of postmillennialism include reconstructionism, Kingdom Now theology, or Dominion theology, which believe that the Church needs to “prepare the world for the return of Jesus Christ” [Missler, 2005]. The idea is that once the world is in the right (positive) state, and the Church rules the world, then Christ will return.

Postmillennialists believe that the Kingdom of God is now extended through teaching, preaching, evangelization, and missionary activities. The world is to be Christianized, and the result will be a long period of peace and prosperity called the Millennium. This will be followed by Christ’s return. This position is seemingly gaining more adherents in contemporary circles ...” [House & Price, 2003, p. 136].

Conversely, premillennialists believe that things generally won’t get better, and that the world will require the return of Jesus Christ to get better.

Are postmillennialists correct in claiming that Christ ruled out a literal, earthly kingdom?

John 18:36 Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."

There are three points to note:

First, Christ made this statement very late in His ministry. By this time, the offer of the kingdom that had been extended to first-century-Israel (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:5-7) had already been rejected (Matt. 12:24) and taken off the table (Matt. 21:43) ...

Second, the final clause of John 18:36 contains the Greek word νῦν, which is typically translated “now.” This final clause could therefore be translated, “but now My kingdom is not from here” (NKJV; italics added). Thus, the idea is “My kingdom is not now established.” In other words, Christ was not denying the kingdom’s ultimate arrival upon earth. Rather, he was only denying its immediate arrival.

Third, rather than denying its future, terrestrial reality, Christ was here simply making a statement as to His kingdom’s ultimate origin or source ... Because the kingdom ultimately originates from heaven, it is referred to as “the kingdom of heaven” by John (Matt. 3:1-2), Christ (Matt. 4:17), and the Twelve (Matt. 10:5-7). Christ simply explains that the future kingdom, which will one day come to the earth, ultimately originated from or is sourced in heaven. [Woods, 2014b]
Here is a summary of the theological perspectives on the final three chapters of the Bible (i.e., Revelation 22-23) [House & Price, 2003]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postmillennial</th>
<th>Victory of Christianity over the world</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amillennial</td>
<td>Coming of Christ; judgment; eternal state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premillennial</td>
<td>Literal millennial reign; Great White Throne Judgment; New Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Missler thinks that part of the blame for the Holocaust needs to be placed at the feet of amillennialism—“from Augustine to Auschwitz”. In particular, some pastors who adhered to amillennialism kept silent during the Holocaust. Missler warns that this sad mistake is likely to be repeated [Missler, 2005].

Since the early 1600s, amillennialism has remained the only significant view of eschatology within the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, while it has been in steady decline within Protestantism.

... The greatest problem with amillennialism is the fact that the Bible just does not teach it. [LaHaye & Hindson, 2004, p. 19]

In summary, the notion of a future, 1000-year Millennium should be taken literally. The number “thousand” is used many times in Scripture. A 1000-year dispensation would be consistent with the notion of 6 days of creation times 1000 years (2 Peter 3:8)—for example: 6000 years since Adam, 4000 years since Abraham, 3000 years since David, and 2000 years since Christ. The number “7” speaks of perfection, and it is an interesting pattern: 7 times 1000 years, although one cannot be dogmatic about this.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
<th>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.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Throughout Scripture, the word “thousand” is used metaphorically: the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10), a thousand generations (Exodus 20:6), Samson killed a thousand men (Judges 15:15), with the Lord a day is like a thousand years (2 Peter 3:8), etc. Thus, it is not meant to be taken literally.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Topic/Question | Was the pretribulational Rapture theory invented during the 1800s by John Nelson Darby? Is there any evidence for a two-phase coming of Christ? Did the early church believe in the premillennial, pretribulational return of Christ? What Rapture position do most churches take today? |
| Dispensationalist Position | Eschatology is the last part of systematic theology (i.e., the study of Christian doctrine/dogma) to be developed [Ice, 2011f]. Ecclesiology is also a late part, and the relationship or distinction between the Church and Israel is a big part of this.

One’s hermeneutics determines one’s eschatology [Missler, 2006]. *Hermeneutics* is the art and science of Biblical interpretation. Those who take the Bible literally are more likely to be in the premillennial camp. Those who allegorize prophetic teachings are more likely to be in the amillennial or postmillennial camps. Within the premillennial camp, we have pre-trib, mid-trib, pre-wrath, and post-trib rapture scenarios. Most denominations today fall into the amillennial and posttribulationist camps, whereas most fundamentalist Christian churches fall into the premillennial and pretribulationist camps [Missler, 2006].

Regardless of the position of the early Christians, Daniel 12:4 states: “But you Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end.” This suggests that towards the time of the end, more events would become clear regarding prophecy. Recall that much of what is written in the book of Daniel was prophetic, including some very specific details about world empires (now historical), the first coming of Christ, and about end-times prophecy (e.g., the 70th week of Daniel, the Antichrist, military alliances). Daniel didn’t understand some of these prophecies, nor was he expected to; but, he wrote about them under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Contrast these two verses to the book of Revelation—the final book of the New Testament—which brings the canon of Scripture (i.e., the Bible) to a close:

> Revelation 22:10 Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near.

Contrary to those who claim that the pre-trib Rapture theory originated with John Nelson Darby around 1830, it should be noted that some of the early Christians believed in a two-phase Second Coming of Jesus Christ: first the Rapture, then a return following the Tribulation. Secondly, to provide reasons and evidence that Darby did not initiate the dispensationalist |
position, William Watson has written a scholarly book entitled Dispensationalism before Darby [Watson, 2015].

The Shepherd of Hermes (circa 110 AD) contains a pretribulational explanation of escaping the Tribulation:

If you then prepare yourselves, and repent with all your heart, and turn to the Lord, it will be possible for you to escape it [The Tribulation], if your heart is pure and spotless. [Quoted in [Reagan, 2005, p. 218]]

Writings about Christ’s imminent return are also found in The Didache (60-100 AD) and The Epistle of Barnabas (130-131 AD) [Reagan, 2005].

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, 2001a]

For the first few centuries after Christ, the Church was premillennial [Feinberg, 1980; House & Price, 2003]. By the 4th or 5th century AD, the amillennialism of Origen and Augustine was preached, and futurism died out. Despite interpreting a lot of Scripture literally, Augustine believed that much of prophecy, especially Revelation, was to be taken symbolically or metaphorically. Origen and Augustine allegorized Scripture, and implied that Scripture had more than one meaning. Augustine tried to explain away the Rapture, the Millennium, and the new Earth. He claimed that the Rapture occurs upon the return of Christ, not before—and without a material universe. His view was adopted by the Catholic Church in 431 AD.

Today, we realize that amillennialism is likely incorrect. 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 pretribulational rapture. For example, suppression of premillennial writings came from both Protestant and Catholic circles, and “blasphemous” books were burned [Ice, 2011f]. Thus, we see an immediate bias against premillennialism, in spite of the strong evidence that supports it.

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—in a language that they could understand
better hermeneutics (Biblical interpretation) and historical exegesis (i.e., understanding the author’s intended meaning), including more of an emphasis on literal interpretation rather than allegorical interpretation
more Protestants came into contact with Jews, and learned Hebrew

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 pretribulational rapture included Increase Mather, Thomas Collier (1674), Peter Jurieu (1687), Philip Doddridge (1738), John Gill (1748), James Macknight (1763), and Thomas Scott (1792).

Thomas Ice has been researching historical Church positions regarding the Rapture, Tribulation, and Millenium—arguing that Darby’s explanation is not “new” but rather a truth held by many theologians. Here are four examples from Dr. William Watson’s paper “Pretribulational Rapture in 17th & 18th Century England”, with their original English spelling (see also [Watson, 2015]):

Robert Maton (1607-1653) in *Israel’s Redemption* (1642) says, “why shall the elect onely be gathered together and the rest be left behind ... they shall be left, either to perish in that great destruction, which shall come upon all Nations that fight against the Jewes, whom our Saviour shall then redeem: Or to bee eyewitnesses of Gods wonders in all Countreys at that time.”

Nathaniel Homes (1599-1678) in *The Resurrection Revealed* (1653) says, “Everyone (or, all mankind) shall rise in their order, Christ the first fruits ... afterwards, they that are Christs at his coming ... notes a distance of time of above a thousand and a halfe of yeers ... the rapture of the Saints into the clouds, to be their present translation into heaven ... this our gathering together unto Christ at his coming (so the Apostle calls this rapture, 2 Thess.2.1.) we shall from henceforth never lose his presence, but always enjoy it. Partly on earth, during his reign of the thousand yeers, and partly in heaven, when wee shall be translated thither. [Why] this rapture of the Saints on high to meet the Lord in the clouds, rather than to wait his coming to the earth. What if it bee, that they may be preserved during the conflagration of the earth, and the works thereof, 2 Pet.3.10. That as Noah, and his family were preserved from the deluge, by being left up above the waters in the Ark, so should the Saints at the conflagration bee lift up in the clouds unto their Ark, Christ, to be preserved there from the Deluge of fire, wherein the wicked shall be consumed?”

William Sherwin (1607-1687) in *Eirenikon: or a Peaceable consideration of Christ’s Peaceful Kingdom on Earth* (1665) says, “... he will raise all his people that then sleep in the grave, to raigin on earth with him, till the great multitude of their fellow-members be come in. This Doctrine many of the ancient Fathers acknowledged ... Justine Martyr ... Irenaeus ... Tertullian ... even Augustine sometime held it, though by the subtlety of
Satan, forgeinglyes to asperse the Millenary opinion, and stirring men up
to foist in offensive errours ... in these latter times hath again discovered it,
after so many hundred years of its lying hid for the most part in the
Church, to be a doctrine really embraced by his faithful people [who] will
doubtless certainly know, that upon their rapture to meet Christ, they shall
be perfected in glory evermore in heaven.”

John Mason (1646-1694) in The Midnight Cry (1691) says ... “When ‘the
times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled’ Christ ... will reign here upon earth
... there will be a Tribulation. This goes before the Destruction of Babylon
... Then comes the Conversion of the Jews: the appearance of the Son of
Man, the Tribes mourning ... ‘then shall two be in the Field, the one shall
be taken, and the other left.’ ” [Ice, 2013a, pp. 4-5]

Morgan Edwards (founder of Brown University) wrote in 1742-1744 about a
distinct rapture taking place 3½ years before the start of the Millennium. His
writings include mention of the disappearance of earthly saints to a John
14:2-3 home for a 3½ year period [Ice, 2011f] ... but note that this is
definitely pretribulational. His writings are pre-Darby (1830). Edwards
separates the Rapture from the Second Coming, stating that millions and
millions of saints will accompany Christ (i.e., Adam to current believers),
and that they would arrive at the Mount of Olives. Thomas Ice comments
that Edwards hand-wrote 140 sermons, and it’s unlikely that Darby read
Edwards. Other people, including Darby in his early years of writing, also
believed in a 3½ year period; however, Darby later changed his position to 7
years.

Premillennialism was revived as part of Protestantism between the 16th and
17th centuries [Ice, 2010d]; but, it was part of historicism rather than
futurism. Historicism gave way to futurism in the mid-1800s, starting in
Great Britain.

Darby advanced pre-trib futurism in 1826 or 1827 through the Brethren
movement. His understanding of the doctrine came through careful study of
the Scriptures rather than through some special revelation or invention.
Darby believed that the Christian church (circa 30 AD) interrupted the
fulfillment of most of the Biblical prophecies—and that the eventual
fulfillments would take place post-Rapture [Ice, 2010d]. Others who
promoted the doctrine around that time included Emanuel Lacunza, Edward
Irving, and Margaret McDonald [Missler, 2005]. In the first half of the 20th
century, other believers in a pretribulational rapture included James H.
Brookes, J.R. Graves, William Blackstone (Jesus is Coming (1878)), C.I.
Scofield (Scofield Reference Bible (1909)), Arno Gaebelein, A.J. Gordon,
James M. Gray, R.A. Torrey, Harry Ironside, and Lewis S. Chafer.

Some may ask: If the early church was pre-trib, why is there little evidence
of this? Thomas Ice gives several reasons [Ice, 2011f]:

First, although preterists may claim that documents about dispensationalism
are “missing” from the early church records, we should note that there probably were not that many documents (of any kind) to begin with. Remember, the Bible itself was “hidden” from most people until the 1500s. Only 1 in 2,500 people could even read back then. Furthermore, Hebrew and Greek were not readily studied. Preterists are also “missing” documentation. If the history of preterism were to be compiled, we would have a hard time finding people prior to the 1820s who were preterists.

Second, some post-apostolic writings, and even New Testament writings, indicate that the early church had some trouble even presenting the gospel accurately; therefore, it is not surprising that there wasn’t a propagation of pretribulational eschatology. In other words, the early church got some things wrong; so, even if a document on prophecy does not endorse the pre-trib view, it does not necessarily mean that the document’s position is correct.

Third, we are gradually discovering more early-church documents that imply both premillennialism and imminence (imminence was common until about 150 AD), which in turn help to support a pre-trib view. Ice argues that there are at least four criteria in early church writings that support a pre-trib argument, even if the writer did not explicitly state that he/she was pre-trib:

- Any mention that there is more than one phase to Christ’s future coming (i.e., that there is any interval of time between two stages of His coming)
- Any mention of Christ removing the Church
- Any resurrection of removed persons prior to His Second Coming
- Any distinction between Israel and the Church

For example, the Pseudo-Ephraim document (circa 300 AD), which was likely authored by followers of Ephraim who wrote under his name, makes reference to two distinct comings of Christ and a period of time between those two comings [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007]. The author(s) assumed a 3.5-year Tribulation, not a 7-year one; however, they believed that the Church would be removed from Earth prior to the Tribulation. A theme of the document was that of being “prepared”—a clear reference to imminence.

Thus, many pretribulational publications existed long before Darby.

Incidentally, the term Maranatha (Aramaic: “ouf Lord come”) was a greeting used by the first-century church to indicate that the Lord could return at any moment (1 Corinthians 16:22). Thus, it demonstrated an eager expectation on the part of the early Christians.

It is interesting to note that 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]. Then, in the 1970s, Hal Lindsey’s *New York Times*’ best-seller *The Late Great Planet Earth* caused worldwide interest in the pre-trib Rapture. Since then, much pre-trib literature, including the highly successful *Left Behind* series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins, has been published.

It’s hard to say what the Catholic church’s official eschatological view is. Catholics have had different views over time. Late in the 1500s, 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 most systematic theologians seem to agree that the early Church was premillennial in its eschatology, with some aspects possibly being pretribulation [House, 2010].

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.”

History has shown that what gets taught in academia is what filters through to the next generation [Ice, 2011f].

The partial and mid-trib rapture positions were developed in the 1900s:

> “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]

Unlike dispensationalist premillennialists, historic premillennialists such as Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, and Tertullian believed that the Church would go through a period of trial and persecution before Christ’s return, and that the Church “will fail in her mission, lose influence, and become corrupted as worldwide evil increases toward the end of the Church Age” (Gentry, quoted in [Sproul, 1998, p. 199]). Furthermore, the Rapture, resurrection, and judgment will occur upon Christ’s return and will be done “in the twinkling of an eye”, as per 1 Corinthians 15:51-52. Following this, Christ will fight at the Battle of Armageddon, bind Satan, and establish a worldwide, political kingdom for 1,000 years. At the end of the Millennium, Satan will be set free temporarily, and the final, but unsuccessful, rebellion will occur. This will mark the end of sin and evil, and the eternal order will begin.

The bottom line is that the early church fathers (including Justin Martyr) held to the premillennial view of a resurrection, followed by the Millennium, including a physically enlarged Jerusalem, as per the writings of Ezekiel and Isaiah [Woods, 2013a]. Furthermore, this was the opinion of Barnabas, Papias, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Methodius, and Lactantius.

More discussion on the early adherence to dispensationalism can be found in [Watson, 2015; 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 1500s. About three years before Darby, Samuel Maitland introduced this futurist view to the non-Catholic world. Apparently, Darby picked it up from there.

Contrary to the claims of dispensationalists, Gregg argues that dispensationalist doctrine was not preached until around 1830, when John Nelson Darby, a church leader in the Plymouth Brethren movement, formalized it.

Prior to Darby, Christian theologians almost unanimously taught that the promises made to Israel have found their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Darby believed the former theologians had erred through their failure to employ a thoroughly literalistic hermeneutic. ...

As a result of this hermeneutical commitment, Darby’s views placed Israel, not the church, at the center of God’s eschatological interest. The church, then, was said to comprise a parenthesis, occupying the interim between Israel’s rejection of Christ, in the first century, and the restoration of Israel to God in the end times.

Darbyism, as it is sometimes called, became popular in the United States through a variety of media, not least of which was the publication of the Scofield Reference Bible in 1909, whose notes, printed at the foot of each
This publication had far-reaching influence on many evangelical readers, who often read Scofield’s notes as though they carried some kind of canonical authority [Gregg, 2012].

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 is the set of verses most often quoted by pretribulationalists. In it, Paul is 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 pretribulational Rapture, however, has no evidence in the early church—none before the 19th century, it appears. For example, Harry Ironside said that he did a lot of searching for evidence of the early church fathers’ belief in pretribulationism, and couldn’t find such evidence [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, May 18, 2015].

Hanegraaff adds that Grant Jeffrey did a lot of research on the same point, and the best he could come up with was the Pseudo-Ephraim document (circa 300 AD), which wasn’t convincing.

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 at least to minimize their deceased loved ones’ suffering in purgatory (the “holding tank” notion of the 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. Christ will return bodily to the Earth at some point in the future. We have no way of knowing when Christ will return.

Lastly, a full preterist doesn’t believe there is a Second Coming; however, that contradicts an essential message in the Bible, and is therefore a heretical position.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>How do the events of the Olivet Discourse correspond to the events of the first part of the Tribulation? Is there a connection?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>Thomas Ice argues that the events of Matthew 24:4-14 (part of the Olivet Discourse) and the first 5 seal judgments in Revelation 6 run in parallel, and therefore support consistent futurism [Ice, 2010d]. This makes verse 15 the “watershed” verse, dividing the first and second halves of the Tribulation: “So when you see standing in the holy place, the ‘abomination that causes desolation’...”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Here are a few variations on the theme [Ice, 2010d]:

- Hal Lindsey believes that the birth pangs (Matthew 24:4-8) actually began with Israel’s independence in May 1948.
- Arnold Fruchtenbaum believes that Matthew 24:9-14 applies to the first half of the Tribulation.
- John F. Walvoord believes that Matthew 24:4-14 describes general characteristics leading up to the end. In particular, these verses are part of the inter-advent stage starting with the beginning of the Church age (circa 30 AD) and closing with the Rapture.

| Preterist Position | There is no 7-year Tribulation period; therefore, the question is irrelevant. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Surprisingly, the Church is not found in the Bible in Chapters 4-18 of Revelation. Does this support a pretribulational Rapture?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<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. The Christian Church or “Body of Christ” is made up of both Jews and Gentiles—in other words, whoever chooses to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. “For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all, and richly blesses all who call on him” (Romans 10:12) The absence of the Church in Revelation 4-18 supports the notion of a pretribulational Rapture. Revelation is largely silent about the church, and “the silence is deafening” [Hitchcock, 2011c]. Hitchcock argues that the Bride of Christ (i.e., the Church) is in Heaven during this period “to make herself ready”, as per Revelation 19:7.</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 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 “tribulational 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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Topic/Question | Is the failure to teach the pretribulational Rapture crushing the hope of many people? Is this what is meant by scoffers asking, “Where is the promise of... |

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| 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.  

In society today, it is not uncommon for believers to be ridiculed for their interest in prophecy—and some of this scoffing comes from within the church. Date-setters, sensationalists, and those who take Scripture out of context have given Bible prophecy a bad name. Because of all the different interpretations, many pastors rarely teach on eschatology. There will inevitably be people in the congregation who disagree with some of their points—even well-presented and well-supported points. Therefore, to avoid controversy, Bible prophecy is sometimes given a back seat to other teachings on the Bible. Early Genesis is similar, due to the various positions that Christians take. Thus, the “bookends” of the Bible (Genesis and Revelation) are often under-taught.  

Furthermore, many people are skeptical about supernatural events or miracles in today’s society, especially—but not exclusively—unbelievers.  

David Reagan adds that some Christians are not terribly interested in hearing about Christ’s soon Second Coming:  

… there are many carnal Christians who cannot get excited about the coming of the Lord because they are in love with the world. … They want the Lord to come, but they want Him to come when they are 80 years old and have experienced all that this world has to offer. In other words, they want Him to come, but they don’t want Him to mess up their lives.”  
[Reagan, 2005, p. 365] |
| Preterist Position | Prophecy should not crush the hope of many people, but should actually help build their faith. |
| Topic/Question | Is 2 Thessalonians 2 talking about Christians being worried that the Day of the Lord has already come? In other words, did they think they had missed the Rapture?  

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 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.

Dispensationalist Position

Apparently they misunderstood Paul’s letter. They thought that the Rapture had already occurred, and that they had missed it. The tribulations that they were going through at the time may have formed the basis for their worries, since Roman oppression at the time was quite severe—a tribulation/persecution, no doubt; but not the Tribulation, which would be more severe. Note that since Paul was a Christian, he would have been raptured; so, they clearly misunderstood the note. This also implies that they (and Paul) believed in a pretribulational rapture.

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 [at 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 [forged], 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 at least Christ’s Second Coming, including the Tribulation] will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness [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 [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., at 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 [possibly referring to the counterfeit Christ, or a false religion or philosophical system that claims that there is no God] and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

Note that the Antichrist will not be revealed until after the restrainer moves out of the way and the Rapture has occurred. Only after the Rapture (perhaps years after the Rapture) will the 70th week of Daniel begin. A new set of believers, post-Rapture, will be able to identify the Antichrist because of Daniel 9:27 (the 7-year covenant) and Revelation 13:18 (the mark of the beast: “666”).

Removal of the restrainer does not mean that the Holy Spirit is absent from Earth. Mark Hitchcock explains:

The main objection that is always mentioned when anyone identifies the restrainer as the Holy Spirit is that the Holy Spirit is omnipresent and cannot be removed from the earth. I agree. The Holy Spirit is the third member of the triune Godhead. He is omnipresent and cannot be removed from the earth. Moreover, millions of people will be saved during the tribulation (Rev 7:9-14). The Holy Spirit must be present on earth during this time to convict sinners of their need for salvation and bring them to faith in Christ just as He does today.

In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit came to earth in a new capacity that He had not fulfilled before. He was present on earth before that time. [He] came to fulfill a new ministry. The spirit was present during creation according to Genesis 1:2, and was on earth all during Old Testament times to convict sinners and uniquely empower certain ones of God’s people. But on the day of Pentecost He came to earth with a new ministry—to indwell each individual believer and the church as a whole. He “came” to earth in a new capacity or new ministry. And the presence of the Spirit in all believers individually and corporately is the means God uses in this age to restrain evil. That restraining influence will be here as long as the church is here. The return of the Holy Spirit to heaven will not be a complete withdrawal from earth, but a return ... [to the state before] the church age.

... We are the temple of the Holy Spirit both individually and corporately (1 Cor 3:17; 6:19; Eph 2:21-22). [Hitchcock, 2011c]

Some teachers think “the lie” mentioned in the above passage (i.e., 2 Thessalonians 2:1-8) could refer to people who were presented with the gospel before the Rapture, but rejected it, and therefore will not get a second chance. It’s not clear that this would be the case, but Satan will convince many people (regardless of whether they heard the gospel or not) to reject God.

Another Scripture passage refers to those who think they may have missed the first resurrection, suggesting in part that early believers thought there
were at least two resurrections: one for the saved, and one for the unsaved:

2 Timothy 2:17-18  Their teaching will spread like gangrene.  Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have wandered away from the truth.  They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.

Revelation 7 mentions the proclamation of the gospel, during the Tribulation, by 144,000 special witnesses.  In particular, Revelation 7:14 states that they came out of the Great Tribulation.  Thus, salvation still occurs post-Rapture.

Note also that the omnipresent Holy Spirit does not stop His ministry when the Church is removed; just His restraining ministry is removed [Pentecost, 1958].  Thomas Ice writes:

“Those who do not hold to pretribulationism often mischaracterize our view of the Holy Spirit in the tribulation. ... We do believe that the Holy Spirit will be present and active during the tribulation.  We do believe that the Holy Spirit will not be carrying out His present unique ministry related to the Church because the completed body of Christ will be in heaven.

Further, we are saying that the Holy Spirit will be present in His transdispensational ministry of bringing the elect of the tribulation to faith in Christ, even though they will not be part of the body of Christ—the Church.  The Holy Spirit will aid Tribulation believers as they live holy lives unto the Lord.  The Holy Spirit will also function to seal and protect the 144,000 Jewish witnesses for their great evangelistic ministry as noted in Revelation 7 and 14 and the two witnesses of Revelation 11.  [Ice, 2015e]

Incidentally, it is believed that Paul was martyred under Nero in 65 AD [Sproul, 1998].  Nero ruled from 54 AD to 68 AD, with persecution against the Christian community starting in 64 AD.  In 55 AD, a statue of him was placed in the Temple of Mars in Rome.  Nero committed suicide in 68 AD, at the age of 31.

| Preterist Position | Does this mean that the Thessalonians thought they had missed the Rapture?  No, because 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)?  Therefore, we have to conclude that this “Day of the Lord” passage in 2 Thessalonians has nothing at all to do with the Rapture.  There won’t be a secret/special “Rapture”, other than the one at Judgment Day when all people—believers and non-believers—give an account of themselves at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

One thing is almost certain: the passage does not apply to the 21st century or to a 3rd or 4th temple.  On the other hand, it could have been the Roman Caesar, or the Roman Empire, in the first century AD.  Concerning the “man of lawlessness” and “the Day of the Lord”, Hank Hanegraaff writes: |
As N.T. Wright explains, “The Roman emperor Gaius Caligula, convinced of his own divinity, and angry with the Jews over various matters, ordered a huge statue of himself to be placed in the Temple in Jerusalem. Massive Jewish protests at all levels, and the anxious advice of his officers on the spot, failed to dissuade him from this provocative project. Only Gaius’s sudden murder in January of AD 41 prevented a major disaster.”

Wright goes on to explain that the events of the late AD 60s provided the near-future fulfillment of Paul’s prophecy:

... Had Paul lived until AD 70 he would have recognized the initial fulfillment of his words in this passage. Evil must reach its height, and then meet sudden doom. The Roman empire itself would go through unimaginable convulsions: the death of four emperors in quick succession during 68 and 69, followed by the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, would certainly qualify, in Old Testament terms, for the title “the day of the Lord.” [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 212-213]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Can we predict when the Rapture or the Second Coming of Christ will occur?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>People are naturally enthusiastic about Christ’s return, and sometimes the enthusiasm gives way to date-setting. Most 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. Some people in the dispensationalist camp have given dates (e.g., 1981, 1988, 1996, 2000, and 2007), and have even done so in print. But, the bottom line is that we shouldn’t set dates.</td>
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It’s been said that Isaac Newton spent a lot of time studying the books of Revelation and Daniel, trying to figure out when Christ would return. He spent more time writing about the Bible than writing about Science [Doyle, 2015], and of the time he spent writing on the Bible, much of it was focused on eschatology [Watson, 2015].

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, Missler thinks that the (or an) 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 ready to 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 dispensationalists have used for the Rapture is 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. An extension of this idea was presented when Israel captured the Temple Mount in Jerusalem in 1967: 1967 + 40 = 2007, less 7 years for the Rapture, etc. There has been additional debate about the length of a generation: is it 50 years? ... 70 years?

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 arriving 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 [John the Baptist] 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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
<th>We shouldn’t set dates—period.</th>
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</table>
|                    | 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 years = 2000, then subtract 7 years for the Tribulation, and you get the year 2000). Coincidentally, the year 2000 or 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 pretribulational 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/future Temple.

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. The key question is: What did each person do with Jesus Christ. There is one judgment; not separate judgments for separate groups. There are degrees of reward, and degrees of punishment. What we do now counts for all eternity. 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).

| 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? Similarly, what about: “two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left”?

Matthew 24:36-41  No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 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.

Dispensationalist | Verse 36 describes how the time of the Rapture (and sometime later: the start of the Tribulation) is unknowable—as is the time of Christ’s Second
Coming—although people will be able to count the days until the end of the Tribulation, once the Tribulation begins. Verses 37-41 are about Christ’s Second Coming. The ones “taken” are unbelievers who are taken away in judgment. 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.

The Great Tribulation will hardly be a time of “eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage”. It appears that Matthew 24 references the Rapture, even though the majority of Jews (to whom Matthew is written) is unlikely to be a part of it. The Rapture is an imminent event: it has no prerequisites, and thus, its timing cannot be predicted. On the other hand, Christ’s Second Coming can be predicted—after a certain point of time, that is, after the Abomination of Desolation occurs. From that event, people will be able to count down the days until the appearance of Jesus Christ: 1,260 days. (Arguably, the establishment of a 7-year covenant occurs 3½ years prior to the Abomination of Desolation; so, depending on how clear that event actually is, there may be a 7-year warning.)

In this context, you don’t want to be the one taken. Just like in the days of Noah, people were taken away—in this case, by the Flood—and they perished.

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. It is not about the Second Coming; rather, it is about the judgment that takes place at the end of the age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What are the strongest arguments in favor of—and against—a pretribulational rapture?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dispensationalist Position</strong></td>
<td>The strongest arguments in favor of a pretribulational rapture include:</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Imminence.</strong> No other option (e.g., preterism) seems to come close in this regard. Even a simultaneous rapture/resurrection fails to explain away the test of imminence, because of all the events in Revelation (and elsewhere in the Bible) that have not been fulfilled yet, but must be fulfilled before Jesus Christ physically returns. Recall that the prophecies of Christ’s first coming were fulfilled literally; there is no reason to believe the same won’t happen at Christ’s Second Coming!</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Synergy.</strong> The excellent fit of the whole of Scripture to the dispensational model.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The fact that the “Church” is not explicitly mentioned in Revelation after Chapter 3 suggests that it is not present on Earth at that time. However, many will come to Christ during Daniel’s 70th week—or during the time between the Rapture and the start of Daniel’s 70th week.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Note 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, and in particular the words in bold:

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18  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. Therefore encourage each other with these words.

This passage alone makes several things clear. First, there is a gap of at least some length between the raising up of Christians who have already died and those who are still alive. Thus, a simultaneous rapture/resurrection for all (believers and unbelievers) is denied. Second, we will be “caught up” in the sky. Third, we will be with the Lord forever, after this point in time.

| Dispensationalist Position | The strongest arguments against a pretribulational rapture—and against dispensationalism in general:

- The words used by Christ concerning “this generation” (i.e., those present, circa 30-70 AD, who will seeing the apocalyptic events/judgment fulfilled in their lifetimes, as opposed to a population 2,000 years later). Does “this generation” apply to those present at the time of Christ’s discourse—or does it apply to the generation that is alive when Israel becomes a nation again? |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Are the catastrophes described in the Book of Revelation to be interpreted literally?</th>
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</table>
| Dispensationalist Position | Examples of catastrophes in the book of Revelation include: the stars falling to the earth, the sun turning black, the sun becoming seven times hotter, the moon turning “blood red”, and “the cities of the nations fell, and every island fled away and the mountains were not found”. Are these phrases meant to be taken literally? It may well be that some of these events are phrased in apocalyptic judgment language. Such a form of writing appears not only in the book of Revelation, but in the Old Testament as well. For example, Isaiah uses some of this same language to describe Babylon, circa 500 BC. However, we should be careful not to dismiss all these judgments as being “apocalyptic language” meant to be taken symbolically or as a hyperbole. Charles Clough explains:

The proper way to understand prophecies of catastrophes is to follow the apostle Peter’s approach and look at the true record of God’s past historical judgments (2 Pet. 3:5-7). The universe, including all astronomical and geophysical processes, runs under the control of the Word of God rather than being the product of hypothesized natural laws (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; 11:3). God has preserved in the Bible eyewitness observations that testify to sudden, precisely-designed catastrophes affecting the celestial heavens as well as planet earth. |
The most catastrophic judgment ever to befall mankind is the Flood of Noah's day which radically altered the planet and which is used in Scripture to illustrate God's future end-time judgments ... The flood judgment has a specific pattern: 1) the judgment came suddenly (Gen. 7:11), but only after a period of grace (Gen. 6:1-8), 2) it involved the total physical environment in the heavens and the earth in ways previously unobserved (Gen. 6:17, cf. 2:5-6), 3) it surgically and precisely separated the saved from the lost (Gen. 6:18-21, cf. 2 Pet. 2:5-9), and 4) it included specific geophysical phenomena that manifested God's glory in supernatural fashion ...

God continued this pattern of judgment throughout the subsequent history of Israel. The ten Exodus plague judgments consisted of suddenly occurring, intelligently directed phenomena that targeted specific objects. The visible fiery pillar between heaven and earth was the Angel of Yahweh, a theophany (Ex. 13:21). The crossing of the Red Sea featured unique meteorological and hydrodynamic phenomena (Ex. 14:21-29). Joshua was aided with 'large hailstones from heaven' that hit only enemy soldiers, while solar and lunar motion ceased (Josh. 10:11-14). Unusual celestial and atmospheric events occurred in the days of the Judges (Judg. 5:20-23) and of Samuel (1 Sam. 7:10). While David reigned, a precise seventy-two-hour plague that killed only Hebrews occurred (2 Sam. 24:10-25; 1 Chr. 21:9-27).

The same fire, smoke, hail, thunder, plague, and earthquake of the Old Testament judgments once again appear in Revelation 6-18. These terms are not exaggerations and metaphors. They point to a final culmination in God's program of separating good from evil throughout all creation. God's past judgments thus model His future judgments. [Clough, 2001]
### Chapter 5: The Judgment Seat of Christ

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is the <em>Bema Judgment Seat of Christ</em>? What is the <em>Great White Throne Judgment</em>? When does the judgment of the “sheep and the goats” in Matthew 25 occur? What is the timeline for these judgments with respect to other events in Revelation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Corinthians 5:10</td>
<td>For we [Christians] must all appear before the <em>judgment seat of Christ</em>, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Romans 14:10-12</td>
<td>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 <em>judgment seat</em>. ... So then, each of us [Christians] will give an account of himself to God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew 25:31-33</td>
<td>&quot;When the Son of Man comes in his glory [at the Second Coming], 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelation 20:11-15</td>
<td>Then I saw a <em>great white throne</em> 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.</td>
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| Dispensationalist Position | Every believer and unbeliever will appear before God at some point in the future. For believers in Jesus Christ, it will be at one of: (a) the Judgment Seat of Christ (post-Rapture, but pre-Second Coming), (b) the end of the Tribulation (post-Second Coming, but pre-Millennium) because many believers will come to Christ during the Tribulation, or (c) the end of the Millennium (e.g., for people born during the Tribulation and Millennium). For Old Testament saints (i.e., pre-Christ), it will also be at the end of the Tribulation. Lastly, for unbelievers, the judgment will take place at the Great White Throne Judgment at the end of the Millennium, but before the new Heavens and Earth are created. |

Let us consider these events in more detail. The Rapture occurs *seven or more years* before the return of Christ, that is, before He physically sets foot
on the Earth at the Battle of Armageddon. Believers in Christ are called the 
*Bride of Christ* in Scripture, and they are *already* saved because of their 
belief in Christ’s finished work on the Cross; so that is not what the Bema 
judgment is about.

Romans 8:1  Therefore, there is now no condemnation for 
those who are in Christ Jesus,

Instead, the Bema judgment is one of rewards—*not* punishment. It is similar 
to awards given to the victors at athletic contests. The term *bema* refers to an 
elevated platform used in Grecian games to reward the winners. (See the 
section on “crowns” below.)

What kind of activities will be rewarded? Well, to begin, the foundation of a 
Christian’s life is laid when a person accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and 
Saviour. A person is *saved* by grace, not by works. It is a free gift. What a 
person does with his or her life after this point determines his or her reward:

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”. This will probably also include “good” works that were 
performed for selfish reasons such as drawing attention or praise to 
themselves. Finally, there are many others who worked hard for the Lord, 
and perhaps sacrificed greatly (the persecuted church comes to mind):

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.

A related concept is that of refinement. Most of us go through life gradually 
refining our character, whereby unproductive or shameful attributes are 
changed to more noble attributes. Speaking from experience, it is
unfortunate that we spend so much time in our “immature” state. The amount of time that we spend in this state depends on our life experiences; the people we choose to spend time with; our parents, teachers, and mentors; our occupation; the many other choices that we make on a daily basis; etc. Some of these events and circumstances are beyond our control; however, the Lord will only hold us accountable for the resources that we have. Furthermore, it is often through tragic personal/family circumstances that we grow the most; but, even so, the eternal rewards are enormous when we commit to following Jesus Christ, and to make a difference for Him and for others throughout life.

Psalm 66:10 For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver.

Isaiah 48:10 See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.

Jeremiah 9:7 Therefore this is what the LORD Almighty says: "See, I will refine and test them, for what else can I do because of the sin of my people?

Daniel 11:35 Some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time.

Zechariah 13:9 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.'"

Malachi 3:2 But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap.

1 Peter 1:7 These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Good mentoring, in particular, is extremely important at all stages of life. We should pass on what we learn and experience, so that others can benefit. Without adequate mentoring, most people struggle in life, repeating the mistakes made by others, and living below their potential.

_There other judgments besides the Bema judgment._ In fact, premillennialists believe there will be four kinds of eschatological judgments before God, and these deal with the three major divisions of the human race: the Church (i.e., believers in Christ), Jews, and Gentiles—plus all unbelievers—as follows:

- Judgment of Christians at the Bema Judgment Seat of Christ (just mentioned)—1 Corinthians 3:11-15. Everyone at this judgment is
saved, and the judgment will provide rewards in accordance with one’s works and motives.

- Judgment of Israel (Jews) following the return of Christ.
- Judgment of the nations (i.e., Gentiles) following the return of Christ—Matthew 25:31-46. Many scholars believe that the basis of the judgment—often called the Judgment of the Sheep and the Goats—will be on how the Gentiles who were alive at the time of the return of Christ treated the Jews during the Tribulation. The purpose of this judgment is to determine who can enter the Millennium Kingdom of Christ, and who cannot.

- Judgment of unbelievers at the Great White Throne Judgment, at the end of the Millennium. This resurrection involves two sets of books: the Book of Life (which shows that the person is not saved) and the other “books” which document the individual’s works while on Earth—and which in turn determines the degree of their punishment.

In particular, 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, possibly because of the Gentiles’ treatment of the Jews during these last few years on Earth. The treatment of Christ’s “brethren” (the Jews) reflects the Gentiles’ faith and belief in God (Matthew 25:34-40). There will be degrees of reward for the saved (those who enter the Millennium), and degrees of eternal, conscious punishment (determined at the Great White Throne Judgment) for the unbelievers who do not enter the Millennium.

Note that posttribulationalists have a problem if the Rapture occurs simultaneously with the Second Coming: no one will be left as “sheep” since there will only be “goats” left for Christ to judge [Hitchcock, 2011c]. Similarly, if there are no “sheep”, there will be no one to repopulate the Earth during the Millennium. Furthermore, God would hardly be sparing the believers from His wrath if believers have to go through all the events of the Tribulation. Thus, pretribulationism seems to be the best explanation for the timing of the Rapture.

Secondly, some posttribulationalists assume a yo-yo type of “Rapture”, whereby believers meet the Lord in the air, and instantaneously turn around with Him and come back to the Earth, in their resurrected bodies. But, who’s Christ going to rule with a “rod of iron” during the Millennium if everyone was translated and given a perfected body, beforehand?

Some posttribulationalists do not believe there will even be a 7-year Tribulation. But, this contradicts the book of Daniel and other Scripture passages.
With respect to the relationship among the Rapture, the Bema 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]

The Great White Throne Judgment 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. Note that the books (plural) mentioned in Revelation 22:12 contain the works of each unbeliever here on Earth. None of us can escape judgment; it’s just a matter of which judgment we will appear at [Hitchcock, 2007].

Would an evangelist who wins souls for the Lord, but then later stumbles in his walk with God, lose his reward? This is debatable; but, it appears that the good works survive, and the bad works are burned up. The consequences of sin exist in this life, meaning that it is likely that fewer good works follow one’s pursuit into a sinful lifestyle; therefore, there are fewer rewards to claim at the Bema judgment than might otherwise be had. Even King David, a man after God’s heart, stumbled—and there were consequences in his later life; but Scripture tells us that David will still be rewarded mightily by God.

Mark Hitchcock states that the Bible tells us what we will be evaluated on at the Judgment Seat of Christ [Hitchcock, 2007]. These “examination questions” have been given to us in advance, and include:

- How we treat other believers
- How we employ our God-given talents and opportunities
- How we use our money
- How well we accept mistreatment and injustice
- How we endure suffering and trial in this life
- How we spend our time (e.g., the choices that we make with our hours)
- How we run the particular “race” that God has set before us; each person’s “race” to run is different
See how well you do when going through the above checklist.

Unconfessed sin is part of that which will be burned; however, we can build on the lessons we learn from confessed sin. Sometimes sin is exposed, and may lead to confession and repentance (e.g., Nathan the prophet speaking to King David). On the other hand, people can also get angry and defensive when confronted with sin, engage in further sin, and stray further from the Lord. Any shame that we have now, and the reactions we have to people because of that shame, need to be kept in balance [Whitcomb, 2009]. There needs to be a spirit of forgiveness and restoration, despite the consequences to sin.

Finally, note that the Bema judgment occurs after the Rapture. When a believer dies, he doesn’t receive his reward (upon death); the rewards come later.

(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 consequences—is inappropriate. God’s justice demands that there is a hell. |

| Topic/Question | What are the “crowns” that are spoken of in Scripture, with respect to rewards? What do we know about the 24 elders in Revelation? |
| Both Positions | Arnold Fruchtenbaum explains the crowns in Scripture: 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 I 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]

These are victors’ crowns. All Christians can gain any or all of these crowns. The 24 elders in Revelation have some of these crowns. The elders represent the church; they are not angels or priests. They appear to be resurrected in Heaven:

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 (with their crowns), and the fact that the Tribulation events are mentioned in Revelation 6 and beyond, lend 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. Furthermore, the group of 24 elders does not include Israel, or the Tribulation saints, since neither of these groups is complete by the time of Revelation 4. Only the Church is complete at this time [Ice, 2011e].

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]

The figure “24” may refer to a cycle (like a clock), signifying completeness, rather than referring to an exclusive group of 24.

Revelation 5:8-9 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

It is interesting to note that the 24 elders have their crowns/rewards already (Revelation 4:10), yet the seven seals in Revelation have not been opened yet. This suggests a pretribulational rapture, since the seals, trumpets, and judgments are still in the future [Missler, 2005]. In similar fashion, in Revelation 6:9-11 at the unsealing of the fifth seal, some martyrs are given white robes, suggesting that they have already been given resurrection bodies, even though the Tribulation is ongoing.

It is unlikely, however, that the group of 24 elders refers to a single, unified group of representatives from the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles of Jesus Christ [Ice, 2011e].

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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What are the parallels between the Church as the Bride of Christ, and the role of Israel as the wife of God? Does this mean that Israel and the Church are indistinguishable in the New Testament?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>Israel and the Church are distinguishable.</td>
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First, let us examine Ariel Canada’s Statement of Faith at Web site http://arielcanada.com:

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.

The life and times of the Wife of Jehovah can be outlined in six stages:

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.

The entire formal of the Book of Deuteronomy is that of both an ancient suzerain-vassal treaty and an ancient marriage contract. In other words, what Moses did in Deuteronomy was to take all the various facets of the three earlier books [Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers] and present them in the form of an ancient marriage contract. This book contains the marriage contract signed between Israel and God—where Israel became the Wife of Jehovah. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 570]

Even after about one hundred years of separation, during which time the blessings of Deuteronomy continued to be withheld, Israel still failed to return to God, her husband. ...

The Book of Hosea was God’s bill of divorcement of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and the Book of Jeremiah is the bill of divorcement of the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

Because she worshiped the gods of the Egyptians, the Egyptians will destroy her. Because she worshiped the deities of Assyria, the Assyrians will devastate her. Because she worshiped the idols of Babylon, the Babylonians will make her desolate. The nations who worshiped the very gods Israel committed adultery with will be the ones who will invade and destroy the nation of Israel. ... The aim of this punishment is not so God can be vengeful and get His revenge upon Israel, but rather to cause her to stop sinning and to stop her adulteries ... [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 576-
Several major prophets in the Old Testament wrote about the situation:

The Jewish prophets did not leave things in a state of hopelessness. They spoke of a coming day when Israel will again become the restored Wife of Jehovah. Of course, this will require a brand-new marriage contract, and this marriage contract is found in Jeremiah 31:31-34 ... According to [Ezekiel 16:60-63], God will enter into an everlasting covenant with Israel in the future. This everlasting covenant is the same as the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34. ...

The restoration of Israel as Jehovah’s wife is also described in Isaiah 54:1-8. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 581-582]

This explains God’s relationship to His wife; but what is different about this relationship, and the Church? First, we must realize that while the Church is called the Bride of Christ, she is pictured today as an engaged bride who is not yet joined by marriage to her husband. This latter stage will occur at the Rapture, when believers will be joined with Christ. Whereas the wife of Jehovah can be outlined in six stages (see above), Arnold Fruchtenbaum outlines three stages to the Bride of Christ [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]:

- The espousal (2 Corinthians 11:2)
- The process of sanctification, maturing, or purifying of the bride (Ephesians 5:25-27)
- The marriage (Revelation 19:6-9). There are four stages to the marriage:
  - the arrangements: the father of the groom made the arrangements and paid the bride price (i.e., the blood of the Messiah)
  - the fetching of the bride after a possibly long period of time (the Rapture)
  - the marriage ceremony to which only a few would be invited (the Church at the Marriage of the Lamb after the Judgment Seat of Christ)
  - the marriage supper or feast in which many more were invited (add: the Old Testament saints and the post-Rapture saints, including the Tribulation saints). The Marriage Supper of the Lamb takes place at the start of the Millennium or Messianic Kingdom.
- The home of the bride (Heaven)

Fruchtenbaum emphasizes that many contradictions appear if the Wife of Jehovah and the Bride of Christ are the same entity. They are not. Thus, many would-be contradictions disappear.

Preterist  At Christ’s Second Coming, the Bride of Christ (the church universal) is
Position complete. There is no need to wait another 1007 years for its completion. If a 7-year tribulation exists following a pretribulational rapture, it seems kind of silly for the church to enjoy a heavenly wedding feast at the same time that the world is going through so much tragedy and suffering.
**Chapter 6: The Magog Invasion of Ezekiel 38-39**

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<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
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<tr>
<td>Does the “Magog invasion” of 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 make up the invading armies? The identities of most of the nations are clear, but there is some disagreement about the others.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| The book of Ezekiel was written around 570 BC. The Magog invasion, found in Ezekiel 38-39 is one of the most important unfulfilled prophecies in the Bible. Ezekiel 38-39 indicates that specific nations will attack Israel in the latter days (i.e., latter years or the “end times”), and that five-sixths (about 83%) of those invading armies 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”—or in some translations, the “uttermost parts of 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 [possibly the 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 [possibly another tribe from ancient Turkey] with all its troops, and Beth Togarmah [possibly 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].

Who is Gog? The term refers to a leader. Some think this is an actual person, such as the leader of a nation or confederacy of nations. Others think this is a demonic (non-physical) leader. Why the great discrepancy? The writings in Ezekiel 38-39 seem to suggest that this is a human participant in the Magog Invasion. However, the same word for Gog is used in Amos 7:1, which is translated in the Septuagint, as follows:

Amos 7:1 "... a swarm of locusts were coming, and behold, one of the young devastating locusts was Gog the King."

Furthermore, Gog is mentioned again, in Revelation 20:8, but this is about 1000 years after the Magog Invasion, that is, near the end of the Millennium. Thus, the name “Gog” may indeed be a demonic leader.

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 and the Dead Sea called the Valley of Hamon Gog (meaning hordes or multitudes of Gog)—in modern-day Jordan. After this time, if anyone sees a body part/bone, he/she is to place a marker next to it, and specialized personnel 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
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 so they will cleanse the land.'

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 of the invading nations mentioned above would like to wipe Israel off the map.

Some nations in Ezekiel 38-39 are difficult to identify (e.g., Gomer); but others are not (e.g., Persia). The reason that some nations are difficult to identify is that the Bible lists the locations of the ancestors (which cannot change), and not the modern-day names (which would have been unknown to audience in the age in which the Scriptures were written). Nations and cities change names periodically, even today; however, ancient names form a baseline. Even though the boundary lines of some nations have changed as the years go by, some regions are identifiable with high probability.

Before looking more closely at the groups of people mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39, it may also be helpful to look at the table of nations in Genesis 10, in conjunction with writings of some ancient historians [Missler, 2010]. Noah’s three sons were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Who were the descendants of these sons?

- Shem: Elam and Persia (both in modern-day Iran)
• Ham: Mizraim (Egypt, Philistines), Cush (Ethiopia), Put (Libya), Canaan (Sidon to Gaza, Sodom, Gomorrah)

• Japheth: Gomer (perhaps settlers of the Danube/Rhine area: Cimmerians), Askenaz (Germany), Togarmah (Turkey), Magog (perhaps the Scythians, a number of nomadic tribes in the Russian Steppes, from the Ukraine to China, during the 10th to 3rd centuries BC)
  - The ancient historians Philo and Josephus said that the Great Wall of China was called the “Ramparts of Gog and Magog”.

Here is a summary of the nations involved in the Ezekiel 38-39 invasion of Israel, with modern-day nations, regions, or cities identified as follows [Hitchcock, 2006; Rhodes, 2008; Shoebat & Richardson (S&R), 2008]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ancient (Biblical) Name</th>
<th>Modern Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rosh</td>
<td>[Hitchcock, Rhodes]: Russia [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). [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 [Rhodes, p. 110]: Meshech &amp; Tubal = area to the south of the Black and Caspian seas, in Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tubal</td>
<td>[All 3]: Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persia</td>
<td>[All 3]: Iran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cush</td>
<td>[Hitchcock, S&amp;R]: Sudan [Rhodes, p. 112]: Ethiopia or Sudan (the area just south of Egypt on the Nile River)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put</td>
<td>[Hitchcock]: Libya [Rhodes, p. 112]: Libya, plus possibly Algeria and Tunisia, since ancient Put was larger than Libya is now [S&amp;R]: Libya, plus possibly Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Mauritania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gomer</td>
<td>[Hitchcock]: Turkey [S&amp;R]: central Turkey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
[Rhodes, p. 113]: “Identifying Gomer is difficult. No clear consensus exists among Bible scholars. The best guess among scholars is that it refers either to modern-day Turkey or modern-day Germany.”

“In support of the Germany hypothesis, the Jewish Talmud claims Gomer refers to Germani, or the Germans. Arnold Fruchtenbaum says Gomer is ‘located in present-day Germany. This too was the rabbinic view. The Midrash calls Gomer Germania, and that is also the way the Talmud refers to Gomer.’”

“Which view is correct? We can’t be sure. The Josephus reference as well as the historical data we possess on the Cimmerians leads me to believe that Gomer probably refers to part of the geographical territory around modern Turkey, an Islamic territory.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beth-Togarmah</th>
<th>[Hitchcock]: Turkey</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[S&amp;R]: southeastern Turkey, near Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Rhodes, p. 114]: “may refer to Turkey and some neighboring geographical territories.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note the absence of Babylon (modern-day Iraq) from the above list of nations that are part of the Magog invasion. Hitchcock writes:

*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*
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]

Mark Twain, writing about a trip to the Holy Land in the mid-1800s, in his book Innocents Abroad, mentioned that Palestine was a wasteland. It seemed to be largely uninhabited, with few trees and shrubs [Twain, 1869].

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]

An interesting phrase appears in Ezekiel 38:11:

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.

This hardly describes Israel today as Israel has walls for protection from some neighbors, is not living in peace, and is always on the alert. Some scholars believe that the conditions of the peace treaty or covenant mentioned in Daniel 9 and Ezekiel 38 represent the same agreement, because both of these describe a time of peace and prosperity [Hitchcock, 2010].

It should also be noted that most of the cities of Israel had walls built around them until modern times [Brimmer, 2011]. For example, until 1860,
Jerusalem was a walled city with none of its residents living outside the walled area. Today, the Old City within Jerusalem still has walls; however, most of Israel’s cities are unwalled. There is, of course, the wall between Israel proper and some of the Palestinian-controlled areas—erected for security reasons.

Lastly, the Gog and Magog that are mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39 are *not* the same as the Gog and Magog described in Revelation 20:8. The former refers to an event that will occur before the start of the Millennium, whereas the latter event occurs near the end of the Millennium. This means that about 1000 years separate the two events.

*For a discussion about whether or not the United States is mentioned in Bible prophecy, see the section below entitled “Is America in Prophecy?”*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
<th>The language of Ezekiel is fulfilled in Old Testament prophecies, and in Jesus Christ.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For example, Ezekiel 36-39 was fulfilled in Old Testament times, not in 1948. When Ezekiel 36:8 states that Israel will “soon” come out of exile, the prophet Ezekiel is not speaking about 2500+ years later; rather, he is talking about the return from exile in Babylon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most of Ezekiel 38-39 can be taken <em>symbolically</em>. For example, the words about fire, brimstone, and earthquakes are apocalyptic writing, and should not be taken literally. Other writings are also expressed in apocalyptic language (e.g., Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, and other Old Testament books), and are meant to be taken symbolically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The idea that “Rosh” and “Gog and Magog” refer to Russia is nonsense. “Rosh” is an 11th-century Viking word. When using the word “north”, Ezekiel is giving the <em>direction</em> of the attack, not the location of the attacker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The idea that this is a future attack by Russia is incorrect. Ezekiel 38-39 was not written to today’s audience. It was fulfilled long ago. Authors who believe that Russia will invade Israel from the north (in the future) are leading people astray with their misinterpretation 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). Ezekiel was a member of a refugee camp on the banks of the Kebar River, circa 570 BC. He was looking forward to the days when Israel would be back in the land, with a rebuilt temple. The temple that he was looking forward to was the <em>Second</em> Temple. Gary DeMar, for example, states that Ezekiel 38-39 was fulfilled around 473 BC in the days of Queen Esther of Persia—as described in Esther 9.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hanegraaff adds that modern-day friction between Iran and Israel has nothing to do with Bible prophecy. This is an “abuse of Scripture”. Instead of trying to use newspaper headlines as a possible fulfillment of prophecy, we should focus on the real, future prophecies: resurrection, no more sin, no more Satan, etc.

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 the writer of Revelation, John is giving a description of the forces of evil coming against the people of God, “both from within the Jewish ecclesiastical society and the Roman government”—when he mentions Gog and Magog in Revelation 20:8 [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, August 29, 2011]. This passage refers back to Ezekiel 38 and 39, which was a real event. The Revelation passage mentions “1000 years”; however, this does not refer to a literal period of 1,000 years, but rather it signifies that the time of oppression by the forces of evil will be short, but the vindication will be eternal.

Hanegraaff comments that the notion of Gog and Magog being literal—or being Russia for that matter—isn’t something that Christians should divide over, because it is not an essential doctrine in Christianity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>When will the Magog invasion take place? Is the Magog invasion part of the Battle of Armageddon? 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 neighbors: Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt? Are they also part of the Magog invasion or Armageddon?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensational Position</td>
<td>Regarding the timing of the future fulfillment of Ezekiel 38-39, the most common timeframes seriously considered today are: 1. After the Rapture, but before the Tribulation. Most pretribulationists are supporters of this view. Note that the Rapture may occur many years prior to the invasion of Gog and Magog, which in turn may occur many years before the start of the Tribulation. 2. After the Rapture, but <em>during</em> the first part of the Tribulation. Mark</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hitchcock, among others, takes this position.

3. After the Rapture, but at the Battle of Armageddon (i.e., near the end of the Tribulation). Adherents include Ed Hindson, Dave Hunt, Hal Lindsey, Joel Richardson, and Walid Shoebat.

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; but, this viewpoint is much less common.

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]

Arnold Fruchtenbaum and David Reagan believe that the Magog invasion will take place at least 3½ years before the start of the Tribulation [Fruchtenbaum, 2004; Reagan, 2010]. 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, is suggestive about the timing of the event. In particular, it rules out a midtribulational—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). It is debatable whether Israel will be using the weapons for fuel during the first 3½ years of the Millennium; however, this is a possibility.

(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 ascendance 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, 2008a]

Mark Hitchcock remarks that Daniel 11 is probably a parallel passage for a number of reasons [Hitchcock, 2013b]. First, Daniel and Ezekiel were contemporaries, and contemporaries often write about the same thing. In particular, both of the battles described in Ezekiel 38 and Daniel 11 take place during the “latter years”. They are just treated from different perspectives. The attacking nations will both be wiped out by God. The nations come from the same geographic areas. They both take place at a time when Israel is living securely in the land, which seems to imply the first half of the Tribulation. Furthermore, after the invading armies of Ezekiel 38-39 get destroyed, the Antichrist (Daniel 11) may attempt to fill the power void, argues Hitchcock.

(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 allow the Temple to be rebuilt. Furthermore, at the end of this battle, it appears that Israel will turn to God. 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."

However, 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
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; it is in chaos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armies gather to plunder Israel.</td>
<td>Armies gather to fight Christ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The battle takes place on the mountains of Israel.</td>
<td>The battle takes place on a vast plain (wide valley) starting at Megiddo in northern Israel, heading south past Jerusalem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ does not appear at the battle.</td>
<td>Christ appears at the battle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The attackers are destroyed by pestilence, hailstones, fire, and brimstone.</td>
<td>The attackers are destroyed by a supernatural word from Jesus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armies are drawn by God (“I will put hooks in your jaws.”)</td>
<td>Armies are gathered by demons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran, Russian, and Islamic allies invade Israel.</td>
<td>All nations invade Israel.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[sources: Hitchcock, 2006; Rhodes, 2008; Reagan, 2010]

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—and would be consistent with a literal interpretation of Scripture [Ice, 2012c]—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 change names and borders relatively often; therefore, their ancient names serve as a stable reference point. The wording of Scripture also encourages the study of Bible prophecy. God is not giving away too much “information” that could cause some groups (even Christian groups) to “influence” or accelerate future events. The descriptive details in Ezekiel 38-39 should serve as a testimony (a sufficient verifier) of Bible prophecy, even to believers, upon its fulfillment!
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]

Ezekiel 25-32 lists 7 nations that are singled out for judgment: Ammon,
Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt [Missler, 2012]. Edom, in particular, is singled out for judgment more often than any other nation in the Old Testament.

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]

Isaiah 17:1 A prophecy against Damascus: “See, Damascus will become a heap of ruins.

Damascus is said to be the world’s oldest, most continuously inhabited city. Some authors claim that Isaiah 17:1 may have been fulfilled circa 732 BC; however, there is little evidence to suggest this is the case. Thus, the prophecy most likely applies to the future.

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]

Abraham was the father of both Ishmael (“God Hears” in Hebrew) and Isaac (“laughter” in Hebrew; equivalently, “Yitzhak”). Hagar (Abraham’s maidservant, a surrogate mother) bore Ishmael, whereas Abraham’s wife—Sarah—was the mother of Isaac, 13 years after Ishmael was born. Jesus Christ came through the line of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, ...

The 12 sons of Ishmael are: Nebajoth, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadar, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah.

After Sarah’s death, Abraham took another wife—Keturah—and they had 6 other children (Genesis 25:1-2): Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbuk,
and Shuah. Thus, Abraham was the father of many nations.

It is interesting to see the diversity of the “Mothers of the Middle East”—that is, the women who had significant roles in the history of Israel and the ancestry of Jesus Christ [Hindson, 2012a]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Wife of ...</th>
<th>Nation of Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarah (an Aramean)</td>
<td>Abraham</td>
<td>Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebekah</td>
<td>Isaac</td>
<td>Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leah (from Haran)</td>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel (from Haran)</td>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamar</td>
<td>Judah</td>
<td>Canaan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asenath</td>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zipporah (a descendant of Keturah)</td>
<td>Moses</td>
<td>Midian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rahab</td>
<td>Salmon</td>
<td>Canaan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth</td>
<td>Boaz</td>
<td>Moab</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Boaz was the father of Obed, who was the father of Jesse, who was the father of David, the future King of Israel ... who was also an ancestor of Jesus Christ.

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 flamed 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.

Ezrubiel 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."

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 neighbors [Salus, 2008]. He groups these three battles into three rings or zones, each progressively further away from Israel:

1. Israel’s “exceedingly great army” (Ezekiel 37:10 and Jeremiah 49:21) gaining victory over its immediate neighbors (e.g., Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, 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 thought-provoking thesis is based on these observations: (a) Psalm 83 (discussed in detail below) gives prophecies about Israel’s immediate neighbors, but these nations are surprisingly absent from the list of nations that participate in the Magog invasion of Ezekiel 38-39; (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 expands its borders to include its current neighbors (first ring); (d) Israel is a very wealthy nation before the Magog invasion (Ezekiel 38:13, second ring), which is hardly the case today; and (e) Ezekiel 38:11 characterizes Israel as being the home of a peaceful people, dwelling without walls, gates, or bars before the Magog invasion, which, again, is 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.

Psalm 83 was written by Asaph, who was both a prophet and the worship leader of David—circa 950 BC. It is not clear whether the passage relates to modern-day Syria—or to ancient Assyria (north of Babylon, with Ninevah as its capital). Ninevah was destroyed by the Babylonians in 612 BC. Furthermore, it is not clear whether the modern-day Palestinians are related ethnically to the Philistines of old.

Were any of the Psalms prophetic? Yes. Examples include Psalm 2, Psalm
22, and Psalm 60:8. The Psalms include messages about Christ’s first coming and about His second coming [Salus, 2014a]. Salus argues that Psalm 83 has never been fulfilled.

Before examining Salus’ thesis, it should be noted that some scholars are not in agreement with it. For example, Thomas Ice argues that many of the Scriptures that refer to Israel’s neighbors (in the context of Psalm 83) are likely to be part of the Battle of Armageddon, rather than be part of a pre-Rapture event [Ice, 2011c; Ice, 2011d]. Ice’s argument is at least partially supported by judgment references in the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel—about some of the same nations that are listed in Psalm 83.

Salus argues that all of the neighbors of modern-day Israel are listed in Psalm 83. The Psalm 83 confederacy includes: Lebanon and Hezbollah to the north of Israel; Hamas, Egypt, and the Muslim Brotherhood to the southwest; Saudi Arabia to the southeast; the Palestinians, Jordan, and Iraq to the east; and Syria to the northeast [Salus, 2014a]. More specifically:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psalm 83 Nations</th>
<th>Modern-Day Equivalents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tents of Edom</td>
<td>Palestinian Refugees and Southern Jordanians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ishmaelites</td>
<td>Saudi Arabians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tents of Moab</td>
<td>Palestinian Refugees and Central Jordanians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hagrites</td>
<td>Egyptians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gebal</td>
<td>Northern Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ammon</td>
<td>Palestinian Refugees and Northern Jordanians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amalek</td>
<td>Arabs of the Sinai Peninsula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philistia</td>
<td>Palestinian Refugees and Hamas—both of the Gaza Strip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyre</td>
<td>Hezbollah and Southern Lebanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assyria</td>
<td>Syrians and perhaps Northern Iraqis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descendants of Lot</td>
<td>Moabites and Ammonites</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

... 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 [Magog invasion]. The logical explanation for their transparency would be their prior defeat at the hands of Israel’s exceedingly great army. [Salus, 2008, p. 50]

Another possibility is that these neighbors of Israel are taken over, not by Israel, but by the enemies of Israel—that is, some of the nations listed in Ezekiel 38-39.

Although there is agreement with Salus on the modern-day names of the locations of most of the countries listed above, some scholars believe that the
Ishmaelites, Hagrites, and Gebal (mentioned above) refer instead to people groups of northern Saudi Arabia (and possibly southern Jordan) [Ice, 2011d].

According to the Scriptures, the believing Egyptian (Isaiah 19:23-25), Jordanian (Jeremiah 48:47; 49:6), and Syrian (Isaiah 19:23-25) remnants of the Psalm 83 confederacy will return to their homelands following the return of Christ. According to Obadiah 1:18, the Edomites, however, will have no survivors.

Concerning the Abrahamic covenant and a god of the Ammonites (note that Ammon worshipped the god Milcom, and Moab worshiped the god 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 [Muhammad] 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,
Some additional Scriptures:

Obadiah [verse] 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.

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.

Isaiah 19:17-18  And the land of Judah will bring terror to the Egyptians; everyone to whom Judah is mentioned will be terrified, because of what the LORD Almighty is planning against them. In that day five cities in Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to the LORD Almighty. One of them will be called the City of Destruction.

The third and outer ring of Salus’ thesis involves nations from around the world. It is the Battle of Armageddon. During this timeframe, the Antichrist aims to destroy the Israelites, who will be fleeing rather than fighting. The Lord Jesus Christ will personally handle the response.

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 possibly parts of northwestern Saudi 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 [the Jews]. He will pitch his royal tents between the seas [Mediterranean Sea, Dead Sea] at the beautiful holy mountain [Mount Moriah or the Temple Mount]. Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.

Salus summarizes his position:

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]

Putting the above together, we see that Salus’ three-ring thesis may explain why a power vacuum forms in Europe and the Middle East—and is naturally filled by the leader of the Revived Roman Empire. In other words, instead of Israel making a future peace treaty with its Islamic neighbors, it would make a covenant with the leader of a revived Roman empire.

Let us return to the prophecy about Elam, and in particular, draw some distinctions between Elam and Persia [Salus, 2014b].

Modern-day Iran is composed of both of these ancient territories, plus Media in the north (as per the time of Daniel). Ancient Elam makes up about 10% of modern-day Iran—it is part of the west-central area of Iran, bordering the Persian Gulf. A major nuclear facility exists here—the 40-year-old Bushehr nuclear plant—in a seismically active area near the junction of three tectonic plates. Elam is separated from Persia by the Zagros mountains.

Bill Salus [Salus, 2014b] analyzes a major prophecy regarding Elam found in Jeremiah 49:34-39, written circa 596 BC; and also briefly mentioned in Ezekiel 32:24-25, written circa 585 BC. This prophecy in Jeremiah is
different from the prophecy about the Magog invasion in Ezekiel 38-39 which specifically mentions Persia rather than Elam. Psalm 83 is another unfulfilled prophecy that is sometimes considered with these two prophecies. Salus argues that all three of these passages deal with separate prophetic events.

Jeremiah 49:34-39 This is the word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning Elam [west-central Iran], early in the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah: This is what the LORD Almighty says: "See, I will break the bow of Elam, the mainstay of their might. I will bring against Elam the four winds from the four quarters of the heavens; I will scatter them to the four winds, and there will not be a nation where Elam's exiles do not go. I will shatter Elam [in a terrifying manner] before their foes [enemies], before those who seek their lives; I will bring disaster upon them, even my fierce anger," declares the LORD. "I will pursue them with the sword until I have made an end of them. I will set my throne in Elam and destroy her king and officials," declares the LORD. "Yet I will restore the fortunes of Elam in days to come," declares the LORD.

Psalm 83:1-18 A song. A psalm of Asaph. O God, do not keep silent; be not quiet, O God, be not still. See how your enemies are astir, how your foes rear their heads. 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.

The Ezekiel 38-39 is dealt with at length in this book. See Chapter 6, entitled “The Magog Invasion of Ezekiel 38-39”.

Let us examine the differences among these prophecies.

First, although Persia and Elam both are part of modern-day Iran, the prophet
Ezekiel does *not* mention Elam when describing the Magog invasion in Ezekiel 38-39; instead, he mentions Persia. Conversely, in Ezekiel 32, Ezekiel specifically mentions Elam, but not Persia. Thus, Ezekiel under the direction of the Holy Spirit is undoubtedly being precise when he uses the names Elam, Meshech, and Tubal in Chapter 32, and then Persia, Meshech, and Tubal in Chapter 38. Interestingly, in both sets of passages, Meshech and Tubal are mentioned (both are usually assumed to refer to modern-day Turkey). Ezekiel 32 also mentions, in order, 7 people groups among the slain: Egypt, Assyria, Elam, Meshech, Tubal, Edom, and Sidon.

Second, none of the nations mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39 appear in Psalm 83.

Third, although both Jeremiah 49 and Ezekiel 38-39 have a militaristic overtone, the former takes place in Iran; whereas the latter takes place on the mountains of Israel.

Fourth, the destruction in Ezekiel 38-39 is handled by God; whereas the defeat in Psalm 83 and Ezekiel 25:14 suggest the involvement of Israel’s military forces.

Fifth, in Ezekiel 38-39, the invaders attack Israel from the north; whereas, in Psalm 83, the invaders largely surrounding Israel.

Sixth, fortunes will be restored for the survivors in Elam; but, the same is not said about the survivors in Persia.

None of the Elam prophecies took place in history; therefore, they are still to be fulfilled. How do we know that they weren’t fulfilled? Simply put, there is no historical evidence. We know that King Cyrus (of Media-Persia) was friendly towards the God of the Bible (Ezra 1:1-4). Nothing in history suggests that God was particularly appalled at Persia during the times of Jeremiah or Ezekiel. The prophecies were not fulfilled during the times of Persia’s King Ahasuerus or Queen Esther (both circa 475 BC) or King Artaxerxes (circa 450 BC) because there was no wide dispersion of Elamites, nor was the area destroyed. Even after Christ’s ascension circa 30 AD, Acts 2 mentions that Elamites were among the participants on the Day of Pentecost.

Salus conjectures that Elam is involved in a major disaster taking place sometime *before* the Magog invasion. Then, years later, the Magog invasion takes place, and the larger part of Iran (“Persia” before 1935) participates.
Similarly, the events of Psalm 83 involving the neighboring nations of Israel are over and done with by the time the events in Ezekiel 38-39 occur. In particular, Salus argues that all of the nations of Psalm 83 are defeated by Israel prior to the Magog invasion. Elam is not mentioned in the prophecy written by Asaph (i.e., Psalm 83) which lists a coalition of nations; but, neither Elam nor Persia is among them.

Salus thinks Israel can tear down the walls it currently has, and be a wealthier, larger, more secure Israel—by annexing land. He thinks that the Israel that Russia and its allies attack is a much larger Israel than it is today. Verse 18 of Obadiah suggests Israel defeats southern Lebanon; Jeremiah 49 suggests Israel takes part of Jordan; and Isaiah 19:18 says that 5 cities of Egypt will speak the language of Canaan (Hebrew) and give praise to the God of the Bible.

Keep in mind that if the Rapture occurs prior to the events of Jeremiah 49:34-39, then all Elamites who believe in Jesus Christ at the time will be spared from disaster and be assured of everlasting life. In fact, Iran is experiencing the fastest growth rate among evangelical Christians: approximately 20% annually, compared to under 1% for the United States [Salus, 2014b].

Despite the disaster that occurs when God breaks Elam’s “bow” or military strength, and the mass exile that occurs because of this, there will be a remnant of Elamites that will be blessed (i.e., fortunes will be restored). Perhaps they will turn to the Lord—or perhaps they were believers all along (and the Rapture had not yet taken place).

Interestingly enough, God says that He will place His throne in Elam. This is the only place other than Jerusalem where God says He will set his throne. This suggests that many Elamites will be especially blessed upon their return. The final verse (verse 49) in Jeremiah’s prophecy probably takes place after the return of Jesus Christ; thus, it probably occurs years after the other verses in that same prophecy. These Scripture verses were written by Jeremiah, circa 596 BC.

Salus orders these 3 prophecies according to the following relative times:

2. Psalm 83
3. Ezekiel 38-39

He adds that the Rapture could occur before any of these events—thus holding open the notion of an imminent Rapture.

David Reagan goes one step further, and orders the 9 major wars of
unfulfilled prophecy, as follows [Reagan, 2014b]. Although he draws a distinction between Psalm 83 and Ezekiel 38-39, note that he does not have a separate entry for Jeremiah 49.

1. War on Israel’s neighbors (Psalm 83, Zechariah 12:6)
2. First battle of Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 38-39)
3. War during the Tribulation (Revelation 6; Horsemen of the Apocalypse; Daniel 8:23-25; Revelation 8:7; 9:15, 16:5-6)
4. War in the Heavens (Revelation 12)
5. War against the Jews and the saints (Revelation 12, Zechariah 13:8-9)
6. Middle-East campaign of the Antichrist (Daniel 11)
7. Battle of Armageddon (Joel 3, Zechariah 14, Revelation 19)
8. Second battle of Gog and Magog (at the end of the Millennium: Revelation 20)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Will Israel become a nation of great wealth in the end times?</th>
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</table>
| Dispensationalist Position | The Bible suggests that Israel will be a wealthy nation. Two major, future events on Israel’s horizon include the Magog Invasion and the Battle of Armageddon (some authors combine these two events). In reference to the Magog Invasion, we read: | Ezekiel 38:9-13 You [Gog] 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." Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish and all her villages will say to you, "Have you come to plunder? Have you gathered your hordes to loot, to carry off silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods and to seize much plunder?"

The prophet Joel writes of the end times: |
| Joel 3:1-2 'In those days and at that time, when I [God] restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, 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. |
What is meant by the phrase “restore the fortunes of”? Some conjecture that Israel will mine the wealth of the Dead Sea area, including:

- Massive amounts of a valuable export—fertilizer—that the world needs to expand its food base
- Massive amounts of gold, silver, and other elements found in and around the Dead Sea
- Possible petroleum reserves from the Dead Sea area, especially the Southern end of the Dead Sea—an area that has a history of bitumen/tar pits (e.g., the area near the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah).

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<th>Preterist Position</th>
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<td>Topic/Question</td>
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Dispen-

tionalist Position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What roles will Turkey play in eschatology?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| By around 1500, the Ottoman Empire spanned modern-day Turkey across to northern Iraq, down to Egypt, and across the coastal strip of North Africa to the Strait of Gibraltar at the Atlantic Ocean. Some people believe that Christopher Columbus’ voyage was initiated to find a new trade route to eastern Asia because of the trade blockade posed by the Ottoman Empire, and because of the possibility of a Turkish invasion of Spain [Lipkin, 2008]. After World War II, Turkey joined the UN (1945), IMF (1947), OECD (1948), Council of Europe (1949), NATO (1951), and European Community (associate membership, 1963) [Missler, 2003a]. They applied for EU full membership in 1987, but have not been accepted as a member, yet.

Turkey will certainly be a player in the fulfillment of the prophecies of Ezekiel 38-39; however, it is difficult to predict what other role Turkey will have in eschatology. On the one hand, Turkey wants to join the EU, and this would open the door unrestricted entry, travel, and commerce for 70 million Turks. It would obviously strengthen the Turkish economy. However, if Turkey is rebuffed in joining the EU, then it will naturally side with—and strengthen its alliances with—the Muslim nations of the Middle East. This delicate geopolitical situation is why Turkey is said to lie at a “crossroads”—Biblically speaking. On the one hand, there is a desire for peace and economic prosperity; on the other hand, there are concerns or fears. According to Avi Lipkin, there are 3 reasons why the Europeans don’t want the Turks:

- The Turks need to have an advanced economic system—which they do not yet have.
- Turkish human rights are poor.
- Turkey has 70 million Muslims which would help Europe become an Islamic entity.
He reports the following percentage of each nation’s population that is Muslim:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holland</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, it looks like Turkey will not be part of the European Community. Instead, Turkey will be a key nation of the armies that invade Israel in the latter days.

Finally, the book of Revelation mentions that Pergamum (also written as Pergamos) was one of the 7 churches to which part of the book of Revelation was written. Revelation 2:12-13 states that Pergamum is “where Satan has his throne”—at least, at that time.
## Chapter 7: The Temple

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is the significance of the Tabernacle in the wilderness and the Temples that were built at Jerusalem?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Both Positions | The Tabernacle and the two Temples were *types*:  

Every part of the Tabernacle and Temple pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ. The gate pointed to Him as the Door. The altar pointed to the Cross; the laver, to His cleansing Word. The table of shewbread spoke of Him as the Bread of Life; the candlestick pointed to the Light of the World; the altar of incense spoke of Him as the interceding High Priest. The ark of the covenant was a picture of Christ who by His blood redeemed us 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. [De Haan, 1946, p. 297] |

| Additional comment about the Dispensationalist Position | Eventually, there will be *four* Temples, the first two of which were destroyed long ago, and the last two are still future: (1) Solomon’s Temple, (2) the second Temple, (3) the third Temple, and (4) the Millennial Temple.  
The book of Zechariah states that Christ ("the Branch") will build Millennial Temple. We know that it is the Millennial Temple because Christ will rule and reign during that time period.  

Zechariah 6:12-13  Tell him [Joshua] this is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the Lord. It is he who will build the temple of the Lord, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two.’ |

<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>
</thead>
</table>
| Both Positions | 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 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 of many ways in which, “The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed; The Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed” [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.

Greek is a more precise language than English. Let us closely examine the John 20 passage that speaks of the disciples running to the tomb early on Sunday morning—resurrection day, by focusing on the words “looked at” and “saw” [Lindsey, 2016]:

So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in [Greek: to look at, or observe, without understanding] at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw [Greek: to see and to study] the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw [Greek: to see and understand] and believed.

Why did the first disciple (John) believe? He probably know that myrrh was an embalming substance that provided a shellac-like coating around the dead
body, when the strips of linen were wrapped around Jesus’ body. He recognized that this was a miracle: the cloths were still there, probably intact, yet the body was missing.

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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>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?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matthew 27:50-51</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark 15:37-38</td>
<td>With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Luke 23:44-46</td>
<td>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.</td>
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| 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 literature. Had this event physically occurred, it most certainly would have been written about, in extra-biblical sources [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man, September 14, 2011]. It is a metaphor indicating that Christ, through his death and resurrection, is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. In particular, 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.

**Ezekiel 37 uses a similar style of apocalyptic and symbolic language:**

**Ezekiel 37:4-6** Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'"

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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the Temple mentioned in Revelation 11 symbolic—or literal? If the latter, does it refer to the Second Temple (i.e., the one in existence before 70 AD)—or to a future one?</td>
<td>The Temple in Revelation 11 is being measured by an angel, and exact dimensions are given in the text. When measures are being taken in the Bible, this implies a literal temple. It has worshipers, as well as an outer court for the Gentiles. It is not the same temple as in the time of Christ because the Second Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, and the book of Revelation was most likely written in 95 AD. Thus, the temple mentioned in Revelation 11 is likely the tribulational Temple (still future), that is, the Temple that will be desecrated by the Antichrist during the 70th Week of Daniel. Recall that Christ referred to the 70th week of Daniel during the Olivet Discourse. Daniel wrote of sacrifices and a temple. The Antichrist will set up an image of himself in this new Temple. On the other hand, the temple mentioned in Ezekiel 40-48 does not correspond to either the first or the second Temple. It does not appear to be the tribulational Temple either, because the dimensions and the geographical description do not fit. It appears that major tectonic and geographical changes will take place during the latter part of the Tribulation. The Millennial Temple will be built at the start of, or just before, the Millennium. This temple will be used during the Millennium for the people on Earth, and is most likely the Temple described in Ezekiel. Furthermore, Christ is likely the “prince” mentioned in Ezekiel 44 and 45. Preterists argue that the Temple mentioned in Revelation 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. Most dispensationalists believe that</td>
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Revelation was written between 90-96 AD; 95 AD is commonly accepted. In fact, the majority of scholars place the writing of Revelation “well after A.D. 70” [Sproul, 1998, p. 141].

Recall that the apostle John was instructed to write about what he had seen, what he currently sees, and what visions about the future that he will be given (Revelation 1:19). Thus, a future temple is entirely plausible, without reflecting back on the Temple that was destroyed 20-26 years earlier.

Revelation 1:11  ... "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

Revelation 1:19  "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.

Thomas Ice argues:

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.

Preterists argue that the Temple mentioned in Ezekiel 40-48 and in Revelation 11 cannot be a future temple because Christ fulfilled the sacrifice,
and therefore there is no need anymore for a temple, priest, and sacrificial system. After all, Christ gave His own life, and it would now be an abomination to introduce a sacrifice again. But a counterargument is that sacrifices never took away sin—they only covered (atoned for) sin. Only the death of Jesus Christ could take away sin. Thus, even in the Millennium, sacrifices cannot permanently take away sin. More will be said about this in the section following the Preterist Position below.

Preterist Position

The Temple was clearly significant in Jewish worship. Many books of the Bible speak of the Temple, either the first Temple or the second Temple. 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).

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 that is 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]

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 asks: If the Living Temple (Christ) is in our midst [e.g., 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 about sacrifices for atonement).

Ezekiel 43:26-27 For seven days they are to make atonement for the altar and cleanse it; thus they will dedicate it. At the end of these days, from the eighth
day on, the priests are to present your **burnt offerings** and fellowship offerings on the altar. Then I will accept you, declares the Sovereign LORD.”

Ezekiel 46:2  The prince is to enter from the outside through the portico of the gateway and stand by the gatepost. The priests are to sacrifice his **burnt offering** and his fellowship offerings. He is to worship at the threshold of the gateway and then go out, but the gate will not be shut until evening.

“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.

The first Temple may well have been destroyed (587 BC) by the time that Ezekiel 40-48 was written. (Ezekiel lived during this timeframe, and, in exile, he was yearning for a rebuilt temple.) Thus, Ezekiel would have been looking forward to the Second Temple, which would be built a century later, as per the writings of Ezra and Nehemiah. The bottom line is that the temple mentioned in Ezekiel is not another physical, future temple; it is the Second Temple. After all, why long for a third or a fourth temple, when the second one hasn’t been built yet?

There is no need to look forward to a 3rd or a 4th temple, say in the 21st century, which is to replace the Dome of the Rock, where there is water underneath it that will eventually flow to fill the Dead Sea (in which many kinds of fish will swim), and where Jesus Christ presides over a temple where there are animal sacrifices that atone for sin. Instead, Ezekiel was looking forward to—and describing, via apocalyptic language—the New Jerusalem: a new Heaven and a new Earth. Metaphorically, Christ is the living stone, and we are part of that living stone: “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s Temple ...?” [1 Corinthians 3:16-17]. The water flowing in the Arabah is symbolic of the living water and of the Tree of Life mentioned in the books of Genesis and Revelation. John sees the water in the river of life, and that the fruit of the tree is for the healing of the nations. This is symbolic, consummation, or apocalyptic language to describe the post-return of Jesus Christ, in which there is a new Heaven and a new Earth, in which there will be righteousness [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man; August 3, 2012].

Lastly, it is not appropriate for a post-crucifixion Temple to be used in 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! After Christ came to Earth, there was no longer any need for another temple. Furthermore, when Christ returns, we will enjoy Jesus Christ as our metaphorical and eternal “temple”.
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.

<table>
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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? Are Chapters 33-48 of Ezekiel meant to be taken literally? If so, have the prophecies been fulfilled? Are the prophecies eschatological in nature?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>Most dispensationalists believe that Chapters 33-48 are eschatological. They can be broken down as follows [Woods, 2014a]:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezekiel 33</td>
<td>A promise of Israel’s restoration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ezekiel 34</td>
<td>King David in the Millennium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ezekiel 35</td>
<td>Destruction of Edom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ezekiel 36-37</td>
<td>Israel’s political and spiritual reunification</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ezekiel 38-39</td>
<td>The battle of Gog and Magog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezekiel 40-46</td>
<td>The millennial temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezekiel 47</td>
<td>The millennial river</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ezekiel 48</td>
<td>The restoration of Jerusalem</td>
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The latter chapters of Ezekiel deal with the millennial temple. But even before this, another temple will be built (still future) which will have animal sacrifices. The Jewish people do not believe in Jesus Christ, and therefore do not believe in the all-sufficient sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This is why animal sacrifices will resume, even though Christians firmly believe that Jesus Christ eliminated the need to do so.) The Antichrist will permit worship in the temple—and animal sacrifices—for a while; but later, he will take away the sacrifice (in the middle of the 70th week of Daniel, according to Daniel 9:27).

The millennial temple appears to be another temple—this one probably being built by Jesus Christ at the start of, or just before, the Millennium. However, the sacrifices in Ezekiel 40-48 appear to occur during the 1000-year Millennium, which is after the return of Jesus Christ. So why are there sacrifices again? This appears to pose 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 passage is puzzling because it indicates future sacrifices are taking place, apparently after Christ’s finished work on the cross.

Some dispensationalists believe that these sacrifices are used to take away 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 memorial (retrospective) sacrifices. Remember, even in Old Testament times, the animal sacrifices could “never take away sins” (Hebrews 10:11); instead, they pointed forward to Jesus Christ, and just acted as a temporary covering (i.e., atonement) of sins, but did not result in the removal of sins. As a side note, many sacrifices in the Mosaic Law were for purification and ritual purposes, rather than for atonement.

Hebrews 10:10-12  And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 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. But when this priest [Jesus Christ] had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.

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]

Some scholars believe the Millennial offerings will be memorials, similar to keeping the Lord’s Supper today in remembrance of Christ’s death. They reason that sacrifices are needed because Millennial saints will live in an ideal setting where Christ’s righteousness will fill the earth and people will need a reminder of the awfulness of sin.

Therefore, the shedding of blood will visibly remind them that only Christ’s blood can take away sin. This interpretation has two problems: (1) Nothing in the text indicates the sacrifices are memorials, and (2) the prophet says the sacrifices are to make atonement.

Consequently, these offerings must be much more than memorials. The word for “atonement” (Ezek. 45:15,17,20) is the Hebrew word kippur, meaning to “cover” or “propitiate.” Under the Levitical system, sacrifices were required to atone for sin and to cleanse the buildings, the altar (43:20-27), the Levities [sic] (44:25-27), and the sanctuary (45:18). The blood sacrifice covered the worshiper’s sins (Lev. 17:11) and functioned as propitiation to God.

Animal sacrifices offered in the Millennial Temple will be needed to cover the worshippers’ ceremonial uncleanness. Why? Because God will be dwelling on Earth in the midst of sinners living in their natural,
unresurrected bodies. Without blood sacrifices, these impure worshipers would defile God’s holy Temple when they come to worship Him.

Professor Jerry Hullinger came to the same conclusion:

... Ezekiel 40-48 indicates that during the millennium God’s glory will return to the temple where sacrificial ritual will take place and in which offerings will make atonement. For Ezekiel the concept of atonement is the same as it was in the Book of Leviticus, namely, an act that wipes away and purges uncleanness.

... impurity is inimical to Yahweh, who refutes to dwell among a people if uncleanness remains untreated. Because of God’s promise to dwell on earth during the millennium (as stated in the New Covenant), it is necessary that He protect His presence through sacrifice.

This function of sacrifices, according to the Book of Hebrews, is efficacious. However this was never the purpose of Christ’s sacrifice, for it dealt with the internal cleansing of the conscience. Therefore, the two are harmonious.

[Levy, 2011, pp. 32-33]

Arnold Fruchtenbaum writes:

It should be kept in mind that the Mosaic sacrifices never took away sin and were not the means of salvation for the Old Testament saint (Heb. 10:1-4). The Old Testament saint was saved by grace through faith. The blood sacrifices were the means of restoring fellowship of a saint who had sinned. In this present age, fellowship for the believer is restored by confession (1 Jn. 1:9). The millennial sacrifices will not take away sin either, but they will be the means of restoring fellowship for the millennial saint who sins.

… it is necessary to remember three facts about life in the Millennial kingdom. First, the presence of God will dwell literally in the midst of the people. . . . Second, the unglorified human population will be capable of incurring ritual defilement and polluting the earthly Sanctuary. . . . Third, the Millennial population will be under the New Covenant and will be regarded as a holy and priestly Nation just as they [the Jews] were under the Mosaic Covenant. . . . the Nation (and in the future, also the nations) must maintain a status of ceremonial purity. As argued above, this kind of sacrificial “atonement” is not for salvation nor for inward sanctification, but to preserve outward corporate “sanctification” (or ceremonial purification) so that a holy God can remain in the midst of an unholy people.

Dr. Thomas Ice expresses it this way:

Critics of future millennial sacrifices seem to assume that all sacrifices, past and future, always depict Christ’s final sacrifice for sin. They do not! There were various purposes for sacrifices in the Bible. An overwhelming majority of sacrifices under the Mosaic system were for purification of the priests and objects used in various rites. This is why atonement can be said in the past to be effective, yet still need Christ’s future sacrifice, because
many of the sacrifices did atone ceremonially, cleansing participants and objects in Temple ritual.

Dr. Jerry Hullinger of the Piedmont International University reaches the same conclusion:

A solution that maintains dispensational distinctives deals honestly with the text of Ezekiel and in no way demeans the work Christ did on the cross. This study suggests that animal sacrifices during the Millennium will serve primarily to remove ceremonial uncleanness and prevent defilement from polluting the temple envisioned by Ezekiel. This will be necessary because the glorious presence of Yahweh will once again be dwelling on earth in the midst of a sinful and unclean people . . . Because of God’s promise to dwell on earth during the Millennium (as stated in the New Covenant), it is necessary that He protect His presence through sacrifice . . . It should further be added that this sacrificial system will be a temporary one in that the Millennium (with its partial population of unglorified humanity) will last only one thousand years. During the eternal state all inhabitants of the New Jerusalem will be glorified and will therefore not be a source of contagious impurities to defile the holiness of Yahweh. [Fruchtenbaum, et al., 2016]

Because God wrote that there will be animal sacrifices in the future (i.e., in the Millennial Kingdom), the onus is us to see how it fits into eschatology—not to question whether or not it is actually part of the future [Hanegraaff & Hitchcock, 2007]. And, no, it is not a reversion to the old covenant.

In summary, the Temple being described in Ezekiel 40-48 is the Millennial Temple. It is a future temple because: (a) no temple existed when Ezekiel wrote; and (b) the second Temple—Herod’s Temple—was destroyed in 70 AD, and there is currently no temple in Israel. Is it the third Temple? Well, the third Temple will be built in unbelief (of Jesus Christ) and will be desecrated by the Antichrist; but the Millennial Temple appears to have different dimensions than the space on the Temple Mount allows. It appears that the fourth Temple will be built by Jesus Christ upon His return.

Other points:

- Ezekiel 43:4 refers to the Shekinah glory returning to Israel by entering the Millennial Temple via the outer eastern gate, not the (eastern) Golden Gate presently in the eastern wall of Jerusalem, which was built centuries after Christ [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. Following that, the Shekinah glory will enter the new Temple, and finally it will enter the Holy of Holies.
  - Some background is appropriate here. The Shekinah glory had left in four stages: (1) from the Holy of Holies to the threshold of the door of the Temple (Ezekiel 9:3), (2) from the threshold of the door to the Eastern Gate (Ezekiel 10:18-19), (3) from the Eastern Gate to the Mount of Olives (Ezekiel 11:22-23), and finally (4) from Israel altogether. Now, in
Ezekiel 43, it returns to the Temple in the same way that it left.

- Arnold Fruchtenbaum remarks that the Shekinah Glory returned temporarily to Israel—in the earthly life of Jesus Christ [Fruchtenbaum, 2004].
  - First, the Shekinah glory actually returned at the birth of Jesus Christ, as shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks at night ... and the “glory of the Lord” shone around them (Luke 2:8-9).
  - The second occurrence was during the Magis’ visit from the East, via a “star” to direct them to the young Jesus Christ.
  - The third occurrence was with Jesus Christ Himself (Isaiah 9:2; 2 Corinthians 4:5-6; Hebrews 1:2-3).
  - Another manifestation was at the Mount of Transfiguration (e.g., Matthew 17:1-8). “The appearance of the cloud and the Voice of God speaking out of the cloud was the very same thing that had occurred at Mount Sinai.” [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 609]
  - Other occurrences include Saul’s conversion experience on the road to Damascus, and his leading into Damascus (twice); the flaming tongues of fire at Pentecost; and, of course, the revelation of Jesus Christ in the brightness of his glory (Revelation 1:12-16).

- The Shekinah glory will return with Christ at the Second Coming (Matthew 24:30), and, as mentioned above, at the Millennial Temple. It will remain over the Millennial Temple in a cloud of smoke and flame of fire, similar to that around the Tabernacle in the wilderness following the Exodus from Egypt. Finally, the Shekinah glory will be seen as a visible manifestation of the glory of Jesus Christ (e.g., Revelation 21:23-24). Revelation tells us that the earth has no need for the sun anymore, since Jesus Christ will provide the light—and there will be no night, forever.

- Ezekiel 44:9-14 refers to the Levites’ duties in the Temple.
- Ezekiel 44:15-31 refers to the sons of Zadok and their duties with respect to the sacrifices.
- Ezekiel 45:9-46:18 refers to the duties of resurrected King David.
- There are a substantial number of differences in the Mosaic Law and that presented in Ezekiel 40-48. The Millennium is not a restoration
of the conditional, Mosaic covenant. Similarities and differences between the Aaronic (Levitical) and Millennial systems of worship (e.g., the Temple services) are investigated in works such as [Fruchtenbaum, 2004; Pentecost, 1958].

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 Millennial Temple. Not specifically mentioned are the Rapture and Armageddon. 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.

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.

| Preterist Position | 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. 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. |

| 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 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 precisely where 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:

Matthew 24:1-2 Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. “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.”

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 location of the Temple.

Koinonia House reports in its “K-House eNews” e-mail newsletter on June 23, 2009:

An Israeli official made a visit to the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem on Tuesday [June 23, 2009], sparking anger among Muslims. Yet, while the Dome of the Rock is the third most holy site in Islam, it is the holiest spot on earth in Judaism as the site of the once and future Temple. Most recently, a Jewish scholar has argued that the Third Temple could be built on the Temple Mount without tearing down the Dome of the Rock. Of course, that idea has faced opposition from both Jews and Muslims.

... Many Jews do not believe that the Temple should be built until the Messiah comes. Muslims agree that no Jewish temple should be built near their shrine.

Sheikh Abdulla Nimar Darwish, founder of the Islamic Movement in Israel, argues that it’s pointless to discuss rebuilding the Temple until the “mahdi”—the Muslim messiah comes...

Darwish warned that attempts to rebuild the Temple before the Messiah would only result in mayhem. “As long as there is a Muslim alive, no Jewish Temple will be built on Al-Haram Al-Sharif [the Temple Mount]. The status quo must be maintained, otherwise there will be bloodshed.”

The Dome of the Rock, which dominates the skyline of Jerusalem, was erected on the Temple Mount in the late 7th century. Muslims believe that the dome is built over the spot where Mohammad ascended into heaven, making it a very holy site in Islam. In 1967 Israel regained control of the Temple Mount, but shortly after gave the Muslim Waqf (religious trust) the authority to manage the mount in order to keep peace. Since 2006, visitors have been allowed to enter the compound at restricted times. Non-Muslim worshipers are still not permitted to enter the area.

Jewish authorities do not approve of entering the compound anyway, primarily because the site of the ancient Temple is still holy and there is no purification system in place to make worshipers ritually clean. There is also concern that people might accidentally tread across the site of the Holy of Holies. The Chief Rabbinate of Israel has placed signs outside the
ANNOUNCEMENT AND WARNING: According to the Torah it is forbidden for any person to enter the area of the Temple Mount due to its sacredness.

There are at least three positions with respect to the location of the second 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 also 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, 2005; 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/template of the Jupiter Temple at Baalbek in Lebanon, which when superimposed and aligned on the Temple Mount, seems to be a good fit. In this scenario, an equestrian statue of Hadrian would have been 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.

Hank Hanegraaff warns:

Christian Zionists today are bent on stoking the embers of Armageddon by scheming the construction of yet another temple—and that on the very spot where the Dome of the Rock now stands. As previously noted, LaHaye calls Mount Moriah, site of the ancient Jewish temple, “the most coveted ground in the world.” In his words, “The deep significance of the 1967 Six-Day War is seen in the prospect that at long last Israel can rebuild its temple. This [is] not just a national yearning—but a prophetic requirement of God’s Word.” [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 207-208]

Matthew 24:2 is apocalyptic language, similar to that used by the prophets of
the Old Testament. When Christ said that, “not one stone will be left on another,” he meant that there will be great destruction, but not necessarily that two rocks will not be found together.

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<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
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<td>Does dispensationalism actually “help” prophecy to move along? For example, 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?</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 that to Him. 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 previous section for further comments.)</td>
<td>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]...”</td>
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<td>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. Hank Hanegraaff argues that there will be no Armageddon [Hanegraaff, <em>Bible Answer Man</em>, January 5, 2012]. The “Armageddon” that</td>
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dispensationalists think is a future world war that reaches its climax in northern Israel is instead an apocalyptic term that simply refers to the virtual destruction of the land of Israel and the second Temple. Similar text in Isaiah refers to the destruction of Babylon. In particular, the Medes and the Persians defeated the Babylonians. Jesus simply used the same kind of language in the book of Revelation. He compared true Israel to prostituted Israel. Judgment came upon Israel in 70 AD. Jesus said that he was describing “what must soon take place” ... “because the time is near”. When Jesus says “soon”, “near”, and “this generation”, we should take him at his word.

Because of the destruction of the Second Temple, the Jewish people have stopped performing animal sacrifices. Messianic Jews see no need for a sacrifice because Christ was the ultimate sacrifice, whereas other Jews reinterpret the Mosaic law in which Torah study replaces temple sacrifice [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man, July 3, 2013].

As a postscript to this, the “rest” that the descendants of Abraham experienced upon crossing the Jordan River and entering the Promised Land, is symbolic of the “rest” we receive when we accept Jesus Christ—and in the future when we go to Heaven, and there is a new Heaven and a new Earth.

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<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>
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<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>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</td>
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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 then was to 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 eunuch 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 [KJV] 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. 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 in the Second Temple, 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. Ezekiel 41-44 explicitly mentions some articles used in the future Temple service; therefore, some authors conjecture that the Ark of the Covenant will once again be part of the worship of God in the rebuilt Temple [LaHaye & Hindson, 2004]. In particular, 2 Thessalonians 2:4 states that the Antichrist will take his seat in the Holy of Holies, implying the presence of the Ark of the Covenant (the “mercy seat”) which historically occupied the Holy of Holies.

The theoretical location of the Holy of Holies in present-day Jerusalem is unknown. 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.

Besides King David’s purchase of real estate on what is believed to be today’s Temple Mount, another famous real estate transaction in the Bible is found in Chapter 23 of Genesis. Abraham purchased the cave of Machpelah from Ephron the Hittite for 400 shekels of silver circa 2000 BC. There he buried his wife Sarah.

**Genesis 23:7-20** Then Abraham rose and bowed down before the people of the land, the Hittites. He said to them, “If you are willing to let me bury my dead, then listen to me and intercede with Ephron son of Zohar on my behalf so he will sell me the cave of Machpelah, which belongs to him and is at the end of his field. Ask him to sell it to me for the full price as a burial site among you.” Ephron the Hittite was sitting among his people and he replied to Abraham in the hearing of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of his city. "No, my lord," he said. "Listen to me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. I give it to you in the presence of my people. Bury your dead." Again Abraham bowed down before the people of the land and he said to Ephron in their hearing, "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." Ephron answered Abraham, "Listen to me, my lord; the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver, but what is that between me and you? Bury your dead." Abraham agreed to Ephron’s terms and weighed out for him the price he had named in the hearing of the Hittites: four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weight current among the merchants. So Ephron’s field in Machpelah near Mamre—both the field and the cave in it, and all the trees within the borders of the field—was deeded to Abraham as his property in the presence of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of the city. Afterward Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave in the field of
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<th><strong>Machpelah near Mamre (which is at Hebron)</strong> in the land of Canaan. So the field and the cave in it were deeded to Abraham by the Hittites as a burial site.</th>
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<td><strong>Preterist Position</strong></td>
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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] |
Chapter 8: The Tribulation (70th Week of Daniel); The Antichrist

| 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?

Furthermore, if the former is true, then how do we know that the Tribulation will be 7 years long?

| Dispensationalist Position | There will be a 7-year Tribulation. The latter half of the Tribulation will be the “Great Tribulation” (3½ years). The revealing of Antichrist is still to come, but he may well be 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 book). A “week” in this context means a “week” of years (i.e., 7 years). This period is split into two halves of 1,260 days (i.e., 42 months or 3½ years).

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 [Israel], 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 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.

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 7:25  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 [i.e., 3½ years].

Revelation 11:2  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.

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 12:14  The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach.

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

First of all, note that the above scriptures seem to suggest a correlated event: a time when all will be saved, and when King David will rise from the dead. This seems to place the time of Jacob’s trouble in the end times, rather than circa 70 AD, as suggested by preterists. Second, 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. Third, these and other passages in Jeremiah, Daniel, and Revelation infer a period of 7 years, with the latter half being the most intense time.

The book of Revelation was written around 95 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 95 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. Furthermore, John was instructed to write about future events; so, a 95 AD writing would not be inconsistent with a 70 AD destruction of the second Temple. In particular, the second Temple wouldn’t need to be mentioned.

Even if Revelation were written before 95 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 (an aspect of it: the Rapture) would be like “a thief in the night” (Matthew 24:42-43) to many people; however, we are also warned in Scripture that believers are not children of the night (1 Thessalonians 5:4-5). In other words, we should be prepared for Christ’s return at any time. Then, we won’t be surprised. There will be plenty of warnings during the Tribulation, and there were plenty of warnings about the Roman invasion of 70 AD. For example, there was a lengthy revolution, and a long build-up. The Roman invasion took months.

Incidentally, the analogy of a thief is not present in the Old Testament or in other Jewish literature. This suggests that Peter and Paul drew from Christ’s words directly.

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 [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. Just before these three chapters, Isaiah 13-23 deals with judgments upon individual Gentile nations, and following that, Isaiah shifts his focus to the entire earth—and this is similar to the destruction found in the book of Revelation.
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.

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<th>Preterist Position</th>
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<td>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 pretribulational 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.</td>
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The Tribulation, or Great Tribulation, occurred within 40 years of Christ’s ministry, and refers to the persecution of Christians by the “Beast” of the Roman empire. One such example is Nero circa 64-68 AD. “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 concur.

Although, in this world, Christians will have some tribulation in their lives; the Tribulation and Great Tribulation are not events in the future. In particular, the Great Tribulation referred to the early church, which Satan tried to wipe out shortly after it started. This happened pre-70 AD. The church, obviously, survived.

Ancient writing is full of hyperbole. Here are some examples of prophetic hyperbole in the Bible:

- Jesus commented about a future tribulation that is so great that nothing can parallel it (i.e., “never to be equaled again”). The destruction of Jerusalem in 586 or 587 BC (at the time of the Babylonian exile) was described in Ezekiel 5:8-9 as the greatest tribulation to date—and in the future. So, how could there be another greatest tribulation? Furthermore, 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!

- 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.

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• Isaiah 13:6-8 describes the terror that accompanies “the day of the Lord” including the phrase, “They will look aghast at each other, their faces aflame”.
• 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 Joel 2, in the same terms. These appear to be two different locust plagues.
• Solomon was to be the richest and wisest man ever … but today there appear to be people who are even richer. Furthermore, Christ was wiser!

The point here is that such hyperboles are figures of speech. The take-home message of “unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again” is that 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: “It’s an art in that the more you do it, the better you get at it; but it’s a science in that certain rules apply.” [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man, July 21, 2010] In dealing with prophecy, especially Revelation, Hanegraaff 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 Hanegraaff. “All of the Bible was written for us; but remember, not all of the Bible was written to us.”

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).

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.

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.

One of the genres that the Bible was written in is apocalyptic language. Matthew is using apocalyptic language. It wasn’t taken literally at the time, and is similar to the way we use English phrases like, “I weigh a ton” or “It’s raining cats and dogs”. It’s not literal, but the expression gets the point across to the intended audience. Hanegraaff writes:

Rather than viewing all of Scripture thorough the opaque lens of wooden literalism, the careful student of the Bible recognizes and accurately interprets form, figurative language, and fantasy imagery.

Form. To interpret the Bible literally, we must first pay special attention to what is known as form or genre. ... Just as a legal brief differs in form from a prophetic oracle, so too there is a difference in genre between Leviticus and Revelation. Recognizing the genre is particularly important when considering writings that are difficult to categorize, such as Genesis, which is largely a historical narrative interlaced with symbolism and repetitive poetic structure.

If Genesis were reduced to an allegory conveying merely abstract ideas
about temptation, sin, and redemption, devoid of any correlation with actual events in history, the very foundation of Christianity would be destroyed. If the historical Adam and Eve did not eat the forbidden fruit and descend into a life of habitual sin resulting in death, there is no need for redemption. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 20-21]

Figurative language includes literary terms such as similes, metaphors, and hyperboles.

Fantasy imagery includes phrases such as, “an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns”, “locusts with human faces, women’s hair, and lions’ teeth”, “the beast”, etc. These are not meant to be taken literally, but rather to paint an impactful image in one’s mind that one can associate with an underlying biblical principle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is the purpose of the Tribulation?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dispensationalist Position</strong></td>
<td>The Tribulation largely applies to Israel, but the whole world will learn lessons from it—and people all over the world will put their faith in Jesus Christ because of it. Its purposes are multifold [House &amp; Price, 2003]:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• To finish the discipline upon Israel and the Jews for their unbelief over the centuries, and especially for their rejection of the Messiah at his first coming</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• To produce a longing for the Messiah, and in particular, to get Israel to call upon the name of the Lord, and plead for the return of the Messiah (Zechariah 12:9-13:2)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• To end the Time of the Gentiles and deliver the Jewish people from Gentile domination</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• To purge the earth of wickedness, and prepare to usher in the Messiah, and the Millennial Kingdom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Preterist Position | There will be no 7-year “Tribulation” period; therefore, the question is irrelevant. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Because the book of Daniel is so accurate in its prophecies, some skeptics question the authenticity of the book. When was the book of Daniel written? Is it possible that the book of Daniel was written after the “prophesied” events took place?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Dispensationalist Position** | 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 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 someone that the Bible is the Word of God, then direct that person to the book of Daniel because there is a lot evidence confirming the fulfillment of prophecy exactly as it was written in the book of Daniel [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. 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 100-200 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:

Isaiah 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."

As a side note, King Josiah was also mentioned by name, about 300 years
before he was born (1 Kings 13:2). Also, the books of Daniel (written between 607-534 BC) and Zechariah (circa 520 BC) make reference to Alexander the Great who lived around 333 BC.

**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 Daniel 2:4-7:28. Aramaic was the Gentile language of that part of the world, at that time.

**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:** These include the interpretation of dreams and visions, the unfolding of Babylon’s history, the description of future world empires, Antiochus Epiphanes, and the first 69 of the 70 “weeks” of years of Daniel (i.e., up to the time of Christ—500-600 years into the future).

**Key Unfulfilled Prophecies:** These include the 70th “week” of Daniel (i.e., the Tribulation), including the rise of Antichrist, the Abomination of Desolation, and the fall of Antichrist.

Here are the prophecies of world empires, as per Nebuchadnezzar’s dream about the statue, and Daniel’s visions and interpretations [LaHaye, 2001b; 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; plucking of wings; man’s heart</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nebuchadnezzar; the plucking of wings refers to his insanity, and the man’s heart refers to his conversion</td>
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<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; three ribs in its mouth</td>
<td>Ram with two horns</td>
<td>Cyrus, Darius; The Persians were dominant; the Medes and Persians conquered Lydia, Babylon, and Egypt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronze (belly and thighs)</td>
<td>Greece (332 BC to 68 BC)</td>
<td>Leopard (emphasizing speed), four wings and heads</td>
<td>Goat from the west; (four horns grew up in place of the first horn (Alexander the Great))</td>
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<td>Following his death, the empire splits into four parts, each led by a general: Cassander (west), Lysimachus (north), Seleucus (east), and Ptolemy (south).</td>
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<tr>
<td>168 BC: Antiochus Epiphanes is a type of the future Antichrist.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iron (legs)</td>
<td>Rome, Phase I (68 BC to 476 AD)—no one conquered it; it fell apart. The eastern leg of the Roman Empire (i.e., the Byzantine Empire) lasted longer (68 BC to 1450 AD).</td>
<td>Terrifying Beast</td>
<td>A kingdom with unequalled military strength</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>284 AD: Diocletian divides the empire into two.</td>
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<tr>
<td>312 AD: Constantine moves the capital to Byzantium.</td>
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<tr>
<td>476 AD: The empire breaks into pieces.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iron Mixed with Clay (feet and toes)</td>
<td>Rome, Phase II (future)</td>
<td>Antichrist (in the latter stages)</td>
<td>Christ destroys this kingdom and sets up his own, for eternity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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. The Eastern leg lived about a thousand years more than the Western leg.

Are Cyrus and Darius the same person? No. Here is a summary of some of the leaders of the Medes and Persians. Cyrus II and Darius I are the key players mentioned in the book of Daniel:

The son of Teispes was Cyrus I who came in contact with the Assyrians as the leader of the Persians. The son of Cyrus I was Cambyses who married the daughter of the Median king Astyages. Their son of Cyrus I was Cambyses who married the daughter of the Median king Astyages. Their son was Cyrus II, known in history as Cyrus the Great (559–530 B.C.), the first great and dominant king of ancient Persia. Cyrus II also conquered the Medes, and defeated his grandfather Astyages, and made the Median capital of Ecbatana his own capital. Cyrus also invaded Asia Minor and defeated Croesus, king of Lydia. He also captured Babylon in 539 B.C. (the official date of the fall of the Babylonian Empire) with little resistance.

The son of Cyrus II was Cambyses II (529–522 B.C.) who conquered Egypt. Cambyses II was succeeded by Darius I, known as Darius the Great (522–486 B.C.) and as Darius Hystaspes (his father was one of the satraps of the Persian Empire). Darius created 20 satrapies (provinces) in order to administrate effectively the growing strength of the Persian Empire. Darius I also moved the capital from Pasagadae to Persepolis. He was a follower of Zoroaster and a worshiper of Ahura Mazda (also followed by Xerxes and Artaxerxes of Biblical history). This is the same king mentioned in the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah. The Temple project was completed by the Jews in 516 B.C. during his reign.

Darius I was succeeded by his son Xerxes (485–465 B.C.). An inscription at Persepolis lists the nations under his control. He is also the same King Ahashuerus mentioned in the Book of [Esther]. Following his reign, Artaxerxes Longimanus I came to power (465–424 B.C.) and it was in the 20th year of his reign that the decree to restore the wall of Jerusalem was given to Nehemiah (Nehemiah 2:1). [Hocking, 2012]

Here are some eschatological types [Missler, 2005; LaHaye, 2001b] 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 refused to bow down and worship the image of gold.—Analogy: not worshipping Antichrist
- Daniel’s three friends were untouched in the fiery furnace (except for the fact that their bindings were burned away), and surprisingly, a fourth person appeared in the fire (perhaps a Christophany, i.e.,
preincarnate Jesus Christ?)—Analogy: protected during the Tribulation

- Daniel seems to have been removed from the situation somehow (perhaps he was 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”.)
  - 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”)

The seventy weeks in the book of Daniel: What is the correct interpretation of the “70th week of Daniel” (also known as “seventy sevens”, “70 weeks of years”, or simply the Tribulation)—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 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**

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 neighbors or the whole world. The coming world leader—the Antichrist—is the person who signs, confirms, establishes, or enforces the covenant. This marks the beginning of the final seven years of human history leading up to the physical return of Jesus Christ at Armageddon. It is only because Christ returns that mankind will survive. In the words of Jesus Christ, circa 30 AD:

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.

Note that Daniel 9:24-27 (above) 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. Also, the books of Daniel and Revelation refer to times such as 3½ years, half of seven, 1260 days, 42 months, etc. These are reasons for the 360-day year used in prophecy.

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? Some 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” prophecy is due to Sir Robert Anderson [Anderson, 1984]. It is instructive; but, there is a second model that seems equally valid, but places the death of Jesus Christ in 30 AD, and seems to be a better fit. Both models claim similar patterns, but differ in their starting dates.

[Model 1] To begin, there were four decrees to rebuild Jerusalem (Temple), but 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 20th year of his reign, which, according to the Encyclopedia Britannica, would be March 14, 445 BC. Sir Robert Anderson writes that 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 His 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.

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.

The (approximate) 2000-year gap is part of the times of the Gentiles which began with Israel’s Babylonian exile under Nebuchadnezzar (i.e., with the end of Israel’s theocracy occurring in 586 BC with the deposition of Zedekiah), and extends to the physical return of Jesus Christ at the Battle of Armageddon (i.e., the Second Coming), shortly before the start of the Millennium [Pentecost, 1958; Woods, 2012e]. It refers to the time when no king was on David’s throne in Israel/Judah. Jesus Christ will gain the throne upon His return.

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."

Some authors distinguish the times of the Gentiles from the fullness of the Gentiles. The latter period is said to have begun with the start of the Church on the Day of Pentecost, as per Acts 2 [Missler, 2006] because the fullness of the Gentiles represents the Body of Christ, that is, the Christian Church. In Romans 11:25, Paul equates the fullness of the Gentiles to the number of Gentiles who become part of the Church (i.e., believers in Jesus Christ):

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.

The Greek word for “fullness” represents “a set number” [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. Even though the Christian Church ends with the Rapture, people can still be saved after the Rapture.

Thus, by the time of Christ, the nation [Israel] had been back in the Promised Land for over five centuries. However, such long residency in the land did not mean that the Times of the Gentiles had concluded. During all of this time, Israel still had no reigning king upon David’s Throne. Moreover, as Daniel predicted (Dan. 2; 7), Israel continued to be under the domination of various Gentile powers. Those powers included Persia, which was followed by Greece, and finally Rome. By the time
Christ was born, the Roman Empire occupied the Promised Land, placed Israel under an enormous tax burden, and usurped from the Jews the right to execute their own criminals. [Woods, 2012c]

It was incumbent upon first-century Israel to enthrone Christ in order to enter into all of her covenantal blessings (Deut. 17:15). The opportunity for first-century Israel to enthrone Christ thereby bringing in the kingdom is known as “the offer of the kingdom.” This idea is captured in the expression, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” as proclaimed to the nation by John (Matt. 3:1-2), Christ (Matt. 4:17), the Twelve (Matt. 10:5-7), and the Seventy (Luke 10:1,9). ... In Matthew 10:5-7, He instructed the twelve: “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” Such a national limitation on the offer of the kingdom conveys that it was only for first-century Israel. Had first-century Israel enthroned Christ, the earthly kingdom would have become a reality for the nation and the entire world. Israel’s covenants would have been fulfilled, and the Times of the Gentiles would have terminated. Despite the unprecedented opportunity for the establishment of the messianic kingdom due to the presence of the rightful king among the first-century Jews, Israel rejected the kingdom offer (Matt. 12:24) leading to the kingdom’s postponement.

... The entire Gentile world could become Christian. Yet, if tiny Israel remains in unbelief, the kingdom cannot materialize. Conversely, the entire Gentile world could reject Christ. Yet, if Israel fulfills the condition stated in Matthew 23:37-39 by accepting Jesus as the Messiah, the kingdom will materialize upon the earth. Because the Olivet Discourse and related passages teach that the condition of Jewish national acceptance of the Messiah will not be satisfied until the events surrounding the future Tribulation period have occurred, the kingdom will remain in a state of postponement until that time.

... the fact that God knew that Israel would reject the kingdom offer thereby ushering in His eternal purpose for the interim age in no way implies that the offer to national Israel was not a genuine or bonafide offer. [Woods, 2012d, pp. 6-7]

Let us look more closely at Model 1’s date of Sunday, April 6, 32 AD as the date of Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem, on a donkey, on Palm Sunday. Recent research [Jones, 2004] suggests that Anderson’s calculation is off 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. Jones claims that, in Anderson’s model, Nisan 10 would not have been Sunday, April 6th, 32 AD, but rather Wednesday, April 9th, 32 AD. (We know from Scripture that Christ rode into Jerusalem on a donkey on the first day of the week—a Sunday.) 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: (a) entered Jerusalem on a donkey on Nisan 10 (analogous...
to the Nisan 10 sanctification of the Passover lamb in Egypt), (b) died on Nisan 14, and (c) rose from the dead on Nisan 17. Thus, because of the Nisan 10 problem—and more arguments below—Jones says that the 32 AD date is unlikely, and 30 AD makes more sense.

**Model 2.** Instead, consider the following model that uses the date of Sunday, March 31, 30 AD for the triumphal entry into Jerusalem [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 (because 454 BC to 1 BC = 453 years; 1 AD to 30 AD = 29 years; 1 BC to 1 AD = 1 year (only); and, in total: 453 + 29 + 1 = 483). Note that we treat the years as ordinary solar years. In Anderson’s model, however, the years are “prophetic” years consisting of 360 days each. Jones writes that the 365.2422-day earth year began with Noah’s Flood, and there is no need to override this with a prophetic year of 360 days (which may be restored during the Millennium). Lastly, in 30 AD, Nisan 10 fell on a Sunday. Eventually, the city of Jerusalem and its temple would be destroyed on August 6, 70 AD.

**Model 3.** Yet others (e.g., Dr. Harold Hoehner) come up with a calculation that uses March 5, 444 BC as Nisan 1 of Artaxerxes’ 20th year; Monday, March 30, 33 AD as Nisan 10 for Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem; and Friday, April 3, 33 AD as Nisan 14 for the crucifixion date [Ice, 2013b; House & Price, 2003; Hitchcock, 2010]. This set of dates also spans 173,880 days, and also ends upon Jesus Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

That said, there are some numerical patterns in Scripture that “fit better” with a crucifixion during 30 AD rather than 32 AD or 33 AD. For example, 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]

In summary, Jones argues that the 32 AD crucifixion date is impossible, and that the 20th year of King Artaxerxes is 454 BC, not 445 BC. Instead of using 483 prophetic years of 360 days each, for a total of 176,880 days, we use 483 regular solar years, which is a total of 176,412 days. Under Model 2 (see above), Christ was born in 4 BC; began His public ministry in 27 AD; rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, March 31, 30 AD (which corresponds to Nisan 10 in the Jewish calendar); and died four days later: on Passover day, Nisan 14 (which corresponds to Thursday, April 4, 30 AD).

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., subject 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. From the establishment of a covenant between Israel and the coming world leader (Antichrist), 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.

Six things are predicted regarding the Jews that will occur during these 490 years: 1) Their “transgression” will be finished; 2) their “sins” will end; 3) “reconciliation for iniquity” will be made; 4) “everlasting righteousness” will become a reality; 5) prophecy will be sealed up; and 6) the “Most Holy” will be anointed. These six things will not be completely fulfilled until the entire 490 years transpire.

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 [Fruchtenbaum, 2004].

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 would end in his day; but, that was not going to be the case. 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 close to 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. As mentioned, 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; 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 is another 70-year period in Scripture that relates 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 affictions 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."

For the 70 “weeks” of years to be continuous (i.e., 490 literal years, without a gap), we would require that Daniel’s prophecy end a few years after Christ’s crucifixion—but still well before 70 AD. There are no major events that occurred within a few years after Christ’s death and resurrection that would line up with this prophecy. Therefore, we must conclude that the 70th week of Daniel was not fulfilled by Christ’s earthly ministry, crucifixion, resurrection, or ascension. Similarly, the Day of Pentecost cannot be a fulfillment of this prophecy. Instead, the 483 years ended with Jesus Christ’s public declaration as the Messiah at the start of Passion Week, which coincided with his rejection as Messiah.
If the 70th week were intended to be fulfilled with Christ’s entry/rejection, then the text should use the Hebrew word for “during” or “in the midst of”, but that is not the case, states Randall Price [Ice, 2012c].

Upon Christ’s entry into Jerusalem on Nisan 10, there was a break or gap that extends to the present age. That gap exists because the Jews rejected Jesus Christ, and He was crucified. The gap is similar to a referee blowing the whistle at a sporting event: the clock doesn’t resume until play resumes.

Prophetic scriptures about the Messiah can come in various forms of focus. There are prophecies that deal solely with Christ’s first coming, deal solely with Christ’s Second Coming (Isaiah 63:1-6), deal with both (e.g., Zechariah 9:9-10), or deal with a wider span encompassing all of: the first coming, a gap of time, the Second Coming, and the Messianic Kingdom [Fruchtenbaum, 1998].

And 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 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."

In Scripture, Jesus wept twice: first, when his friend Lazarus died. Here, the Greek word for “wept” implies some tears. The second time, Jesus wept over Jerusalem. Here, the Greek word for “wept” implies a much stronger emotion. Jesus knew the future of Jerusalem and that within a generation it would be destroyed, the Temple would lie in ruins (“not one stone here will be left on another”), and large numbers of Jews would be killed.

Preterist Position

The 70 weeks of Daniel are over. The time does not apply to a future Antichrist. The “70 weeks” are 70 times 7 years—in other words, 490 years in all. Steve Gregg says that these years 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—and is not pointing to a future Antichrist’s rule on planet Earth. Three and a half years into Christ’s ministry, He 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”).

The book of Daniel looks forward to the coming of the Messiah, as prophesied by Jeremiah.

Hank Hanegraaff has a different viewpoint than Gregg. He doesn’t think the passage of the 70 weeks has anything to do with Jesus Christ’s first coming. In other words, the 70 weeks (490 years) do not refer to Christ riding into Jerusalem on a donkey declaring Himself to be the Messiah. Hanegraaff
states that the prophet Jeremiah was calling for 70 years of exile. The angel Gabriel confirmed this. The prophet Daniel acknowledged it, and was contemplating the writings of Jeremiah. Jerusalem would experience a partial restoration after 70 years of exile, but the return from exile was just a type. In particular, it was “a type of the antitypical freedom that would be experienced through Judas Maccabeus” several centuries later (i.e., 165 BC), which in turn was symbolic of ultimate freedom to be experienced under Jesus Christ in the far future [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man, September 13, 2010].

After Antiochus IV Epiphanes desecrated the Temple and abolished the daily sacrifice, Judas Maccabeus’s army re-captured the Temple Mount, cleansed the sanctuary, and restored the sacrifice. The great tribulation in the Old Testament is the 70th week of Daniel (i.e., a 7-year tribulation), argues Hank Hanegraaff [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man, June 24, 2015]. This event is remembered through the annual Jewish holiday called Hanukkah.

That said, in the New Testament, Jesus warned about another 7-year tribulation that would occur, and that took place around 70 AD. In that tribulation, the Temple in Jerusalem was set ablaze by Roman infidels on August 30, 70 AD (7 years after the start of the tribulation); and by September 26, 70 AD, all of Jerusalem was ablaze. Many people were killed during this tragedy. During this event, the Holy of Holies was not just desecrated by a pagan god, but was destroyed.

There is, however, no reason to expect another 7-year tribulation after that one; but, that doesn’t mean that there won’t be other “tribulations” (e.g., tragic events around the world on smaller scales) [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man, June 24, 2015]. For example, in the 21st century (circa 2015), Christians in Syria, Nigeria, and Iraq are undergoing tribulation and persecution.

In summary, the last “seven” of the “seventy sevens” has nothing to do with an Antichrist in the 21st century breaking a peace treaty in the middle of it. Daniel’s vision of the “seventy sevens” 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’ [i.e., 70 * 7 years = 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.

Hanegraaff argues that numbers in Scriptures like “the cattle on a thousand hills” are not necessarily literal. The term “seventy times seven” is being used in a metaphoric sense. 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 general period of time, such as the days
since 70 AD. Hanegraaff states, “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].

Hanegraaff agrees with Gregg that the 69th and 70th weeks have no gap
between them. The source of the dispensationalists’ 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”.

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. Others, such as Gregg, say that “he” who confirms
the *covenant* is actually the Jesus the Messiah. 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. This happened in 70 AD.
God is no longer interested in animal sacrifices and Temple worship. Christ
was the sacrifice. “Jesus’ perfect sacrifice accomplished what the Law could
not do with its temporary sacrifices.” [LaHaye, 2001b, p. 628] Furthermore,
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], and (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, mentioned in a footnote
at www.biblegateway.com].

Like Gregg, Gary DeMar also 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.

Hanegraaff states 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; but, 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.

Another point to consider: Had the writers of the New Testament claimed that Christ’s entry into Jerusalem, on a donkey, was a major fulfillment of a prophecy relating to the 70 weeks of Daniel, they most surely would have said so.

Hanegraaff believes that the interpretation of the 70 weeks that is promoted by most 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.

Hanegraaff 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 [my son] 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 or birdie) 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 (i.e., a story that uses symbols and metaphors to make its point, and thus, to transcend the literal story). 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, Temple, New Jerusalem, the issue of no more death and mourning) points to its fulfillment in Christ.

The writer of Hebrews makes clear that the rest the descendants of Abraham experienced when they entered the land is but a type of the rest we experience when we enter an eternal relationship with the Lord. The land provided temporal rest for the physical descendants of Abraham, but the Lord provides eternal rest for the spiritual descendants of Abraham (see Hebrews 3 and 4). The land was never the focus of our Lord; instead, our Lord is forever the locus of the land.

... In the final future, the promise of the land will be fully and finally consummated when Paradise lost is reconstituted as Paradise restored. Canaan is thus typological of a renewed cosmos. Accordingly, Abraham ... viewed living in the Promised Land in the same way that a stranger would view living in a foreign country. Why? Because as the writer of Hebrews makes plain, “He was looking forward to a city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Hebrews 11:9-10). [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 182]

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| What is “the abomination that causes desolation”? When does/did the “abomination that causes desolation” take place? | Let us expand on the following Scriptures (see the inline comments):

**Daniel 9:27** He [Antichrist] will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven' [i.e., at the 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.

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 at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD [Ice, 2003e, p. 179]:

- 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.
The Roman General Titus did not enter the Temple in 70 AD until after the sanctuary was already in flames [LaHaye & Ice, 2004]. Even an early, well-known, Church father, Irenaeus (circa 185 AD) believed that the Antichrist was still in the future, when the Antichrist would sit in the Holy Temple and declare himself to be God. Conversely, the spiritual or symbolic use of the Temple did not formalize until the well-known Church father Origin did so in the 3rd century AD.

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. Zechariah 12-14 contains a lot of information about the times prior to Christ’s return, and in particular, having to do with Israel and the Tribulation.

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 book 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.

Note that the Abomination of Desolation is to stand in the Holy Place, implying the existence of a temple. Also, Jesus is addressing the message to the Judeans, in particular. However, only the high priest was allowed to go into the Holy Place; so, how could the general public (in Judea) see this
event? The answer might refer to modern communications equipment, namely television, cell phones, computers, the Internet, and all kinds of software (e.g., Google, YouTube, Facebook)—all of which have the ability to connect large numbers of people, worldwide, in near real-time. Major events can be broadcast throughout the world (i.e., “go viral”) within minutes, if not seconds, of the event unfolding. Someone who is at work, for example, does not have to wait until the end of the day to see major events on the evening news; instead, one can see events taking place on-the-fly—unfiltered and uncensored.

Matthew 24:16 states, “Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath”. In winter, the roads in Judea may become impassible. Reference to the Sabbath implies that the Law is in effect.

Randy Price comments on possible “abominations of desolation”, such as Kenneth Gentry’s preterist interpretation; however, none of these 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 of desolation” spoken of by Jesus, had been prophesied six centuries earlier by Daniel, who wrote, “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” (Daniel 11:31-32). 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. [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 87]
was both looking backward and forward—backward because of the events in history surrounding Antiochus Epiphanes, and forward because of the events following his crucifixion. After Christ offered Himself as the penalty for all of mankind’s sins, any further sacrifices would be unnecessary, and in fact, would be an abomination to God. 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. In 70 AD, a Roman image was set up in the Temple. This was the Abomination of Desolation. Might there be a third “abomination of desolation”? Probably not.

When Christ stated, “when you see these things come to pass…”, he implied 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who is the king in Daniel 11:40-45?</strong> This king doesn’t seem to have a match in history. Might this be the Antichrist?</td>
<td>This is a ruler at the time of the end. He is likely the Antichrist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The reference in Daniel 11 may refer to the “cruel” or “worthless” shepherd depicted in Zechariah 11. Chuck Missler conjectures that Zechariah 11:17 may be the only physical description of the Antichrist:</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Zechariah 11:17</strong> “Woe to the worthless shepherd, who deserts the flock! May the sword strike his arm and his right eye! May his arm be completely withered, his right eye totally blinded!” An Oracle</td>
<td>There may be a connection between the above passage and: (a) the fatal wound of the beast in Revelation 13:3, which had been healed; and (b) the mark of the beast (i.e., taking a mark in one’s right hand or the forehead), as per Revelation 13:16-17 [Missler, 2005].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preterist Position</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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”?</td>
</tr>
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</table>

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 book.)

Dispensationalist Position

Antiochus 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. Revelation 13:1 says that the Antichrist will be a “beast coming up out of the sea”. Symbolically, the “sea” always refers to the Gentile nations in Scripture; the “land” refers to Israel. Furthermore, because the “times of the Gentiles” do not end until the Second
Coming of Christ, the Antichrist will be the final Gentile ruler of the world.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
<th>Hank Hanegraaff writes:</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“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.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“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]</td>
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### Topic/Question

**In the Olivet Discourse, what signs precede Christ’s return? What chronological (time-ordered) events precede the Tribulation?**

Matthew 24:3  As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this [Temple’s destruction] happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

### Dispensationalist Position

**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 hence, the start of the second/Messianic) age?**

The Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 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 and Mark.

In his book *The Footsteps of the Messiah* (entitled as such to refer to events leading up to the return of Jesus Christ), Arnold Fruchtenbaum mentions the following *sequential* signs that precede the Tribulation [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. There are other pretribulational signs as well, but it is difficult to place them in any sequence. Because these signs are expanded upon in other parts of this book, the details are not listed here.

**Sign 1** is when “nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom”—accompanied by famines and earthquakes.
Sign 2 is the re-establishment of Israel.

Sign 3 is Jerusalem being under Israeli/Jewish control.

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).

Jack Kelley provides the following summary of end-time events, and he works backwards from well-defined events, noting that only the Ezekiel 38-39 event and the Rapture are subject to a debate about timing [Kelley, 2011]:

- Eternity
- Millennial Kingdom
- Second Coming of Christ
- End of the Great Tribulation
- Abomination of Desolation (when the Antichrist declares himself to be God—in the Middle of Daniel’s 70th Week)
Finally, there is a pair of battles that could occur either before or after the Rapture, but they probably occur before the battle of Ezekiel 38-39 because that would mean that all of Israel’s enemies will have been defeated, argues Kelley:

- The battles of Psalm 83 and Isaiah 17

Kelley states that the only reason for a rebuilt Temple is to perform Old Testament ordinances, which include animal sacrifices. It is true that this is unnecessary because of Jesus Christ’s ultimate and personal sacrifice, but remember, the 70th Week of Daniel specifically applies to the Jews—and the 70th Week (Tribulation) is still in the future. It is only near the end of the 70th Week that the Jews realize that Jesus Christ has fulfilled this prophecy, and that Jesus is the Son of God.

A major event must take place in order to get the Muslim world—and for that matter, the secular world—to accept the rebuilding of a Temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. It’s possible that that event will be the fulfillment of the Ezekiel 38-39 prophecy regarding the Gog & Magog invasion. After that event, Israel will be re-awakened to God, and will seek to rebuild the Temple—at a time when the amount of opposition would be relatively small.

All the leaders of the early church now knew that once God had accomplished His goals with the church, He would turn again to Israel, and that would signal the end of the Church Age.

There are two critical points to remember here. The first is that the Church didn’t end God’s covenant with Israel, but only interrupted it 7 years short of its scheduled completion. Those seven years, called the 70th Week of Daniel, have to be fulfilled to complete the Old Covenant.

And the second is that the Old and New covenants, as practiced in Israel and the Church, are theologically incompatible, and therefore the two can only be on Earth at the same time while Israel is out of covenant. For Israel to return to the Lord, the Church has to be gone. [Kelley, p. 10, 2011]
<table>
<thead>
<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 unbelief), and (4) the Rapture.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First of all, we remind the reader that the “Day of the Lord” or “Day of Jehovah” refers to the Tribulation (and possibly posttribulational 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 unclear 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. This is the fourth and final Temple; it becomes a center of Jewish and Gentile worship during the Millennium. It supersedes the third Temple which will be built by the Jews in unbelief of Jesus Christ, and which will be desecrated by the Antichrist during the midpoint of the Tribulation. The fourth Temple is also much larger (about one square mile) and cannot be contained on the current Temple Mount, implying that physical/geographical changes will occur.

(4) The Rapture. (See detailed explanations in other parts of this book.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is the meaning of the “1,260 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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daniel 7:23-25</td>
<td>&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;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel 12:7</td>
<td>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, &quot;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.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 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 1,260 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 1,260 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.

The three kings stand in the way of Antichrist’s political objectives. The kings are probably not supernatural, but are among the last rulers of human government that serve as checks and balances over the people. Might they be the last democratic governments? Might these rulers be converts, post-Rapture—given that they oppose the Antichrist?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
<th>The 1,260 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.</th>
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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is meant by the “1,335 days” in the book of Daniel?</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Note that the “1,260 days” discussed in the previous section is connected to this prophecy. Does this mean that there is a period of 75 days following the 1,260 days? If so, what happens during this 75-day period?</td>
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</table>

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.”

<table>
<thead>
<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>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<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, 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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

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 that the end of the Tribulation is also 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 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 divided on this—with some thinking that Bozrah is one of his first stops during the Battle of Armageddon, rather than either one of his last stops or a post-Armageddon stop. 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."

Arnold Fruchtenbaum conjectures that the additional 30 days past the 1,260 days will be the time during which the Abomination of Desolation remains [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. Why would Christ need 30 days to remove the abomination? Well, the 30 days may include: (a) the time between Christ’s initial appearance at Armageddon (Bozrah) and his arrival at Jerusalem (“... and the ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing ...”) (Isaiah 35:10; Psalm 51:11); (b) the destruction and removal of the existing Temple (i.e., perhaps the whole Temple is desecrated); (c) part of the construction of a new Temple to be dedicated at the start of the Millennium (the Millennial Temple is described in Ezekiel 40-48); and (d) other, unspecified events.

The “1,335 days” appears to include a stretch of 45 days after the 1,290 days. The latter 45 days may include the construction of the Millennial Temple, as well as the multi-day Marriage Supper of the Lamb (following the resurrection of the Old Testament and Tribulation saints), as per Matthew 8:11.

It is not clear whether the judgments take place in an instant of time, or whether the judgments will take place over many days/years.

The 75 days following the return of Christ at Armageddon include the following events, according to [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]:

- Removal of the Abomination of Desolation (during first 30 days)
- Antichrist and False Prophet are thrown into the Lake of Fire
- Binding of Satan in the Abyss
- Judgment of the Living Gentiles (“sheep and goats” judgment referring to how each Gentile treated the Jews during the Tribulation)
- Resurrection of Old Testament saints
- Resurrection of Tribulation saints
- Marriage Supper of the Lamb

Other events [Hitchcock, 2015a]: It will take some time to cleanse Jerusalem, and to bury the dead after Armageddon. It will also take some time to set up
the administration of the Millennium. In particular, people will be assigned to take charge of various administrative portfolios. Israel will take possession of the Promised Land, from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates River. During the 75 days of time between Armageddon and the start of the Millennium, the Millennial Temple may also be built. The resurrected saints will be given rewards in accordance with their lives. It is unclear how long these events will take place.

| Preterist Position | There is no future 7-year “Tribulation”. The 1,335 days referred to in Daniel 12:12 may well refer to the death of Antiochus Epiphanies that occurred around 165 BC [Hanegraaff, 2015]. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>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?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 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." |

| Dispensationalist Position | The 2300 days mentioned in Daniel 7:14 refers to a six-year period during 171-165 BC [LaHaye, 2001b]. The Maccabean army captured the temple mount, and cleansed the sanctuary in 165 BC. This is the event celebrated by the Jews, as Hanukkah. |

| Preterist Position | The phrase “2300 evenings and mornings” refers to a period of time leading up to the desecration of the Second Temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, starting around 170 BC [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man, December 29, 2011]. The daily sacrifice was abolished in 168 BC, and this would represent “2300 evenings and mornings” (i.e., 1150 days’ worth of offerings). |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is meant by the following description of the Antichrist?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Daniel 11:37 | "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."

| Dispensationalist Position | Arnold Fruchtenbaum provides some good commentary on this matter: |
### Rationalist Position

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...

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]

### Preterist Position

There is no future global leader called the Antichrist. Preterists believe that the Beast “of Revelation was a symbol of both Nero in particular and the Roman Empire in general.” [LaHaye & Ice, 2003]

### Topic/Question

Who, or what, is the “little horn” in the book of Daniel?

**Daniel 7:7-11** "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. “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. ... "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.

**Daniel 7:19-26** "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. "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. '"'But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever.
| Dispensationalist Position | 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 4 horns of the fourth beast (describing the Roman Empire). It uproots 3 of the other horns (of Alexander the Great’s Greek kingdom). The first few verses of Daniel 7 describe the 4 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): |

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 17:10-13 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. 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. They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast.  

Apparently, the Antichrist will enter the domain of the 10 kings, uproot 3 of them, and become the leader of the remainder. |

| Preterist Position | Reference is made in Matthew 24:15-16 to the Great Tribulation that took place in the Old Testament under Antiochus IV Epiphanes. This is correlated to what is about to come (circa 63-70 AD).  

For 7 years, Antiochus IV Epiphanes had terrorized the Jews and caused havoc in Jerusalem and the Temple. He killed the high priest. Circa 169 BC, he stole many of the vessels from the Temple; circa 167 BC, he desecrated the Holy Temple by building a pagan altar and sacrificing unholy things on the altar. Then, for 3 years, he pillaged Jerusalem and slaughtered the Jews. Thus, there was a 3+ -year “tribulation” [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man, December 2, 2010]. In 164 BC, Antiochus IV Epiphanes died at the hands of Judas Maccabeus. The Jewish celebration of Hanukkah celebrates the liberation from Antiochus IV Epiphanes.  

In Matthew 24:15-16 (part of the Olivet Discourse), Jesus warned about the tribulation that was to come, circa 70 AD, which would be similar to what happened under Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed. Indeed, in 70 AD, prophecy was fulfilled; it was what Jesus Christ warned would happen to “this generation”. |
Why did this happen? Simply put, the Jews did not receive Jesus Christ at His first coming. They didn’t acknowledge that the ultimate sacrifice had come. Since Christ was that sacrifice, there was no longer any need for the Temple.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>When were “all nations” judged in the Valley of Jehoshaphat? When did “all nations” (Joel 3:2; Zechariah 12:3) 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>
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<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>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>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?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>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.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>... 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?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... 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 &amp; Ice, 2003]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 neighbors 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 | Many preterists believe that God judged Israel in 70 AD with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple. There is no future point in time when “all nations” will gather against Jerusalem, or where they will literally gather for judgment in the Kidron Valley (Valley of Jehoshaphat). |
Chapter 9: Revelation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>When was the book of Revelation written?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dispensationalist Position</strong></td>
<td>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 [Hitchcock, 2005]. Respected apologist and dispensationalist Norman Geisler concurs that John probably wrote Revelation in 95 AD.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mark Hitchcock states that, for the first 500 years of Church history, a late date for the writing of Revelation was the accepted norm [Ice, 2008b]. There was no evidence to suggest that the early Church ever considered a pre-70 AD writing of Revelation.

Furthermore, even if a pre-70 AD were true, that would not rule out dispensationalism. On the other hand, if a post-70 AD date were true, then that would rule out partial and full preterism.

There are two bodies of evidence to consider: arguments *internal* to the book of Revelation, and arguments *external* to the book of Revelation.

Let us deal with internal arguments first. 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 mentioned explicitly. 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). Actually, little fulfilled prophecy of any kind is explicitly mentioned in Revelation. The book of Revelation deals primarily with prophecy, not history. Note also that Revelation was written primarily to a Gentile audience that lived about 800 miles away from Jerusalem [Hanegraaff & Hitchcock, 2007]. Unlike a Jewish audience, a Gentile audience would not have had much interest in a temple.

Besides not explicitly mentioning the destruction of the Temple (and the fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecies), Revelation does not directly quote Old Testament passages either, even though it makes “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.

Biblical archaeologist and Old Testament scholar Randall Price says,

Titus had given specific orders that the Temple be left intact, but evidently a soldier acting on impulse threw a torch through an archway of the Temple and set the tapestries inside on fire. It is said that when the building burned, the decorative gold on the walls melted and ran into the seams between the stones. Afterward, in a frenzied attempt to recover the gold, the Roman soldiers tore apart the stones of the Temple’s walls, resulting in a complete desolation of the Temple (see Jesus’ prophecy in Luke 19:43-44). A large number of the stones of the uppermost course of the outside retaining walls of the Temple were also forcibly torn down as a show of Roman vengeance.

Make no mistake: Jesus, Israel’s premier prophet, got it right. He prophesied correctly! The temple was totally destroyed in A.D. 70 just as He predicted. Not one stone was left upon another. [Hitchcock, 2010, p. 94]

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: (a) Ezekiel prophesied about the temple (Ezekiel 40-43), and (b) when Daniel gave his end-time prophecies (Daniel 9). Hank Hanegraaff argues that Revelation recapitulates Ezekiel, so this precedent weakens his case [Hanegraaff & Hitchcock, 2007].

What about the external arguments?

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” (which ended in 96 AD).

It is important to note that Irenaeus was from Asia Minor (modern Turkey). The Apostle John was from Ephesus, which is also in Asia minor. Irenaeus was discipled in the faith by Polycarp, who was discipled by the Apostle John. Thus, there is a direct link between the one who wrote Revelation and Irenaeus. This link strongly supports the credibility
of Irenaeus and his statement [about Domitian’s reign]. [Ice, 2001b]

Eusebius (260-340 AD), “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]]

Mark Hitchcock compares late vs. early references to the dating of Revelation, in the following table taken from the debate between him and Hank Hanegraaff [Hanegraaff & Hitchcock, 2007]. The external evidence seems to support a late dating of Revelation. In particular, no Biblical scholar prior to 508 AD explicitly supports a pre-70 AD dating of Revelation [Hanegraaff & Hitchcock, 2007]. The late date for Revelation is the traditionally accepted one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting the 95 AD (Domitian) Date</th>
<th>Supporting the 65 AD (Neronic) Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who?</td>
<td>When?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hegesippus</td>
<td>c. 150 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clement of Alexandria</td>
<td>150-215 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irenaeus</td>
<td>180 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dio Cassius</td>
<td>150-235 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertullian</td>
<td>160-220 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origen</td>
<td>185-253 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorinus</td>
<td>c. 300 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eusebius</td>
<td>260-340 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerome</td>
<td>340-419 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulpicius Severus</td>
<td>c. 400 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orosius</td>
<td>c. 400 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primasius</td>
<td>c. 540 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andreas of Cappadocia</td>
<td>c. 600 AD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Acts of John  c. 650 AD
Venerable Bede  c. 700 AD
Arethas  c. 850-900 AD
Theophylact  c. 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 Smyrnæans 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]

What about the terms “soon” and “near” that are used in Revelation? Aren’t these words supportive of a near-term (e.g., pre-70 AD) writing? Mark Hitchcock argues that these terms apply to all of the contents of Revelation, including Chapters 20-22 (e.g., Second Coming, Great White Throne Judgment, new Heavens and Earth). None of these events have occurred yet! In Romans 15, Paul writes that the Lord will “soon” crush Satan. In Philippians 4:5, Paul writes that the Lord is “near”. Instead, the words “soon” and “near” speak of imminence [Hanegraaff & Hitchcock, 2007]. Hitchcock argues that, for consistency, people need to be either futurists or
full preterists. The word translated “soon” in Revelation 1 is better translated “quickly” or “fast”—referring to the speed with which events unfold as they begin to take place [Kelley, 2017a].

Other points to consider: Laodicea experienced a severe earthquake in 60 AD, and it took close to 30 years to rebuild the city—yet Revelation states that the Laodiceans had no need of anything. This is more in line with a late dating of Revelation. Also, why would Nero execute Peter and Paul, but just banish John to the Island of Patmos?

The preterist view requires a date for the writing of Revelation prior to 70 AD, and probably at least several years before that. Furthermore, even if Revelation were written prior to 70 AD, it would not invalidate the dispensationist view.

| 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 likely existed at that point, making the necessity of a third Temple (i.e., a future Temple) irrelevant.
| | There appears to be no historical evidence of a late writing. Kenneth Gentry argues for a late 64 AD to early 67 AD dating of Revelation [Sproul, 1998]. John Ankerberg wrote, “It is becoming an increasingly persuasive argument that all the New Testament books were before AD 70—within a single generation of the death of Christ” [Hanegraaff & Hitchcock, 2007].
| | 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. |
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 or later, 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 Revelation 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? ... so too it is unreasonable to think that a history of the Jews in Germany would be written in the aftermath of World War II and yet make no mention of the Holocaust. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 153-154]

Scholars that hold to an early dating of Revelation include: F.F. Bruce, John A.T. Robinson, Philip Schaff, Milton S. Terry, Brooke Foss Westcott, R.C. Sproul, and Kenneth Gentry [Hanegraaff, 2007].

Hanegraaff adds that we shouldn’t trust the early Church fathers on this issue of dating because they were wrong about many things that we don’t embrace today. For example, they believed in baptismal generation, the perpetual virginity of Mary, and holding all Jews responsible for the death of Christ [Hanegraaff & Hitchcock, 2007].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Should Revelation be taken literally?</th>
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<tbody>
<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. This includes all numbers mentioned, such as, 7 lampstands, 1000 years, 1260 days, 42 months, etc. Recall that Daniel took them literally, and history has shown their fulfillment (e.g., the first 69 weeks of the 70 weeks of Daniel). For a good treatment of the literal interpretation of Revelation, see the book/commentary The Revelation Record by Henry Morris [Morris, 1983]. There were hundreds of prophecies that were literally...</td>
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fulfilled at Christ’s first coming, so why not take a literal 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.

[G.B. Caird writes:] “An allegory is a story intended by an author to convey a hidden meaning, and it is correctly interpreted when that intended meaning is perceived. To allegorize is to impose on a story hidden meanings which the original author neither intended nor envisaged; it is to treat as allegory that which was not intended as allegory.” [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 29]

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]

In the third century, Alexander of Alexandria and Origen developed the allegorical approach to biblical interpretation [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007].

Jerome and Alexander were advocates of the allegorical approach in the area of Bible prophecy. ... Their influence paved the way for the dominance of allegorical interpretation during much of the Middle Ages, especially when it came to Bible prophecy. Augustine developed a dual hermeneutic. On the one hand, he tended to interpret the Bible literally, but when it came to eschatology he interpreted that spiritually or allegorically. [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007, pp. 91-92]

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]]

Categorizing Revelation as prophetic also relates it to the Book of Daniel, which it alludes to more than any other Old Testament book. Jesus specifically referred to Daniel as a prophet (Matthew 24:15). Because Revelation’s content relies so heavily upon Daniel, it stands to reason that the material found in Revelation should also be categorized as prophetic.

... 

Categorizing Revelation as prophetic rather than apocalyptic significantly changes the hermeneutical landscape. If Revelation is prophecy, then we should interpret it just as we would any other prophecy. We should use the same literal, grammatical, historical method that we normally use for interpreting Scripture [LaHaye & Hindson, 2004, p. 30].

It was not until the dawning of the Reformation that biblical interpretation began to return to the sanity of literal interpretation. ... Luther and Calvin generally returned the church to literal interpretation. Had they not done this, then Protestantism would have never been born and reformation would have never taken place.

By the 1600s most biblical scholars preferred a literal interpretation; nevertheless, a couple hundred years passed before that understanding influenced all areas of Bible interpretation, especially Bible prophecy.

It was not until the late 1700s and early 1800s that biblical interpreters
In general, the evangelical church, especially in the English-speaking world, returned to the premillennial futurism of the early church. [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007, pp. 93-95]

Charles Feinberg emphasizes 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].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
<th>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]</th>
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<td>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; but Revelation 20:7-21:22, in particular, will be fulfilled in the future [Hitchcock &amp; Ice, 2007].</td>
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<td>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 “coming on the 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.</td>
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<td>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.</td>
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<td>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.</td>
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<td>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”</td>
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Hanegraaff 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-corporeal 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 Hanegraaff; 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.

The Tree of Life in Genesis 2-3 reappears in Revelation 22. The Bread of Life is Jesus Christ. When you partake of the Bread of Life (a symbol or type), then you have access to the Tree of Life [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, February 16, 2011]. Although there is a debate about whether the Tree of Life is a literal tree or not, the bottom line is that we have access to the Tree of Life through the Bread of Life: Jesus Christ.

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.

With respect to the dispensationalist model of Christ coming to rescue the Jews following the Battle of Armageddon, 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. Furthermore, if two-thirds were to be killed, wouldn’t it make more sense to encourage people to leave the land, so that as few as possible would die?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>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?</th>
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<tbody>
<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 pretribulational Rapture.</td>
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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, pretribulationists 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.

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 Laetantius.’

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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, 2001a]

Thomas Ice comments:

Almost all of the Gentile and Jewish workers involved in Jewish evangelism were premillennial. …

In the almost forty-five years that I have been involved in Christian ministry, I have observed generally a sincere Christian love by
premillennialists of the Jewish people and a desire to lead them to Christ, rarely seen in non-premillennial evangelicals. [Ice, 2014b]

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 pretribulational 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 pretribulational 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, who is not a pretribulationalist, argues that we should tell Israel that it will not be left alone to face the coming persecution (Tribulation) [Pawson, 2002].

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 | Revelation refers to the things “what must come soon to pass”. Christ said, “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 in, say, the 21st century? How should readers of Revelation interpret these words?

**Dispensationalist Position**

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 also 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 95 AD. Thus, these 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]

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 that “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.

There was indeed a “soon” coming of Christ, and this is associated with the coming of Christ in judgment in 70 AD. Christ’s words were fulfilled within one generation. He is speaking in the language and manner of the Old Testament.
Testament prophets. For example, in Isaiah 11:6 and 65:25, the prophet speaks of the wolf lying down with the lamb, in association with the coming judgment on Assyria (as per Isaiah 10-11).

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<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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<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>
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| Comment about the 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) |

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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Consider the seven churches of Revelation 2-3. Does this portion of Revelation apply to actual churches that were contemporary to John when writing the book of Revelation ... or does it apply to eras of church history since then ... or does it apply to seven, concurrent, types of churches that are active today?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>All three. 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, and are indicative of the kinds of churches that are present today. Furthermore, in the case of church ages or eras, they’re given in order. 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.</td>
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Missler 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 argues for three applications of the letters [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. De Haan comments on the church ages [De Haan, 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 describes a time when “the finished
The work of Christ was denied, and to it were added works, ceremonies, ritual and sacrifices” [De Haan, 1946]. The name 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]. Furthermore, Nero’s persecution of the Christians preceded the letter to the church of Smyrna. Secondly, 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]. It may also refer to the notion of the clergy ruling over the laity [Missler, 2005].

With respect to the “ten days” of persecution associated with the church of Smyrna, there is also no confirmation of this in church history.

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. Incidentally, the name Jezebel or Jesebel means “without a husband” [Ice, 2015c]. 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 ek**. The word **tereo** means “keep, preserve, protect”, and **ek** means “out of”. However, when
tereō is used with the word ἐν, it means “to cause one to persevere or stand firm in a thing” [Pentecost, 1958; Hitchcock, 2011c]. The phrase “to test those who live on the earth” seems to refer to the Tribulation, and the implication is that the Church is not there. 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. Furthermore, there is no evidence that Revelation 3:10 (a worldwide trial) found its fulfillment in the early church. Scripture seems to indicate that God would keep the Philadelphia church from “the hour” or the time of testing—still future.

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 because preachers deviate from Scripture. In some cases, these splits have occurred over disputable, but non-essential, issues, in which case the members should respectfully disagree with one another, but not divide over [Hanegraaff, 2003+].

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 phrase “angels of the seven churches” suggests that individual angels are assigned to guide or watch out for individual churches [Morris, 1983]. Had John meant “pastors” instead of “angels”, he likely 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>
<tr>
<td>Laodicea</td>
<td>Age of apostasy</td>
<td>1900-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Preterist Position

This has a first-century context and fulfillment. It is not a twenty-first century prophecy; 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. It was specifically written to the Church in Philadelphia in the first century; however, we can still apply some of the teachings to us today.

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. [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. With the tribulation going on around them, and people claiming, “We have no king but Caesar”, the seven churches got special strength from the messages of Revelation.

There is no reason to believe that the seven churches of Revelation are symbolic of seven stages of Church history. The church of Thyatira does not refer to the papacy, and Sardis does not refer to the protestant reformation
Revelation specifically mentions that the events described are “soon” to take place. This rules out a modern-day fulfillment.

Christ would not have deluded first-century believers by saying, “I will also keep you from the hour of trial (Revelation 3:10) when the you intended were twenty-first-century believers. It is inconceivable that our Lord was informing a persecuted first-century church that twenty centuries later the church would be spared persecution via a pretribulational rapture invented by nineteenth-century believers. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 159-160]

Some of the terms used in the letters to the seven churches have direct connections to the Old Testament [Hanegraaff, 2007]. Indeed, the Old Testament language and imagery would be familiar to them:

- The tree of life appeared in Genesis
- The ten days of fasting appeared in Daniel
- The heavenly manna appeared in Exodus
- Jezebel, who promoted, idolatry appeared in Kings
- The seven spirits appeared in Zechariah
- The key of David appeared in Isaiah
- Christ’s rebuke appeared in Proverbs
- The sevenfold judgment (that appears four times in Revelation) appeared in Leviticus

We would be wise to study the Old Testament to give us greater insight into Revelation, and this is the focus of Hank Hanegraaff’s work in exegetical eschatology.

<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 argues 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.”
Some characteristics of Satan are given in Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14, and many of these details are hard for us to comprehend, in part because they seem to involve a spiritual, rather than a physical dimension.

Ezekiel 28:12b-15 This is what the Sovereign LORD says: "'You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz and emerald, chrysolite, onyx and jasper, sapphire, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you.'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
<th>n/a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<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? What do the horsemen represent?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>The first horseman rides a white horse, and traditionally he is said to be the Antichrist—who goes out to conquer. The four horsemen appear to be related in purpose, and those purposes are dark. 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 (<em>stephanos</em> 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. The second horseman rides a red horse and appears to initiate wars in the end times. The third horseman rides a black horse and seems to initiate food 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 (or possibly micro-organisms or rats, according to some scholars). Approximately one-quarter of the earth’s population is affected by the fourth horseman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preterist</td>
<td>The rider on the white horse in Revelation 19 is indisputably Jesus Christ;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Position | however, there is division among scholars about the rider of the white horse in Revelation 6 [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, August 4, 2011]. The context suggests that the latter is an Antichrist figure because of the following horses described and because it may be a parody of Christ. Also, similar language is used (i.e., “conquer”) in Revelation 13:7 is used to describe an attribute of the beast. Lastly, we know that Satan is a deceiver, and is explicitly described this way four times in Revelation.

What similarities are there to Jesus Christ? First, the rider of the white horse in Revelation 19 is clearly Jesus Christ; so, there is a close reference. Second, in Revelation 6, the rider carries a bow. Recall from Habakkuk 3:9 that the Lord or warrior-king carries a bow. Third, he goes out to “conquer”. Fourth, the rider in Revelation 6 wears a crown—again, a similarity to Jesus Christ.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Consider the phrase “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?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Dispensationalist Position | 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 refer to 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. Stars are also a metaphor for angels in Scripture, with the exception of one case [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. For example, Revelation 12:3-6 and Isaiah 14:9-14 are passages that use this term. |
| Preterist Position | It is not literal. Stars being flung to Earth make no sense since a single star could swallowed up the earth.  

In the Old Testament, figures of speech were used that were not 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.

Isaiah 13:9-10  See, the day of the LORD is coming—a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger—to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light.

Surely no one supposes that the stars went into supernova when Isaiah pronounced judgment on Babylon in 539 BC. Instead, as Isaiah used the sun, moon, and stars as judgment metaphors against Babylon, our Lord used them as judgment images against Jerusalem. Indeed, only when we interpret Scripture in light of Scripture rather than Scripture in light of the daily newspaper do we perceive its perspicuous meaning. [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 233]

Furthermore, *Israel* is described in Scripture as being the sun, moon, and stars (see Genesis 37 and Revelation 12).

<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>
</tr>
</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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preterist Position</td>
<td>It is not literal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<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>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>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).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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. The number “12” is used to represent the 12 apostles (disciples), and the 12 tribes of Israel. We know that the word “thousand” is used in many places in Scripture to indicate a large number. The 144,000 may represent “true Israel”—a number too large to count—a purified people from all nations and languages, argues Hank Hanegraaff [Hanegraaff, 2003+].

The 144,000 do not have the name “The Lamb” or “The Father” literally 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 one 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. The figurative use of the whole number one thousand is virtually ubiquitous in Old Testament usage. For example, God increased the number of the Israelites a thousand times (Deuteronomy 1:11); God keeps his covenant to a thousand generations (Psalm 50:10); the least of Zion will become a thousand and the smallest a mighty nation (Isaiah 60:22); a day in God’s sight is better than a thousand elsewhere (Psalm 84:10)...

<table>
<thead>
<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>
</thead>
</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, which, by the way, is different than the division of tribes in the book of Joshua. 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]. The Millennial Jerusalem is about ten miles long on each side, i.e., about 10 miles squared, or about 100 square miles. The 12 gates will be named after the 12 sons of Jacob. Gentile nations will bring tribute into the city. In particular, the Feast of Tabernacles will be respected and celebrated by the Gentiles during the Millennium; otherwise, the offending Gentile nations will not receive rainfall (Zechariah 14:16-19). |

| Preterist | The 12,000 does not necessarily refer to 12,000 literal individuals from every |
Position | tribe of Israel. Ten of the 12 tribes lost their national identity during the Assyrian exile almost 1,000 years before Christ. The two remaining tribes—Judah and Benjamin—were almost annihilated during the Roman empire about 2,000 years ago.

The bottom line is that “true Israel” is innumerable, and is made up of those who believe in Jesus Christ. This includes Rahab (a Canaanite) and Ruth (a Moabite), who were not Jews, but are part of true Israel. True Israel is not a matter of physical Israel, but rather all those who have expressed faith in Jesus Christ (or in the Old Testament, believed in the God of Israel) [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, February 22, 2011].

In the Old Testament, people looked forward through types and shadows. Jesus Christ came in the New Testament. God does not draw a distinction between ethnicity and race: all who come to God through faith are considered to be “true Israel”.

| 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 | They are not literal locusts for several reasons [Hitchcock, 2010; Hitchcock 2015c]:

a) Their leader is a demon. In Proverbs 30:27, we read that literal locusts have no leader/king.
b) They come from the Abyss, where demons are temporarily held. They may have been demons that have been confined to the Abyss for thousands of years.
c) Their object of attack is not vegetation; but rather, people.
d) They only torture those who do not belong to God, as per Revelation 9:4.

It is not clear why demonic beings would torture people who are not followers of God. Perhaps they want to attack everyone, but God supernaturally protects the believers. Locusts were a form of judgment in the Old Testament. Locusts also have a track record of destroying everything in their path; so, this may be why God is using the term “locusts”.

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. The “locusts” are materialized demonic beings.

Some have identified this king of the abyss as Satan himself; however, Satan’s domain is the heavenly places, not the underworld. In Scripture,
Satan has no connection with the abyss until he is cast there in Revelation 20:1-3. It is better to identify this king as an unnamed, unidentified fallen angel who is in charge of the abyss. He could be described as Satan's hellish “Michael the Archangel.” This terrifying terminator will lead the satanic special forces in their all-out invasion of planet Earth in the last days. [Hitchcock, 2010, p. 141]

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 is presumably over 1000 years after the events of Ezekiel 38-39 (which involve Gog, the leader of the northern army). According to Proverbs 30:27, locusts have no king. Contrast this with the king over the locusts in Revelation 9:3,11. Thus, Gog appears to be a demonic leader. This explains how Gog could survive 1000 years [Missler, 2005].

Also, the characteristics of the locusts spoken of by the prophet Joel (Joel 1:6; 2:5,8) have some parallels with Revelation 9:7-9.
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.

| Preterist Position | Locusts having stingers in their tails does not refer to Cobra or Apache Attack helicopters, as some dispensational prophecy teachers suggest. This is apocalyptic writing that is common to the Old Testament. It is merely an indicator of how horrible the judgment to come is going to be. It will be worse than living in the locust type of scenario described in Revelation. Judgment is so severe that the idea of death is more palatable, says Hank Hanegraaff, but in eternity there is no escape from judgment. Revelation also says that there will be a river of blood, five feet high. Is this, too, to be taken literally? No, since there isn’t that much blood available. |

<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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<tr>
<td>Revelation 11:3-12  And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.&quot; 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>
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| Dispensationalist | Dispensationalists believe that the two witnesses are actual people. Zechariah 4 is the Old Testament reference to Revelation 11. Zechariah |
speaks of a lampstand and an olive tree—two witnesses who are actual people: Zerubbabel and Joshua. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the two witnesses in Revelation 11 are also real 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 two are the most popular candidates because they are Israel’s greatest prophets in the Old Testament, and both appeared with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. The appeal of the latter two is that they are the only two people in the Bible who went to Heaven without dying. Also, the latter pair was favored by the early church [Ice, 2010c].

Regardless, the 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. They would minister in Jerusalem which is figuratively called “Sodom and Egypt”, but Jerusalem is certain because it is identified as the city in which Christ was crucified. The witnesses arrive on the scene prior to the return of Jesus Christ, and probably prior to the start of the second half of the Tribulation. Their testimonies are similar 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, lending some support to the case of their literal return:

Malachi 4:4-6  "Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel. "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD [i.e., the Great Tribulation] 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."

Enoch and Elijah never died; it is unclear whether they currently have resurrected bodies. Jesus was indeed the first to rise from the dead with a physically resurrected body. If Enoch and Elijah are the two witnesses in Revelation, then it would be consistent with the statement “man is destined to die once” (Hebrews 9:27) because, according to Revelation 11, the two witnesses will die during the Tribulation. Thus, Enoch and Elijah deserve consideration as the two witnesses.

Malachi 4:1 actually makes reference to a “messenger”, who would turn out to be John the Baptist:

Malachi 3:1  “See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you
are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the LORD Almighty.

Isaiah 40:3-4 is a parallel passage of John the Baptist ... This passage provides the predicted role for John the Baptist to play as the one who would precede and prepare the way for Jesus at His first coming (Matt. 3:1-6). Elijah will prepare the way for Israel before Christ’s second coming, since Israel rejected Jesus at His first coming.

There are some who teach that the ministry of John the Baptist was a fulfillment of the prediction of the coming of Elijah from Malachi 4:5 at Christ’s first coming. This is not the case. John the Baptist fulfilled a different prediction, that of Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3-5. Yet, John the Baptist was said to be “a forerunner” who would come “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17). Christ told His disciples concerning John the Baptist “If you care to accept it, he himself is Elijah, who was to come” (Matt. 11:14). But Israel did not accept Jesus as their Messiah at His first coming and therefore the kingdom did not arrive. In fact, when John the Baptist was asked directly, “Are you Elijah?” he clearly said, “I am not” (John 1:21). Thus, because of Israel’s rejection, John the Baptist was John the Baptist (My messenger) and not Elijah. So Elijah is still to come. [Ice, 2010c]

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 1,260 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. Most commentaries place the ministry of the two witnesses during the second half of the Tribulation [Dean, 2009]; however, this leaves some questions. Why would the ministry of the two witnesses take place in Jerusalem, if the Lord had told the Jews to flee (at the midpoint of the Tribulation)? When do the three-and-a-half days of partying by unbelievers occur, if the witnesses minister to the end of the Tribulation (i.e., at Armageddon, and the return of Christ)? Thus, some scholars believe that the two witnesses do most—if not all—of their ministry in the first half of the Tribulation—at a time when many Jews are worshipping in the rebuilt temple.

The two witnesses’ 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 the boy presumably died again. Both of these examples are prior to Christ’s resurrection. Most dispensationalists believe that Christ was the very first person to rise from the dead with a perfected body; therefore, these two examples are more along the lines of “resuscitation” than translation to a perfected body, since a perfected body is not subject to death or decay. Some dispensationalists argue that Enoch and Elijah each got a resurrected body—and this, of course, would be pre-Christ. Furthermore, Enoch or Elijah likely won’t be “downgrading” to become one of the two witnesses—and then die again! In fact, 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.

Furthermore, we note that modern technology (television, Internet) can allow the world to see or hear the ministry and testimony of the two witnesses. A worldwide audience would not have been possible prior to the 20th century.

A final observation here is that the spiritual word is the real world. There is
much more to our life than our physical existence. The soul carries on, after
death; and the body will be resurrected. We are body, soul, and spirit.
Compare an analogy of two dimensions (e.g., two insects travelling across a
sheet of paper) versus three dimensions (e.g., an outside can see the bigger
picture from above). More dimensions are superior. Perhaps our resurrected
bodies will have more than three dimensions (plus time). Recall that Christ
could pass through walls in his resurrected body, yet He still had flesh and
bones, could relate to—and communicate with—others, and even ate food.
Physicists model the universe in many dimensions (e.g., 10 or more)
[Missler, 2008b]. Our current bodies may just be subsets of a larger number
of dimensions; so, who knows what God has prepared for us.

Missler comments that we know very little about the universe prior to the fall
of Adam in the Garden of Eden, in Genesis 3 [Missler, 1997]. Is it possible
that Adam lived in more than 3 dimensions? Furthermore, a lot of things
changed at the time of Noah’s Flood (demographics, environment, geology,
ecology, animals); therefore, there are probably many things that we don’t
know about.

Preterist Position

The two witnesses are probably not people. Rather they are metaphors,
symbolic of witnesses. The Old Testament provides clues about the
metaphors. 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
Revelation 11 (fire from their mouths, olive trees from Zechariah 4:3,
plagues in the Old Testament (especially from Exodus), a 3.5-year ministry
like Christ, etc.) Do not think of the two witnesses as having a flame-
thrower in their mouths, because this passage is not to be taken literally. The
two witnesses are representative of all of the Hebrew prophets that
pronounced judgment on Israel for its idolatry and wickedness [Hanegraaff,
Bible Answer Man, March 1, 2011].

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
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]

Here is an example of their parallel imagery [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, March 6, 2011]: Their resurrection after 3½ days parallels that of Christ. The two witnesses have a 3½-year ministry, similar to that of Christ. They are clothed in sackcloth which is representative of the Hebrew prophets from Elijah to John the Baptist. The purpose of the ministry of the two witnesses is to warn the people of the coming judgment upon Jerusalem and the Temple ... because the people failed to recognize the fulfillment of the Temple, priest, and sacrifice (i.e., Jesus Christ).

<table>
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<th>Does the woman in Revelation 12:3-6 actually represent Israel? Is this passage referring to the end times?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Revelation 12:3-6 Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. 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. <strong>She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter.</strong> 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.</td>
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**Dispensationalist 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). Secondly, the woman is pregnant; and the Church is described in Scripture as being a virgin bride (2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 19:7, 21:2,9) [Missler, 2008b].

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 3½ * 360 days = 1,260 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]:

\textit{Genesis 3:15} 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. “1,260 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 pretribulational rapture is nonsense.

### Topic/Question

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<th>Topic/Question</th>
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<tr>
<td>(a) Is the first beast in Revelation 13 the same as the “man of sin” in 2 Thessalonians 2?</td>
<td>(a) Yes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(b) Is this beast the same as the fourth beast in Daniel 7?</td>
<td>(b) Yes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(c) Who, or what, is the “beast” of Revelation?</td>
<td>(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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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).

...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]

The wording in Revelation 20:4 describes the same beast/image as in Revelation 13. Revelation 20:4 is acknowledged by both 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.

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? No; nothing like this has been recorded by any historian (e.g., Josephus) [Hanegraaff & Hitchcock, 2007]. Even the Romans and the Roman army of the first century did not require anyone to take a physical mark.

... 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]

The word “mark” in the Greek refers to a literal mark—such as a tattoo, brand, or etching. Since this “mark” didn’t appear in the first century, and not to this day, it only makes sense that this refers to a future fulfillment. Furthermore, some scholars believe that it will be clear to those people taking the mark of the beast that this is a pledge of allegiance to the world leader (Antichrist).

Could Nero have been the Antichrist? No, 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]

There is little to no evidence to suggest that there was a Roman empire-wide persecution of Christians under either Nero or Domitian; but, there is evidence of persecution in selected parts of Asia minor in 92 AD under Domitian [Hanegraaff & Hitchcock, 2007].

Although preterists will argue that Nero was the first beast of Revelation 13, they do not have a good answer about whom the second beast of Revelation was. Dispensationalists believe that this is the future False Prophet. Similarly, preterists have no good explanation for the “image of the beast” or “666”.

| Preterist Position | (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:

- had his mother murdered
- castrated a young boy, married him, and consummated the marriage
- kicked his pregnant wife to death
- had other female and male lovers
- cruelly murdered many
- impaled Christians on a stake
- set Christians on fire
- wore animal skins and then attacked Christians who were bound to a stake, violating their private parts
- had a 100+-foot statue 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. 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]

The book of Acts, and 1 Corinthians 4:9, speaks of the persecution of Christians. 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.

1 Corinthians 4:9 For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men.

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”.

As far as “the mark of the beast” goes, there was no physical mark during the first century—or will there will not be one in the future. The mark is neither a tattoo nor a microchip implant, argues Hank Hanegraaff. Believers have the “mark” of Christ. The right hand and the forehead are symbolic of what we do and what we believe, respectively. People should be able to identify us as believers, by what they observe about us. That is what the “mark” is referring to.

**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 much of the 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]
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

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
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]

John Whitcomb has a different viewpoint:

I believe the explanation for the first death of the final Beast-King who was “wounded by the sword” (Rev. 13:14) is in Daniel. As the King of the North sweeps through “the Glorious Land” (Dan. 11:41) on his way to northeast Africa, he apparently kills the Beast. Then the Lord destroys the King of the North with fire from heaven (cf. Ezek. 38:22) as the King of the North attempts to kill the Beast who has risen from death to mortal life again (Dan. 11:45). This leaves the Beast-King as the eighth and final oppressor of Israel, with no further threats to come from earthly kingdoms (Rev. 13:4,13). [Whitcomb, 2001]

Thomas Ice argues that Satan cannot raise the dead, and conjectures that God may raise 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 statements about: (a) molecules-to-man evolution (and, in particular, 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 the one who had created them, trusting Him to save them.” [Morris, 1983, pp. 265-266]

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.

Hanegraaff urges his listeners and readers to become familiar with Biblical interpretation—to avoid such arguments. He 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.

**Dispensationalist Position**

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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is the “mark of the beast”?</th>
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<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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<td>Revelation 13:16-18 And he [the False Prophet] causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and</td>
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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. If you are a believer, you do not need to have a physical mark on your body to indicate this; others should be able to see that you are a Christian by what you say and do. Thus, it will be clear who you belong to.

Furthermore, 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.

“Our 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.

Finally, the words of Revelation 14:9-11 should be taken symbolically, rather than literally, although it does mean that one is shut out from the presence of the Lord, permanently [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man, November 9, 2010]. Note that being shut out from the presence of God implies continual existence.

<p>| Topic/Question | What is the meaning of the number(s) “666”, that is, “the mark of the beast”? |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Are the hailstones in Revelation literal hailstones?</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Revelation 16:21 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.</td>
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dispensationalist

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<tr>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
<th>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:</th>
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<td>Exodus 9:22-26 Then the LORD said to Moses, &quot;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.&quot; 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.</td>
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<td>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.</td>
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<th>Preterist Position</th>
<th>Kenneth Gentry says that the Roman Tenth Legion hurled large boulders against Jerusalem, via catapults, and that this may have fulfilled the prophecy [LaHaye &amp; Ice, 2003].</th>
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<td>Hank Hanegraaff argues against both the dispensationalist position and the preterist position by noting that “hundred pound hailstones” are simply judgment language, apocalyptic language, or figurative language. In other words, the phrase is not literal, but rather, apocalyptic imagery [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man, August 30, 2010]. The same applies to the blood at Armageddon that’s supposedly “as deep as the horses’ brides”. Partial preterists try to find fulfillment using a history book, whereas dispensationalists try to find fulfillment using a newspaper. When the Bible uses a metaphor, we want to read it as such.</td>
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<th>Who are the eight kings referred to in Revelation 17:10-11?</th>
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<td>Revelation 17:10-11 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>
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<td>How do the beasts in Daniel relate to these kings, if at all; and how do the beasts in Daniel relate to the beast in Revelation?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist</td>
<td>The best explanation seems to be that the kings refer to successive, historical kingdoms that have persecuted Israel. Five of the kings refer to the five</td>
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major empires that ruled the world before Rome, one is current (i.e., Rome), and two are future (i.e., a revived Roman Empire that may include the initial rule of Antichrist, and a second part under the full control of Antichrist):

1. Egypt—in the time of the Pharaohs, they enslaved Israel
2. Assyria—which took the northern kingdom of Israel into exile
3. Babylon—under Nebuchadnezzar, they took the southern kingdom of Judah into exile
4. Medo-Persia—in the days of Esther
5. Greece—under Alexander the Great and later Antiochus Epiphanes
6. Rome was the world power at the time that Revelation was written—recall that the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Second Temple.
   “Rome” was the sixth king; note the words “one is” in Revelation 17:10.
7. 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. The seventh kingdom may include the first part of Antichrist’s reign—and the eighth kingdom may refer to the second part of Antichrist’s reign (following his resurrection (or fake resurrection), when he is indwelt by Satan) [Ice, 2015a].
8. 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 [De Haan, 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]:

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<td>5.</td>
<td>Greece</td>
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<td>6.</td>
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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 [De Haan, 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]:

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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]

[The Messianic or Millennial Kingdom] is a literal, earthly kingdom in which the Messiah will rule over Israel and the Gentile nations from the Throne of David and from Jerusalem.

... The Messianic Kingdom is rooted in the Davidic Covenant, and it is a major subset of Old Testament prophecy.

In the New Testament, it is this Kingdom that was proclaimed to be at hand by John the Baptist, and this Kingdom was offered to Israel by Jesus, only to be rejected in Matthew 12. As a result of the rejection by Israel, the offer of the Kingdom was rescinded and revoked from that generation. From a human perspective, then, it could be said that the Messianic Kingdom was postponed; from a divine perspective, it was part of God’s divine plan, and there was no postponement whatsoever. It was the means by which the Messiah would die and provide atonement, already prophesied in Isaiah 52:13-53:12. It was also the means by which the gospel would extend to the Gentiles (Is. 49:1-13). The Kingdom is destined to be re-offered to the Jewish generation of the Tribulation, and that generation will accept it. The Messianic Kingdom will then be established.” [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 664]

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 (Oligarchy of Ten)</td>
<td>390-59 BC</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 (i.e., a dictatorship). The rise of the Antichrist in Europe may well be facilitated by the fall of the armies/nations of Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 38-39). As of 2000, there were 25 nations in the European union; therefore, some consolidation or reconstruction must take place to reach the stage of having 10 nations in the forefront.

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, albeit a less likely one: an argument about how the kingdoms in question refer to Islamic kingdoms over 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? 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 argue:

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). Iraq “re-emerged” as a nation, that is, achieved modern-day independence, in 1922, and Syria in 1938.

Consider these 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 17:7-11 "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]

The following verses suggest that the Antichrist will be an Assyrian:

Isaiah 14:25-26  I will crush the Assyrian in my land; on my mountains I will trample him down. His yoke will be taken from my people, and his burden removed from their shoulders." This is the plan determined for the whole world; this is the hand stretched out over all nations.

Micah 5:3-6,15  Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor gives birth and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites. He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. 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. ... I will take vengeance in anger and wrath upon the nations that have not obeyed me."

There is good news that comes out of the above 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."
Yet another viewpoint is provided by Marvin Rosenfeld, who believes that all seven kings refer to nations that have persecuted, and attempted to destroy, the Jews [Rosenfeld, 2009]. The ones that had fallen by John’s day include:

1. Egypt and the pharaoh “which knew not Joseph”—around the time of the Exodus
2. Assyria and King Tiglath Pileser who took the ten northern tribes of Israel into captivity
3. Babylon and King Nebuchadnezzar who attacked Jerusalem, destroyed the first (Solomon’s) Temple, and led many Jews captive to Babylon
4. Medo-Persia in the time of Queen Esther, when Haman plotted to destroy the Jews
5. Greece, which under the leadership of Antiochus Epiphanes attempted to destroy Jewish worship

... and the king that “is” (in John’s day):

6. Rome, which killed many Jews, destroyed the second Temple, and dispersed the Jewish people all over the world

The seventh kingdom which had not yet come, and would appear for only a brief time, is said to be:

7. Germany, which under Adolf Hitler, attempted to destroy the Jews

In his hypothesis, Rosenfeld adds that the eighth king will be:

8. Antichrist, who is likely to be a Gentile (like the seven kings who went before him); and, like his predecessors, he will be demonically inspired to try to destroy the Jewish people. His partner, the False Prophet, will be a Jew.

| Preterist Position | The seven hills of Rome are Capitoline, Palatine, Esquiline, Aventine, Caelian, Viminal, and Quirinal. These are the hills that the apostle John was referring to, in Revelation. 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—and all had died. By the way, Julius Caesar was the first |
“Caesar”; Caesar was his family name. 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.

From Jupiter Julius, the father of the Roman Empire who was voted by the
senate into the hierarchy of gods as “divine Julius,” to Nero Claudius
Caesar who was worshipped as “Almighty God” and “Savior,” the Caesars
defied themselves as gods. Octavius, successor to Julius Caesar, took on
the moniker Augustus meaning “worthy of reverence and worship.” A
two-headed coin bearing the image of Julius on one side and Augustus on
the other rendered Octavius “The divine Caesar—and the Son of God.”
Upon the death of Tiberius—the third Roman Caesar—the city of Smyrna
was awarded the privilege of erecting a temple in which to worship him as
god. Caligula, who succeeded Tiberius, was so convinced of his own
divinity that he purposed to have a colossal image of himself erected in the
Jewish temple in Jerusalem. Only death prevented his perverted ambition
to be enshrined as god in the holy of holies. For Claudius, the fifth Caesar,
the spiritual supremacy of the state was paramount. His philosophy was
summed up in the phrase “Caesar is Lord.” [Hanegraaff, 2007, p. 111]

**Topic/Question**

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?

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”.
They are from the books of Revelation and Daniel. The terms “seven heads”,
“ten horns”, and “seven crowns” often appear together.

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 along with the beast."
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
<th>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.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>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?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>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. 7:8,20,24) 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 ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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]

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.

Another viewpoint is that these 10 nations do not simply represent the European community or the “revived Roman Empire”, but rather they 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 are [Franz, 2008]:

<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>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>India</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The argument is 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 (see Daniel 8:8), Roman (1), and Islamic (1) [Shoebat & Richardson, 2008]. It is not clear, however, which 3 empires would be uprooted by the Antichrist.

As a side note about Europe’s current spiritual condition:

- Less than 1% of Europe is evangelical Christian
- Church attendance is declining
- Morality is declining
- Religious symbols are being removed
- There are more mosques than churches in the UK
  - Some churches are being turned into mosques
- There are more Muslims in mosques on Fridays, than Christians in church on Sundays [Bennett, 2016].

| Preterist Position | The idea that the European Union represents the 10 nations (“horns” or kingdoms) 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?

Hank Hanegraaff states that the vision of the 10 horns was given to Daniel, and they concern the future, several centuries after Daniel. The first large horn belongs to Alexander the Great, who died at the age of 32. From him, the large horn (his empire) was broken off, and there came four horns, and they were the four generals that came after Alexander the Great—the Mediterranean area was parceled out among them.

Out of one of these horns, came a nightmare for the Jewish people. In particular, the “10-horn” Seleucid empire controlled the Jewish state, and is likely what is referred to in the “ten horns” prophecy. One of these horns referred to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who caused great destruction among the Jewish people around 168 BC.

Thus, the ten horns are a fulfilled prophecy, not a future prophecy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>When, in history, were the judgments of the seven seals, trumpets, and vials (bowls) fulfilled?</strong> When were other key events in Revelation fulfilled?</td>
<td>They weren’t fulfilled. Consider the events in—and leading up to—70 AD. 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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.

Even if they are metaphors, when did such a major series of events occur that, historically, can be mapped into a series of trumpets, bowls, and seals? Remember that some of these judgments are specially listed as being *worldwide* in scope, not just local to Israel or its neighboring countries.

Furthermore, none of the following major prophecies were fulfilled in—or around—70 AD [Reagan, 2005]:

- Abomination of Desolation—Titus and his army made no attempt to set up an Abomination of Desolation.
- Mark of the Beast—Nothing was implemented to control commerce
- Great distress “never to be equaled again”—The Nazi Holocaust likely exceeded the events of 70 AD.
- A threat that the earth would be destroyed at that time—or that mankind would wipe itself out—unless Christ were to return—There was no such threat at that time.
- A record of 2 witnesses preaching in Jerusalem, as per Revelation 11—No such individuals came on the scene.
- No Antichrist ruled the world—Nero certainly didn’t.
- There was no “false prophet” either.
- The headquarters of the Antichrist weren’t destroyed in one hour.
- Christ did not return visibly and physically, as required by Acts 1:10-11.

We conclude that all these prophecies are awaiting a future fulfillment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The seals, trumpets, and bowls were written using *judgment language*. The language is similar to that found in Isaiah concerning the judgment of Babylon, which the Medes and Persians executed [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, August 20, 2010]. It is not meant to be taken literally. It is not even figurative language.

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. |
To study the issue, Gary DeMar recommends the book by Ken Gentry entitled *Before Jerusalem Fell.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Will Christ come back to Earth riding on a white horse (literally), and having a sword in His mouth (literally)?</td>
<td>These images appear to be symbolic.</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>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| What are the parallels between the book of Revelation and the book of Joshua (plus the related book of Judges)? | There are a number of parallels [Missler, 2005]:
- There is a 7-year timeframe associated with each (i.e., the Tribulation in the book of Revelation, and the seven year conquest of Canaan in Joshua and Judges).
- The Levites are involved (see Revelation 7:7 and various parts of Joshua, especially with respect to the allocation of land).
- Two special “witnesses” are sent (the witnesses in Revelation 11, and the two good spies in Judges).
- Seven trumpets are involved in each case (the seven trumpet judgments in Revelation, and the blowing of a trumpet during the Israelites’ procession around the city of Jericho for seven days).
- Hailstones and fire come down from heaven (Revelation 16:21, Joshua 10:11) in the form of judgment.
- There are signs in the sun and the moon (Revelation 6:12 and 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 Aramaic/Hebrew name *Yeshua* (often translated as *Jesus* in English). | n/a |
What is the chronology of the judgments in the book of Revelation? In particular, are the seals, trumpets, and bowls (vials): (a) sequential, (b) interleaving, or (c) concurrent/parallel? What is the relative timing of the midpoint of the Tribulation with respect to these septet judgments?

These questions are the subject of some debate. All dispensational viewpoints claim that the events within a class of judgments are chronological. In other words, the first seal judgment is fulfilled before the second seal judgment is fulfilled, etc.

Here is a summary of the septet judgments [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>5th Seal</td>
<td>Rev. 6:9-11</td>
<td>Souls of the slain cry for justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Seal</td>
<td>Rev. 6:12-17</td>
<td>A great earthquake, and 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>A meteor (?) strikes the sea; one-third of the sea is turned to blood, one-third of the sea creatures die, and one-third of the ships are destroyed (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 night are without light (i.e., sun, moon, and stars are affected)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Trumpet</td>
<td>Rev. 9:1-11</td>
<td>Locust-like creatures (demons) come from the Abyss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Trumpet</td>
<td>Rev. 9:14-19</td>
<td>4 angels that were bound at the Euphrates River are released to prepare the way</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
for the kings from the East; a 200 million man army exists; one-third of mankind dies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7th Trumpet (approximately the midpoint of the Tribulation)</th>
<th>Rev. 11:15-19</th>
<th>Worship in heaven; thunder, rumblings, lightning, earthquake, and a great hailstorm; the “third woe”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Bowl</td>
<td>Rev. 16:2</td>
<td>Ugly and painful sores break out</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 are 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 the 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 pounds each</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fourth bowl judgment may cause the ice caps and glaciers to melt, and thus facilitate the sixth 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 fifth bowl uses light and darkness as metaphors to compare God to Satan.

Let us partition the viewpoints with respect to the midpoint of the Tribulation. There are at least three general chronological models of the seals, trumpets, and bowls of Revelation within dispensationalism [Dean, 2009]:

1. **The first six seal judgments occur in the first half of the Tribulation**, and the rest of the judgments occur in the second half.
   - A variant of this is that the first half of the Tribulation includes the first five seals, and the sixth comes at, or slightly after, the midpoint of the Tribulation.

2. **All seal and trumpet judgments occur in the first half of the Tribulation**, but the bowl judgments occur in the second half.
   - A variant of this is that the first half of the Tribulation
includes the seven seals and the first six trumpets (which are part of the seventh seal) [De Haan, 1946; Fruchtenbaum, 2004].

3. All three sets of septet judgments occur in the second half of the Tribulation.

In either the first or second model, the sealing of the 144,000 Jewish witnesses occurs very near the middle of the Tribulation [Dean, 2009].

Because earthquakes are associated with the sixth seal, seventh trumpet, and seventh bowl, some authors believe that the septet judgments may have even more concurrency. Furthermore, there are other judgments than the seals, trumpets, and bowls; and these run concurrently. For example, events that may run concurrently with some of the seal judgments include the government system (ten kings), the ministry of God’s two special witnesses, and the religious system called Ecclesiastical Babylon [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. However, the timing of these events is a matter of debate. If we knew when these events were to occur, we would be able to narrow down the chronology of the septet judgments. As an example of this timing ambiguity, the two witnesses in Revelation are described between the opening of the fifth and sixth seals, even though Revelation 11 (which describes the ministry of the 2 witnesses) appears after the sixth trumpet.

The final three trumpet judgments are called “the woe judgments” because they are severe. The fifth and sixth trumpet judgments are likely demonic invasions, whereas the seventh contains the bowl judgments. Mark Hitchcock argues that there are actually 19 judgments: seven seal judgments, seven trumpet judgments, and seven bowl judgments—but the seventh seal contains the seven trumpet judgments, and the seventh trumpet judgment contains the seven bowl judgments [Hitchcock, 2011c].

Note that 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 salvation.

Most premillennial scholars agree that the seal judgments are in the first half of the Tribulation, and the bowls are (late) in the second half of the Tribulation. The uncertainty concerns the timing of the trumpets.

Let us consider some highlights of the first general chronological model (from above) in more detail:

- The first five seal judgments take place during the first half of the Tribulation.
- The opening of the first seal releases the false Messiah.

- These five seals appear to have a parallel in Matthew 24:4-14. In particular, the seal judgments appear to parallel the beginning of birth pains (e.g., verses 4-8, but see also Jeremiah 30:3-9). Matthew 24:15 mentions the “abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel”. Verses up to, and including, 41 describe more of the Tribulation, in parallel.

- Some authors place the sixth seal 21 months into the Tribulation—at the one-quarter mark (e.g., [Hindson, 2017]). Others claim that the sixth seal occurs at the time of the Abomination of Desolation, which also marks the midpoint of the seven-year Tribulation (or comes slightly after the midpoint). It also marks the start of the Great Tribulation. Some authors place the seventh seal at the midpoint of the Tribulation (e.g., [Reagan, 2005]).

- The seventh seal, and all the trumpet and bowl judgments, take place during the second half of the Tribulation. Mark Hitchcock agrees with this view because of the extent of the devastation from the trumpet judgments. The bowl judgments come late in the Tribulation, and seem to focus on unbelievers.

Robert Dean argues in favor of the second general model mentioned above:

The clear chronological events are the seals (ch. 6), the trumpets (ch. 8-9), [and] the vials (ch. 14-16). Then we must determine how the interlude events described between these chapters relate chronologically to the chapters preceding them. …

Though no definitive passage has been found, it has been argued that the chronological crux is found in Rev. 11 which indicates the great difficulty of having both the two witnesses and the trumpet judgments in the second half. Since the second woe ends with the ascension of the two witnesses, and since the two witnesses serve for 1,260 days, it is not possible for this to take place in the second half of the Tribulation. Therefore, the view with the least problems places the two witnesses and the trumpet judgments in the first half of Daniel’s seventieth week. [Dean, 2009, pp. 21-22, 25]

The assumption here is that the 1,260 days of ministry by the two witnesses doesn’t span the two halves of the Tribulation, that is, their ministry is exclusively in either the first half or the second half of the Tribulation.

Revelation also speaks of 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 what the seven thunders are. Almost none of the eschatological literature comments on the seven thunders. Suffice it to say that they must have some significance; otherwise, God would not have mentioned 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 between the sixth and seventh seal judgments, which pre-wrath proponents say is when “God’s wrath” begins. However, note that one-quarter of the Earth’s population is killed in the fourth seal judgment alone; and, one-third of the remaining population is killed in the fifth seal judgment. Together, these two judgments account for $1/4 + 1/3 * 3/4 = 3/12 + 3/12 = 6/12 = 1/2$ of the world’s population. Therefore, the earlier seal judgments really should be included in the time of God’s wrath!

Furthermore, the final seven years are divided into three parts: “the beginning of sorrows” (3½ years), the Great Tribulation (the first half of the remaining 3½ years), and the Day of the Lord (the second half of the remaining 3½ years). In other words, the dividing line between the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord is the pre-wrath Rapture, and this is three-quarters of the way through the seven-year period. Thus, the pre-wrath Rapture is not imminent. Dispensationalists, however, do not agree with this model, and they call the entire second half of the Tribulation: the Great Tribulation.

Lastly, midtribulation Rapture adherents often associate the Rapture with the sounding of the seventh trumpet and the catching up of the two witnesses [Pentecost, 1958]. This group claims that the Church goes through part of the Tribulation, and that the Rapture is not imminent. Dispensationalists, however, point out that the seventh trumpet in Revelation speaks of judgment, but the passage in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 does not speak of judgment.

| Preterist Position | The judgments are not to be taken literally. They were fulfilled, in apocalyptic language, in the events leading up to 70 AD; therefore, there is no need to speculate about when the judgments will occur. Furthermore, there is no future 7-year Tribulation. |

| Topic/Question | Wormwood is the name of a bitter herb; however, what is the context of the name/term “Wormwood” in Revelation? Is there some eschatological significance? |

Revelation 8:11  And the name of the star is called
| Dispensationalist Position | In Revelation, the term “Wormwood” seems to be the name of an angel/event; therefore, it’s more than just a metaphor for bitterness. The implication is that a substantial part of fresh water or sea water is contaminated. It’s not clear how the water becomes polluted. Some people believe that it may have to do with a nuclear event (perhaps having to do with electrical power generation (possibly involving earthquakes, such as the powerful earthquake that shook Japan in 2011), and it is not necessarily a terrorist attack). |
| Preterist Position | Wormwood is a metaphor for bitterness or suffering, and in particular, the bitterness of suffering that comes from the judgment of God. We should not tie newspaper events or current events into the term “wormwood”. The prophet Jeremiah also used this term to deal with the idolatry of Israel ... and the judgment of God came upon them; hence, the people suffered the consequences of their sin.  

Jeremiah 23:15 [KJV] Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets; Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land.  

Lamentations 3:15 He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood. |
Chapter 10: Babylon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the status of “Babylon” in Scripture? When did the Fall of Babylon occur (or when will it occur)? Is “Babylon” present-day Iraq? Is “Babylon” present-day Rome? Is “Babylon” a metaphor for Jerusalem?</td>
<td>Babylon is mentioned many times in Scripture. For example, 44 of the 404 verses in Revelation (over 10%) deal with Babylon [Hitchcock &amp; 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. Many dispensationalists believe that it is literal Babylon, rather than Rome, New York, some other city, or just a metaphor for evil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(For the related topic “Mystery Babylon”, see the next section/question.)</td>
<td>Jerusalem is mentioned about 800 times in the Bible. In second place—in terms of the number of occurrences—is Babylon at about 300 times [Hitchcock &amp; Ice, 2007]. Every since Old Testament occurrence of the word Babylon was to literal Babylon, in modern-day Iraq.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>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). Nevertheless, Missler believes that “Babylon” means literal Babylon. He and many other scholars believe there will be an end-times revival of ancient, historical Babylon (located several hundred kilometres southwest of Baghdad). The Antichrist will establish a power base in Babylon in the latter days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>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; rather, it was gradually 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 it 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). Chuck 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</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sodom and Gomorrah.

So, 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 Babylon being an actual city: (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]. In fact, 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; however, they are not mountains. 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 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 agelong 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).

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 Babylon.” [Morris, 1983, p. 332]

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 many problems with this viewpoint [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007]:

- Revelation was likely written circa 95 AD, and the destruction of Babylon was still in the future (according to Revelation). Thus, Babylon couldn’t have referred to the destruction of Jerusalem or the Temple since those events had already occurred in 70 AD.
- 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 during or before 70 AD.
- Reference is made to Babylon sitting on “many waters” and engaged in sea trade; but, Jerusalem is nowhere near water—no ocean, river, or lake—which also makes it unusual among capital cities.
- Jerusalem was not a centre of world commerce.
- Jerusalem did not reign over the kings of the earth.

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 form the dead, yet never really dead. [Morris, 1983, pp. 353-354]

Charles Dyer notes the similarities between the Babylon that is described in Jeremiah 50-51 and the Babylon that is described in Revelation 17-18. He concludes that the two are likely the same [Hitchcock, 2009, pp. 20-21]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Jeremiah 50-51</th>
<th>Revelation 17-18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compared to a golden cup</td>
<td>51:7</td>
<td>17:4; 18:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwelling on many waters</td>
<td>51:13</td>
<td>17:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved with nations</td>
<td>51:7</td>
<td>17:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Named Babylon</td>
<td>50:1</td>
<td>18:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destroyed suddenly</td>
<td>51:8</td>
<td>18:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destroyed by fire</td>
<td>51:30</td>
<td>17:16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never to be inhabited</td>
<td>50:39</td>
<td>18:21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punished according to her works</td>
<td>50:29</td>
<td>18:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall illustrated</td>
<td>51:63-64</td>
<td>18:21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God’s people told to flee</td>
<td>51:6, 45</td>
<td>18:4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heaven to rejoice</td>
<td>51:48</td>
<td>18:20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jeremiah 51:26 No rock will be taken from you [Babylon] for a cornerstone, nor any stone for a foundation, for you will be desolate forever,” declares the LORD.

However, there is considerable 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, found in the modern-day nation of Iraq. Although it is currently in ruins, some parts of Babylon are being rebuilt, and some of its stones have been used as building supplies for other buildings. So, prophecies such as Jeremiah 51:26 are unfulfilled, indicating that Babylon has yet not met its fate. It appears that it will be rebuilt, but at some point, it will be destroyed again, never to be rebuilt from that point forward.
This viewpoint implies that Babylon 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.

Note also that Revelation mentions commerce and commodities ... and “many waters”. Some scholars, therefore, think Rome is a better fit than historical Babylon.

Although some scholars believe that “Babylon” is Rome, others 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 because of the focus on wealth, materialism, commodities, and trade—and possibly some major economic meltdown; this notion doesn’t seem to fit very well with other prophecies concerning Babylon.

It may very well be that the prophecy about Babylon has a parallel fulfillment: literal Babylon in modern-day Iraq, Rome in the end times, modern cities with financial empires, etc. In other words, there are historical, spiritual, oppressive, and materialistic angles that may all be fulfilled.

A minority of writers argue that Babylon has its fulfillment in the coastline of Arabia rather modern-day Iraq [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.

One of their arguments is that these verses cannot reasonably apply to Rome since Arabs wouldn’t pitch their tents—or rest their flocks—there. Also, Babylon is described as 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!” Note that Babylon is near central Iraq, and is simply too far away from the sea, thus making “Babylon” somewhat of a paradox. This is a reason why some authors believe that historical Babylon and Revelation’s “Babylon” are two different cities—in two different contexts.

| Preterist | Ancient Babylon was destroyed many years before Christ (but well after 537) |
| Position | 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. Some scholars believe that the destruction of Babylon was accomplished, and the prophecies of Jeremiah have been fulfilled via the Medes and Persians [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, January 7, 2015]. The prophecy is meant to convey the notion that Babylon would never regain its position, power, and prestige. The prophecy is not meant to be interpreted literally. It would be inhabited, albeit in small numbers (e.g., the Persians under Julian). Alexander the Great (Greek Empire) started to rebuild Babylon but he died at a young age. In modern times, Saddam Hussein started to rebuild some of Babylon.

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]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Revelation 17 describes “Mystery Babylon” as system of false worship (and political alliances). Revelation 18 speaks more about the “city” of Babylon. In what ways does Mystery Babylon differ from physical Babylon? Is there a connection here to the symbolism in Zechariah 5?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>There are 404 verses in the book of Revelation and 44 of them deal with Babylon—the great harlot [Hitchcock &amp; Ice, 2007]. The first time Babylon is mentioned in Revelation is in 14:8 where the language closely parallels Jeremiah 51:7-8. From the outset, therefore, Babylon in Revelation is compared to ancient Babylon, not Israel or Jerusalem. Jeremiah 50-51 is a pair of chapters that serve as a kind of Old</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Testament counterpart to Revelation 17-18. Jeremiah 50-51 clearly describes the literal, geographical city of Babylon on the Euphrates. The many parallels between this passage and the future Babylon in Revelation 17-18 indicate that they are both describing the same city. [Hitchcock & Ice, 2007, p. 171]

“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. [De Haan, 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 millennium, but not Babylon.

[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

1 Kings 9:6-7  "But if you or your sons turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land I have given them and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name. Israel will then become a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples.

Hank Hanegraaff states that Mystery Babylon is none other than Jerusalem itself, since its people started out following God, but they embraced foreign gods, let their morals slip, and failed to be the kind of ambassadors that God wanted them to be.

Like the Abrahamic covenant before it, the Davidic covenant was conditional.

Psalm 132:11-12  The LORD swore an oath to David, a sure oath that he will not revoke: "One of your own descendants I will place on your throne--if your sons keep my covenant and the statutes I teach them, then their sons will sit on your throne for ever and ever."

... Intended to be a city on a hill—a light to the nations—Jerusalem became a mere microcosm of the surrounding pagan cultures. Though for a brief time it stood as a sacred place, Jerusalem became a symbol of spiritual prostitution—the harlot against whom the prophets pronounced great woes. The kings of Israel made unholy alliances with the rulers of pagan nations from Egypt to Babylon and, in the time of Christ, imperial Rome. They adopted the religions of foreign lands and built altars and shrines to pagan gods. Thus, far from serving as the holy resting place of God’s presence among his people, Jerusalem became a bed of wickedness.

Jeremiah 3:1(b)  ... But you have lived as a prostitute with many lovers--would you now return to me?" declares the LORD.
Revelation 17:5  This title was written on her forehead: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

... Using apocalyptic imagery of the Old Testament prophets, Jesus went on to predict Jerusalem’s utter devastation within a generation. Colin Chapman, in *Whose Holy City?* comments:

The fall of Jerusalem is to be an act of divine judgment, compared in a shocking way to the judgment on Babylon described by Isaiah. What seems to be most significant, therefore, is that whereas the Old Testament prophets predicted judgment, exile and a return to the land, Jesus predicts destruction and exile, *but says nothing about a return to the land*. Instead of predicting the restoration of Israel, he speaks about the coming of the kingdom of God through the coming of the Son of Man.

Like his Master, the apostle John reflected a radical shift in thinking with respect to Jerusalem. In the book of Revelation, he goes so far as to liken Jerusalem to Sodom, Egypt, and Babylon (Revelation 11:8; 17:5). Indeed, by the end of the apostolic era, the focus of outreach and evangelism had shifted from Jerusalem to such faraway places as Rome.

... There is therefore no warrant for the Christian Zionists’ claims that the recapturing of Jerusalem by modern Israel signifies the preliminary fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham. While one might well defend the right of the secular state of Israel to exist, the contention that the modern state of Israel is a fulfillment of biblical prophecy is indefensible. In truth, since coming under the exclusive control of modern Israel, Jerusalem has demonstrated a far greater resemblance to the harlot city spoken of by the prophets than to the holy city spoken of by the psalmists. [Hanegraaff, 2007, pp. 191-197]
Chapter 11: The Battle of Armageddon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Will the Battle of Armageddon be 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?</td>
<td>Armageddon will be a real battle that takes place, or begins, in northern Israel near Megiddo, carries on to Jerusalem, and continues on to Jordan (e.g., Bozrah or Petra). Some authors state that the Battle of Armageddon is a series of battles taking place throughout Israel in the days preceding the return of Jesus Christ. 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.</td>
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</table>

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)...

There are several other geographical locations involved in this campaign. ... Joel 3:2,13 speaks of events taking place in “the valley of Jehoshaphat,” which seems to be an extended area east of Jerusalem. ... Isaiah 34 and 63 picture the Lord coming from Edom or Idumea, south of Jerusalem, when He returns from the judgment. ... Jerusalem itself is seen to be the center of conflict (Zech. 12:2-11; 14:2). [Pentecost, 1958, pp. 340-341]

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 through 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, possibly because God has prepared a safe place to which the Israelites can flee:

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 book—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
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). Note, however, that the Faithful Remnant may be unbelievers through most of the Tribulation, but they will become believers in Jesus Christ towards the end of the Tribulation. Throughout history, Israel has always had a remnant of believers (e.g., 7,000 in the days of Elijah).

According to Isaiah 41:17-20, just as in the Wilderness of Sinai God miraculously provided food and water for Israel, He will do so again in the Tribulation when the Jews flee to the wilderness. These Miraculous provisions will cause them to reconsider their relationship to God. Just as God miraculously provided food and water for Israel in the Wilderness of Sinai, He will do so again in the Tribulation when the Jews flee to the wilderness. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 788]

Will the whole world be involved in Armageddon? Many prophecy scholars believe so; however, it should be noted that “all nations” in Scripture often refers to the nations around Israel, and not necessarily those from the other side of the world [Shoebat & 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:

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.

Finally, to counter the argument that dispensationalists want to accelerate God’s plan, including the Rapture and Armageddon, it is important to note that there is nothing we can do to speed up God’s prophetic timetable. Even if all the Jews were back in the land, God could still take many years before any further action takes place. God alone is in control of the timetable, and it is perfectly designed—not one moment too soon, and not one moment too late.

(See also the introductory section on “Classical Dispensationalism (i.e., Pretribulational Futurism)” near the top of this book for more details about the Battle of Armageddon, and the sequence of events surrounding it.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
<th>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:</th>
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<td></td>
<td>In the whole land,&quot; declares the LORD, &quot;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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hank Hanegraaff summarizes the sequence of events as follows: Christ returns, there is a judgment, and then there is the eternal state. The same people who inhabit this planet are the same people who will be resurrected. Hanegraaff says there is no secret rapture for the Church, no “Battle of Armageddon”, and after Christ’s return: no marrying, no procreation, and no Millennium. He says that there is no “semi-golden” age (Millennium) whereby sinners and resurrected beings co-exist, and where there is sin, destruction, decay, and the greatest apostasy in history [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man; June 13, 2012]. Instead, all believers will be resurrected, and they will live in a perfected universe with no sin.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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 will 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 God, of course.)</td>
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</table>
The book of Revelation was written to 7 churches in Asia Minor. No 2000-year gap was intended. The words “soon” and “near” specifically applied to the first century church. Thus, the “Battle of Armageddon” is an apocalyptic term or metaphor for events that the Jews went through in 70 AD and before. Revelation is not meant to be taken literally, argues Hanegraaff. “The Bible is not written to us; it is written for us.” When Paul wrote the book(s) of Corinthians, for example, he wrote to the Corinthians. Similarly, when John wrote to the Church at Philadelphia, it was directed to those individuals in the first century and not to us in the 21st century.

With respect to the place of judgment in redemptive history at “Armageddon” (the Plain of Esdraelon or the Mount of Megiddo), past fulfillments of “Armageddon” in Scripture include these events [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man, July 21, 2010]:

- Joshua conquered Megiddo
- Deborah defeated the kings of Cana at Megiddo
- Pharaoh Neco slayed Josiah, who was warned by God not to fight Pharaoh Neco, at Megiddo

Furthermore, John’s words in Revelation use apocalyptic judgment language or fantasy imagery (e.g., a “dragon with seven heads and ten horns...”) to get the message across.

<table>
<thead>
<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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<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, “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.</td>
</tr>
<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 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelation 16:16</td>
<td>Then they gathered the kings together</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Many authors have assumed that the “kings from the east”, or literally, 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]:

Isaiah 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.

Although there is the possibility that the army in Revelation 9 is a human army (because of the description of the weapons of war), many scholars think we should draw a distinction between the mounted army of 200 million in Revelation 9 (i.e., the 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 of Revelation 9:15,18, 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]. The fact that these angels are bound implies that they are demons.

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. In fact, “man” isn’t even mentioned in this Scripture passage.

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]

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 who believe that the army of 200 million are human include Ed Hindson, John Walvoord, David Jeremiah, Hal Lindsey, and Ray Stedman [Hitchcock, 2014d]. Mark Hitchcock, on the other hand, believes that this 200-million-person army is an army of demons. First, the fifth trumpet (“locusts”) and the sixth trumpet are closely associated with one another. Second, there is a precedence of “supernatural cavalry”. In 2 Kings 6:15-17, Elisha prayed for the Lord to open the eye’s of Elisha’s servant at Dothan, and a vast array of (good) angelic beings were displayed. Third, the weapons are fire, brimstone, and smoke—supernatural weapons, often mentioned with hell.

Some authors 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]

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].

Regardless, the kings from the east will come from the eastern side of the Euphrates River.

| Preterist Position | All of this was fulfilled in 70 AD. Jay Adams writes that Roman armies, including Rome’s 10th legion, were stationed along the Euphrates River [Gregg, 1997]. Steve Gregg adds that the 200 million man army is figurative |
language that refers to the armies of Rome and their confederates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What are the stages of the Battle of Armageddon?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>Arnold Fruchtenbaum summarizes the stages [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The first stage is the gathering of the armies of Antichrist: the “kings from the east”.

2. The second stage 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:

   a. 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.

3. The third stage is the attack on Jerusalem.

   a. 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.

   b. 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.

4. The fourth stage includes the events at Bozrah:

   a. 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!"

5. The fifth stage includes national repentance and pleading for the Messiah to return, so that all (surviving) Jews will be saved.

6. 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.

   a. 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."

   b. 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.

   c. 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.

   d. 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].

7. The seventh stage is the battle in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and in particular, the Kidron Valley by the eastern walls of Jerusalem.

8. 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, resulting in geographical changes. 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).

Preterist Position

Preterists do not believe that there ever was, or will be, a literal Battle of Armageddon [LaHaye & Ice, 2003].
Topic/Question | Is it possible that the Antichrist will actually support Israel in the latter days?
---|---
Dispensationalist Position | Daniel 11:40-45 discusses the events involving the Antichrist at the time of the end:

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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.
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The following quotation gives an alternative viewpoint of the Antichrist’s travels during the Tribulation period [Showers, 2012, p. 23]. In this model, note that the Magog invasion of Ezekiel 38-39 takes place in the first half of the Tribulation period.

The original language of [Daniel 9:26-27] reveals that, at the beginning of the last seven years of this unique program, the Antichrist will establish a strong, binding, seven-year covenant with Israel. In fact, it will so strongly bind Israel to him and his revived Roman Empire that he will regard Israel as an extension of himself and his empire in the Middle East. Therefore, any attack against Israel will be an attack against him and his empire.

How will the Antichrist react when Israel has been jointly attacked by Egypt and Syria? Daniel 11:40 says, “He shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through.” He apparently will attack Syria, north of Israel, first. Then he will move his forces south through Israel, “the Glorious Land,” but won’t take time to cross the Jordan River to conquer Edom, Moab, and Ammon (modern Jordan, v. 41) because he will want to get to Egypt.

The Antichrist will conquer all of Egypt to its western border with Libya and its southern border with Sudan. (The “Ethiopia” of Daniel’s day was not the same nation as modern Ethiopia, vv. 42-43.) It appears he will get complete control of that part of the Middle East.

But while the Antichrist plunders Egypt’s wealth, he will receive disturbing news from the east and north (v. 44) of another attack against his ally Israel: the multinational attack foretold in Ezekiel 38. The Jewish prophets Ezekiel and Daniel lived at the same time. The names of those nations in Ezekiel’s time were “Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya,” and the tribes of Gomer and Togarmah (vv. 5-6). Today they are Iran, Sudan, Libya, and Turkey. Gomer and Togarmah were two tribes located in what today is
Turkey. These nations will be led by “God, of the land of Magog” (v. 2). Gog will come from his “place out of the far north” (v. 15), meaning Russia.

This attack will take place “in the latter days” (v. 16) and “latter years” of this present age before the Messiah comes to rule the world and after the Jewish people have been “gathered from many people” and been “brought out of the nations” (v. 8) and back to their homeland. This gathering has been taking place, particularly since 1948. ...

But Israel will feel safe during the first half of the last seven years before Christ’s return as a result of the Antichrist’s seven-year covenant to protect it. However, in the middle of that seven-year period, he will turn against Israel and desolate it until Christ’s return (Dan. 9:27).

The disturbing news the Antichrist will hear in Egypt will come from the east and north. Iran will come against Israel from the east. Russia and Turkey will come from the north. Sudan and Libya would normally come against Israel from the south and southwest. But it appears they will be unwilling to go through Egypt while the Antichrist and his armies are there. So they will take ships north through the Mediterranean Sea to join forces with Turkey and Russia coming from the north.

Once the Antichrist receives the news of this attack, “he shall go out with great fury” with the goal “to destroy and annihilate many” (11:44). But before he arrives, God will have destroyed the invading forces (Ezek. 38:18-23). Now the Antichrist will have a free hand in the Middle East. Perhaps he will claim credit for the supernatural destruction of these forces.

He will come to Jerusalem in the middle of the seven-year period, take his seat in Israel’s new Temple, claim to be God, and desolate Israel for three and one-half years (Dan. 9:27; 11:45; Mt. 24:15-21; 2 Th. 2:3-4) until Messiah Jesus returns to rescue Israel and destroy him.

### Preterist Position
Most of Revelation has already been fulfilled. Preterists do not believe there is a future “Antichrist” figure who appears during the end times in a manner described by dispensationalists. Hank Hanegraaff, for example, warns that Christians today should not be playing the “Pin the Tail on the Antichrist” game [Hanegraaff, 2003+].

### 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 figuratively?

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].
| Dispensationalist Position | This is probably meant to be taken literally, upon Christ’s return at the Battle of Armageddon. Mud, water, large hailstones, etc., mixed with blood in certain areas of the valley could well 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), 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.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum states that the word *nations* in the above passage is better translated as *Gentiles*. The purpose of this particular judgment is to take the Gentile survivors after Armageddon, and judge them for their treatment of the Jews during the Great Tribulation, that is, whether individuals were pro-Semitic or anti-Semitic. Those who fall into the category of goats will be killed during this time of judgment, since their lack of appropriate deeds demonstrates their unbelief (e.g., James 2:14,17) [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. In particular, this judgment is the separation of the *sheep* from the *goats*:

Matthew 25:31-40  "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. 'Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give
you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Fruchtenbaum adds that the sheep will go on to populate the Gentile nations in the Millennium.

Reaping (e.g., harvest in Revelation 14:14-16) is a term used in Scripture for salvation; treading (e.g., the grapes in Revelation 14:17-20) is a symbol of judgment [Fruchtenbaum, 2004].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
<th>This is an allegory; the physical dimensions described make this impossible.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>As Isaiah and Joel used the language of sickles, winepresses, and blood to</td>
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<td>symbolize judgment against the enemies of Israel’s God, so John now uses</td>
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<td></td>
<td>the language of the prophets to signify the impending doom of apostate Israel.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>As the seven heads of the Beast point to seven hills and seven kings, and as</td>
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<td>the seven lampstands symbolize seven churches, so too the number sixteen</td>
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<td>hundred is pregnant with meaning. As Dr. David Chilton explains, the number</td>
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<td></td>
<td>sixteen hundred is a number that uniquely emphasizes Palestine. Four squared</td>
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<td>symbolizes the land. “Sixteen hundred stadia is slightly more than the</td>
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<td>length of Palestine: the whole Land of Israel is thus represented as</td>
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<td></td>
<td>overflowing with blood in the coming nationwide judgment…” [Hanegraaff,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2007, pp. 22-23]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The passage in Matthew 25 is simply an indicator of how people have treated</td>
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<td>one another throughout history.</td>
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**Topic/Question**  Will Christ literally set foot on the Mount of Olives, and will the mountain split when He does so?

**Dispensationalist Position**  Most 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 & Ice, 2003].

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.
Chapter 12: The Millennium
(The Millennial Kingdom, The Kingdom Age)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Is the Millennium a literal period of 1000 years following the return of Christ?</th>
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</table>
| Dispensationalist Position | Revelation specifically states that the Millennium will last for 1000 years, and that the saints will reign with Christ during this time. The saints are those individuals who have not taken the mark of the beast, but have been beheaded because of their testimony for Christ. And, of course, there are many unfulfilled Old Testament prophecies that will likely have a fulfillment during the Messiah’s rule on Earth during the Millennium (e.g., David’s throne, worldwide peace, realization of the full extent of the Promised Land, physical prosperity, healing of nature). Then will “Heaven and nature sing” as per the well-known Christmas hymn “Joy to the World”, which is actually about the second coming of Christ, rather than the first. In particular, it is about the first day of the Millennium [Ice, 2015d]. 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 minimized). Nevertheless, we still see that “the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9), even apart from the influence of Satan! 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. [De Haan, 1946, p. 256]

The Millennium could well parallel the 7th day of creation. Under a young earth creation model, this means that there would have been about 6000 years since Adam (i.e., approximately 4000 years before Christ, and 2000 more years until now), plus 1000 years (the Millennium) when we will live in his presence. Thus, the sum of 7000 years could parallel the 7 days of creation—as per Hosea 6:2 and 2 Peter 3:8:

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.
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.

As a side note, many theologians believe that God created angels (including the eventual fallen ones) on the first or second day of creation [LaHaye & Hindson, 2004].

Some scholars believe that the “two days” referred to in Hosea 6:2 are two literal days, the two days just before the return of Jesus Christ at Armageddon.

Christ will literally return to the earth to rule those on the earth (i.e., physically, after the Second Coming, throughout the Millennium, and beyond) [Missler, 2006]:

- In the Old Testament, there are 1845 references to Christ’s return.
  - 17 of 39 Old Testament books give prominence to the Messiah ruling on the earth.
- In the New Testament, there are 318 references to Christ’s return.
  - 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."

The Millennium is a time when mortals with co-exist with immortals, on Earth. The last time this happened was when the resurrected Jesus walked with the disciples prior to his ascension to Heaven, for a period of 40 days, circa 30 AD [Feinberg, 1980]. Amillennialists are confusing the Millennial state with the eternal state (post-Millennium). It is the latter that has no presence of sin.

Amillennialists argue that there will be no Millennium, but this flies in the fact of many Scripture passages throughout the Old and New Testaments. In fact, if there is no Millennium, then …

What does one do with 2 Samuel 7 … ? What with passages like Isaiah 2, 9, 11, 35, 55, to mention only a minimal number? What of Jeremiah 23, 31, 33? What of Ezekiel 36 and 37 with 40-48? What … with Daniel 2 and 7? What with the overwhelming testimony of the so-called minor
prophets, especially Amos 9, Micah 4, and Zechariah 14? And, in the name of all reason, how is Matthew’s gospel to be interpreted without the millennial doctrine …? [Feinberg, 1980, p. 322]

| Preterist Position | Steve Gregg is a partial preterist and an amillennialist. (Not all Preterists hold to amillennialism.) He argues that 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.

Hank Hanegraaff says that the “Millennium” is not meant to refer to a literal period of 1000 years. Rather, the Millennium is metaphorical [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man, November 11, 2011]. The only place in Scripture where the Millennium is mentioned is Revelation 20. The “Millennium” did not take place between Christ’s First and Second Comings, and it will not occur after Christ’s Second Coming. Furthermore, he argues that there will be no:

- Rebuilt temple
- Pretribulation Rapture
- 7-year Tribulation, followed by Christ’s return
- 1000-year period with:
  - A rebuilt temple and reinstituted temple sacrifices
  - People bearing and rearing children (during a so-called Millennium)
  - Big revolt at the end

Instead, following Christ’s return, Hanegraaff argues that following Christ’s return (“Second Coming”), the eternal state—the new Heavens and New Earth—begins (i.e., without any of the above points). Christ will indeed “put all things to right” and be living among us in the new Heavens and New Earth, with no more mourning or pain, etc. Furthermore, he argues that there is no pretribulational “Rapture” and no posttribulational “Rapture”—just a rapture that occurs simultaneously upon Christ’s return, without a 7-year tribulation.

Hanegraaff points out that the word “thousand” is used over and over again in Scripture, and is not to be taken literally. It is a large round number that’s always to be taken in a metaphorical sense. Examples of such passages include references to: God “showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments” (Exodus 20: 6); “With the Lord a day is like a thousand years” (2 Peter 3:8); “The least of you will become a thousand” (Isaiah 60:22); the Lord “owns the cattle on a thousand hills” (Psalm 50:16); and so on.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</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>
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</thead>
</table>
| Dispensationalist Position | Babies will be born post-Second Coming, during the Millennium, but only to those people who have not had resurrected bodies at that point in time.  

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 bear children during the Millennium or beyond. However, during the Millennium we know that the population will greatly increase. In fact, the number of unbelievers born during the Millennium, will alone be large:  

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.  

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 born. 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.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preterist Position</th>
<th>The preterist position is the same as the dispensationalist position; however, the physical bodies will be obtained after the Second Coming of Christ, rather than at some alleged pre-trib rapture.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic/Question</td>
<td>What are the characteristics of the Millennium? In other words, what will the Millennium be like?</td>
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</table>
J. Dwight Pentecost, H. Wayne House, and Randall Price highlight some of the characteristics of the Millennium [Pentecost, 1958; House & Price, 2003]:

- Peace
- Joy
- Holiness
- Glory
- Comfort
- Justice
- Full knowledge
- Instruction
- Removal of the *curse* (Genesis 3:17-19; Revelation 22:3)
- Restoration of Edenic conditions
- Longevity (of life)
- Removal of sickness
- Healing of the deformed
- Freedom from oppression, war, and enemies
- No immaturity
- Reproduction by the people
- Unimpaired labor
- Economic prosperity
- Increase of light
- Unified language
- Unified worship
- Manifest presence of God
- Fullness of the Holy Spirit
- Rebuilt Temple
- Return of the Shekinah Glory
- Revival of sacrificial system
- Restoration of Sabbath and ritual feasts
- Satan and demons bound (until the end of the Millennium)
- Initially, believers only; later, some unbelievers are born, and choose to remain unbelievers
- 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
- Jews return and live in the land
- Universal access to Israel
- Fertility and productivity of the land
Abundant rainfall
Increase in Israel’s territory; enlargement of Jerusalem
Topographical changes

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”. Note that the Kingdom did not come at Christ’s first coming because He instructed his disciples to pray, “Thy Kingdom come” (still future).

The world will finally experience absence of war. Furthermore, Christ will be in charge, and note that there will be nations on the Earth:

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.

Micah 4:3  He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. 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.

Across the street from the United Nations building in New York is a small park, which has a concrete wall the words of Isaiah 2:4 written on it. Also, it is interesting to note that the former Soviet Union provided a sculpture to the United Nations called “Let Us Beat Swords into Plowshares”. The world longs for peace. Only Jesus Christ can provide true peace.

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.

Secondly, note the agricultural productivity during the Millennium:

Amos 9:13-15  "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills. I will bring back my exiled people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them," says the LORD your God.
Jack Hibbs emphasizes that the Millennium will be characterized by “good government” compared to the many failed attempts at peaceful rule by governments of all kinds—democratic and dictatorship—all over the world, for decades, centuries, and indeed millennia.

Will there be animals during the Millennium? Yes. Note also the presence of children:

Isaiah 11:6-9  The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. 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.

Isaiah 65:19-25  I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. “Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands. They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them. Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,” says the LORD.

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]

In summary, only believers (in their natural bodies) enter the Millennium; but, children are born to them during the Millennium, and some of these children may be unbelievers. It appears that: only unbelievers will die during the Millennium, and there will be no Jewish unbelievers during this time (Jeremiah 31:31-34) [Fruchtenbaum, 2004].

**Preterist Position**

In the preterist camp, there are various schools of thought regarding millennialism. Many do not believe that there will be a 1000-year period of time following the return of Jesus Christ, under the rule and reign of Christ, in the presence of sinners here on Earth.
When the Lord returns, He will indeed create new heavens and a new earth. There will no sinners.

Isaiah 65:20 is figurative language of what the world will be like when Christ returns. Isaiah is using the term figuratively, so that people of his day can understand it. But, the bottom line is that there will be no death for believers following Christ’s Second Coming. There will be no 1000-year Millennium where the saved, unsaved, and people in glorified bodies will be on the Earth.

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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What kinds of tectonic or geographical changes can we expect for the Millennium, with respect to Jerusalem?</td>
<td>We expect major changes to occur to the area around Jerusalem, to fulfill the prophecies about the Millennial Temple given in Ezekiel 40-48.</td>
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At the onset of the Millennium, the Messiah will rebuild Jerusalem on a reconfigured, post-tribulational landscape. A forceful tectonic upthrust will have elevated the area to form a plateau some 50 miles square (Isa. 2:2-4; Mic. 4:1-2). On the northern end of the plateau will be the earthly city of Jerusalem, 10 miles square and housing the center of government for the Messianic Kingdom, with the Millennial Temple at the heart of the city (Ezek. 48:1-28). (The rebuilt city of Jerusalem should not be confused with the New Jerusalem that descends from heaven after the creation of the new heaven and Earth, cf. Rev. 21:2, 10.) [McCracken, 2011, p. 25]

Besides Jerusalem itself, the Millennial Temple is about one square mile in size. The current Temple Mount would not be able to hold the fourth Temple. This is another reason why changes to the physical landscape will have to occur.

Preterist Position
Preterists do not believe that there will be a third Temple, let alone a fourth one. They believe that 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” [LaHaye & Ice, 2003].

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<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
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<tr>
<td>What is the relationship that will exist between the resurrected people and the earthly (unresurrected) people during the Millennium?</td>
<td>The resurrected people entering the Millennium are the raptured believers and the Old Testament saints. Believers who are alive at the time of Christ’s return will enter the Millennium in their natural bodies.</td>
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Jesus Christ freely associated with the disciples (and others) following His resurrection. He even ate with them. Similarly, the resurrected individuals will be able to interact with those in their natural bodies. (The resurrected believers will have permanent, perfected bodies.)
Unlike those who survive the Tribulation and the Millennial Age in their mortal bodies, Tribulation, Old Testament, and Church Age believers will all have glorified, immortal bodies that will not be limited to the earthly realm.

... For the first time in history, mortals living on Earth will mingle with people who have resurrected, glorified bodies.

Today every level of creation groans for the climax of Earth’s history and the peace, tranquility, and righteousness associated with the Messiah’s 1,000-year reign. Our anticipation of a world where every system on the planet is under the Messiah’s direct control is truly mindboggling. [McCacken, 2011, p.26]

Although the resurrected individuals have an active part in the Millennium, they are not subjects of the King’s reign [Pentecost, 1958].

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
Resurrected beings will not mingle or interact with mortals during the Millennium. Resurrection assumes perfection in a perfect environment (i.e., Heaven).

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resurrection and the Millennial Age</td>
<td>These terms are often used interchangeably [Vlach, 2009]. Matthew often, but not always, uses the term “kingdom of Heaven”, whereas Mark and Luke use the term “kingdom of God”. This “kingdom” is the same kingdom that was prophesied in the Old Testament. Among Jewish people, the name “God” was used with great sensitivity, lest it be misused. Orthodox Jews, for example, often write “G-d” instead of “God”. Since Matthew was written to a Jewish audience, this may be the justification for the use of the two terms [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. Some scholars believe that the kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, and not an...</td>
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earthly, political kingdom. Most premillennialists, however, view them as both. The Millennium is most likely the “kingdom of God” that the Old Testament saints and the people of Jesus’ day referred to. As noted elsewhere in this book, the Millennium is physical: both national Israel (under the future rule of David) and the Gentile nations are active entities during the Millennium.

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]

When John the Baptist announced the coming of the kingdom of Heaven, it is clear from the context (e.g., Matthew 5-7) that it was to be an earthly kingdom. Later, from prison, John sent a message to Jesus asking him if this kingdom was to be established at this time.

In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus stated, “Your kingdom come” (Matthew 6:10), implying it was still to come. In Matthew 10, Jesus sent the disciples out to heal the sick, preach the gospel, and state that the kingdom was at hand. Matthew 11:12-14 indicates that the kingdom was being offered to Israel, if the Israelites chose to accept it; but, most didn’t.

In Luke 19, as Christ approached the Mount of Olives, Jesus gave his disciples a parable to indicate that the kingdom was not being ushered in, at this time. In Luke 21, Christ stated that when one sees the signs (of what appear to be end times events), then the kingdom of God is near. Towards the end of His ministry, Christ turned the focus of His ministry to the Church Age—yet without removing the promise of the future earthly kingdom: the kingdom of God. At the end of the Church age, the times of the Gentiles will end, and He will fulfill the promises of the kingdom.

Preterist Position

The terms “kingdom of Heaven” and “kingdom of God” are used interchangeably. See the comments below about the Millennium.

Steve Gregg writes about the coming of the Davidic kingdom:

When Jesus came, the kingdom that the Jews anticipated was a Davidic one—namely, a political empire in which one of David’s sons would rule eternally from David’s throne ...

There is nothing in Scripture to suggest that the kingdom was or would be
postponed. John the Baptist and Jesus both proclaimed that the kingdom was ‘at hand’ (Matt. 3:2; Mark 1:14), and Jesus later said that the kingdom of God “has come upon you” (Matt.12:28) and “is within you” (Luke 17:21). It was not derailed or postponed, but came powerfully in the person of the King Jesus (Acts 17:7). [Gregg, 2012]

According to the book of Hebrews, the idea of a Jewish theocracy with Jerusalem at its head, or a rebuilt Temple, or reinstituted Temple sacrifices is “tantamount to trampling on the sacred blood of Jesus Christ”, says Hank Hanegraaff [Hanegraaff, Bible Answer Man, December 23, 2014]. Jesus left his disciples with instructions to leave Jerusalem, and be filled with power as the Holy Spirit came upon them.

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**Topic/Question**
Who will rule during the Millennium? What is meant by the “David’s throne”? Is this literal? Will David be resurrected and rule over Israel? What role do Christians have in Millennium government?

**Dispensationalist Position**

The following passage was written well after King David died. Note that it says that David will be resurrected.

Jeremiah 30:9 Instead, they will serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.

The following verses state that Jesus Christ will rule 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.

Psalm 110:1 Of David. A psalm. The LORD [God the Father] says to my [David’s] Lord [Jesus Christ]: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”

Note also the disciples’ question about the restoration of the Kingdom:

Acts 1:6-7 Then they gathered around him and 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.

The following hierarchy of rulers is taken from [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]. Note that Jesus Christ rules over both branches, that is, the whole world, during the Millennium. The Jewish branch is Israel with its extended borders, as per the original Promised Land; the Gentile branch is the rest of the world. King David will be resurrected, and will rule over Israel during the Millennium (but under Jesus Christ). In fact, the Old Testament saints will inherit the Promised Land. These events will fulfill the writings of the prophets of long ago, and will also fulfill the covenants made by God to Israel. Unlike the
many centuries following King Solomon, Israel will be joined as one nation; there will not be a separation of Israel and Judea & Samaria. We do not know which apostle will rule over which tribe of Israel. Zerubbabel (of the times of Nehemiah, Ezra, and Haggai) may be one of the princes ruling over part of Israel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jewish Branch</th>
<th>Gentile Branch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church and Tribulation Saints—in resurrected bodies (Revelation 20:4-6)</td>
<td>David—in his resurrected body (Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Hosea 3:5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings of the Gentile Nations—in their natural bodies (Psalm 72)</td>
<td>12 Apostles—in their resurrected bodies—ruling over the 12 Tribes who are in their natural bodies (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:28-30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... Ruling over the Gentile Nations</td>
<td>Princes (e.g., possibly Zerubbabel) (Isaiah 32:1; Ezekiel 45:8; Haggai 2:20-23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Judges and Counselors (Isaiah 1:26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... Ruling over Israel (Deuteronomy 15:6; Deuteronomy 28:1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... who in Turn are Ruling over the Gentiles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No Scripture passage states that Christ is currently reigning on David’s throne, or that David’s throne is in Heaven [Woods, 2014c]. Woods asks: If Acts 2 implies it, then why isn’t the Temple that’s found in Revelation 11 a spiritualization or extension of the Church?

Scripture is not clear as to whether Israel, the church, and the other believer groups of history will maintain their distinctions throughout eternity. There does not appear to be a biblical reason why they may not worship and serve God as distinct saved people groups for all eternity. In fact, the New Jerusalem of the eternal state, indicates some distinctions such as the 12 tribes of Israel (Rev. 21:12), the 12 apostles of the church (Rev. 21:14), and the glory and honour of the nations will be brought into the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:26). [Ice, 2015b]

All who enter the Millennial Kingdom will be believers. While there will be Gentile unbelievers born in the Millennial Kingdom, there will be no Jewish
unbelievers born then (because they will all be saved) [Fruchtenbaum, 2004].

| 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 (e.g., Acts 2), and is ruling from David’s throne today. 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 | Will Satan literally be chained or bound with a chain for 1000 years, and be placed in an abyss? Has Satan been bound, yet? |
| Dispensationalist Position | The chain is probably symbolic; however, 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 looking back for many centuries—makes it clear that Satan has not been bound yet. If Satan were already bound, then the church should not be undergoing persecution, and there shouldn’t be much evil in the world—but there clearly is. Furthermore, if Satan were already chained (e.g., as of the death of Christ on the Cross), then why does Revelation 2:13 state that he is living in Pergamos? Some authors argue that if Satan is currently chained, then “his chain is too long”. In fact, it appears that Satan has been more active in the past 2000 years than he was 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 a physical, being. He is not a literal dragon or serpent, and therefore cannot be “chained” up. The language in Revelation 20 is used metaphorically. |
Satan was bound at the time of Christ’s crucifixion on the cross. When Scripture says that Satan is bound for “a thousand years”, then that’s a style of writing that implies “a very long time” (i.e., eternity). When the Church is told that it will be tested, or undergo trials, for “ten days” (e.g., the church at Smyrna), then that implies a relatively short period of time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>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”.)</th>
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<td></td>
<td>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, &quot;These are the true words of God.&quot;</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dispensationalist Position</th>
<th>Symbolically, the wife of God is Israel. Israel has temporarily rejected God. Israel will eventually return to God. The Marriage of the Lamb refers to the post-rapture gathering of saints in Heaven. This event only includes Christians because the Lamb is Jesus Christ. It likely follows 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. Furthermore, the saints are wearing fine linen suggesting that they have been rewarded for their righteous acts. The implication is that the Marriage of the Lamb has already occurred. The notion of a “marriage supper” begs the question: Will there be literal food in Heaven? The answer is: yes.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>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 Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>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, &quot;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.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Luke 13:28-29  &quot;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</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.

Luke 24:39-43  Look at my hands and my feet. It is I
[post-resurrection Jesus] myself! Touch me and see; a
ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I
have." When he had said this, he showed them his hands
and feet. And while they still did not believe it
because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you
have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of
broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their
presence.

Thomas Ice and Arnold Fruchtenbaum believe that the Marriage Supper of
the Lamb takes place in the first part (perhaps the first seven days?) 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. The Old Testament saints will be there because Scripture
says that they will “take their place at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and
Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 8:11). The Old Testament and
Tribulation saints (i.e., those saved during the Tribulation but after the
Rapture) are sometimes called “friends of the Bridegroom”.

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]

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 bridegroom 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 bridegroom.
Upon the arrival of the bridegroom, 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]

David Reagan believes there are two feasts: the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in Heaven, after the Rapture, but before the Second Coming; and another on Earth after the Second Coming [Reagan, 2017a]. The latter includes the Old Testament saints (believers) and Tribulation martyrs, in addition to those saved during the Church age. Scripture references for the former include Revelation 19:7-9 and Matthew 8:11; and Scripture references for the latter include Luke 22:28-30, Luke 13:28-30, Isaiah 24:23, and Isaiah 25:6.

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]

To summarize, we have the following likely ordering, analogous to a traditional Jewish wedding ceremony [Missler, 2011; Fruchtenbaum, 2013a]. Recall that in Old Testament times, the parents often arranged the marriage.

- **Betrothal.** The bride’s father often paid a bridal price, and the groom often gave an object of value to the bride-to-be, such as a ring or money to confirm his commitment. The betrothal lasted for at least a year, and possibly many years—especially if the betrothal took place when the two were children.
  - Analogy: Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross was an unconditional guarantee—the payment by blood to redeem all who choose to believe. Believers, as previously mentioned, make up the “Bride of Christ”.
- **Imminence.** The bride stays in her current home, and prepares for her future wedding, which is at an undetermined time. The groom often surprised her with his unexpected return. Sometimes, the bride and groom did not meet each other until their wedding day [Fruchtenbaum, 2013a]. The groom takes the bride to his father’s home for the marriage ceremony.
  - Analogy: The Bride of Christ continues to live in the world during the betrothal period, waiting in eager expectation of the
imminent call (i.e., Rapture) to come to the Father’s house for the marriage ceremony.

- During the Bride’s preparation, the Bride (church) is sanctified and cleansed, so that she can be presented as a glorified virgin to Jesus Christ. She is not to run after other lovers (false gods).

- **The Bema Judgment Seat of Christ.** This event is not a part of the marriage ceremony, but it is a time of rewards for the believers following the Rapture, and likely occurs before the marriage ceremony.

  - During this victory judgment, the works of the believer will be judged, with awards being handed out for those who built on the foundation (Jesus Christ) using “gold, silver, and costly stones”, whereas works with selfish motives (“wood, hay, or straw”) will be burned away, as per 1 Corinthians 3:11-15.

  - When the process of sanctification, as per Ephesians 5:25-27, is complete, the Church will be without defilement or sin. In other words, Christ will have a pure bride.

- **The Marriage of the Lamb.** The wedding ceremony was often held in a different place than the groom’s father’s house, and with a very small audience (e.g., immediate family and two witnesses).

  - **Analogy:** The marriage of Jesus Christ and the body of believers, takes place in Heaven. At this point, the Bride of Christ is wearing white, which Scripture says is “the righteous acts of the saints”—implying that the Judgment Seat of Christ has taken place.

- **The Second Coming.** Christ returns to the Earth with his Bride. The resurrection of Old Testament saints takes place, and this includes all believers prior to Christ’s death and resurrection. The martyred Tribulation saints are also included in this resurrection.

- A wedding procession of women carrying lamps *en route* to the marriage supper/feast takes place, similar to that in the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13).

  - **Analogy:** Arnold Fruchtenbaum believes that the ten virgins describe people after the Rapture. Only five of them are saved. Oil is a type of the Holy Spirit. Five of the virgins had the Holy Spirit, that is, they became believers after the Rapture; and five did not become believers. Of these two kinds of virgins, only the former were saved, and were invited, therefore, to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb which is about to take place on Earth.

  - Chuck Missler has a different perspective on the Parable of the Ten Virgins. He agrees that five of the ten virgins were foolish and unprepared, but the application is to the Rapture rather than the Second Coming. In particular, the five foolish virgins missed the opportunity to accompany the bride to the
wedding ceremony [Missler, 2011]. He believes that all ten virgins are saved; but five of them simply weren’t prepared for the Rapture. Since the Rapture is an imminent event, the emphasis is on being prepared to avoid being left behind.

- **The Marriage Supper.** The marriage supper takes place in the presence of a much larger audience. The feast might last for 7 days.
  - **Analogy:** The Marriage Supper of the Lamb takes place on Earth, with a larger audience, possibly during the first part of the Millennium. It occurs following Christ’s Second Coming (i.e., his physical presence on the Earth)—an event that is distinct from the Rapture.
  - Note that John the Baptist is likely the last of the Old Testament prophets. He called himself “a friend of the Bridegroom”—suggesting that he will not be at the wedding ceremony, but rather at the marriage supper [Fruchtenbaum, 2013a]. The Old Testament saints will be resurrected at the Second Coming of Christ (rather than at the Rapture), but will be present for the marriage supper.
  - Who else will be present at the marriage supper? All other believers who are saved, but were not raptured. This includes the Tribulation saints (Revelation 20:4-6), Israel (all the survivors of the Tribulation), and all other believers who are not from the house of Israel.

- **The Millennium.** After the Marriage Supper of the Lamb on Earth, we have the Millennium. At the end of this thousand-year period, Christ will create “new heavens and a new Earth” (Isaiah 65:17), and the New Jerusalem (the home of the Bride, Revelation 21:9-22:5) comes down from Heaven to Earth. All believers will be with Christ in a perfected universe, never subject to sin again—for eternity.

| Preterist Position | David Chilton equates the marriage of the Lamb with the “final divorce and destruction of the unfaithful wife in A.D. 70” (i.e., Jerusalem, the “harlot”) [Gregg, 1997, p. 442]. This represents the fulfillment of the establishment of the New Covenant, and therefore the “age to come” had arrived. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What is the state of Israel’s neighbors during the Millennium? Will the nations live in peace?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>Scripture seems to suggest that, in the Millennium, Israel will include all of Lebanon. The prophets Jeremiah and Obadiah describe the destruction of Edom (southern Jordan). Note that this has not happened yet. Obadiah states rather clearly that this destruction of Edom will come by means of the children of Israel (v. 18), for the two houses of Israel will be like fire, while Edom will be like stubble that quickly catches fire when exposed to the flame. The destruction will be total, so that nothing will remain of Esau’s descendants, while the descendants of brother Jacob will own and possess the mountains of Edom (vv. 19-20). It is out of Mount</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Zion that judgment will fall on Edom (v. 21).

... As for Moab, present-day central Jordan, it, too, will suffer destruction
(Jer. 48:1-46), but it will not be total. Those who survive will come to
repentance and a remnant of Moab will return, according to Jeremiah
48:47 ...

Concerning Ammon, or modern northern Jordan, it will also suffer a
partial destruction and become a possession of Israel, in Jeremiah 49:1-2
...

As with Moab, it will not be a total destruction and those who survive will
turn to the Lord for a remnant of Ammon will also be found in the
Kingdom, according to Jeremiah 49:6 ...

Thus, peace comes between Israel and northern Jordan by means of a
partial destruction, followed by conversion, and there will be a saved
nation called Ammon in the Kingdom. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, pp. 495-496]

Possibly large parts of Egypt will be desolate for 40 years, quite possibly the
first 40 years of the Millennium, in accordance with the prophets Joel and
Ezekiel:

Joel 3:19 But Egypt will be desolate, Edom a desert
waste, because of violence done to the people of Judah,
in whose land they shed innocent blood.

Ezekiel 29:9-14 Egypt will become a desolate
wasteland. Then they will know that I am the LORD.
"Because you said, "The Nile is mine; I made it,"
therefore I am against you and against your streams,
and I will make the land of Egypt a ruin and a desolate
waste from Migdol to Aswan, as far as the border of
Cush. No foot of man or animal will pass through it;
no one will live there for forty years. I will make
the land of Egypt desolate among devastated lands, and
her cities will lie desolate forty years among ruined
cities. And I will disperse the Egyptians among the
nations and scatter them through the countries. "'Yet
this is what the Sovereign LORD says: At the end of
forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the
nations where they were scattered. I will bring them
back from captivity and return them to Upper Egypt, the
land of their ancestry. There they will be a lowly
kingdom.

Only a part of the above passage could apply to the Babylonian captivity.
We know that this prophecy has not yet been fulfilled because significant
parts of Egypt have never been a wasteland for 40 years. Furthermore, the
references to Migdol, Aswan, and Cush (Ethiopia) place the extent of this
prophecy in the general area of the Aswan High Dam, leading some
prophecy scholars to wonder if some kind of an attack on the Aswan High
Dam is prophesied—perhaps a nuclear attack because of words “desolate”
and “forty years” [Stearman, 2011].
Note that this prophecy was issued by the prophet Ezekiel around 570 BC. The phrase, “Migdol to Aswan” is translated as “Tower of Syene” in the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible. (“Migdol” refers to a “tower” at the border of Egypt, and “Syene” has its Hebrew root in the word “key” or “opening”.) No such “tower” existed in Ezekiel’s day. The dam was built in 1967. Some scholars believe that Egypt will become uninhabitable because of radioactivity. Ezekiel 30:6 also uses the term “tower of Syene” in the KJV, but mention is also made of term “sword” (which refers to war). It’s possible that Ezekiel 29 will be fulfilled in the time leading up to Armageddon, suggesting that large parts of Egypt will be uninhabited during the first 40 years of the Millennium. The remaining Egyptians will largely be dispersed throughout the world during this time.

In terms of eschatology, the Bible has little to say about Egypt. Egypt is strangely absent from the Gog and Magog passage of Ezekiel 38-39; however, the prophet Isaiah writes that many believing Egyptians will turn to the Lord, and they will be blessed:

Isaiah 19:19-25 In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the heart of Egypt, and a monument to the LORD at its border. It will be a sign and witness to the LORD Almighty in the land of Egypt. When they cry out to the LORD because of their oppressors, he will send them a savior and defender, and he will rescue them. So the LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians, and in that day they will acknowledge the LORD. They will worship with sacrifices and grain offerings; they will make vows to the LORD and keep them. The LORD will strike Egypt with a plague; he will strike them and heal them. They will turn to the LORD, and he will respond to their pleas and heal them. 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.”

In summary, peace will come between Israel and Egypt by means of conversion. Only when the Egyptians worship the same God as Israel, through Jesus the Messiah, will peace finally come. For the first forty years of the Kingdom, the land of Egypt will be desolate and the Egyptians will be dispersed all over the world. But afterwards, the Egyptians will be regathered, becoming a kingdom again. [Fruchtenbaum, 2009, p. 501]

The Bible has a lot to say about Assyria. Today, northern Iraq makes up part of ancient Assyria. As a side note, in 2015, in Iraq, the Kurds largely live in the north, Sunni Muslims live in the middle, and Shiites live in the south. Iran supports Iraq’s 64% Shiite majority [Wikipedia, 2016]. Saudi Arabia supports Iraq’s 32% Sunni minority. Iran has a Shiite majority. Saudi Arabia has a Sunni minority.
Ancient Assyria also includes some of modern-day Syria. As of 2015, Syria is a war zone. It has been estimated that there are 37 rebel groups opposing Bashar al-Assad. [Dyer & Tobey, 2015]. As of mid-2015, the Syrian government may have killed over 160,000 civilians including 1,800 Palestinians [LaHaye & Hindson, 2015]. Many civilians have had to flee war-torn areas. Russia and ISIS have also become involved. The effects are widespread, and many civilians have tried to relocate to places like Europe. For example, Germany has taken in about one million migrants. This has had a financial strain on the welcoming nations.

We know that the Messiah’s rule during the Millennium will usher in a time of peace unknown since the Garden of Eden (or possibly the early days of the post-Noahic period). But, what about the nations surrounding Israel? Will animosity turn to peace?

Indeed, the Millennial period appears to be a time of peace and prosperity between Egypt, Israel, and Assyria:

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."

What about Southern Iraq, known in ancient times as Babylon? What about Southern Jordan, formerly known as Edom? Arnold Fruchtenbaum points out that both of these regions will be uninhabited forever (presumably beginning with the return of Jesus Christ).

Jeremiah 50:39-40 "... It [Babylon] will never again be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation. As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah along with their neighboring towns," declares the LORD, "so no one will live there; no man will dwell in it.

Isaiah 34:9-10 Edom’s streams will be turned into pitch, her dust into burning sulfur; her land will become blazing pitch! It will not be quenched night and day; its smoke will rise forever. From generation to generation it will lie desolate; no one will ever pass through it again.

Throughout the Millennial Kingdom, while the whole earth is beautified and blossoming as the rose, the two areas of Babylon and Edom will be places of continual burning pitch and burning brimstone. The smoke will rise and be visible for the entire one thousand years. While Satan will be confined in the Abyss, his demons will be confined in Babylon and Edom. These two places will be the abode of demons for the entire Kingdom period. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004]
| Preterist Position | This question is irrelevant because preterists believe that 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” [LaHaye & Ice, 2003]. |
Chapter 13: The Eternal State

So far in this book, we have devoted quite a bit of space to topics related to Heaven and Hell. Heaven is for real, as is hell; however, there are some interesting puzzles regarding the eternal state that follows the Millennium. In this last chapter, we consider some of these seldom explored topics.

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<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>What events occur at the end of the Millennium?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dispensationalist Position</td>
<td>Recall that at the end of the Millennium, Satan is freed one last time. He gathers unbelievers for one final attack on Jerusalem, to try to destroy God’s plan. Scripture says that when Satan’s armies surround Jerusalem, fire comes out of Heaven, and devours the unbelievers. Satan is then thrown into the Lake of Fire, where the Antichrist and the False Prophet have been for the past 1,000 years. They will remain there, for eternity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Revelation 20:7-10</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recall that up to now, all of the unbelievers throughout history are either in Hades (the place of the unsaved dead) or they are still alive at the end of the Millennium. These individuals are unsaved; that much is known. What happens at the Great White Throne Judgment, however, is the determination of the degree of their punishment. These unbelievers are resurrected to demand accountability, and to face judgment. Following the Great White Throne Judgment, they are thrown into the Lake of Fire.</td>
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<td>Revelation 20:11-15</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Following this, God restores creation, without the possibility of sin recurring. The New Jerusalem is part of this creation.

Revelation 21:1-5. 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." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

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 × 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]

The following verses indicate that there will literally be water, trees, fruit—and even nations—in Heaven. The River of Life appears to be a literal river with pure water flowing from the throne of God in the New Jerusalem. Note also that the Tree of Life, first mentioned in Genesis 2, re-appears.

Revelation 22:1-5. Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

These characteristics describe life in the eternal state [Pentecost, 1958]:

- Fellowship with God
- Rest
### Preterist Position
Preterists have different views of the Millennium. All views have problems, and some scholars such as Hank Hanegraaff do not endorse any of them [Hanegraaff, 2016]. Hanegraaff argues that nowhere does Scripture indicate that there will be a “semi-golden” age. The figure “1000 years” is just a figure of speech suggesting a long period of time. For example, the amillennial position is that the Millennium is a period of time which is not literally a period of 1000 years. Rather, it is the period of time between the time of Christ and His Second Coming.

### Dispensationalist Position
The New Jerusalem is a literal city, albeit a very large one—and it is designed by God. Believers, unfallen 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. It is likely that its occupants will be able to regularly travel between it and the Earth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Is the New Jerusalem a literal city coming down from Heaven to Earth? What is the relationship between the New Jerusalem and the Earth during the Millennium? What will life be like in the New Jerusalem?</th>
</tr>
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### 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]

Only 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 their unresurrected bodies.
- The saved Old Testament saints go into the New Jerusalem after Christ’s Second Coming, where they join the Church saints who are already there (because they were taken there at the Rapture).
- After the Millennium, it’s possible that all of the saved have resurrected bodies, and can enter the New Jerusalem; however, as will be seen below, there are some unanswered questions.

The Mountain of Jehovah’s House (during the Millennium) is described by the prophet Ezekiel:
Ezekiel 40:2  In visions of God he took me to the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain, on whose south side were some buildings that looked like a city.

Ezekiel 45:1-7  "'When you allot the land as an inheritance, you are to present to the LORD a portion of the land as a sacred district, 25,000 cubits long [note: approximately 11 km or 7 miles, when using an 18-inch cubit] and 20,000 cubits wide [approximately 9 km or 6 miles]; the entire area [approximately 42 square miles] will be holy. Of this, a section 500 cubits square is to be for the sanctuary, with 50 cubits around it for open land. In the sacred district, measure off a section 25,000 cubits long and 10,000 cubits wide. In it will be the sanctuary, the Most Holy Place. It will be the sacred portion of the land for the priests, who minister in the sanctuary and who draw near to minister before the LORD. It will be a place for their houses as well as a holy place for the sanctuary. An area 25,000 cubits long and 10,000 cubits wide will belong to the Levites, who serve in the temple, as their possession for towns to live in. "'You are to give the city as its property an area 5,000 cubits wide and 25,000 cubits long, adjoining the sacred portion; it will belong to the whole house of Israel. "'The prince will have the land bordering each side of the area formed by the sacred district and the property of the city. It will extend westward from the west side and eastward from the east side, running lengthwise from the western to the eastern border parallel to one of the tribal portions.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum describes the location as follows:

... somewhere on this [Holy] mountain the Millennial Temple is to stand, as well as the City of Jerusalem. This very high mountain, the highest in the world, will itself have a fifty-mile square plateau [my (Ed’s) note: approximately 42 square miles using the 18-inch cubit, or approximately 50 square miles when using the 24-inch Hebrew long cubit] on top (v. 1). This square plateau will be subdivided into three sections. The northern section (vv. 2-4) will be twenty miles by fifty miles, having in its center the Millennial Temple, which will be about one mile square. The rest of the area of the northern section will be reserved for a certain group of priests to live in. The central section (v. 5) will also be twenty miles by fifty miles and will be reserved for the members of the Tribe of Levi. The southern section (vv. 6-8) will be ten miles by fifty miles. In the center of the southern section will stand the Millennial Jerusalem, measuring ten miles by ten miles. On either side of the city will be field areas, each measuring ten by twenty miles, for growing food. These areas will be controlled by the prince, the resurrected David, who will apportion the Land according to tribe. [Fruchtenbaum, 2004, p. 448]

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.

How old will we be, at resurrection time? Will we age in eternity? 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 3:2), with bodies “fashioned like unto his glorious body” (Philippians 3:21). [Morris, 1983, pp. 441-442]

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

“Taking Revelation 21 and reading it in a wooden, literalistic fashion rather than the fashion in which it’s intended lends to all kinds of problems in terms of biblical hermeneutics”, says Hank Hanegraaff [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, August 15, 2011]. Revelation is written in apocalyptic literature; so, it needs to be read with that in mind. Even the modern-day expression, “See you next year in Jerusalem”, can be taken to represent an eternal state.

Contrary to the dispensationalists’ position, Hanegraaff argues that the New Jerusalem is not a physical city. The dimensions given in Revelation are not meant to be taken literally because Revelation 21 is a *symbolic* reference to Heaven, using poetic language. Heaven is not a “new” place, but rather the old order restored; and that is the key point: the universe will be restored. There’s no point in computing how much “acreage” each saved person might have. In Scripture, when the Apostle John describes Christ in apocalyptic language, it’s not stating how Jesus actually looks, but rather *what he is like*.

However, we will have resurrected, physical, recognizable bodies in Heaven. And, how old will we be, at resurrection time? We will likely be fully developed “in full bloom”—the “flower of our youth for all eternity as we learn and grow and develop without error, and as forever we explore the glory and grandeur of the One who created us by His grace” [Hanegraaff, *Bible Answer Man*, August 4, 2011]. This is a theological deduction. We will be as if sin had never entered the world, and if our DNA had never been corrupted. The universe will be ours to explore. We will have *more* information, awareness, and intelligence in Heaven—not *less*. God redeems things; He will restore things to the way they were meant to be: without sin.

There won’t be permanent babies or permanent old men—and everything in between—in Heaven. Remember that God created Adam and Eve as mature human beings. Also, Jesus Christ died in his prime, around age 30. In our mid- to late-30s, and certainly by our 40s, the body is starting to break down.

Dispensationalists and preterists may disagree on a lot of things, but we all agree on the fact that believers will be resurrected with physical bodies, and that the resurrected state lasts for eternity.
What is meant by the “Book of Life” and “the books” mentioned in Revelation 20? Are these records of everything that people did on Earth?

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.

In Verse 12 above, note that the phrase “books were opened” is immediately followed by the phrase “Another book was opened”. The latter is the Book of Life.

What would the first set of books refer to? It could be that these are used for “audit” purposes, and to show every thought, word, and deed from an unbeliever, in order to provide evidence that God’s judgment is just. The fact that the person is not listed in the Book of Life provides an indicator that the person is not saved and therefore will not go to Heaven.

Note, however, that the evil deeds of believers will be burned up as wood, hay, and straw (1 Corinthians 3:11-15), and the Christian can be assured of sins forgiven and forgotten:

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.

Romans 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

With respect to 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]

Both Positions “The book” is the Lamb’s Book of Life that contains the names of all the saved, throughout history. “The books” probably refer to the works of the
unrighteous, and from these records, at judgment time, God will present the evidence to the unsaved, and tailor the punishment to fit the crime. Admittedly, there is some mystery about the books, as we don’t have further information [Hitchcock, 2011b].

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<th>Topic/Question</th>
<th>Describe the eternal state.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Preterist Positions</td>
<td>The eternal state follows the Millennium. This much we know:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isaiah 65:17 &quot;Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.</td>
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<td>Isaiah 66:22: &quot;As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,&quot; declares the LORD, &quot;so will your name and descendants endure.</td>
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<td>2 Peter 3:13: But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.</td>
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<td>2 Peter 3:10-12: 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 done in it will be laid bare [uncovered]. ... That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.</td>
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<td>2 Peter 3:5-7: But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Thus, there will be a new heaven and a new Earth. The word “new”, however, should be replaced with “renewed” or “cleansed” or “purified” [Jeremiah, 2017]. The evidence of sin and death will be removed.</td>
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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, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell 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.”
- There will no longer be any sea.
- God will live with the believers.
- There will no longer be any death, crying, or pain.

Revelation 21:10-11  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.

Revelation 21:15-17  The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia [about 2,200 kilometres] in length, and as wide and high as it is long.

- Note above that the New Jerusalem descends out of Heaven, and is enormous in size (2200 km × 2200 km × 2200 km).

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.

- There is no temple in the New Jerusalem.
- This large city does not need the sun or moon to shine on it, because it gets supernatural light. However, this is not necessarily true about the future Earth.
- The gates of the New Jerusalem will never be shut. This implies that there will be people living outside of the New Jerusalem. Who are those people?
  - It is possible that such individuals are the saved Tribulation believers, or their descendants who were born during the Millennium [Reagan, 2017b]. David Reagan comments that they live to the end of the Millennium, but no resurrection is specifically mentioned for them in Scripture. That said, they are likely to have some kind of glorified body because they need to pass through the renewal of the Earth—and more specifically: the New Heavens and the New Earth.
  - Reagan further argues that they must be capable of reproduction, and there must be people over which to reign
“forever”, in order for the following passage to come true:

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 greatness 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.

We are also told that those of us who receive glorified bodies and whose residence will be the New Jerusalem will reign as priest and kings with Jesus forever (Revelation 5:9-10). To do so requires a population for us to minister to and to reign over.

The major problem I am left with is whether or not the nations on the New Earth will be capable of sinning. Most commentators believe they will not, and they have good reasons for believing this. Again, the Bible says the “wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), and the Scriptures also tell us that in the Eternal State death will be abolished (1 Corinthians 15:25-26 and Revelation 21:4).

But the prohibition against sinners entering the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:27) seems to indicate that the people who compose the nations will be capable of committing sins. And if they are not, why would they need priests and kings? This is a mystery to me for which I have no answer. [Reagan, 2017b, p. 7]

- There will still be nations on the new Earth, in the eternal state. But, why are there distinct nations? After all, isn’t everybody supposed to be “one” without distinction?
  - It appears that the nations and Israel will be treated differently, or perhaps have different roles, in the eternal state.
  - Related to nations, there will still be kings on the new Earth, in the eternal state. So, it appears that there will be people over which to rule.
- Reference is made to “day”, but there will be no “night” there, that is, there will be no darkness.

Ezekiel 43:6-7  While the man was standing beside me, I heard someone speaking to me from inside the temple. He said: “Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet. This is where I will live among the Israelites forever. The people
of Israel will never again defile my holy name ...  

Exodus 32:13 Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever."

The closing chapters of the book of Ezekiel report that, during the Millennium, Israel will live on the Earth, in the Promised Land. As we’ve seen in the Scriptures quoted above, the Church (i.e., all believers in Christ) will live in the New Jerusalem and this is distinct from the Promised Land [Kelley, 2017b]. Although it may be argued that “Heaven” is the ultimate “Promised Land”, it appears from the context that the Scriptures are referring to the Earth whenever the Promised Land is mentioned.

We read about the Tree of Life, first found in the Garden of Eden, and now present in the eternal state:

Genesis 3:22-24: And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."

So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.

After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Revelation 22:1-5 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

The leaves of the Tree of Life “are for the healing of the nations”. But, why is there a need for “healing” in Heaven? Isn’t there supposed to be no sickness, pain, crying, etc?

- One possible explanation is that “healing” can be translated as
“health” or the maintenance of health (i.e., preventative medicine), as opposed to healing from sickness [Reagan, 2017b].

- Note that the Tree of Life was found in the Garden of Eden. Had Adam and Eve eaten from it, they would have lived forever in their sinful state. This is why the cherubim (angels) with “flaming swords” prevented Adam and Eve from accessing the Tree of Life (Genesis 2:9, 3:22-24).

Questions remain as to why there are nations, and why there appears to be a separation of the New Jerusalem from the rest of the Earth. Some claim that these Scriptures late in the book of Revelation represent a look back at the Millennium when there will be glorified individuals, and at the same time, humans living in sin. However, this can’t be an answer because the New Jerusalem doesn’t descend to Earth until after the Millennium [Reagan, 2017b]. Furthermore, this is after the Earth has been destroyed (renewed) by fire.

As noted above, a possible explanation is that those who: (a) survived the Tribulation (and therefore are saved), or (b) were born during the Millennium and are saved … will live in the New Earth in their natural bodies, and will live outside the New Jerusalem and repopulate the New Earth [Reagan, 2017]. Obviously, we cannot be dogmatic about this; but, consider the following comments about the eternal state:

It is clear from the context that John is talking about a group of people who have access to the New Jerusalem but who don’t live there.

There is only one group of people left on earth to go into eternity in their physical bodies—believers that served Christ during His millennium kingdom. They go into eternity in their physical, glorified bodies, not spiritual glorified bodies like we [Church Age saints] will have because they did not experience death and resurrection. These people will go into eternity with bodies like Adam and Eve had at their creation before they were flawed by sin. [Keith Krell, quoted in Reagan, 2017b].

... the “nations” are composed of saved people who survive the millennial kingdom without dying and without joining Satan’s rebellion and who undergo some sort of transformation that suits them for life in the Eternal State. They will be like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden prior to the Fall. They will be unresurrected human beings who will inhabit the new earth … These will be the ones over whom God’s resurrected saints will reign. Nations, people and men on earth must continue in the flesh as Adam and Eve did before the Fall. [Robert L. Thomas, quoted in Reagan, 2017b].
Thus, we see that there are some unanswered questions about the eternal state, but not any showstoppers as far as our destiny is concerned.

In summary, this book has presented arguments for both dispensationalism and preterism. It is my belief that dispensationalism is the model of eschatology that best fits the Scriptures. It fits far better than any other model. An important principle of eschatology that this book has used when mapping Scriptures to the evidence for fulfilled prophecies is that of literal interpretation. This principle also provides a consistent approach when examining unfulfilled prophecies. Literal interpretation of Scripture is generally synonymous with the grammatical-historical approach, and stands in contrast to the allegorical approach.

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]

The bottom line is that Heaven is a real place with real people doing real things, for eternity. We’ll be learning more about the grace and character of God for all eternity. Think of all the things that you could do, if you knew you could not fail.

Keep looking up! The best is yet to come.

Ed Knorr
Vancouver, Canada
References

I have read numerous works on prophecy, and have many volumes in my personal library. Here are some of the volumes that were most influential in the construction of this book. 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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