

Understanding the Future

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Understanding Future Events

In the years I have spent as a member in various different churches, there has always been something in the back of my mind annoying me, which stops me from getting more involved with the church than I could be. That “something” was the fact that the church I was in had an “official” view on future events. Let me explain what I mean.

A while ago, I went to a regional Missionary Conference organised by the local Brethren assemblies. It was excellent. It was so encouraging to hear missionary reports from various countries, to hear about the number of people being converted, and the many church congregations being established throughout the world. At the end of the conference, one of the missionaries gave a rousing call for us all to get involved with missionary work, and it certainly moved my heart to want to get involved. However, in the second to last sentence of his speech, he just happened to mention, in passing, the “Rapture,” and my heart sank. They are doing such a good work planting all these churches, yet when the churches are established, they are teaching the people their particular view of future events. What a disappointment.

I want to make it clear straight away that, here, I’m not trying to conclude which scheme of future events is right or wrong. Neither am I here wanting to force my own personal view on anybody. In return, I don’t like other people trying to force their views on me. But churches do. Many churches have a fixed view on future events, that is taught dogmatically from their pulpits, which, if you don’t believe it, they’ll still accept you as a member, but you’ll be pretty much sidelined, as I felt in all the churches that I was in who did this.

In my life, I have been a member of three different churches. Each had their own particular view on future events. In my case, these churches were the Brethren (who teach Premillennial Dispensationalism), the Evangelical Movement of Wales (who teach Amillennialism) and the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland (who teach Postmillennialism). It doesn’t matter if you don’t know what these schemes are, just to say that they are all different and mutually exclusive. In two of these churches (Brethren and Free Presbyterians) I specifically told them that I did not agree with their view on future events before becoming a member, and they still allowed me into membership. Which was fine, except that the implicit understanding between us was that I would have

to put up with the official teaching of the church, and that no-one, including myself, would ever be allowed to rock the boat in any way, by criticising their view or teaching any other view to others in the church.

This is so sad. It meant that I couldn't fully put my heart and soul into the work of any of these churches. Yes, we evangelise. Yes, we have good Biblical preaching. Yes, we bring people into the church. But then they're taught one particular view of future events. Whatever view is taught, it may or may not be correct. None of us will ever know for sure, until the events actually happen. I find it so frustrating that, in whatever church we're in, we all have to put up with dogmatic, unnecessary teaching on such a subject.

We have two extremes to avoid. We have a Biblical warning about being too dogmatic on this subject, in the attitude of the Pharisees with regards the first coming of Christ. They were the Bible scholars of the day. They thought they knew exactly what their future Messiah would be like and how He would come. They thought they knew the interpretation of all the relevant prophecies from the Scriptures, and they waited for their expectation to materialise. But they completely missed Him when He came. Christ said to them:

John 5:39,46,47

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.... For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?

They had their idea of exactly what the Scriptures taught about future events, but Christ told them they didn't truly believe the Scriptures after all. Indeed, today, 2,000 years later, the Jews are still waiting for a future Messiah, and still don't believe their own Scriptures.

This shows to us the danger of thinking that we know what the Scriptures teach about future events. Do you have in your mind a firm belief as to exactly what will happen when Christ comes again? Whether you've understood this out of your own study of the Scriptures or whether you're blindly following what your church teaches, it doesn't matter. The warning is, Be careful. The Pharisees had such a firm belief, and they were totally wrong.

The opposite extreme, is to say that because we can't tell what's going to happen in the future, therefore we shouldn't study the Scriptures which refer to these things at all. However, the fact remains that there are passages in Scripture which do refer to Christ's second coming. They are in the Bible, so they must mean something. They can't mean nothing. Neither can we ignore them. We ignore Scripture at our peril.

The correct way to treat all Bible passages which refer to future events, is to read, understand and learn what we can from them. We shouldn't, however, read them in order to try to sort out in our minds a dogmatic timetable of exactly what's going to happen. Rather, we should make sure we're sufficiently familiar with the Scriptures, so that when and if Christ does come again in our lifetime, we shall look at what's happening around us and then say to ourselves something like, "So **that** is what this Scripture means," "So **that** is what that Scripture is referring to." In other words, we should be familiar with Scripture, so that we can be ready to interpret it correctly when the events happen, and not before.

With regards Christ's first coming, there were people around who knew the Scriptures just as much as the Pharisees, but who were also open-minded enough to think in this way. Simeon and Anna, to name but two:

Luke 2:25-38

And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

Notice that Simeon was "waiting for the consolation of Israel" (v.25), whilst Anna "departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day." Both knew the Scriptures. Both were waiting patiently for the Messiah to appear, in the meantime daily performing their duties before God. And that's exactly what we should be doing.

We should not be trying to interpret difficult prophetic Scriptures, pretending we're an oracle for others to follow. Neither should we be blindly following whatever our church teaches on these things, even if it is right. We should rather be like Mary, who simply:

Luke 2:51

kept all these sayings in her heart.

We all need to be ready for that day, so we will recognise it when it comes.

Matthew 24:42-44

Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

Mark 13:32,33

But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

The Use of Apocalyptic Literature

The Bible contains many different kinds of writings. There are historical books like Genesis, Samuel and Kings, poetic books like the Psalms and Song of Solomon, wisdom books like Proverbs and Ecclesiastes and letters of practical Christian living in the epistles. But there's one type of writing which is slightly different from the others. What I refer to as "apocalyptic literature."

I don't like using the word "literature" to describe the Bible. The Bible is not just another piece of literature, like the Works of William Shakespeare. The Bible is the Word of God. Shakespeare was a dirty old man from Birmingham. The two things are completely different.

However, there are sections of the Bible which are "apocalyptic." This word simply means something that is revealed, which is normally hidden. The major "apocalyptic" passages (although not the only ones) are found in the book of Revelation, Daniel chapters 7 to 12 and Zechariah chapters 1 to 6.

The question is: How do we deal with such passages? There are many different interpretations, which one, if any, is correct?

We need first of all to look at the Scripture to see how such passages are introduced:

Revelation 4:1

After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven.

Revelation 15:5

And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.

Ezekiel 1:1

Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.

Luke 3:21,22

Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.

Acts 7:55,56

But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

2 Klngs 6:17

And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

Acts 10:10,11

And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth.

All of these passages are introduced with “*The heavens were opened,*” or a similar phrase. So they are a description in human terms and in human language, of heavenly, spiritual things.

But we can't properly speak of heavenly things while we are in these bodies. They are too much for us to take in. At one point, the Apostle Paul:

2 Corinthians 12:4

...was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

And others who had seen glorious things were overwhelmed, and were told not to write about them:

Revelation 10:4

And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

Daniel 12:8,9

And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.

Heaven is so glorious, and God is so great, that no man can see God and live:

1 Timothy 6:16

Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

Exodus 33:20

And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.

So when we approach these apocalyptic passages, we must be very careful. We need to realise that God is condescending to us and describing heavenly things, which we cannot grasp, in terms of earthly things that we do know about. This is in exactly the same way as when we are told that God has hands, feet, eyes, etc. God is a Spirit and does not have these things, but it is helpful to us to think of Him as though He does have these things, for our own benefit whilst we are down here.

The most important thing to understand from all of this is that we should NEVER take any of these apocalyptic passages literally. So many people think they know what these

passages are teaching. They have the book of Revelation sussed. They know exactly the meaning of the book of Daniel, and Matthew 24. Rubbish.

But, does this mean that these passages are totally useless? Well, of course not. They are in the Bible. They are therefore useful.

2 Timothy 3:16

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable....

These passages do not exist in order for us to know exactly what to believe and have a good argument with our Christian neighbours about it. Rather, they are there to make us familiar with heavenly things, so that when we get there, we will already have some idea of what to expect.

Are you ready for heaven? If we are one of the Lord's people, that's where we're going. We really only spend such a short time down here compared to eternity. All of us need to become more heavenly-minded.

There is an argument which says that it is possible to be "too heavenly minded that we can't be any earthly good." But I really don't think this is the case. As long as we're in these bodies we'll always be far more full of this world than any of us would want to be. I suggest that heaven will be quite a shock to every one of us when we get there, because we're all still so carnal by nature in our hearts.

We should be spending our days down here on this earth doing the good works that God has got for us to do here, but we should also be making ourselves ready for the next place, which is our eternal home.

Down here we are just unprofitable servants, merely doing our duty:

Luke 17:10

So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

And we must all remember that on this earth, we are but dust:

Genesis 3:19

Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

We will never understand much of these apocalyptic passages, but we can, through them, become familiar and ready for when we finally leave this earth and arrive in our resurrection bodies, in our forever home.

Let's stop pretending we know everything. Let's humble ourselves beneath these apocalyptic passages. And get ready for the great move from things temporal to things eternal.

The Antichrist

The Bible teaches that the visible church is going to be contaminated from within by an “*Antichrist*.” Only John actually uses the term “*Antichrist*,” Paul, in 2 Thessalonians 2, uses several different names: “*that man of sin*” and “*the son of perdition*” (v.3) and “*that Wicked*” (v.8), but he’s obviously referring to the same person.

The prefix “*anti-*” is used today to mean “the opposite of,” but it really means “in the place of,” in other words someone who will come into the church and set himself up in the place of Christ, demanding the worship of Christ. So we’re not looking for a world leader. The world leaders are leading people far from Christ already, and they will continue to do so until the end. They don’t profess to be Christian. They’re not in the place of Christ at all, they’re always there and obviously evil. The Antichrist will be a man from within the visible church who rises by deceit and leads people astray. Paul says he:

2 Thessalonians 2:4

.... opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

He sits in the visible church receiving the worship that ought to be given to Jesus Christ. So, who is this person? There are two main ideas within evangelical circles as to who he is. One is that he’s the pope, the other is that he’s a leader who is still to come just before Christ returns. Which one is correct? My answer is that both are correct, and, not only that, but there are many more antichrists than just these two. John tells us that there are “*many antichrists*”:

1 John 2:18

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

The danger with looking for just one person, is that we’ll miss all the others. In 1 John 4:3, John mentions a “*spirit of antichrist*,” and it is this that we should be watching for, on our lookout for antichrists in the church.

So what are the characteristics of an antichrist? Well, we’ve already seen one. He’s going to lead people astray after himself, and away from Jesus Christ:

2 Thessalonians 2:4

... sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

Paul also tells us that the Antichrist will deceive with false signs and wonders:

2 Thessalonians 2:9

Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.

John tells us that he:

(1.) denies Jesus is the Christ.

(2.) denies the Father and the Son.

and (3.) confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh:

1 John 2:22

Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.

1 John 4:3

And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

2 John 7

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

Now, does this apply to the pope? Well, yes. He sits in the Roman Catholic church and is worshipped by millions as the vicar of Christ. People cry in the streets when he's driven past. He sits in the temple of God (i.e. the church) accepting from his followers the worship which ought only to be reserved for God. He also accepts false signs and wonders, and elevates to sainthood anyone who can "prove" to his satisfaction that they have performed miracles. But surely, he doesn't deny Christ, does he? Well, yes he does. He denies the finished work of Christ on the cross, because he tells his followers that the way of salvation is through sacrificing Christ again and again in the Mass, whereas Christ's work was once for all:

Hebrews 10:10

We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

So the pope has all these characteristics. He has the "*spirit of antichrist.*"

But Scripture also seems to suggest that just before Christ comes again there will be a similar figure deceiving the visible church. This may still be the pope of the day, or it may be some other infiltrator in the visible church. Paul indicates that an antichrist will be destroyed by Christ's second coming:

2 Thessalonians 2:8

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

But we don't stop at these two. John says that there are "*many antichrists*" (1 John 2:18) and that they are "*even now already in the world*" (1 John 4:3). Paul tells us that "*the mystery of iniquity doth already work*" (v.7). There will be many who display these characteristics, and we should always be on the lookout for the "*spirit of antichrist*" (1 John 4:3) wherever it may be found.

So, I'm not just criticising Roman Catholics for following the pope here. Protestant churches abound with such men and organisations. If an organisation requests unswerving obedience to them and not to Christ alone, look out! If a tele-evangelist, who already owns a mansion and a helicopter, asks you for even more money to support his "ministry," look out! If anyone, anywhere, tries to make a reputation for themselves from stupid people blindly following them believing that they are some great prophet or apostle or man of God, look out! All of these phenomena display the "*spirit of antichrist*" and should be avoided. The lesson to learn is that we should NEVER follow men. Follow Christ alone.

Isaiah 2:22

Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?

I want to look now at two verses in particular:

2 Thessalonians 2:6-7

6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

I believe that these two verses have generally been misinterpreted. We have five pronouns here. A “*what*,” a “*he*” and a “*his*” in verse 6, and two “*he’s*” in verse 7. We need to know exactly who these pronouns refer to.

Those who believe the pope is the Antichrist interpret the passage in this way:

*6 And now ye know **the Roman Empire** withholdeth that **the pope** might be revealed in **the pope’s** time.*

*7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only **the Roman emperor** who now letteth will let, until **the Roman emperor** be taken out of the way.*

The idea behind this is that the papacy came to prominence as the Roman Empire declined.

Those who believe in an end-times Antichrist interpret the passage in this way:

*6 And now ye know **the Holy Spirit** withholdeth that **the antichrist** might be revealed in **the antichrist’s** time.*

*7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only **the Holy Spirit** who now letteth will let, until **the Holy Spirit** be taken out of the way.*

The idea here is that the Holy Spirit normally guides the church, but just before the end of time, His influence will decline as the Antichrist appears.

It is interesting to note that the New King James Version of the Bible capitalises the two “*He’s*” in verse 7, thus referring them both to deity, which would only fit this latter interpretation. Bible translators should translate, not try to interpret.

However, both of these interpretations I have difficulty with. Both interpretations equate the “*revealing*” of the antichrist with his rising to power. That’s not the case. The rising to power of the antichrist is with deceit:

2 Thessalonians 2:9-10

Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Deceit, by definition, is hidden. Nobody knows they’re being deceived. That’s the whole point. A “*revealing*” is exactly the opposite. To reveal something is to show what was previously hidden.

We're told of Christ being "revealed" at His second coming:

Luke 17:30

Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

When He came the first time, God chose to send Him in a hidden manner. Currently, He is reigning on His throne and working in the world, but only Christians recognise this. Most of the world can't see that at all. When He comes again in glory however, He will be "revealed," and "every eye shall see Him" (Revelation 1:7).

Similarly, these antichrists reign in a hidden manner, most people won't recognise their presence. But when God chooses to reveal them, they will be seen for who they are.

To "reveal" the antichrist means that his reign of deceit is over. It's the end of his reign, not the beginning. So I would interpret the above verses as follows:

*6 And now ye know **God's providence** withholdeth that **the antichrist** might be revealed in **God's** time.*

*7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only **God** who now letteth will let, until **the antichrist** be taken out of the way.*

It is the Lord who allows antichrists to reign in deceit, but only ever for a limited period of time, until He chooses to "reveal" them. All is done for the Lord's holy and just ends:

2 Thessalonians 2:11-12

And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

The antichrist's "revealing" I equate with his being "taken out of the way," not his rise to power. Note in verse 7 we are told "the mystery of iniquity doth already work," in other words, the antichrist is already at work, long before his "revealing." The word "mystery" meaning something that is hidden for a time, and which is later revealed, such as "the mystery of the kingdom of God" (Mark 4:11), or "the mystery of the gospel" (Ephesians 6:9), or "the mystery of the faith" (1 Timothy 3:9).

The man of sin is only "revealed" as the man of sin when the deceit is exposed.

So, if antichrists come in deceit, how can we recognise a "spirit of antichrist" at all? The only way is to stay close to "the spirit of his [Christ's] mouth" (2 Thessalonians 2:8), in other words the Word of God. Staying close to God's Word is the only way not to be deceived. We know that many people will be deceived. Many will blindly follow these people. So don't trust in men, don't trust in a church, however many are blindly following it, but trust in the Lord and stay close to Him.

Antichrists will come and go, and as the Lord in His providence removes the "withholding" they will be "revealed" for who they are, men of sin, and their time of deceitful influence will come to an end. Ultimately, all these deceitful men of sin will be finally "revealed" and fully exposed once and for all when Christ comes again:

1 Corinthians 3:13

Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

2 Thessalonians 2:8

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

So the message is to look out for the “*spirit of antichrist*” wherever it may be found, and keep close to the Lord and His Word at all times, because this spirit of deceit “*doth already work*” (2 Thessalonians 2:7) in the church, and is deceiving many right now.

Mark 13:33

Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

References to an Antichrist in Scripture

The spirit of Antichrist is everywhere where men seek to exalt themselves in the visible church, in other words, where authoritarian dictatorship reigns at the expense of truth and righteousness. The whole visible church is corrupted with this spirit, no matter what visible denomination or organisation which calls itself “church” one is talking about. In the times of the Reformation, there was only one visible church, the Roman Catholic church, so the Reformers clearly saw this spirit in the papacy. Nowadays we have many denominations and churches, and this spirit is in all of them to some degree. The natural man tends only to see this visible influence of the church, and doesn't understand the concept of an invisible church, which is a small despised minority within it (but which are the true church, chosen and kept by God). God has deliberately allowed this to happen for the good of His elect.

The Antichrist is not the beast of the sea or the false prophet in the book of Revelation (although he is under their control) as these are fallen angels, not men. He is not in the book of Revelation at all, except (1.) possibly alluded to in Revelation 12:15 as the flood from the mouth of the dragon which tries to sweep the church away, and (2.) Revelation 17:11 as the eighth horn.

He only really appears in the following passages:

(1.) 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12 - as the man of sin, the son of perdition who causes the church to fall away (v.3).

(2.) Daniel 7:8,11,20,21,25 - as the “*little horn*” arising after the collapse of the Roman Empire. This would particularly point to the pope. Note 7:25 He “*shall think to change times and laws.*” Only God can do this (Daniel 2:21). The pope invented the Gregorian calendar, which nearly everyone in the world uses today.

(3.) Daniel 8:9-14,23-25 - This Antichrist reigned in the time of the four kings arising after the Greek empire was split into four and before the Roman Empire rises. So it must primarily refer to Antiochus Epiphanes, who desecrated the temple in 168 BC.

(4.) Daniel 11:21-45 - “he shall come in peaceably and obtain the kingdom by flatteries,” i.e. not by war (although “arms shall stand on his part,” v.31).

This refers to a king that shall rise out of the Roman Empire, again referring to the pope. Some references are to a continuous Roman rule, hence things referring to the secular Roman Empire merge with things relating to the ecclesiastical Roman Empire.

Characteristics of Antichrist

Book of Daniel:

7:8 - He is a man with a "mouth speaking great things."

7:11 - His body will be "destroyed and given to the burning flame."

7:20 - His "*look was more stout than his fellows.*" He will be greater than the Caesars.

7:21 - He "*made war with the saints and prevailed against them.*" The vast majority of the visible church is under his control and unbelievers see only his influence and not the true invisible church, so they get a wrong idea about true religion.

7:25 - He shall "speak great words against the Most High," "wear out the saints," "think to change times and laws," and believers will "be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time," (i.e. the second coming of Christ).

8:10 - "It cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground and stamped upon them."

8:11 - He "*magnified himself even to the prince of the host,*" i.e. Christ, "*Messiah the Prince*" (9:25). By him "*the daily sacrifice was taken away,*" i.e. persecution of believers. The "*place of his sanctuary was cast down,*" Christ is no longer in His rightful place in the church.

8:12 - "*An host was given him against the daily sacrifice,*" i.e. again we see persecution of believers. Truth was cast to the ground. The false church "*practised and prospered.*" Note that the visible church is largely given over to him "*by reason of transgression*" to stop anyone exalting themselves that they have the one true church. i.e. It is for our eventual good and well-being.

8:23 - "A king of fierce countenance and understanding dark sentences."

8:24 - His "*power shall be mighty, but not by his own power,*" i.e. not visibly war-like but under the pretence of peace. He shall "*destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper and practice,*" "*and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people.*"

8:25 - "*Through his policy he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand.*" "*He shall magnify himself in his heart.*" He shall "*by peace destroy many.*" He shall "*stand up against the Prince of princes,*" i.e. Christ. He shall "*be broken without hand,*" i.e. by the breath of Christ's mouth, His Word (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

11:36 - He shall "do according to his (own) will." He shall "exalt himself and magnify himself above every god." He shall "speak marvellous things against the God of gods." He shall "prosper" until the appointed end shall come.

11:37 - He shall “not regard the God of his fathers.” He shall not regard “the desire of women.” He shall “magnify himself above all.”

11:38 - He shall “honour the god of forces.” He shall honour a foreign god with “gold and silver, and with precious stones and pleasant things.”

11:39 - He shall do this “*in the most strongholds with a strange god.*” He shall acknowledge and increase this god with glory. He shall “*cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain.*”

11:40-44 - He shall spread himself over nearly the whole world, but tidings out of the east (the Orthodox Church? or China?) and the north (the Protestant church?) shall trouble him and curtail his total dominion.

11:45 - He shall plant the tabernacle of his palace between the seas (the nations) in the glorious holy mountain (the visible church). But his end will be as has been ordained.

2 Thessalonians:

v.4 - He “opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God shewing himself that he is God.” Cf. Ezekiel 28:2, the prince of Tyrus.

v.6 - God's providence “witholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.”

vv.7,8 - Christ will consume him with “*the Spirit of His mouth*” (truth) and “*the brightness of His coming.*”

v.9 - His coming is “after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.”

v.10 - The reprobate will perish by “all deceivableness of unrighteousness.”

v.11 - God sent them this strong delusion deliberately.

v.12 - All those who believe not the truth but have pleasure in unrighteousness will be damned.

The Future of the Jews

A lot of Christians believe that God still has a purpose for the Jews. But He hasn't. He's finished with them, other than treating them as any other nation, i.e. a remnant will be saved by grace.

Many Christians follow events in the Middle East very closely, particularly since 1948 when the state of Israel was founded. But the current state of Israel is of no consequence to the Christian. I have no problem with the Jews having a homeland, if that's what they want, but it's of no consequence whatsoever to the Christian. Indeed, Orthodox Jews, who have been living in Palestine since the 19th century, don't recognise the current state of Israel anyway, and align themselves with the Palestinians. Christians shouldn't align themselves with either party in what is effectively a this-worldly land dispute.

True Religion

From the fall of Adam, salvation has always been by grace through faith, because we cannot save ourselves.

Psalm 51:11-12

Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

And it always will be this way until Christ's second coming. But outwardly, and I stress outwardly only, the visible church before Christ was the nation of the Jews. Since Christ (and particularly since AD70 when the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed never to be rebuilt), the visible church is no longer the Jews but the Christian Church, which contains both Jews and Gentiles:

Genesis 9:24-27

And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; And Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, And he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; And Canaan shall be his servant.

1 Timothy 3:15

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Romans 11

The view that there is still a purpose for the Jews, only comes from a wrong interpretation of Romans chapter 11. The receiving of Jews (by God) as "*life from the dead*" (v.15), is regarded as being a mass turning of the Jews to Christ near the end. Blindness in part happening to Israel now (v.25), until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and the idea that "*all Israel shall be saved*" (v.26) is seen of as an event that will happen after all the Gentiles who are going to be saved have been saved.

But that's not true. Rather it is a "what if..." passage. i.e. Paul is saying in effect: "*What if Jews should be saved, wouldn't it be wonderful?*" It is never a statement of what is actually going to happen *en masse* at all.

Look at the background. If Romans 11 wasn't in the Bible, it would be possible to think that the Jews were not to be evangelised any more, they have had their day. Christ said to the Jews:

Matthew 23:38; Luke 13:35

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

Now Christ has come into this world and atoned for sin, there is no need for Temple worship any more, so God in His providence did away with the Temple for good in AD70, when the Romans burned it down. It never needs to be rebuilt.

After this event, which the Bible prophesies but does not describe (so we can conclude the Bible was complete by then), it would be quite understandable for any Christian to fully believe that the Jews had had their chance, and should no longer even be the objects of evangelism. To counteract this erroneous view, Paul wrote Romans 11.

Romans 11:1

I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid....

Paul goes on to say that there will always be a remnant of the Jews saved by grace, who will come to know Jesus as the Messiah. Indeed, when a Jew is saved, it will be as "*life from the dead*":

Romans 11:13-15

For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?

Note here he is talking about the fact that he might save "*some of them*," so he is clearly talking only about a remnant that will be saved, not a mass turning at the end of time, in fact the end of time is not even spoken about here.

But what about:

Romans 11:25,26

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved.

Note that it says "*And **SO** all Israel shall be saved*," in other words "*in this manner*," not "*and THEN* chronologically." The "*fulness of the Gentiles*" being "*come in*" is a clear reference to:

Luke 21:24

....and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

The "*times of the Gentiles*" being fulfilled in this verse is immediately followed by the signs from heaven prior to Christ's return being displayed. There is no Jewish conversion of any kind taking place in between. Once the last Gentile has been gathered in, Christ returns. The quote from Isaiah following this statement in v.26, you may think points to the Jews only:

Romans 11:26,27

And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

But it is not unusual for a prophecy mentioning the salvation of “Jacob,” or “the house of David” or the like, to refer to all the elect, both Jews and Gentiles, not just to the Jews only. For example:

Acts 15:14-17

Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

This is a quote from Amos 9 which indicates that the “tabernacle of David” is to include Gentiles. The true “Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16) is the elect, made up of Jews and Gentiles, not the Jewish race.

So for these reasons, I see Romans 11 as a passage meant to show that we should evangelise Jews just as we should evangelise other nations, a fact which one could have lost sight of, if all we had were Christ’s teachings on the subject.

Jewish Privileges

The Jews, in the past, had tremendous privileges. God chose them to receive the Scriptures, to be an example to everybody else (although they failed miserably), and indeed to be the race the Messiah would come from. What privileges!

Romans 3:1-2

What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

Romans 9:4-5

Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

Christ and the apostles went to the Jews first:

Matthew 10:5-6

These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Matthew 15:24

But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Acts 13:46-47

Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

But the Jews, apart from a remnant saved by grace, rejected the gospel. So God rejected them from having any more privileges any more. Not that they can never be saved, but the only way any of them can be saved now is by coming to Christ, just like everybody else.

Rejection Prophesied

This rejection was prophesied:

Parables about a Great Supper:

Matthew 22:1-14

And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.

Luke 14:16-24

Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my

house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

Builders refused:

Psalms 118:22-23

The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.

Matthew 21:33-44 (also Mark 12:1-11 and Luke 20:9-18)

Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

House left desolate:

Matthew 23:37-39

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Luke 13:34-35

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

The Fig Tree:

Many people regard the fig tree as a symbol of Israel, although the Bible nowhere says so.

Matthew 21:18-22

Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away! Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

Mark 11:12-14; 20-26

And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it..... And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Luke 13:6-9

He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

Temple Destroyed:

Luke 19:41-44

*And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, **and thy children within thee**; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.*

The True Israel

The true Israel of God are all those, both Jew and Gentile, who come to Christ:

Romans 2:28-29

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

Romans 3:29-30

Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

Galatians 3:7

Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

Galatians 6:15-16

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

The Millennium

Introduction

The “*Millennium*” refers to the “*thousand years*” mentioned six times in chapter twenty of the book of Revelation. So many books and articles have been written on this subject. Many people think they know exactly what is going to happen in the future in minute detail, and they’re so sure of it. But all of them not only differ so wildly from one another, but they also seem to be written from a perspective of trying to convince the reader that their particular theory is true simply because the author’s particular church teaches it. Too many church members take on board their particular church’s teachings on the last things without really thinking whether they’re right or wrong. This is blind belief and should not be.

The fact remains that because we are dealing with future events, we are not really going to know which theory, if any, is actually correct until it happens, just as at Christ’s first coming, the majority of the church leaders of the day did not acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth as being the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures; a few people only realising this after the events had occurred. Therefore by nature of the case, all theories about the Millennium are going to be exactly that - just theories (like the Atomic Theory, or the Theory of Evolution).

The Holy Spirit convinces a man of the truth, and I personally am thoroughly convinced of the truth about, for example, six-day Creation, the received texts of Scripture, the Atonement and so on, but I have never had that same certainty about any of the theories about the Millennium that I have ever come across. I therefore proffer yet another theory,

one which I have not found elsewhere, and which I have more conviction about than all of the others. I hasten to add, though, it is still only a theory. I'm willing to be corrected by further reading of Scripture. How dare I be so sure about anything before the time.

Problems with Current Theories

There are three main groups of current theories about the Millennium. And these can be grouped depending upon the relationship of the Millennium to the time of Christ's return. Those who argue that Christ comes before the Millennium are known as Premillennialists, those who argue that Christ comes after the Millennium are known as Postmillennialists and those who do not see a literal millennium at all but the thousand years of Revelation describing something else, such as the whole of the period between Christ's first and second comings, or the period between a believer's conversion and his death, for example, are known as Amillennialists. Within each group there are many different variations, which it is not necessary to go into in detail about, but it is necessary to state the problems I have with each group in general before I give you my theory.

Postmillennialism

Postmillennialists believe that the gospel alone will usher in the Millennium. The gospel will spread to the ends of the earth and many will be saved. In time, a majority of the world will be converted to Christ, nations will begin to enact laws in keeping with Christian principles rather than worldly ones and there will be a time of general peace, which they equate with the Millennium, before Christ returns to judge the world and glorify His people. I have problems with this.

Firstly, I would like to make it clear that the gospel will perform all the work God intends it to perform, not only in the saving of all His people but in the damnation of the rest. Let us not be concerned about the failure of the gospel at all. All God's chosen people, whoever they are, will be saved:

John 10:27-29

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

This is a tremendous comfort to the Christian. However we must not be ignorant of the fact that the gospel is not only a savour of life unto life to the elect but becomes a savour of death unto death to the rest (albeit in and of itself it is good news to them), those who have heard it being more culpable if they refuse the gospel than those who have never heard it:

2 Corinthians 2:16

To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

Luke 12:47-48

And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

God will save all His people however many there are, and wherever they are. Indeed we are told that this will be a great multitude that no man can number:

Revelation 7:9-10

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

The number of the reprobate will also be as the sand of the sea:

Revelation 20:8

And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

A vision of a future Millennial kingdom with lots of conversions at a certain period of time is not necessary for the application of this comfort to the individual believer.

Secondly, it seems that the Postmillennialists cling to certain verses of Scripture which they claim refer to the conversion of the vast majority of the world in what they would term the "latter-day glory." Verses such as:

Psalms 22:27

All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

Psalms 72:7-11

In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.

Habakkuk 2:14

For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

There are two things to mention about such verses. Firstly nowhere does it specifically state that towards the end of time there will be a mass turning to Christ in true salvation. We do read:

Matthew 24:14

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

But this just means that the gospel will be preached to all nations (note it does not even mean all people head for head) as a witness to them all. This does not mean that they will nearly all be converted, it just means it will be a witness to them, either for good or ill.

Secondly, when Scripture talks about the “*world*,” or “*all the ends of the world*” we must remember that the Jews of the day had only ever known of salvation as being solely within their own community. In other words, to be saved in Old Testament times one had to either be a Jew or at least come into contact with the Jews and become one. Nowadays the gospel goes to the “*ends of the earth*” and it is no longer confined to the Jews as before. This was a major shift in the thinking of the Jew in Biblical times, hence the emphasis on “*the world*,” not just the Jews. It is not a blanket statement that the whole world will all necessarily be converted, rather that *some* out of every tribe and nation will come to believe, not merely some out of just Israel.

We must also realise that Christ will have dominion from sea to sea (Psalm 72:8). All will eventually bow the knee before Christ, but not necessarily before His return by the preaching of the gospel. Those who reject Christ here will be bowing the knee in hell fire. All men will eventually serve Him and give Him the glory:

Phillippians 2:9-11

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

In fact, Christ has dominion over the nations and they are under His control even now.

One of the main reasons we can't go along with the Postmillennialist view is because the Bible tells us that the world, if anything, will get worse, not better before the end:

Matthew 24:21-22

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Postmillennialists dismiss this as referring to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, but is that really the only thing that the passage is about? Was that the greatest tribulation anyone has ever suffered? It was no worse than many other atrocities that have been perpetrated throughout the centuries in other parts of the world. Relatively speaking, of course, the world cannot get “worse” than it always has been - total depravity is total depravity. However, it seems that any restraints put on the sin of the world by God in His providence will be removed to a great degree and it would at least *seem* worse to the believer, maybe because believers will be so few at that time.

Also, the Bible exhorts us to watch, for we do not know the time of the Lord's return. In order to be watchful we can't believe that there is going to be a thousand years (or at least a very long time anyway) after the world has been “Christianised” by the gospel before Christ will come again. We see no Millennium now, no land on earth has a truly Christian government today. So the Postmillennialist's Millennium has not even started yet. So does that mean we can relax and take our ease, because we know Christ is not going to return for a long time yet (according to the Postmillennialist)? Of course not. We

must be ready for His return at all times. This does not just mean that we must simply be ready for death to come to us personally at any time. The Bible specifically states that it is Christ's return we must be ready for:

Matthew 24:45-51

Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

We seem to be taught in Scripture that there is going to be more godlessness before the end and more troubles for the poor believers, not a spiritually aware converted world:

Matthew 25:5

While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

Luke 21:35

For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

Luke 18:7,8

And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

This is a rhetorical question. He will find faith, but not in many. What is the point of Christ asking this question if the majority on the earth when He comes again are going to have this faith anyway?

1 Thessalonians 5:1-3

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

The “*peace and safety*” here is a false peace that godless men have produced for themselves, without reference to God and His commandments. It is not the peace of a converted world, otherwise destruction would not come on them.

Matthew 24:15-22

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Postmillennialists refer this again to the fall of Jerusalem, but in the discourse it is immediately followed by the description of Christ's return, so there is at least a sense in which it refers to that time as well. The fact that v.21 is taken directly from Daniel 12:1 also confirms this.

Postmillennialists themselves believe that after the Millennium there will be a falling away because Revelation 20 states as much:

Revelation 20:3

And cast him [Satan] into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

Revelation 20:9

And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

So the question stares us in the face: What on earth is the point of believing in a great time of Christian prosperity towards the end of time if the whole thing is going to collapse anyway? This falling away proves the pointlessness of the Postmillennialist finding some kind of hope or comfort in this view.

With regards Matthew 24, Postmillennialists hang their exposition heavily on a certain interpretation of v.34:

Matthew 24:34

Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

They have to interpret the word “*generation*” to mean all those alive at that particular time. This way they can fit verses 1 to 36 to refer to the fall of Jerusalem, and the rest of the chapter (and indeed chapter 25) to refer to Christ's second coming, with a nice clean break between the two. This may seem quite plausible at first, especially as the equivalent passages in Luke's gospel seems to be split almost exactly along those lines, with the first part (supposedly about the fall of Jerusalem) coming in chapter 21, and the second part (supposedly about the second coming) in chapter 17. However, two problems present themselves here. Firstly, Luke 17:31 is about being on the housetop. In Matthew 24 this (supposedly, to the Postmillennialist) refers specifically to the fall of Jerusalem, whereas in Luke it refers to the second coming. So the division is not as clear cut as it may at first seem.

Secondly, the word “*generation*” does not only mean all those alive at one particular time, (or a period of twenty or forty years or so), but it can also mean “family line”. Sometimes it can only mean the first definition, e.g. Exodus 1:6, Matthew 1:17. Sometimes it can only mean the second definition, e.g. Matthew 1:1, Psalm 14:5, Psalm 22:30, Psalm 49:19, Luke 16:8, Acts 2:40, 1 Peter 2:9. Other times it could be either definition. Of this latter sort are the passages in question. We cannot argue from these passages alone that the word “*generation*” here can only be the first definition. We do not have sufficient facts

before us to warrant such a conclusion. Hence we cannot be as clear cut as to which verses belong to the fall of Jerusalem and which to the second coming as we would like. There is a sense in which they could refer to both events.

This also means that passages such as Deuteronomy 7:9, 1 Chronicles 16:15 and Psalm 105:8 which refer to “*a thousand generations*” cannot be used, as postmillennialists would like them to be used, to refer to the idea that Christ will not come again for a very long time, at least $40 \times 1000 = 20,000$ years.

Scots Presbyterians have a Postmillennial view.

Amillennialism

Here we have a wide-ranging group of people, who believe that the Millennium is not a literal period of time at all, but a symbol of something else. Typically, the time between Christ’s first and second comings, or maybe the time between a person’s conversion and his death, or between his death and his rising on the last day to judgment or something similar.

One thing all these Amillennial theories do have in common is that they all believe that the world will be in a godless state just before the end, with people ignorant of a returning Christ. This solves the problem that the Postmillennialist has of trying to explain away Scriptures which clearly indicate this. It also clears the way for a belief that Christ can come at any time, so the believer should always be ready.

However, the main problems with Amillennialism are that firstly, the passage in Revelation 20 where the thousand years are mentioned, gets allegorised away and not taken in the straightforward meaning of the words. For example the “*first resurrection*” (Revelation 20:5) is equated with conversion, and Satan being “*bound for a thousand years*” (Revelation 20:2) is equated with the gospel age, i.e. the New Testament era. This allegorising of the plain text is far-fetched to say the least. When it says that:

Revelation 20:4

I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

This text is allegorised so as not to apply to happenings on the earth, because “*souls*” are mentioned. However, it clearly states that the souls “*lived,*” a clear reference to Genesis 2:7:

Genesis 2:7

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

For a soul to live in this sense, it has to have a body. In the Genesis account this was of the dust of the ground, but in the Revelation account, clearly talking of the resurrection, it refers to the resurrection body.

Secondly, if we are in the Millennium now, we therefore must believe that Satan is “bound” now:

Revelation 20:1-3

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

Amillennialists would say that Satan is bound in the sense that true religion is no longer limited to the Jews any more, and that Satan still has an influence but is now on a “short lead.” This is very difficult to accept. Satan still has tremendous influence on the world and can hardly be said to be “bound” more than in the time before Christ came. In any case he has always been on a “short lead,” because throughout all ages he has never been able to do anything that God did not permit him to do (see Job 1-2), this is not just a peculiarity of New Testament times.

Many Reformed churches tend to embrace an Amillennial view.

Premillennialism

This involves the return of Christ *before* the Millennium.

Premillennialism has the same advantages as Amillennialism in that it allows for Christ to come at any time, and for things to be in a bad state just before Christ’s return, but the problem with it is that in this system Christ’s return is not the end of the world. There is plenty more going on here on this earth afterwards – an idea which is not Scriptural:

1 Corinthians 15:23,24

But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

There is one particular Premillennial scheme that is so common, many people believe it is the only Premillennial scheme there is, and that is that of Dispensationalism. This was made very popular by J. N. Darby and the Brethren. Pentecostals and many Baptists have also picked up on this scheme.

In summary, Christ comes, all believers are raptured into the air, and disappear from the earth for a time (typically for either three and a half or seven years), whilst the “Great Tribulation” takes place on the earth. After this, Christ sets up his kingdom for a thousand years on the earth with a physical temple rebuilt in Jerusalem. Then, after the Millennium, comes the Final Judgment.

In this scheme, the world is split into “dispensations,” hence the name. First there was the “dispensation” from Creation to the Fall, then Adam to Abraham, then Abraham to Moses, Moses to David, David to Christ, Christ to His coming again (the “gospel” dispensation we are in now), then Christ’s earthly rule in Jerusalem with the temple sacrifices being reinstated for a thousand years, then the final judgment. The problem with all this is that there ends up being more than one means of salvation. In the Old Testament it was via

the sacrifices, now in the “gospel” dispensation it is by the blood of Christ. In the Millennium it will be by re-instating the sacrifices again. This is all wrong. Every one of the elect in every age go to glory because of the shed blood of Christ. Christ’s blood was not just shed for those in the present “gospel” dispensation.

And the idea of there being a particular time known as the “Great Tribulation” too is completely opposite to what the Bible teaches:

Revelation 7:14

And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

This refers to believers, but it states that these are the ones who have “*come out of great tribulation.*” So they were once in this tribulation and have not missed it completely by being “raptured” to totally avoid it altogether.

Matthew 24:37-41

But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

In the days of Noah it was the wicked who were “*taken*” away, and the believers who were “*left behind,*” not, as the Dispensationalists would have us believe, the other way around:

Matthew 5:5

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Psalms 37:10-11

For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

So the whole concept of a “rapture” before a period of tribulation which all believers will miss, is totally wrong. The idea of a “rapture” is taken from:

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

But this happens at the end of time, there is no mention of a millennial kingdom on earth afterwards in this passage at all.

And of course, what’s the point of reinstating the animal sacrifices? They were originally there as a picture to point us to Christ’s once for all sacrifice on the cross. We no longer need animal sacrifices, and we never will need them again:

Hebrews 7:26-27

For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

Most people think that Premillennialism is solely a belief in Dispensationalism, such is Dispensationalism's dominance in modern evangelical circles. But there is a far more sober view which is completely different, but nowhere near as common. In this view, Christ will return, then will reign for a thousand years on the earth (the Millennium), at the end of which is the final Judgment. No secret "rapture," no special period known as the "Great Tribulation," no reinstatement of the animal sacrifices.

However, most proponents of this more sober scheme still go wrong when they believe that, in the Millennial kingdom after Christ's return, it will still be inhabited by people in their earthly bodies. The believers who have died or are alive at Christ's coming will have been resurrected at this point and be in their resurrection bodies, but there will be others in the Millennium who will still be in their sinful earthly bodies, and indeed people still to be born in their sinful bodies to them. So we have the surreal spectacle of some people in their resurrection bodies mingling with those still in sinful flesh, with otherwise things going on pretty much as before. They would get this from passages such as:

Isaiah 65:20,21

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. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.

Also, Ezekiel's vision of the rebuilt temple in chapters 40 to 48 is used to believe that an exact literal temple of those dimensions is still to be built, because the description there does not fit with one that has ever existed yet.

Indeed the problem with Premillennialists tends to be the opposite of that of Amillennialists. Whereas Amillennialists tend to over-spiritualise biblical passages, Premillennialists tend to take everything far too literally. The right way to interpret Scripture is to take everything in the plain meaning of the words, e.g. when Isaiah says that "*the trees of the field shall clap their hands*" (Isaiah 55:12), it is obviously poetic, not literal.

Baptists, Brethren and Pentecostals are all Premillennial.

My Theory Explained from Revelation 19 and 20

The Millennial theory that I wish to put forward here is based on a logical, straightforward exposition of Revelation 19:11 to 20:15. That this is all one chronological order of events is clear from the word "*and*" which is constantly repeated to link each stage to the next (19:13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 20:1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15).

Amillennialists and Postmillennialists must have a chronological break somewhere (usually at the end of chapter 19) to make their theory fit this narrative, so that they can make

Christ's coming at the end of chapter 19 to be the same as Christ's coming in chapter twenty. Otherwise they have two comings of Christ here, which would not fit into their scheme of things. This however is a forced break, and there is no reason to break the chronology at all. If here, then why not at any of the other of the "and"s in the passage? Any break made is purely arbitrary, to make the passage fit a theory, rather than to let the passage flow and hold together in the plainest sense of the words. My theory links the entire passage together as a chronological whole.

I cannot read Revelation 19:11 to 20:15, in the plain sense of the words, without seeing the following chronological sequence of events:

- (1.) Christ comes again to "*judge and to make war*" (19:11).
- (2.) Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword (usually taken as the sword of the Spirit, i.e. His Word) whereby He smites the nations and treads them in the winepress of God's wrath. (19:15).
- (3.) The fowls are called to eat the flesh of those about to die (i.e. the wicked) (19:17,18).
- (4.) The beast leads the wicked into war against Christ and his armies (whether these are angels or glorified saints we do not need to know, they could be either or both) (19:19).
- (5.) The beast and false prophet are defeated by Christ, and are both cast into the lake of fire (19:20).
- (6.) The wicked hordes which followed the beast and false prophet are slain by the sword proceeding out of Christ's mouth and the fowls gorge themselves on their flesh (19:21).

Note that treading the winepress of God's wrath, fowls gorging themselves and a sword coming out of Christ's mouth etc. are purely picture language. We would be stupid to take what is clearly picture language in any way literally. I leave any detailed explanation of pictures such as these as they are not relevant to the basic theory I am offering here. Until these events happen everything is really guesswork anyway, so I'm not going to go into too much detail on what they all mean.

Note also at this point that Christ has come again before the Millennium, so I have to admit I must by definition be a Premillennialist. Not of the usual variety though, as I have never come across this scheme anywhere else before.

- (7.) Satan is cast into the bottomless pit and bound for a thousand years (the "Millennium") (20:1-3).
- (8.) The souls of believers "*lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years*" (20:4). For a soul to "*live*" it must be given a body (Genesis 2:7), hence believers will be on the earth in their resurrection bodies, whilst the wicked will be dead until the end of the Millennium (they are slain in 19:21, this is confirmed in 20:5).
- (9.) 20:6 confirms that these are believers only who take part in the "*first resurrection*" and they will not undergo the "*second death*" of the Lake of Fire (20:14).

So the Millennium will not be a place where the wicked, believers in their fleshly bodies and believers in their glorified bodies will all be mingling together, with the temple re-

established in Jerusalem. The only people alive in the Millennium will be believers in their resurrection bodies. The meek shall indeed inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5).

The question could be asked, what is the purpose of the Millennium? This question both Postmillennialists and Premillennialists cannot answer. I answer that it is a display to all creatures of the justice of God and vindication of His people before the final Judgment itself actually takes place. Why do we need a display? Well, the question could be asked, why do we need this world, when the elect have been chosen from all eternity anyway? God has ordained all things, including this world and including the Millennium, for His own glory. No other way could display His glory to any greater effect than the way that He has ordained will come to pass.

(10.) At the end of the Millennium, Satan is released out of the bottomless pit, the wicked will be raised (in their resurrection bodies) and Satan will gather them to war against the saints; but God will stop this war from taking place by destroying them with fire (20:7-9).

The fact that there are two separate resurrections, one for the just and one for the unjust, is biblical:

Luke 14:14

And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

John 5:28-29

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

Acts 24:15

And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

(11.) Satan will be cast into the “*Lake of Fire*” (where the beast and false prophet are) to be tormented for ever and ever (20:10).

(12.) Earth and heaven will “*flee away*” and be no more as we know it. Presumably it is burnt with fire as in 20:9 (20:11).

There are plenty of biblical texts which describe the earth being burnt with fire or purged with fire to make way for the new heavens and the new earth described in chapters 21 and 22. How this exactly takes place we are not told, and again we should not be too dogmatic as to the precise details:

2 Peter 3:7

But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

2 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.

(13.) Judgment takes place, and “*death*” and “*hell*” are cast into the “*Lake of Fire*” (“*Gehenna*”), i.e. are destroyed for ever (20:12-14).

A note is in order here with regards “*death*” and “*hell*”:

With regards “*death*,” it no longer has any power after this point as it is cast into the “*Lake of Fire*.” The torment is “*for ever and ever*” (v.10). So we see that after this point people will never be able to die again, and will be either in bliss in heaven or in torment in “*hell*” (“*Gehenna*”). All those not in the “*Book of Life*” are not just annihilated out of existence, but cast into the “*Lake of Fire*,” i.e. torment for ever without any relief possible by “*death*.” Similarly those who are in the “*Book of Life*” will be everlastingly with the Lord, without “*death*” to end such a state.

With regards “*hell*,” there are four words in the Bible which are translated in English into the word “*hell*.” This is important to note because the Annihilationists would say that because here it states that “*hell*” is thrown in to the “*Lake of Fire*,” therefore there is no eternal torment in “*hell*” for ever after all. This is not true. The two words “*Sheol*” (Hebrew) or “*Hades*” (Greek) denote the place where the **souls** of the wicked *apart from their bodies* go after death in this life and before they are reunited with their bodies again at the end. (The souls of believers go to “*Paradise*”). The word “*Tartarus*” (Greek) only occurs once in the Bible (2 Peter 2:4) and denotes the place where fallen angels are kept until the judgment, after which they are cast into the “*Lake of Fire*.” “*Tartarus*” is also known as the “*Bottomless Pit*” which Satan is thrown into for the duration of the Millennium (Revelation 20:1-3), and “*The Deep*” which demons pled with Christ not to be cast into (Luke 8:31). The word “*Gehenna*” (Greek) denotes the “*Lake of Fire*” itself, where reunited bodies and souls spend their eternal torment. “*Hades*” is the word used for “*hell*” in this passage, so it refers to the place where souls *apart from their bodies* go. It is *this place* that is destroyed forever (as there is now no need for it because souls and bodies can now no longer be separated by death) and not the final place of torment, “*Gehenna*,” the “*Lake of Fire*,” which does still exist after this, and indeed will do so everlastingly.

(14.) Whosoever was not found in the “*Book of Life*” was cast into the “*Lake of Fire*” (“*Gehenna*”) to suffer most grievous torments for ever (20:15).

(15.) Chapters 21 and 22 of Revelation then go on to speak about the “*New Heavens and the New Earth*” which will be the final home for the believers who have escaped the “*Lake of Fire*.”

That is my theory, and I cannot see this passage (which is incidentally the only passage in the whole of Scripture which mentions this “*thousand years*” at all) as meaning anything else. I hope I have kept to the plain meaning of the words and not either allegorised or literalised anything in any way in my explanation of the passage.

One final thing to mention. If this theory is true, then the end times will be at least a thousand years in length (to include the Millennium), so how can we explain the many passages of Scripture which mention that all these things will happen on the “*Last Day*,” or the “*Day of the Lord*”? The answer is simply that we should:

2 Peter 3:8

...be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

In any case, just before the coming of Christ we are told that:

Revelation 10:6

...there should be time no longer.

So we see that this event occurs outside of the constraints of time, although for convenience in Scripture it is called the “*Last Day*” or “*Day of the Lord*,” as it will clearly be at the end of time as we know it now.

One objection to this could be that we are so dogmatic with regards the six literal days of twenty-four hour periods of the Creation week, how can we now talk about a long “day”? Well, in Genesis 1 we are clearly told that “*and the evening and the morning were the first day*,” (Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31), whereas here we are specifically told that “*there will be time no longer*” (Revelation 10:6). So the Genesis days are literal days of twenty-four hours and the Revelation “*Last Day*” is not.

Confession on the Last Things

To clarify my theory even more, and to back up what has been said by passages from other parts of Scripture, I proffer the following Confession on the subjects of the Intermediate State and the Last Things.

The Intermediate State

1. A man is made up of both body and soul.¹ A man’s spirit is not a third separate entity, rather, it is so fused to the soul, like joints and marrow, that it can only be separately discerned by the Word of God². Therefore, it refers to the soul, particularly with respect to the disposition of the heart.³

Upon death, the body and soul separate.⁴ The body returns to the dust and sees corruption.⁵ The soul of the wicked descends to Hades (Sheol, The Pit)⁶ where it remains, forsaken by the Lord⁷ and unable to praise him⁸, in great torment reserved under punishment for the day of judgment.⁹

The soul of the believer will be delivered from the power of Sheol (Hades, The Pit).¹⁰ It will be carried by the angels into Paradise (Abraham's bosom) to be with Christ¹¹ until the times of restitution of all things¹², waiting for the full redemption of the body.¹³

These are the only two places which Scripture acknowledges for souls separated from their bodies.¹⁴ Souls cannot pass from one place to the other as there is a great gulf fixed between the two.¹⁵

¹1 Thess.5:23; Isaiah 10:18; Job 14:22; Matt. 10:28

²Heb. 4:12

³Isa. 42:5; Job 34:14; Zech.12:1; Luke 8:55; James 2:26; Eccl. 12:7; Eccl. 8:8; Isa. 57:15,16; 1 Cor. 5:3; 1 Cor 7:34; Luke 1:47; Luke 23:46; Psalms 31:5; Heb. 12:23; 1 Thess. 5:23; Prov. 20:27

⁴Luke 12:20; 1 Kings 17:21,22; Gen. 35:18; Job 7:15; 2 Cor. 5:8

⁵Gen.3:19; Acts 13:36; Psalms 90:3; Job 7:21; Psalms 104:29; Psalms 146:4; Eccl. 3:20

⁶Psalms 9:17; Prov. 15:24; Prov. 23:14; Isa. 5:14

⁷Acts 2:27 & Matt. 27:46 & Mark 15:34; Psalms 9:10

⁸Isa. 38:18; Psalms 88:10-12; Psalms 6:5; Psalms 30:9; Psalms 115:17

⁹2 Pet. 2:9; Isa. 50:11; Job 21:30; Luke 16:23,24,28; Rom. 2:9

10Psa.49:9,15; Psa.86:13; Job 33:30; Psa. 16:10; Psa. 30:3; Psa.33:19; Psa. 34:22; Psa. 56:13; Psa. 116:8; Hos 13:14
11Luke 16:22; Luke 23:43; Phil. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:6,8; Rev. 2:7
12Acts 3:21
13Rom. 8:11,23; Rev. 6:9-11; Rev. 20:4; 2 Cor. 5:2-4
14Luke 16:22,23
15Luke 16:26

2. Angels who have sinned have no means of salvation¹ and are cast down to Tartarus (The Deep, The Bottomless Pit) by God, to be delivered into chains of darkness to be reserved unto the judgment of the Great Day.²

Satan's main task was to destroy the Christ and His people.³ He was given freedom to roam the earth and have access into heaven⁴, but only under God's providential control.⁵

Upon Christ's victory on the cross, Satan and his angels were defeated, no longer had a place in heaven⁶, and were cast out into the earth⁷, where Satan turned his mind to persecuting the Lord's people.⁸ But they are kept safe by God.⁹

Satan has been given the key to the Bottomless Pit (Tartarus, The Deep), so that the demons (fallen angels) there can be let loose on the earth.¹⁰ The two greatest of these are the Beast (Beast from the sea), whom, along with Satan himself, all unbelievers marvel at and worship¹¹, and the False Prophet (Beast from the earth), who, with miraculous signs, causes all unbelievers to worship the Beast (Beast from the sea) and gives them his mark.¹² Again, all of this is only under God's providential control.¹³

1Heb. 2:16
22 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Luke 8:31
3Rev. 12:4
4Rev. 12:3,4,7; Job 1:6,7; Job 2:1,2; Zech. 3:1; Luke 22:31
5Job 1:12; Job 2:6
6Rev. 12:8
7Rev.12:9,12,13; Isa. 14:12; Luke 10:18; John 12:31; John 14:30; Rev. 9:1
8Rev. 12:13,17
9Rev. 12:6,14,16; 1 John 5:18; John 17:12
10Rev. 9:1-3
11Rev. 13:3,4,8
12Rev. 13:13,14,16
13Rev. 13:8; Rev. 14:1

The Last Things

1. On one day in the future, the day and hour of which is only known to the Father¹, Jesus Christ will visibly return. It will be sudden and unexpected, like a thief in the night.² This is so that we may shake off all carnal security and be always watchful.³

He will appear as lightning.⁴ The sun and moon will no longer give their light, the stars will fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.⁵ This also symbolises the fact that at this time all those who exalt themselves in this world shall be abased.⁶ Then every eye shall see Christ coming in the clouds with power and great glory.⁷

He will descend with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel Michael and with the last trump of God.⁸ He will come with his holy angels⁹, and the souls of all believers who have died.¹⁰ Their souls will then be reunited with their bodies which are raised first. This

is the resurrection of the just (the first resurrection, the resurrection of life).¹¹ They are raised incorruptible.

Those believers who are still alive at the time will also be changed into an incorruptible state in the twinkling of an eye.¹² They will then be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus so shall they ever be with the Lord.¹³

All believers will then be conformed to Christ's own glorious body.¹⁴

¹Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32

²Luke 12:40; 1 Thess. 5:2-3; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 3:3; Rev. 16:15; Acts 1:11; Heb. 9:28

³Luke 21:34-36; 1 Thess 5:4; 2 Pet. 3:11-12; Mark 13:35-37; Matt. 24:42,44; Matt. 25:13; Luke 12:36-48

⁴Matt. 24:27; Luke 17:24

⁵Isa. 34:4; Isa. 24:23; Isa. 13:10; Zech. 14:6; Amos 8:9; Matt. 24:29; Mark 13:24,25; Luke 21:25; Ezek. 32:7; Rev. 6:12-14; Joel 2:31; Joel 3:15,16

⁶Ezek 31:14; Matt. 23:12; Job 22:29; Psa. 138:6; Isa. 57:15; Dan. 4:37; Luke 1:51,52; Luke 14:11; Luke 18:14; James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5

⁷Matt. 24:30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27; Acts 1:11; Matt. 16:27; Luke 9:26; Rev. 1:7

⁸1 Thess. 4:16; Jude 9; Matt. 24:31; 1 Cor. 15:52; Rev. 11:15; Isa. 27:13

⁹Matt. 24:31; Matt. 25:31; Matt. 16:27; Mark 13:27; 2 Thess. 1:7; Matt. 13:39,49; Mark 8:38

¹⁰Rev. 19:14; Matt. 24:31; Mark 13:27; 1 Thess. 3:13; 1 Thess. 4:14; Jude 14; Zech. 14:5

¹¹1 Thess. 4:16; Job 19:26,27; Rom. 8:11; Isaiah 26:19; Luke 14:14; John 5:29; Acts 24:15; Rev. 20:5,6

¹²1 Cor. 15:42-44; 1 Cor. 15:51-54

¹³1 Thess. 4:17; Matt. 24:40-41

¹⁴Rom. 8:29; Phil.3:21

2. When Christ appears, the wicked who are still alive on the earth will mourn.¹ Great terror will fall on them and their hearts will fail them for fear.²

Even so, the Beast will gather them together to make war against Christ and the saints³, but the Beast and the False Prophet will be taken and cast into the Lake of Fire (Gehenna).⁴ The rest of the unbelievers will then be killed by the sword proceeding out of Christ's mouth.⁵

Then Satan himself will be cast into the Bottomless Pit (Tartarus, The Deep) and bound for a thousand years with a seal set upon him that he should deceive the nations no more.⁶

All events regarding the last things, including the "thousand years," are known in Scripture as taking place on "The Great Day," "The Day of the Lord" or "The Last Day"⁷, which is after there is time no longer (the sun and moon having disappeared).⁸

The court shall be seated and all believers shall reign with Christ for the thousand years.⁹ Indeed, the meek shall inherit the earth.¹⁰ Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.¹¹

¹Matt.24:30; Rev. 1:7; Zech. 12:10; Amos 8:10; Zech. 14:13

²Luke 21:25,26; Rev. 11:13; Isa. 24:16-18; Hos. 10:8; Luke 23:30; Rev. 6:15-17; Isa. 13:7,8; Isa. 2:20,21; Jer 4:28,29; Ezek. 38:19-20

³Rev. 19:19; Ezek.39:2; Rev. 16:14-16; Zech. 14:2

⁴Rev. 19:20; Dan. 7:11

⁵Rev.19:21; Isa. 24:1-3; Jer. 25:27-33; Ezek. 39:3-5; Isa. 11:4; Isa. 34:2,3; Isa. 66:16,24; Jer. 7:32-34; Jer. 19:6,7; Jer. 31:40

⁶Rev. 20:1-3; Isa. 24:21,22

7John 6:39,40,44,54; John 11:24; John 12:48; Heb. 10:25; Ezek. 39:8; 2 Pet. 3:10-13; Rev. 6:17; Zech. 14:7-9
81 Pet. 4:7; Dan. 12:13; Rev. 10:6
9Dan. 7:26,27; Rev. 20:4,6; Zech. 14:9,11; Rev. 5:10; Isa. 24:23; Isa. 27:13; Isa. 66:23
10Matt. 5:5; Psa. 25:13; Psa. 37:9-11,22,28-29,34; Isa. 60:21
111 Cor. 15:24

3. When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison.¹ All the dead (i.e. the unbelievers) will then be resurrected, their souls being reunited with their bodies. This is the resurrection of the unjust (the second resurrection, the resurrection of damnation).² Satan will go out to deceive them all and to gather them together to battle against all the believers, who during the thousand years have been living peacefully on the earth.³ But fire will come down from God out of heaven and devour them.⁴ Satan will then be cast into the Lake of Fire (Gehenna) to be tormented day and night for ever and ever.⁵

The earth and the heaven will flee away; and there will be found no place for them any more.⁶

All people will then stand before the Great White Throne of Judgment.⁷ God is the Judge to whom we must all give an account⁸, and the Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son.⁹ Indeed, all believers will play their part in judging the world and angels.¹⁰

Every man will be judged according to his works.¹¹ All men will therefore be found guilty.¹² However, deliverance from being cast into the Lake of Fire (Gehenna) is not based on this, but on whether their names are in the Lamb's Book of Life.¹³

¹Rev. 20:3,7; Rev. 17:8

²Rev. 20:6; John 5:29; Acts 24:15; Isa. 24:22

³Rev. 20:8,9 ; Ezek. 38:8-23

⁴Rev. 20:9; Rev. 16:21; 2 Pet. 3:7; Isa. 66:15,16; Ezek. 38:22; Mal. 4:1; Zeph. 1:18; Zeph. 3:8

⁵Rev.20:10; Matt. 25:41

⁶Psa. 102:26; Rev. 20:11; Isa. 13:13; Heb. 12:27; Matt. 24:35

⁷Rev. 20:12-13; Dan. 7:9; 2 Cor. 5:10; Matt. 25:32; Acts 17:31; Rom. 14:12; Jude 14,15; 1 Cor. 4:5

⁸Dan. 7:9; Psa. 58:11; Psa. 75:7; Rom. 14:12; Heb. 4:13; Matt. 12:36

⁹John 5:22; John 9:39; Acts 10:42; Rom. 14:10; Dan. 7:13,14; 2 Cor. 5:10; Psa. 149:9

¹⁰Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30; 1 Cor. 6:2,3; Luke 11:31-32; Isa. 41:15,16

¹¹Matt. 16:27; Rev. 20:12,13; 2 Pet. 2:12,13; Jer. 17:10; Job 34:11; Psa. 62:12; 1 Cor. 3:12-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 2:23

¹²Psa. 130:3; Eph. 2:12; Psa. 51:5; Psa. 58:3; Rom. 3:9-20,23

¹³Rev. 20:15; Luke 10:20; Psa. 69:28; Rev. 21:27; Rom. 3:24; Dan. 12:1; Mal. 3:6; Exod. 32:33; Matt. 25:34; Rev. 13:8; Rev. 17:8

4. Death and Hades (Sheol, The Pit) will then be cast into the Lake of Fire (Gehenna).¹ Christ will then make himself subject to the Father that God may be all in all.²

Whosoever is not found written in the Lamb's Book of Life will be cast into the Lake of Fire (Gehenna).³ This is the second death.⁴ It is an everlasting process of destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power⁵, where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.⁶ A place of outer darkness where there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.⁷

Then a new heavens and a new earth will appear wherein dwelleth righteousness.⁸ It shall remain forever.⁹ This will be the Holy City, New Jerusalem.¹⁰ God will dwell therein with the elect forever and will wipe away all tears from their eyes. There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former

things shall not be remembered, nor come to mind.¹¹ There will be no more temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.¹² There will be no more sun or moon for the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.¹³

Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus.¹⁴

1Rev.20:14; 1 Cor. 15:26

21 Cor. 15:28

3Rev. 20:15; Rev. 21:8; Luke 12:5; Matt. 25:41

4Rev. 2:11; Rev. 20:6,14; Rev. 21:8

52 Thess. 1:9; Dan 12:2; Isa. 33:14; Psa. 92:7; Matt. 10:28; Dan. 7:26; Rev. 20:10; Matt. 25:46

6Isa. 66:24; Mark 9:43-48; Ezek. 20:47,48; Isa. 34:10; Jer. 7:20; Matt. 3:12

7Matt. 8:12; Matt. 22:13; Matt. 13:42,50; 2 Pet. 2:17; Jude 13; Isa. 8:22; Matt. 25:30

8Rev. 21:1; 2 Pet. 3:13; Heb. 2:5

9Isa. 66:22; Joel 3:20

10Rev. 21:2,10; Psa.48; Heb. 12:22

11Rev. 21:3,4; Isa. 35:10; Isa. 51:11; Isa. 65:17,19; Rev. 7:16,17

12Rev. 21:22

13Isa. 60:19,20; Rev. 21:23; Rev. 22:5; Zech. 2:5

14Rev. 22:20; 1 Cor. 16:22