

Preface

“When Aragorn arose all that beheld him gazed in silence, for it seemed to them that he was revealed to them now for the first time. Tall as the sea-kings of old, he stood above all that were near; ancient of days he seemed and yet in the flower of manhood; and wisdom sat upon his brow, and strength and healing were in his hands, and a light was about him; and then Faramir cried: “Behold the King!”

*J. R.R. Tolkien
The Lord of the Rings*

J. R. R. Tolkien’s, Lord of the Rings is one of the great literary fantasies of all time. In the land of Middle Earth, the world is threatened by an evil overlord. A few brave Hobbits strive to save it while evil engulfs them all along their journey. Unknown to the Hobbits, they are helped along on their quest by the true king of Middle Earth who is working undercover. When Frodo the Hobbit performs one final heroic deed, darkness turns to light and Aragorn the King is revealed in all his splendor.

The excerpt above suggests that Tolkien personally knew Jesus Christ, the true King of Kings. Tolkien’s fiction works because it is based on a true understanding of God’s power and the ultimate victory of God and of good. The Book of Revelation is the divinely inspired portrait of a world threatened by an evil overlord, while the True King is seen to be working all along the way. Finally, the real King, Jesus, is victoriously revealed from heaven for all to see. What Tolkien presented in fiction, the Apostle John presents in reality.¹

This is why Paul told Titus to...

“Look for the blessed hope and the appearing of our Great God and Savior Jesus Christ... who gave himself for us to redeem us...”

Titus 2:13

This is why the author of the letter to the Hebrews says we are to...

“Encourage one another all the more as you see the day drawing near... For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay.”

Hebrews 10:25 & 37

This is why Jesus told John...

*“I am coming quickly.
Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.”*

Revelation 22:7

¹ Easley, Kendaell H.; Revelation; Holman NT Comm., pg. 11, Holman Reference, 1998

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Beginning our Understanding of “the End”

When the Battle of Britain was finally won in the early days of World War II, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill said, “This is not the beginning, and it is not the end...however, it may be the end of the beginning.” What he intended to relay to the war weary people of Britain was, “don’t assume the war is over.” He did however feel safe in saying they were making progress toward the victorious end of hostilities.

We are in a war, a war that in reality is already won for all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and who’ve been gloriously saved by His grace through faith. However, we’re still on the earthly side of eternity and there are many battles still ahead. I hope this present look into end times events will encourage you, instill hope, and through a proper understanding of Scripture equip you to explain why you have no need for worry in a world that demands despair.

First of all, the proper title to the last book of the New Testament is “The Revelation to John.” It is not titled “Revelations.” It is a literal visionary revelation from heaven to the Apostle John while he was imprisoned and exiled on an island called Patmos. However, for simplicity sake we may refer to it in this study as “The Book of Revelation.”

Secondly, any study of The Revelation requires exploration of three preliminary subjects:

- 1. What is meant when we refer to “The Kingdom of God.”**
“Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven (Mt. 6:10).”
- 2. The Old Testament covenants of God with Israel with particular emphasis on the *Unconditional* Abrahamic Covenant.**
- 3. The Book of Daniel, particularly chapter 9 through 12 which can properly be titled “The Front Door to the Revelation to John.”**

Without a proper understanding of many basic Old Testament truths, we will never reach a proper understanding of the final book of the New Testament. To begin a study of The Revelation at the beginning of that book is to begin in the middle of the topic. We will only partially understand The Revelation to John if we look only at that one book. Remember, The Revelation is the end of a story that began prior to human history. We will begin by exploring the three subjects mentioned above.

Let’s begin by describing and defining “The Kingdom of God.”

“Thy Kingdom Come”

We need to understand what God means when He says “kingdom,” so that we understand what is “coming” in the future.

In particular:

- *What do we mean by the term, “Kingdom?”*
- *How do we describe it?*
- *How do we define it?*
- *What are its characteristics?*

Describing the Kingdom of God

“The kingdom of God exists wherever Jesus rules.” Dr. Darrell Bock

“Coming to Christ means coming into relationship with believers of every generation, who likewise have been built into God’s grand building project. The structure will be completed when the scaffolding of human history comes down and the kingdom of Christ is revealed in all its glory.”

Dr. Karen H. Jobes²

Why address this topic in a study of end time events?

If we are to understand Revelation we must first understand what is at stake. The lawless rebellion of Satan against God raised questions of gigantic importance:

- **Who is really God?**
- **Who has the right to rule?**
- **How far, over what or whom, and where does that rule extend?**
- **These are the primary issues addressed and answered in Revelation.**

What is the Kingdom of God?

The great theme of God’s kingdom program can be found throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. It is a theme that unifies all of Scripture. Through it the Bible records the progressive unfolding of a program in which God reveals His sovereign authority. And through it God demonstrates His right to rule through various forms of a kingdom He establishes here on earth, beginning in Genesis and consummating in the reign of Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords in the Book of Revelation.

Some understand the kingdom of God to be synonymous with the eternal state, or heaven where saints go following physical death. Thus it is held that it has nothing to do with anything on earth. The eternal state will be part of the final manifestation of the kingdom of God, but this concept taken alone is too limited.

Others understand the kingdom as a nonmaterial or “spiritual” kingdom in which God rules over the hearts of men. Thus, it is held to be entirely spiritual and not material.³ For example, in Luke 17:21, Jesus tells the Pharisees who were questioning Him on “when the kingdom of God was coming,” that, “The kingdom of God is in your midst.” Many people will interpret the phrase “in your midst” as “within you (e.g. the NIV).” Many nineteenth century scholars saw Jesus’ work as basically one that changed hearts in a strictly individualized way.

² Jobes, Karen H.; 1 Peter; Baker Exegetic Comm. of the NT, pg. 149., Baker, 2005

³ Pentecost, J. Dwight; Thy Kingdom Come, pg.11, Kregel Publications, 1995

With all due respect to the NIV, the correct rendering of εἰντός (in-tos) is not “within you.” Jesus is not speaking of some potential within each person’s heart to establish the kingdom. This personalized reading is highly unlikely because Jesus’ audience in this instance were the Pharisees with whom the kingdom was completely unconnected.⁴ What Luke meant in this instance was that Jesus’ presence as God’s unique delivering representative means the kingdom is also present. The necessary elements of the kingdom were all present before the Pharisees in the Person of Jesus Christ and needed only to be recognized.⁵ While God’s work in the human heart through Jesus the Son is required for inclusion in the kingdom of God, this is not the only realm in which the kingdom exists.

Still others see the kingdom as purely earthly, without any spiritual realities attached to it. These see it as a future political and social structure achieved by the efforts of humanity, a goal reached through social and economic evolution. Some see this future reality as a manifestation of the visible organized church.

Finally, there are those who hold to a “literal-normative” interpretation of Scripture who see the kingdom as an earthly manifestation of the universal sovereignty of God. The kingdom is a realm in which God rules in the affairs of men, so that the kingdom is conceived as being both spiritual and material. It is this earthly and material part of the kingdom to which the Nation of Israel is so intimately connected.⁶ Again, the final earthly manifestation of the kingdom of God is only one dimension of the kingdom. It is however, this primary dimension concerning the coming of the earthly millennial kingdom which is discussed in the Book of Revelation.

Putting together a description of “The Kingdom of God.”

If you haven’t already guessed, there is no short description for the term, “The Kingdom of God.” To clarify the seeming complexity of the subject, we must recognize that the kingdom over which God rules is not one dimensional.

We need to look at three interrelated ideas regarding the kingdom, and then look at four essential truths concerning the kingdom. One thing we can safely say at this point is, the nature of the kingdom is derived from the Person of God and is a reflection of what is found in Him.⁷

⁴ Bock, Darrell; Jesus According to Scripture, pg. 576, Baker Academic, 2002

⁵ Ryrie, Charles C., Ryrie Study Bible, NASB, pg. 1675, Moody 1995

⁶ Pentecost, *ibid*, pg. 12

⁷ *ibid*, pg. 15

Defining The Kingdom of God

A logical starting point is defining the word “kingdom” (Greek = basilea) itself. There are three interrelated ideas at work which require some explanation. Let’s continue by looking at these **three interrelated ideas** which must be considered in establishing a biblical definition of the term, “The Kingdom of God.”

- a. *The Right to Rule*
- b. *The Realm of the Rule*
- c. *The Reality of the Rule*

The Right to Rule

The first idea we need to keep in mind in regard to the kingdom is that it is ruled or governed by a Ruler. That rule is only authentic when the king, or ruler, or overseer is granted the “right to rule” by someone who has the power and authority to grant that right.

Therefore, the word ‘kingdom’ includes the concept of a person’s right to rule. In the Book of Revelation the right to rule is seen as a struggle between God and Satan. The question then is, “Who has the right to rule over the kingdom?” We might also ask “why” the ruler of the kingdom has the right to rule?

The Realm of Rule

The second question is that of a “realm” in which ruling authority is exercised. What are the boundaries of this realm?

This realm includes both the spiritual and material aspects of ruling the kingdom. This realm includes both the heavenly and earthly aspects of ruling the kingdom. This realm includes souls who are present in the kingdom and subject to that rule. This realm includes all the created subjects (angelic and human – elect and non-elect) which have ever existed in both the spiritual heavenly realm, as well as the earthly material realm.

The Reality of the Rule

Essential to the word “Kingdom” is the actual exercise of royal authority in a realm over which one has the sovereign right to rule. If the actual exercising of authority is not in view, and being actively carried out, then the concept of the kingdom is not present. It was the exercise of Jesus’ royal kingdom authority which the Pharisees rejected in His first advent. Therefore, the kingdom was not initiated at His first coming because the exercise of Jesus’ royal authority was not recognized at that time. When Jesus comes again, He will exercise absolute authority in heaven and on earth. The reality of His rule will be experienced by all creation.

Seeing the three ideas at work in the Book of Hebrews:

Presently, according to the Book of Hebrews, Jesus is enthroned at His Father's right hand from which (the reality of) His sovereign rule is explained.

“God...in these last days has spoken through His Son, whom He appointed (the right to rule) heir of all things (the realm of His rule), through whom He made the world (the reason God has the right to rule)... Hebrews 1:1-3

“Consider Jesus... He was faithful to Him who appointed Him...(the right to rule)...Christ was faithful as a Son over His house (the realm of His rule)...whose house we are...(the realm of His rule)” Hebrews 3:1-2 & 6

“We have such a high priest who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens (the realm of His rule)...a minister in the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, not man. (the right to rule)” Hebrews 8:1-2

“He is the Mediator of a new covenant...(the exercise and reality of His rule).” Hebrews 9:15

Four Essential Truths That Characterize the Kingdom of God.

1. It is “timeless.”

Since God Himself is eternal, a timeless element characterizes His kingdom.

God's kingdom is eternal as He Himself is eternal.

Numerous Scriptures demonstrate that God has always possessed absolute authority over all His creation and that He rules eternally as King.

(Ps. 10:16; Ps. 74:12; Jer. 10:10; Ps. 145:13; Lam. 5:19)

2. It is “universal.”

Since God is omnipresent, the Bible clearly makes reference to the unlimited scope of God's sovereignty over His kingdom. It is clear from Scripture that God's sovereignty is exercised over heaven and earth – even hell itself. There is simply no realm outside of God's authority. God's kingdom is universal because it reflects the omnipresence of God Himself.

(1 Chron. 29:11-12; Ps. 103:19; Ps. 139:7-10; Dan. 4:17, 25, 32; Amos 9:2)

3. It is administered through appointed representatives.

The Bible also makes clear that while God exercises absolute authority over all things, His sovereignty may be exercised or delegated to and through individuals.

God deals sovereignly through men, some of whom recognize it, some of whom reject it, and some of whom are ignorant of it. Yet in every situation God's will is executed. This is not only true in the realm of humanity, but in nature as well.

(Gen. 45:7-8; Gen. 50:20; Prov. 21:1; Is. 10:5-6; Is. 45:1-4; Jer. 25:8-12; 27:4-8; 51:11-24, 27.)

4. *It is miraculous.*

There are occasions when God's sovereignty is manifested through the direct intervention of God in the affairs of men. These demonstrations of His sovereignty are what we call miracles. (Ex. 7:3-5; Ps. 135:6-10; Rev. 4 -22)⁸

It will be His direct intervention in the affairs of men that will create the dramatic events we'll study in the Book of Revelation. The rapture of the church, the tribulation, the second coming of Christ, Armageddon, and the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom on earth are all examples of the miraculous nature of God's intervention in human history.

Summarizing the concept of "The Kingdom of God."

By now we have realized that "the kingdom of God" is a much broader concept than what is described in the closing chapters of the Book of Revelation. The earthly Millennial Kingdom, described in Rev. 19-21, is only part of the bigger picture. The Millennial Kingdom is a final earthly manifestation of the truths we have just examined.

It would be safe to conclude that the Kingdom of God has an eternal dimension as well as manifestations in the material realm which are temporal by definition. There is a universal nature of the Kingdom which spans both the spiritual and material dimensions, and there is a local sense in which the kingdom is expressed as being present on earth (Millennial Kingdom of Revelation).

There is also an immediate sense in which Jesus rules in Heaven (Book of Hebrews) and a mediated sense in which Christ rules through delegated authority to appointed representatives on earth (King David).

The kingdom requires the right to rule, a realm over which ruling is conducted, and the authority to rule actually being exercised. The kingdom is also characterized by four essential truths: It is timeless, universal, providential, and miraculous. It is a reflection of God Himself in its character.

Closing thought:

"For the concept of the kingdom of God involves, in a real sense, the total message of the Bible. Not only does it loom large in the teachings of Jesus; it is found, in one form or another, through the length and breadth of the Bible...Old Testament and New Testament thus stand together as two acts of a single drama. Act I points to its conclusion in Act II, and without both acts the play is an incomplete, unsatisfying thing. But Act II must be read in light of Act I or its meaning will be missed. For the play is organically one. The Bible is one book. Had we had to give that book a title, we might with justice call it "The Book of the Coming Kingdom of God.""⁹

⁸ *ibid*, excerpts from pgs. 15-19

⁹ Bright, John, *The Kingdom of God*, pg. 7, 197, New York Abingdon Press, 1953

Satan challenged God's Kingdom when he rebelled against God.

The Revelation of John is about God's ultimate dealing with Satan and his counterfeit kingdom.

We need to understand the nature of that challenge and how it has played out in human history.

Two Kingdoms in Two Places

1. **The Kingdom of God in Heaven – *eternally existent***

“In eternity past, before the creation of angels or the creation of the earth and the population of it with man, a kingdom existed in the sphere of the “heavenlies” because of the relationship existing among the members of the Trinity.

God the Father was sovereign. God the Son, although equal in his essential being with the Father, was subordinate to the Father. God the Holy Spirit was the active executor of the will of the Father. Thus in eternity past there was a kingdom involving the right to rule, as well as the realm in which the right operated, and where ruling was actively exercised. Indeed all the elements essential to the kingdom were present.”
Dr. Dwight Pentecost

The Lord’s prayer opens with the words;

“Our Father Who art in heaven...”

Heaven is the place where God lives. He is enthroned in the heavens. He will make His glorious return to earth from the heavens. His “address” is not in this world, not yet anyway! He has always ruled in and from heaven and executed the initial creation of the “(physical) heavens and the earth” from His eternal dwelling. His authority to rule comes from His ownership of everything that exists.

He created all that is; the physical universe, angels, mankind, and all living creatures. He created air, heat, cold, water, dirt, rocks, trees, clouds, mountains, oceans, beaches and the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem which we will learn about later.

Angels, Elect and Evil

When God created, He created angels before he created the heavens and the earth and all the trappings (like us!). He created angels to be the keepers of his kingdom. They were created for service to God and the worship of God.

“Praise the Lord, you His angels, you mighty ones who do His bidding, who obey His word. Praise the Lord, all His heavenly hosts, you His servants who do His will.” Ps. 103:20-22

Angels live “in the heavenly places” (Eph. 3:10). They live where God lives (Rev.4).

They were created as messengers to the patriarchs and prophets.

They were created to minister to those of us who are saved (Heb. 1:14).

They were created to worship the Lamb as we shall see in Revelation 4 & 5.

We all know the story of Lucifer (Rev. 12:9 calls him “that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan”), the most beautiful angel and how he rebelled in heaven (before creation of the earth and mankind) and was cast out of heaven by God along with one third of all the created angels of God (Rev. 12:4). We can safely say that God created elect angels (those who stayed faithful to their Creator), and un-elect angels (Rev. 12:4 – those who rebelled with Satan and now oppose their Creator).

**2. The Kingdom of Satan in “the heavenlies” – temporal & limited
(Angelic opposition to the kingdom of God began in heaven.
It will end on earth.)**

**Two primary passages describe Satan’s rebellion against God’s authority.
These passages set the stage for two competing, non-compatible kingdoms to
clash at the end of human history in the great battles of the Book of Revelation.**

- A. Isaiah 14:12-14** describes the sin that led to Lucifer’s fall from heaven. The “five “I wills” demonstrate and describe the attitude that preceded his actions.
- “I will ascend to heaven.” vs. 13
He wanted to occupy heaven as a sovereign ruler and not a servant.
 - “I will raise my throne above the stars of God.” Vs. 13
He wanted to assume sole ruling authority over all of God’s kingdom.
 - “I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain.” Vs. 13
Lucifer wanted to usurp the authority of God.
 - “I will ascend above the tops of the clouds.” Vs. 14
Lucifer wanted to bring God under his own authority.
 - “I will make myself like the most high.” Vs. 14
Lucifer wanted to be accountable to no one but himself.

B. Ezekiel 28:1-19 describes the fall of Satan.

Satan’s judgment is spelled out in this passage in particular in vs. 16-19. Despite the great privileges and authority God granted to this premier angel, it wasn’t enough and rebellion began. God did not sit still but judged as active authoritative ruler over the whole realm of His kingdom.

As Ryrie notes, “Satan’s judgment, announced in these verses, will not be consummated until he is forever cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10). Satan’s position in God’s government has been terminated, though he still has access to the heavenly realm (Job 1:6).

In the middle of the Tribulation he will be cast from heaven altogether and restricted to earth (Rev. 12:7-13).

At the beginning of the Millennium he will be cast into the shaft of the abyss (Rev. 20:1-3) to be loosed for a short time at the end of the Millennium (Rev. 20:7-9), then cast into the lake of fire forever.”¹⁰

¹⁰ Ryrie, Charles C., Ryrie Study Bible, NASB. Pg. 1306ff. Moody, 1995.

C. The Realm of Satan's counterfeit Kingdom:

"The realm of darkness." Col. 1:13

Other passages give us clues that Satan is still active in the heavenly realm through the permissive will of God. He doesn't "own any turf" there but is occasionally pictured as being present in heaven. When Satan rebelled he instituted his own counterfeit of God's kingdom, a program entirely opposed to God's authority and right to rule. Satan's attempt to usurp God's right to rule over his kingdom realm resulted in Satan's fall and judgment. Though Satan's kingdom began in heaven, it never was established there.

- Ephesians 2:1 refers to Satan as "the prince of the power of the air"
- Ephesians 6:12; "Our struggle is against...the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."
- Job 1:6; "the sons of God (i.e. angels) came to present themselves before God and Satan came along with them." Satan has access to God in heaven through God's permissive will.
- Rev. 12:7-9; Satan and his angels are finally and forever cast from heaven, or access to heaven.

D. The characteristics of Satan's kingdom

- 2 Thes. 2:4; Lawless and rebellious
- Col. 1:13; darkness rather than light
- Rev. 13:14; deceit and deception
- Romans 6:16-17; sin
- Ps. 6:16-17; Rom. 5:6; ungodliness
- Eph. 2:2; disobedience
- Eph. 2:5; death
- Rev. 19-20; defeat
- Rev. 20:10; eternal doom and torment

Summary

"We see that the Bible reveals two kingdoms existing in the realm of the heavenlies. The two are in absolute opposition to each other. There will never be agreement between the two and there will never be compromise to accommodate either. While God's kingdom is as timeless as God Himself, Satan's kingdom had its beginning with Satan's rebellion. Thus the two kingdoms are not seen as coexisting from eternity past. While good existed eternally because of God's character of absolute goodness, evil was introduced by Lucifer's rebellion against the kingdom of God. Although God passed judgment on that false ruler and his false kingdom (Luke 10:18), and its ultimate subjugation to Himself is certain (Phil. 2:10), that subjugation has not yet been accomplished. Therefore the two kingdoms coexist in the heavenly realm: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan."¹¹

¹¹ Pentecost, Thy Kingdom Come, pg. 26-27

3. **The Kingdom of Satan on Earth – *temporal***

When Satan rebelled and was judged initially, he was cast down to the earth. Isaiah says he was “cut down to the earth (Is. 14:12).”

God “turned Satan to ashes on the earth (Ezk. 38:18)” when he rebelled.

When Satan comes before God in heaven to seek permission to tempt Job, Scripture notes that he came “from roaming about on the earth and walking around on it (Job 1:7).” John tells us “the whole world is under the influence of the evil one.” (1 John 5:19)

A. Tracing Satan’s earthly kingdom through human history

“With the fall of Adam and Eve all mankind became subjects of the kingdom of Satan. Up to this point the kingdom of Satan had only existed in the heavenly realm where only fallen angels were subject to his authority. With man succumbing to the temptation in the Garden, Satan’s kingdom was now established on earth.”¹²

B. Satan’s earthly kingdom spread as men refused to submit to God.

We see Satan’s kingdom realm spread across the earth through those who continued in subjection to his rule:

- Adam and Eve were driven “east of the Garden of Eden” (3:23)
- Cain murdered his brother and “went out from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden...and he built a city, and called the name of the city Enoch...” Gen. 4:16 & 17
- Mankind became evil “on the whole earth” before the flood of Noah. God decided to judge “the whole earth.”
In Genesis 6 we see “the sons of God” and the “daughters of men” beginning to cohabit and procreate. People of the two kingdoms (godly and ungodly) began to intermingle and God brought the flood and wiped out all but Noah and his family.
- Ham, Noah’s son rebelled (Gen. 9:22) and Noah cursed Canaan, Ham’s son (Gen. 9:24-25). Gen. 10:6-20 records the geographic expansion of the descendants of Ham and Canaan, including Nimrod who established his kingdom in “Shinar” which included Babel. It was here that Nimrod built the tower of Babel from which he rebelled and God confused the languages of the people.
- From Shinar, Satan’s earthly realm continued in places like the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Egypt, Philistia, Assyria, Babylon, and Rome. It is safe to assume it has also existed in Berlin, Moscow, Beijing, Baghdad, Damascus, Tehran, Hanoi, and Islamabad. As John said, “the whole world is under the influence of the evil one.” (1 John 5:19)
- In the Book of Revelation we see the revival of Babylon as a world wide religious system and a world wide economic system.

¹² *ibid*, pg. 37

4. The Kingdom of God on Earth – *present and future*

Question:

Why didn't God impose absolute judgment on Satan and those who followed him when he rebelled and so prevent the existence of any other kingdom? Why does God tolerate any opposition at all?

A. The reason the earth was created:

“Rather than executing absolute power over Satan and his kingdom, God chose another method by which the question of God's right to rule would be addressed. God created the heavens and the earth, a new realm in which God's kingdom might be administered and through which the question of the right-to-rule would ultimately be decided.

Creation was more than a demonstration of sovereign omnipotence.

The earth was specifically brought into existence as a manifestation of the sovereign will of God who would work out His purposes in this realm.”¹³

B. The purpose of man on the earth: Reflecting and Ruling

Reflecting: The Image of God

“God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Gen. 1:27

“The concept of dominion is inherent in the image of likeness given to man. God is sovereign, and man was to exercise delegated authority and thus reflect the authority that belongs to the Creator.”¹⁴

Ruling: The earthly kingdom of God

“God did not prepare the earth to remain in an empty, useless, darkened, surging state (Gen. 1:2). It was to become a sphere occupied by those who would become subjects of the kingdom of the God of heaven. The earth was created to be populated by those who would become subjects of the kingdom of God.”¹⁵

C. God's purpose was to allow man to rule as His delegated representative on earth as we see in Psalm 8.

“What is man that You take thought of him,
and the son of man that You care for him?
You have made him a little lower than God,
and You crown him with glory and majesty!
You make him to rule over the works of Your hands;

¹³ *ibid.*, pg. 29

¹⁴ *ibid.*, pg. 33

¹⁵ *ibid.*, pg. 30

You have put all things under his feet...
All sheep and oxen, and also beasts of the field,
the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea...
O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!"
Psalm 8:4-9 (& Hebrews 2:6-8)

D. God Establishes a “Theocracy” on Earth.

“Theocracy” simply means “God ruling.”

The term further means that God is actively and rightfully ruling over a realm which He created according to our definition of a kingdom. God never releases his ruling authority. At all times and in all places He holds absolute power over all things. However, the One who has the right to rule can delegate His responsibility to a specified delegate to administrate the affairs of that kingdom. Such delegation through a delegated representative constitutes a “theocracy.”

E. Delegated Ruling Authority in a “Theocracy” was God’s intended purpose for all of human history; that plan has been altered as a result of the fall.

God intended Adam to be His delegated ruler in the Garden. Adam was God’s first delegated representative over the realm He had created. His theocracy was unique. A sinless man ruled in perfect fellowship with God, with direct access to God’s directives. We will not see this again on earth until Christ returns.

F. Adam’s fall necessitated a change in the administration of God’s kingdom on earth. Only through redemption (A Redeemer) could mankind continue to represent God in His kingdom.

Genesis 3:15; *The first gospel.*

“Then the Lord God said to the serpent...

‘I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel.’”

As Ryrie notes: “The phrase ‘between your seed’ refers to the spiritual descendants of Satan, and the phrase ‘and her seed’ refers to those who are in the family of God. ‘He’ refers to an individual from among the woman’s seed, namely Jesus Christ, who will deal a death blow to Satan’s ‘head’ at the cross, while Satan ‘you’ will ‘bruise his heel’ through causing Him to suffer on the cross.”¹⁶

Adam’s son Seth ruled the earthly kingdom by faith.

“The men began to call upon the name of the Lord.” *Genesis 4:26*

¹⁶ Ryrie, Charles C., Ryrie Study Bible, NASB, Pg. 9, Moody, 1995.

With the fall of man, God's kingdom plan changed. God decided to delegate the rule of His kingdom on earth to chosen "theocratic kingdom administrators."

He begins that process by making a promise to Abraham. This "covenant" with Abraham will be the governing principle throughout the history of Israel, from the call of Abraham to the end of human history.

God promises Abraham:

- *land*
- *Seed- a descendant*
- *Blessings*

Later covenants will enlarge the provisions of this one covenant.

This covenant is only partially fulfilled in the history of Israel. Its' complete fulfillment follows the events of the Book of Revelation.

The Abrahamic Covenant

The *Unconditional* Covenant of God with Abraham

“The Mother of all covenants”

“It is recognized by all serious students of the Bible that the covenant of God with Abraham is one of the most important and determinative revelations of Scripture. It furnishes the key to the entire Old Testament and reaches for its fulfillment into the New Testament. The analysis of its provisions and the character of their fulfillment set the mold for the entire body of Scriptural truth.”

Dr. John Walvoord¹⁷

A. Abraham begins his journey from the center of Satan’s kingdom on earth in obedience to God’s call.

Genesis 11:2 tells us that the descendents of Shem, Noah’s righteous son, “found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.” Ryrie notes this as “The area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, ancient Babylon.”¹⁸ Pentecost notes that Abraham’s family “had originated in the land of Shinar – which was originally established by Nimrod as a center of rebellion against God.”¹⁹

Acts 7:2 Stephen says “The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran...”

Genesis 11:31 tells us Abraham’s family “went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan; and they went as far as Haran, and settled there.” Ryrie notes that “Ur of the Chaldeans was a wealthy populous, and sophisticated pagan center of southern Mesopotamia (220 miles SE of Baghdad). A great ziggurat (Babylonia temple tower in the form of a terraced pyramid) was built there which Abraham must have seen.”²⁰

Genesis 11:31b “And they went as far as Haran, and settled there.” Haran was a city in northern Mesopotamia on a tributary of the Euphrates River 240 miles northwest of Ninevah (Jonah’s destination) and 280 northeast of Damascus. Like the inhabitants of Ur, Haran’s inhabitants worshipped Sin, the moon-god.”²¹

¹⁷ Walvoord, John F., *The Millennial Kingdom*, pg. 139, Zondervan, 1959

¹⁸ Ryrie Study Bible, NASB, footnotes on Gen. 11:2, pg. 19

¹⁹ Pentecost, Dwight, pg. 51, *Thy Kingdom Come*, Kregel Publications, 1995

²⁰ Ryrie Study Bible, pg. 21

²¹ Youngblood, Editor, *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pg. 540, Nelson, 1986

B. God Calls Abram Out of Satan's Kingdom to His Own.

1. Abram is called while still a pagan idol worshipper.

Acts 7:2 Stephen says "The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran..."

"The land where he was dwelling was the center of the kingdom of darkness. God was calling Abram out of the kingdom of darkness into a new sphere in which a new kingdom would be established... a better country in which God's promises would be fulfilled." Dwight Pentecost

**2. Abram is called to "believe God."
Inclusion in the kingdom of God has always been "by faith."**

(Hebrews 11)

Genesis 12:1

"Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go forth...

- From your country
- From your father's house
- To the land which I will show you;"

Genesis 12:4a

"So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him."

Genesis 15:6

"Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness."

Hebrews 11:8

"By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out not knowing where he was going."

Romans 4:16-22

"Abraham...in the presence of him whom he believed...in hope against hope he believed...without becoming weak in faith he contemplated...with respect to the promise of God he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith... giving glory to God...and being fully assured that what God promised He was able also to perform."

3. **God Continues His Kingdom Program Through Abraham**

‘God appeared to Abraham not because he was righteous or seeking God but rather as a revelation of His glory to prepare an instrument through which He would work to establish His kingdom in this earthly realm. It was to be a kingdom in which worship was offered to God, in which obedience was given to His commands, and in which Abram was the administrator, God’s theocratic representative.’²²

Abraham arrives in Canaan – the “Promised Land”

Genesis 12:6-9 & 13:18

“And they set out for the land of Canaan, and came to the land of Canaan...as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh...so he built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him...

then he proceeded east of Bethel...and built an altar to the Lord and called upon the Lord...and came and dwelt among the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to the Lord.”

C. **The Content and Provisions of God’s Covenant to Abraham**

Genesis 12:1-3; God’s call while Abram was in Ur

“Go...to the land which I will show you;
And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you, and make your name great;
And so you shall be a blessing;
And I will bless those who bless you, and on the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Genesis 13:14-17; God expands the promise in Canaan

“Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendents forever.

I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendents can also be numbered.

Arise walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you.”

²² Pentecost, *Thy Kingdom Come*, pg. 51

**D. Genesis 15:1-21; The Abrahamic Covenant Repeated
(This was spoken ten years after the original promise, while
Abraham and Sarah are still without a child.)**

- 1 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying,
“Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great.”
- 2 Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir
of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?”
- 3 And Abram said, “Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is
my heir.”
- 4 Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “This man will not be your
heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.”
- 5 And He took him outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars,
if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”
- 6 Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.
- 7 And He said to him, “I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans,
to give you this land to possess it.”
- 8 He said, “O Lord GOD, how may I know that I will possess it?”
- 9 So He said to him, “Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat,
and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.”
- 10 Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the
other; but he did not cut the birds.
- 11 The birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away.

- 12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold,
terror *and* great darkness fell upon him.
- 13 God said to Abram, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a
land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years.
- 14 But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come
out with many possessions.
- 15 “As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old
age.
- 16 “Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is
not yet complete.”
- 17 It came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, *there appeared*
a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces.
- 18 On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying,
“To your descendants I have given this land,
From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates:
19 the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite
20 and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim
21 and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite.”²³

²³ New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update Edition, Moody Publishing

Genesis 15:1-21; The Abrahamic Covenant Provisions

1. The promises that God gave to Abraham included:

- **Personal promises to Abraham**
“I will bless you... I will make your name great.”
- **National promises to Abraham and his descendants**
“I will make you a great nation.” – a direct reference to ethnic and national political Israel
- **Universal Promises to Abraham and to all believers**
“You will be a blessing and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” – all who come to Christ by faith are considered descendants of Abraham (Romans 4:9-25)

2. The specific provisions included three primary promises:

A. Land – God first called Abram to a “land,” a new land in which the kingdom program of God would have a geographic “center.”

- “To your offspring (Seed) I will give this land” Gen 12:7
- “All the land you see I will give you and your offspring forever” Gen. 13:15
- “To your descendants I give this land” Gen. 15:18
- “The whole land that you see I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants” Gen. 17:8
- “Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies” Gen. 22:17
- “He has remembered His covenant forever, The word which He commanded to a thousand generations, the covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac (Gen. 26:2-3). Then He confirmed it to Jacob for a statute (Gen. 28:13), to Israel as an everlasting covenant, saying, ‘To you I will give the Land of Canaan as the portion of your inheritance.’ Psalm 105:8-11

“**The land** in Old Testament faith is not something indifferent that just as well be as not be. It is something that belongs to the complete relation of God to Israel...the land is a gift of Yahweh, the Lord of the land, who has led Israel out of Egypt in order to bring her to the place of rest...of all the promises made to the patriarchs it was that of the land that was most prominent and decisive.”²⁴

²⁴ W.D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land*, pg. 24, Berkeley Press; University of California, 1974

B. “Seed” (descendants) – In regard to general descendants

- “I will make you into a great nation.” Gen. 12:2
- “I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth.” Gen. 13:6
- “So your offspring shall be” Gen. 15:5
- “I will greatly increase your numbers,”
“You will be the father of many nations”
“I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and
kings will come from you:” Gen. 17:2, 4-6
- “Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation.”
Gen. 12:2 & 18:18
- “I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars of the sky.”
Gen. 22:17

“Seed” (descendent) -In regard to a specific descendent:

- “A son coming from your own body will be your heir.” Gen. 15:4
- “Then Abraham said to God, ‘Oh that Ishmael might live before you!’ But God said, ‘No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and will make him a great nation. But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you...’” Gen. 17:19-21
- “In your seed all the nations of the world shall be blessed”
Gen. 22:18
- “Now the promises were spoken to Abraham, and to his seed. He does not say ‘And to seeds,’ as referring to many, but rather to one, ‘And to your Seed,’ that is Christ.” Galatians 3:16
- “And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise.”
Galatians 4:28

“All the promises to the **“seed”** in Genesis are references to the physical descendants of Abraham. The line of the seed and its promise is narrowed to the one son of Abraham, Isaac. Later when Jacob and Esau were born, God choose Jacob to carry on the line through whom the blessings would come. While the promises to the “seed” must be limited to their application according to the Biblical context, it is clear that much of the general blessing attending the Abrahamic covenant such as the general blessing of God upon men of “all the families of the earth,” is larger in its application. It is anticipated that the seed

should be a channel of blessing and in particular this is fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ.”²⁵

Historically, the kingdom story is one of God’s blessing and “choosing” from Adam to Seth to Noah to Shem . Finally, God called Abram out of Ur to the land of Canaan and extends His covenant promise through Abraham to Isaac and then to Jacob. Abraham’s “Seed” would later be seen in King David and ultimately in Jesus Christ.

Theologically, Abraham continues the dictum to Adam to “be fruitful and multiply” not only physically but spiritually (by faith) from the center of the land and through the chosen covenant “seed.”²⁶

C. **Blessing - *Personal***

- “I will bless you and make your name great.” Gen. 12:2
- “I will surely bless you.” Gen. 22:17
- “To be your God and the God of your descendants...
I will be their God.” Gen. 17:7-8

Blessing – *Through Universal Influence*

- “You will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” Gen. 12:2-3
- “All nations on earth will be blessed through him.” Gen. 18:18
- “Your descendents will take possession of the cities of their enemies,” and “through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed.” Gen. 22:17-18

“Abraham himself has certainly been a **blessing** to all nations. The seed of Abraham, the nation of Israel, has been a great blessing as the channel of divine revelation and the historic illustration of God’s dealings with men.”²⁷ Through Israel came the Law, the prophets, and Messiah.

“The blessings promised to Abraham are holistic, that is, they cover the whole of human life and experience: physical, material, social, personal, (including mental and emotional), political, cultural, and religious.

²⁵ Walvoord, John F., *The Millennial Kingdom*, pg. 141, Zondervan, 1959

²⁶ Lanier Burns, *Eschatology*; Theology Course 406, Class notes, pg. 90, Dallas Theological Seminary Press, Fall 1997

²⁷ Walvoord, John F., *The Millennial Kingdom*, pg. 142, Zondervan, 1959

The religious **blessing** (seen in God's promise to be their God and they to be His people) is the key to the others for it was the breach between God and humanity that brought about the loss of other blessings in the first place. The restoration of a peaceful relationship with God requires an act of reconciliation, of redemption, of forgiveness. Such an act is implied in the very fact that God approached Abraham to bless him. But it is revealed more directly in the promise of an abiding relationship between God as the God of His people, and His people as the people of God. Just what that act of redemption would be required further revelation. Later we come to see that it is none other than the atoning death of Jesus Christ."²⁸

Questions:

In light of the fact that the modern nation of Israel is back in her "land" after a two thousand year absence, and in light of the fact that Jesus (the Seed) has come and provided salvation (blessings) to all who believe by faith, and understanding that Israel as a nation has not recognized her Messiah...some critical questions come up as a result of our review of the Abrahamic Covenant:

1. *Has the Abrahamic covenant been fulfilled in our day?*
2. *To what extent, if any, has the Abrahamic covenant been fulfilled in our day?*
3. *If not fulfilled now, then when?*
4. *If not fulfilled, then why hasn't it been?*
5. *What does the Abrahamic covenant have to do with the Revelation to John?*

Response:

The answer to all these questions can be answered by determining the nature of the Abrahamic covenant.

²⁸ Craig Blaising & Darrell Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, pg. 131, Bridgeport Books, 1993

Abrahamic Covenant – Conditional or Unconditional?

The question comes down to, “Has God made a promise to Abraham He is bound to keep?” The simple answer is “Yes He has.”

In the ancient Near East of Abraham’s day, there were “conditional covenants” known as “Suzerian – Vassal Treaties” in which the vassal (servant of the king) needs something from his master or king. This type of treaty favored the rights of the king and was usually initiated by the servant based on some need the king could meet. In order to obtain what he needs from the king, the servant had to obligate himself to perform or maintain certain conditions to protect the rights of the king. If the servant keeps his end of the bargain the king is then bound to keep his end of the bargain. This is also known as a “bi-lateral,” or two way treaty.

The other type of Old Testament treaty was known as the “Covenant of Grant” which is an unconditional promise that obligates a king to do something for his servant. “The Grant treaty often originated as a reward for loyalty and good deeds already performed, or as an inducement for future loyalty.”²⁹ “The Abrahamic Covenant is by nature, like other biblical covenants, a “grant” covenant in particular; a gracious commitment from God to fulfill a collection of promises for a chosen mediator.”³⁰

“This particular grant treaty to Abram is depicted simply as a binding promise – or better, a promissory oath – on the part of God. No particular conditions are attached to it...the giving of the promise itself is not made subject to conditions...the Patriarchial covenant thus rests in God’s unconditional promises for the future, and it asks the recipient only that he trust.”³¹

In Genesis 15, God initiates His “grant” covenant with Abram which He’d earlier alluded to in Genesis 12. The Abrahamic Covenant was a “unilateral” oath, a one way deal by God alone. It was formalized in Genesis 15 where we begin by noting “The Lord came to Abraham in a vision,” and vs.15:12 notes, “a deep sleep fell on Abraham.” Genesis 15:9-18 further describes a scene where animals are cut in half and placed in such a way that a pathway is created between the severed halves. Following this, Abraham witnessed “a smoking oven and flaming torch pass between these pieces.” This follows the cultural norm of grant treaties in Abraham’s day.

In order to enact a grant treaty, two covenant makers would first agree on terms of the covenant. To solidify the covenant, these two people walked hand in hand between the severed halves of the animal sacrifice which meant that each party was committing himself by blood oath to the fulfillment of certain terms being agreed on.

²⁹ Moshe Winfield, “The Covenant Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, pg. 184-203, 1970

³⁰ Cleon Rogers, “The Covenant with Abraham and its historical setting.” *Bib Sac* 127, pg. 252, 1970

³¹ John Bright, *Covenant and Promise*, pg. 25-26, Westminster, Philadelphia, 1976

“This type of covenant signified two things. First, it signified that if either participant in the covenant failed to fulfill his portion of the agreement, his blood would be poured out like the blood of the animal that bound them in covenant agreement. In other words, it was a covenant that carried a death penalty for failure to fulfill its obligations.”³² This type of Grant covenant was also known as a “blood covenant.”³³

Any single animal would have been significant enough to enact a blood covenant, but the sheer number of animals in Abraham’s vision stressed the importance of what was being promised.

On this unique occasion, Abram was not a participant in the covenant; rather he was a sleeping (passive) recipient of the covenant.”³⁴ In Genesis 15, Abram’s involvement in the agreement, even in a dream state, ends before the agreement is formally finalized. Abram was a passive observer who saw only God’s “flaming torch” pass between the halves. In other words, God made a “one way deal” on an oath of death that should He fail to keep the terms of the agreement (the terms being “land, seed, and blessing”) He would become as the sacrificed animals, dead...or worse, He would no longer reign as King of kings. That possibility did not exist then, nor does it exist now. In this covenant, a sovereign God made a deal that He was willingly bound to keep and which He knew He alone had the power to maintain over the course of human history. Therefore, He was taking no risk at all because fulfillment of the covenant in no way depended on anything mankind would or would not do in the future.

“The way the Abrahamic covenant was unilaterally formalized in Genesis 15 (by God alone) supports its unconditionality.”³⁵

Let’s go back to our questions:

- *Has the Abrahamic covenant been fulfilled in our day?* – partially
- *To what extent, if any, has the Abrahamic covenant been fulfilled in our day?* – only partially
- *If not fulfilled now, then when?* – partially now / fully later
- *If not fulfilled, then why hasn’t it been?* – not fulfilled due to Israel’s disobedience in not acknowledging their Messiah
- *What does the Abrahamic covenant have to do with the Revelation to John?* – Revelation is about the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant with the Nation of Israel – the land, the Seed, and the blessing are fully realized by national Israel in the Millennial Kingdom (as well as with all who believe from every tribe, tongue, and nation)

Remember that God has unconditionally bound Himself to this end.

³² *ibid*

³³ Pentecost, Thy Kingdom Come, pg. 56-57

³⁴ Pentecost, Thy Kingdom Come, pg. 58

³⁵ Lanier Burns, Eschatology; Theology Course 406, Class notes, pg. 93, Dallas Theological Seminary Press, Fall 1997

The Mosaic Covenant – Israel’s *Conditional* Covenant

There is a connection between obedience to God and enjoying the provisions of the Covenant.

God’s promise to Abraham began when God said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, and from your relatives, and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you...(Gen. 12:1).” The question always comes up as to what would have happened had Abram not heeded the call to go to Canaan? The fact is, he did go and there now exists the Abrahamic Covenant.

It is however, important to observe the relationship of obedience to this covenant program. Whether there would be a covenant in the first place depended on Abram’s obedience to this initial command to “go.” But, once he obeyed, “the covenant was instituted and did not depend on Abraham’s further obedience but on the promise of the One who instituted it.”³⁶

The Promise has always been received by faith. Obedience has always been asked of those who have believed by faith.

“In Romans 4 and Galatians 3, Paul argues that Genesis 15 is foundational for understanding the promissory nature of the Abrahamic Covenant. The blessing was not given to Abraham because he performed certain works. Rather, he received it through faith. God gave Abraham a promise. Abraham believed God. God counted him righteous and formalized the promise to him as a grant covenant.

A grant covenant does not however, exclude obligations from the overall relationship of a recipient to his master. Disobedience or disloyalty are punishable offenses. The punishment may take away the enjoyment of the grant temporarily (imprisonment) or permanently (capital punishment.) Yet the unconditional nature of the grant covenant guarantees the legal possession of the gift even during the period of such punishment. If the servant dies, his descendants inherit the grant promises.

There are some occasions where Abraham seems to fall short of being “blameless.” This is nowhere more evident than his foray with Hagar which resulted in the birth of Ishmael. Yet the covenant remained. At other times his obedience is unmatched, such as when he agreed to offer Isaac as a sacrifice to God. Nevertheless, Abraham is generally described as one who obeyed God.

Abraham’s obedience to God’s commandments does function as the means by which he experienced God’s blessing on a day to day basis. These commandments function as conditions for Abraham’s historical experience of divine blessing, for as he obeys God, God blesses him more and more. But these obligations do not condition the fundamental intent to bless Abraham. They condition the “how” and “when” of the blessing.”³⁷

³⁶ Dwight Pentecost, *Thy Kingdom Come*, pg. 61, Kregel, 1995

³⁷ Bock & Blaising, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, pg. 133-134, Bridgeport Books, 1993

Israel is only enjoying partial fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Genesis 17:17 establishes the covenant as an everlasting covenant to the descendants of Abraham. The abiding nature of the Abrahamic Covenant provides the ultimate revelation of its unconditionality. While God imposes various obligations on Abraham's descendants, biblical history records numerous failures on their part in meeting them. Nevertheless, the covenantal relationship remains in force through the generations, guiding the history of redemption to a blessed conclusion."³⁸

The Mosaic Covenant – A Unifying Covenant that Established a Nation.

“The Law given to Moses at Sinai came 430 years after Abraham and at the time the people of the Exodus needed to come together as a people. One of the functions of the Law was to be a unifying principle that made possible the establishment of the nation of Israel, which was made up primarily of the physical descendants of Abraham.

In response to the instruction given by Moses concerning the things God had revealed, the nation voluntarily submitted to the authority of the Law. Apart from voluntary submission to a unifying principle there could have been no nation. From a divine standpoint, the people redeemed by the blood of an innocent Passover lamb, who began by walking by faith, became a nation when the people voluntarily submitted to the Law.”³⁹

However, Deuteronomy 28 stated that if the people abandoned the Law, God would deliver them into the hands of foreign Gentile nations. The Prophet Jeremiah warned the people of the same consequences, and thus Babylonian captivity by which Israel lost her national identity became a sad reality. It is equally significant that until Israel submits to the authority of the law of her Messiah-King, she will not be recognized by God as a nation again.

In fact, Israel never has fully enjoyed the full extent of the provisions at any point in their past history, even during the peak of national prominence during the reign of King David. However, Israel's past disobedience has not voided the provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant.

They are presently enjoying the provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant in that they are back in part of their historic land. Some believing Jews are also enjoying the blessings of the AC through the redemptive work of the Seed of Abraham.

The fact that they are enjoying any part of the covenant in our day demonstrates the ongoing nature of the covenant. It better demonstrates the faithfulness of God in keeping His promise to His covenant people.

The Apostle Paul spent three chapters in Romans (9, 10, and 11) explaining Israel's past, present, and future position in regard to this covenant. As Paul says in Romans 11:1; “God has not rejected His people has He? May it never be!”

God has always had a faithful “remnant” within the nation as He does today. One day He will rule over redeemed Israel as her Messiah-King in fulfillment of His promise to Abraham.

³⁸ *ibid*, pg. 134-135

³⁹ Pentecost, They Kingdom Come, pg. 90

The Palestinian Covenant – Deuteronomy 30:1-10 Enlarges the “Land” aspect of The Abrahamic Covenant

Chapter 30:1-10

Restoration Promised

“So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call *them* to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, (2) and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, (3) then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you.

(4) “If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. (5) “The LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.

(6) “Moreover, the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live. (7) “The LORD your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you. (8) “And you shall again obey the LORD, and observe all His commandments which I command you today. (9) “Then the LORD your God will prosper you abundantly in all the work of your hand, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your cattle and in the produce of your ground, for the LORD will again rejoice over you for good, just as He rejoiced over your fathers; (10) if you obey the LORD your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul.

At this point in their history, we find that the Children of Israel, the physical seed of Abraham, facing a crisis in their national existence. They are about to pass from the proven theocratic leadership of Moses into the unproven leadership of **Joshua**. As they remembered God’s words to Abraham, “The whole land of Canaan, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you,” (Gen. 17:7) they must have had some questions about what was about to happen.

The promised land was currently occupied by Israel’s enemies who had already demonstrated they didn’t want to be invaded. There was no going back to Egypt and to slavery. They must have wondered about whether the land would ever really be theirs? Did the conditions of the Mosaic Covenant, which they’d already violated, set aside the land promise of the Abrahamic Covenant? Could these desert wanderers ever hope to take permanent possession of the land before them in the face of pagan opposition?

Moses set the record straight and repeated the land promise on the Plains of Moab before this new generation of Israelites began their conquest and occupation of the land.

As Dr. Dwight Pentecost points out in his book, Thy Kingdom Come;

“Great importance is attached to this covenant because it reaffirmed to a new generation of Israelites, in no uncertain terms, their title deed to the land of promise. In spite of unfaithfulness and unbelief – as had occurred so frequently in Israel’s history from the time of the promise to Abraham until the conquest of Canaan, - the covenant was not nullified or abrogated. The land was still theirs by promise.

Further, the introduction of the conditional Mosaic Covenant, under which Israel was then living, could not and did not set aside the original gracious promise concerning the purposes of God. This was the basis of Paul’s argument when he wrote, ‘The Law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise.’ (Gal. 3:17)

This covenant was a confirmation and enlargement of the original Abrahamic Covenant, which promised land, seed, and blessing. **The Palestinian Covenant, in fact, amplified the “land” features of the Abrahamic Covenant.** And the amplification, coming after willful unbelief and disobedience in the life of the nation, strongly proves that the original promise was given to be fulfilled in spite of disobedience.”⁴⁰

Portions of this covenant have already been fulfilled literally. Israel has experienced its historic dispersions as judgments for unfaithfulness. Israel has also experienced restorations to the land and now awaits its final restoration. Israel’s history abounds in examples of her enemies who have been judged. These partial fulfillments – all of which were literal fulfillments – indicate a future literal fulfillment of the unfulfilled portions in the same way.

Some argue that this covenant was conditional because of the statements in Dt. 30:1-3 that includes the words, “when...then.” We need to observe however, that the only conditional element here is the ‘time’ element. The program itself is certain; but the time when this program will be fulfilled depends on the conversion of the nation. A conditional time element does not make the whole program conditional.”⁴¹

⁴⁰ *ibid*, pgs. 102-103

⁴¹ *ibid*, pg. 105

The ramifications of the fall of man are never more clearly seen than in the lives of the kings of Israel and Judah.

God's desire to work through a godly theocratic ruler is constantly frustrated by evil kings who lead the people toward evil.

Through Abraham's "Seed," also a descendant of David, the perfect and final Kingdom administrator will come and rule.

He will rule in a new way as spelled out in the New Covenant with Israel.

Kingdom History from Joshua to David – Theocratic Rulers

Moses assumed the theocratic leadership of the wilderness generation who “provoked God in the day of trial in the wilderness, whose fathers tested God, and saw God’s works for forty years...who always went astray in their hearts and did not know God’s ways...and God swore in His wrath, they shall not enter My rest (i.e. promised land; Hebrews 3:7-11).”

Joshua used the same method of theocratic administration Moses had used and as a result, “Israel served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and the elders who outlived him... (Josh. 24:31).” The Law was their guiding principle for living, though salvation was still by grace through faith in the forgiveness provided through blood sacrifices of the Lord.

Later, the transition between the death of Joshua and his elders was done by appointing judges who continued the work done under Joshua. However, “Then Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals (Judges 2:11).”

As Judges 21:25 states, “In those days everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

Israel’s Judges: It is then noted that “the Lord raised up judges (Judges 2:16)” who were directly chosen by God. Genesis 18:25 said the “God Himself is to be the judge of all the earth.”

God is presented as Israel’s king Who ruled indirectly through judges (examples would be Samson, Gideon, and Samuel). These judges were to administer the Law and keep the people in subjection to God through discipline. The judges were instruments God used to bring the people to confession and repentance so there could be restoration and deliverance from oppression. The judges were used in battle to lead Israel to victory over their enemies and to restore them to the land. These judges had no dynastic rights, they could not be elected, and did not succeed one another. As one judge died, God raised up another to take his place.

During this extended time in Israel’s history (approximately 400 years), God exercised His authority through the judges. This preserved the nation and eventually ushered in a new form of theocracy – the monarchy, or theocracy administered through kings.⁴²

Theocratic Kingdom Rule through the Kings

Samuel was a major transitional figure in the kingdom of God on earth. He was the last of the judges and the first in a line of great prophets. He was instrumental in the transition from the period of the judges to the kings of Israel.

It was not God’s desire for Israel to have a king. God wanted to be their king. God told Samuel, “It is not you they have rejected, they have rejected Me from being king over them (1 Sam. 8:7).” The people did not want to wait for God to send a delivering judge. Instead of having to trust for deliverance through His means, they wanted a king who would ride to war and deliver them. A king was thought to save them a step in the process of confession, repentance, and restoration as with a judge.

⁴² *ibid*, pg. 129-130

“Samuel played an important part in the development of the theocracy.

As God’s prophet he was the instrument God used to set Saul apart as king. Later Samuel would pronounce judgment on Saul because of his failure to fulfill the functions of the delegated administrator in God’s kingdom. Samuel would seek out David, anoint him as the new king and the one through whom God’s covenanted program would come to its fulfillment.”⁴³

⁴³ *ibid*, pg. 136

The Davidic Covenant – 2 Samuel 7:10-16 Enlarges the “Seed” aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant

2 Samuel 7:10-16

God’s Covenant with David

(8) “Now therefore, thus you shall say to My servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel. (9) “I have been with you wherever you have gone and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name, like the names of the great men who are on the earth. (10) “I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly, (11) even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you. (12) “When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. (13) “He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. (14) “I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, (15) but My loving-kindness shall not depart from him, as I took *it* away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. (16) “Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.” (17) In accordance with all these words and all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.

God’s Covenant with King David

The ‘seed’ promise contained in the Abrahamic Covenant was made the center and nucleus of the Davidic promise. It is through the Davidic Covenant that the ‘seed’ promises in general and the ‘seed’ line of David in particular – including his kingdom, his descendants, and his throne - are amplified.

The provisions of the Davidic Covenant include the following:

- David is to have a child, yet to be born, who will succeed him
- The throne of his kingdom will be established forever
- David’s house, throne, and kingdom will be established forever.

The essential features of the Davidic Covenant are found in four words in

2 Samuel 7:16: *House, Kingdom, Throne, and forever.*

- **House** = David’s physical descendants
- **Kingdom** = the political body of people David would rule and reign over
- **Throne** = the right to rule and the authority to rule as king
- **Forever** = any time during which David and the descendants of Abraham exist. The authority of David’s kingship would never transfer to another line.

It is important to note that God’s covenant with David never said his line would be ongoing “continuously,” throughout history, just that it was “eternal.”

God's Covenant with King David Historic and Future Fulfillment

It is no secret that the nation of Israel, soon after David's son Solomon, would become two separate nations; the ten northern tribes made up the Nation of Israel and the two remaining tribes made up the southern kingdom of Judah. As with the other provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant, the covenant of God with David was unconditional. The only conditional element of this covenant was whether or not the descendants of David would continually occupy the throne or exercise the right to rule. Like Abraham, David knew that disobedience to the Mosaic Law would bring about discipline and temporary suspension of the privileges of kingdom life. Disobedience might bring about chastening, but it would never nullify the covenant.

It is evident that parts of the Davidic Covenant were fulfilled literally through the nation of Judah. They did enjoy the land, and the blessings of God despite their rebellion and ingratitude. One of David's "seed" occupied the throne in Solomon, Rehoboam and a line of kings down to the time of the Babylonian exile.

Disobedience throughout the history of the nation brought God's judgment down on both the northern and southern kingdoms. Assyria besieged the northern kingdom and took them into captivity in 722 B.C. Assyria was later overtaken by the Babylonians who took Judah captive in 586 B.C. Disobedience to the Mosaic Law caused the nation to forfeit their covenant privileges and go into foreign exile.

Despite being restored to the land under Ezra and Nehemiah, Israel never again rose to true independence and prominence in the way God promised. Following the rejection of Jesus Christ, the true King of Israel, the nation was cast out of the land. No ruler has sat on David's throne since Titus marched into Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and destroyed the temple. The people of Israel were dispersed for the next 1878 years until the United Nations partitioned the land of Palestine and created a Jewish homeland following the atrocities that befell the Jewish people of Europe during World War II.

Centuries after the nation divided after Solomon's reign, the Scriptures still abounded in promises concerning Israel's future possession of the land. While the prophets of Israel and Judah cried "turn, turn," the people rejected their message. In response, the prophets began to preach, "first the worst, then the best." (i.e. first exile, then later ultimate fulfillment of God's promises) This proves that God's eternal covenant with Abraham and David has not been fulfilled in total. Since the Davidic Covenant has not been fully fulfilled in Israel's history, and because of its unconditional character, there remains a future literal fulfillment of the covenant.

The Theocratic Kingdom under the Kings of Israel and Judah.

The problem with kings:

When we talk of the kingdom of God on earth, and God's decision to work through a divinely appointed theocratic administrator, we admire men such as Adam, Seth, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, and the judge Gideon in the history of Israel. These men all lived in obedience to the Lord in a time before the establishment of the monarchy of Israel and Judah.

To put it mildly, the people's idea of having a king reigning as God's theocratic administrator was a disaster! It is important we remember God's opinion of the whole concept which is recorded in 1 Samuel 8:7-22:

"The Lord said to Samuel, listen to the voice of the people...they have not rejected you but they have rejected Me from being king over them. Like all the deeds they've done since leaving Egypt – in that they've forsaken Me and served other gods – so they are doing to you...you shall solemnly warn them and tell them of the procedure of the king who will reign over them.

So Samuel said to the people, the king ...

- He will take your sons away to war
- He will take your sons to do his plowing and to make weapons of war
- He will take your daughters
- He will take the best of your fields and groves
- He will take a tenth of your profits
- He will take your best servants for himself
- He will take a tenth of your livestock
- You will regret your decision, but the Lord will not answer you...

But the people refused to listen to Samuel, so...

The Lord said to Samuel, 'appoint them a king.' 1 Samuel 8:7-22

The Record speaks for itself:

Under the United Monarchy:

- **King Saul** – "Samuel said to Saul, 'You have acted foolishly and have not kept the Lord's commandment...now your kingdom shall not endure. The Lord has sought a man after His own heart..." 1 Sam. 13:13-14
- **King David** – "David captured the stronghold of Zion...that is the City of David...so David lived in the stronghold and built all around it... David became greater and greater, for the Lord God of Hosts was with him." 2 Sam. 5:7 & 10
(Despite David's great leadership, we can see in 2 Samuel that Israel prospered, as did David personally... up until his sin with Bathsheba. Following the sin with Bathsheba, we see a steady decline David's personal life and in the nation during the end of David's reign until his death. (i.e. wars, famine, plague, and divine judgment for taking a census)
- **King Solomon** – David's son and choice for his replacement...

“Solomon sat on the throne of his father David and his kingdom was firmly established...now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind...men came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon...” 1 Kings 2:13 & 4:34

Solomon also built “a house to his Lord” (The Temple) yet confessed, “heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house...yet listen to the cries of Your people and to this house night and day...1 Kings 8:27-28 “and the Lord said...I have consecrated this house by putting My Name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually.” 1 Kg. 9:3

This is the peak of national prominence in the days of the Kings of Israel...from this point the history of the kings and the nation digressed.

Solomon leads the people poorly in that...

“King Solomon used forced labor to build the temple, and his own house, the wall of Jerusalem, Millo, Hazor, etc...and all the storage cities, and a fleet of ships...the weight of gold that came to Solomon was 666 talents of gold...the king made shields, and of beaten gold, and a throne of ivory overlaid with gold...and imported horses and chariots...” 1 Kings 9:15 -10:29

Solomon’s personal life declined in that he “loved many (1000) foreign women” against the Lord’s command not to marry women from foreign nations. “When Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away to other gods, and his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord his God...Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord...now the Lord was angry with Solomon...” 1 Kings 11:1-8

The Lord Divides the Kingdom

“The Lord said to Solomon, because you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, I will tear the kingdom from you and give it to your servant (Jehoboam) ...however, I will not do it in your days but I will tear it from your son (Rehoboam)...however, I will not take all the kingdom but **I will leave you with one tribe** which I have chosen (Judah).” 1 Kings 11:11-13

The Nation of Israel divides and it’s downhill from there.

King Rehoboam – “And Solomon died and slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of his father David, and his son Rehoboam reigned in his place.” 1 Kings 11:43

Jeroboam: “A valiant warrior and appointed by Solomon over all the forced labor of the house of Joseph.” Ahijah the prophet told Jereoboam, “Thus says the Lord, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon **and give you ten tribes.**” 1 Kings 11:28-31

The dispute between Rehoboam and Jeroboam splits the Kingdom.

- **The Southern Kingdom became known as “Judah.”**
- **The ten northern tribes retained the national title “Israel.”**

Blown Negotiations:

Upon hearing of God’s plan to take ten tribes away from his heir, Solomon
“sought to put Jeroboam to death.” 1 Kg. 11:40

When Jeroboam heard of Solomon’s death, he approached King Rehoboam
“saying, your father made our yoke hard; therefore lighten the hard service of
your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you.”
1 Kg. 12:4

“The Rehoboam...forsook the counsel of the elders and said to
Jeroboam...My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke...
I will discipline you with scorpions.” 1 Kg. 12:14

“When all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people...
departed to their tents...and Jeroboam reigned over them...
So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.”
1 Kg. 11:16-19

**2 Kings tells the ongoing story of a succession of Kings in both the
northern and southern kingdom who, “did evil in the sight of the Lord.”**

“**Ahaz**...sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, and even made his
sons pass through the fire”...he also refused to listen to the prophet Isaiah,
refused to trust God to relieve him of a military threat, and sought foreign
military alliances...this was the last true opportunity for Judah to be rescued
from eventual captivity.

“**Mannasseh**” a king so evil that Jews today will not speak his name in the
synagogue. Instead, they clear their throat and spit on the ground when he is
spoken of. He was the “Adolf Hitler” of ancient Judah.

The New Covenant **Enlarges the “Blessing” aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant**

Jeremiah 31:31-34

A New Covenant

(31) “Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, (32) not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. (33) “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. (34) “They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

Jeremiah spoke at the time of Nebuchadnezzar’s first invasion of Judah (606 B.C.).

The judgment of which Jeremiah spoke came on the nation because of their sin, just as it had the northern ten tribes a century earlier under the invading Assyrians.

“I have stuck you as an enemy would and punished you as would the cruel, because your guilt is so great and your sins so many...because of your great guilt and many sins I have done these things to you (Jeremiah 30:14-15).”

“As we have seen, the nation as seen in the lives of her kings, was unable to fulfill the obedience the Law required. For one, the Law was weak because it depended solely on the energy of the flesh (Romans 8:3). Further, the nation of Israel was characterized by God as being stiff-necked (Jeremiah 17:23) and hardened and obstinate (Ezekiel 3:7). If the nation was to experience the blessing of the covenant they would need forgiveness for sins, a new heart characterized by obedience, and empowerment from outside of themselves. The covenant given by the prophet Jeremiah guarantees these divine promises to Israel, as seen in Jeremiah 31:31-34.”⁴⁴

“The basis of the hope Jeremiah held out to a nation about to undergo deportation and exile was not that they would become strong in themselves, but rather the Lord would provide this new covenant which speaks to the divine enablement necessary for men to walk in obedience and again experience the full blessings of the covenant.”⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Dwight Pentecost, *Thy Kingdom Come*, pg. 164, Kregel, 1995

⁴⁵ *ibid*, pg. 168

The New Covenant with Israel *Unconditional and Eternal*

Since the New Covenant described in Jeremiah 31:31-34 is an enlargement of the “blessing” aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant, **this New Covenant is also eternal** in its promise and application. It is interesting to note that God told Abraham, “through you all the families of the earth will be blessed (Gen. 12:3).”

Israel was to be a missionary nation proclaiming the God of Israel as the one true God to every nation of the earth. The blessings of relationship with God and eternal life were theirs first, but not exclusively. There is a sense in which the church has experienced New Covenant blessings, but it must be pointed out that the Church is not Israel and does not replace National Israel in any sense in regard to the Abrahamic Covenant. We will address this issue later.

“This covenant – which the prophet says is a new covenant – stands in sharp contrast to the covenant God gave to the nation at Sinai. That covenant (The Law) defined the obedience God required as a prerequisite to blessing, but it provided no enablement (Romans 8:3). It was a conditional covenant.”⁴⁶

The New Covenant, on the other hand, **is an unconditional covenant**, as proven by the number of times God affirms, “I will” as He outlines all things he will perform through this covenant. It is wholly unconditional because it rests solely on the affirmation of what God Himself would do (did) through His Son, Jesus Christ. Moreover, the covenant is an eternal covenant. God said, “In My faithfulness I will reward them (Is. 61:8). In Ezekiel 37:26 God said, “I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant.”

Further, this covenant is based on an atoning blood sacrifice. The New Covenant guarantees a regathered, repentant, and redeemed Israel a converted heart as the foundation of all her blessings. This covenant makes necessary as its foundation a blood sacrifice acceptable to God which the Book of Hebrews states is “a superior sacrifice to the blood of bulls and goats.”

“Finally, concerning the coming of the king who will bring this covenant of blessings to Israel, the prophet Zechariah said, “He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will stem from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. As for you, because of My blood covenant with you, I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit (Zech. 9:10).” In spite of the disobedience of the nation, this covenant necessitates the continuation of the nation of Israel. Even continued disobedience cannot remove Israel from her covenanted position. The nation is also promised restoration to the land. Since this restoration is viewed as future in that the nation has not yet realized the extent of the geographic or redemptive aspects of this promise, the return of the nation from exile did not fulfill the provisions of this new covenant.”⁴⁷

⁴⁶ *ibid*, pg. 168-169

⁴⁷ *ibid*

Ezekiel Also Speaks of the New Covenant

Ezekiel 36:24-3

(24) “For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. (25) “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. (26) “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. (27) “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

(28) “You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God. (29) “Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness; and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you. (30) “I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, so that you will not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations. (31) “Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations.

(32) “I am not doing *this* for your sake,” declares the Lord GOD, “let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel!”

“If the nation (as well as you and I) was to experience the blessing of the covenant they would need forgiveness for sins, a new heart characterized by obedience, and empowerment from outside of themselves.”
Dr. Dwight Pentecost

He also makes an important point about the initiation of the New Covenant:
“This covenant is based on blood. The New Covenant guarantees Israel a converted heart as the foundation of all her blessings.”⁴⁸

The Book of Hebrews 8 & 9 alludes to the New Covenant and its True Mediator:

“We have a great high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens... He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as **He is the mediator of a better covenant**, which was enacted on better promises... ‘For this is the covenant I will make **with the House of Israel** after those days... I will put My laws into their minds and write them on their hearts and I will be their God... I will remember their sins no more.’”
From Hebrews 8 & 9

“But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through a greater tabernacle, not made with hands, not of this creation, and not through the blood of bulls and goats...but **through His own blood**, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption...For this reason **He is the mediator of a new covenant...and will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.”**

From Hebrews 8 & 9

⁴⁸ *ibid*

The Fulfillment of the Biblical Covenants *through Jesus Christ*

Jesus: The Basis of our Hope

Eschatology (the theology of future things) has everything to do with the present and future expectations of believers. Biblical prophecy should result in hope that grows from faith which leads to greater love for God and the welfare of others. We must never forget that our “blessed hope” is a hope in the final summation of God’s wise and loving activity throughout history. Our hope also reflects our longing for a final reckoning with the enemy of our hope. Prophecy reveals the fulfillment of God’s purpose for creation and foresees the fulfillment not only of creation’s purpose but ultimately, life’s true meaning.

Yet, faith is only as good as the One on whom it is focused, and on that One’s ability to deliver on His promises. This is why the author of Hebrews wrote that we should “fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith (Heb. 12:2).” Jesus is “The Son whom God appointed heir of all things, through whom He made the world. He is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High (Heb. 1:2-3).”

Jesus Christ is the center piece of creation, the covenants, redemptive history, the literal and visible coming kingdom, and the focus of our eternal existence. He is also the One through whom all the covenants we’ve discussed will be fulfilled. Without Him there would be no “Israel,” past, present, or future; no covenants; no promises; no hope; indeed no future at all.

The Revelation to John indicates that the political and earthly aspects of the Davidic kingship will be fulfilled in a literal way in the future through the millennial reign of Jesus Christ, David’s descendant who is therefore, the ultimate ‘Seed of Abraham.’ In fact, all aspects of the Abrahamic Covenant (land, Seed, and blessing) will be literally fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom when Jesus rules as the Davidic King of kings. Until that day, it is important that we see in Scripture the Davidic nature of Christ’s present position in heaven. His ruling activity “at the right hand of God,” provides a guarantee of the fulfillment of all aspects of the Davidic promise in the future, including the national and political fulfillment of that promise with ethnic and redeemed Israel.

Jesus: Source of New Covenant Blessings

Jesus of Nazareth, a descendent of David through whom the grant covenant with David has been confirmed, has been anointed by the Holy Spirit, raised from the dead, declared to be the Son of God, and made Lord and Christ in that He has already been enthroned at the right hand of God. The Lord said to David’s Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet (Ps. 110:1).’ In receiving these Davidic blessings in heaven, Jesus has thus become the heir of the blessings promised to Abraham. He mediates those blessings to others,

from both Israel and the Gentile nations. His victory through His finished work and His enthronement in heaven has already initiated the eventual fulfillment of the covenants. The wheels are already in motion toward the days John envisioned because of what Jesus has already accomplished.

In Christ, the Mosaic covenant (the Law) has also been fulfilled. The demands of the Law have been fulfilled in Christ, and a new era has begun with the initiation of a New Covenant which “writes the law on the hearts of men (Jer. 31).” Jesus Christ has served Israel and the nations by propitiating the curse of the Mosaic covenant (the Law – which extends to God’s fundamental curse against sin). His own death has provided the sacrificial basis for the New Covenant blessings which grants us redemption, renewal, and resurrection through faith.

The ‘blessing’ promised to Abraham comes to us in our day in the form of the blessings of the New Covenant mediated through Jesus Christ. A believing remnant of Israel and the faithful among the Gentile nations, receive this blessing equally, without distinction through faith in Jesus.

The present era is not the end. It looks forward to a future era in which the New Covenant will be completely fulfilled and its blessing fully received. The fulfillment will occur at the descent of Jesus from heaven. All the grant covenants will be fully realized at that time. The blessing in Him upon all who have believed by grace through faith, will be everlasting, and confirmed through the redemption that was God’s original plan for creation.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Craig Blaising & Darrell Bock, Progressive Dispensationalism

Israel and Judah's violation of the Mosaic Covenant, (the Law) eventually leads them into exile under foreign kings.

Their violation of the Law leads to a loss of the enjoyment of the provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant, temporarily.

During a 70 period of exile, a young prophet named Daniel interprets the dreams of a king and predicts the future of the world.

Daniel has a great deal to say about kingdoms both past and future.

Daniel – the exiled prophet *The “Front Door” to the Revelation to John*

“In those days the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed.”
Daniel 2:44

Daniel was a prophet who set the stage for John’s Revelation. As he interpreted King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, he spoke of kingdoms which would span much of human history. He also spoke of a kingdom that would go beyond human history.

Daniel said many other things which in and of themselves would provide the content for an entirely independent study. I’d like to briefly focus on three things in particular which Daniel addressed which are directly related to the Book of Revelation:

1. The “Kingdom which will never be destroyed;” vs. 2:44
2. The vision of the “Little Horn *and* the Ten horns” *from* Daniel 7
3. The prophecy of “70 weeks;” Daniel 9

1. “The Kingdom which will never be destroyed.” Daniel 2:44

Through the intervention of God, and Daniel’s faithfulness to God, this young exile found himself standing before a foreign king who “had dreams and whose spirit was troubled and whose sleep left him (vs. 2:1).” Scripture tells us the meaning of the king’s dream “was revealed to Daniel in a night vision (2:19)” by the “God of heaven Who reveals mysteries (2:28).” Daniel told the king his dream was about “things which will take place in the latter days...in the future... (2:27-30).” Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of “A single great statue which was large and of extraordinary splendor...the head of the statue was made of gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet of partly iron and clay (2:32-33).” Most commentators interpret the dream as a vision of four kingdoms, one of which was Nebuchadnezzar’s own kingdom.

In Daniel 2:36-43 we find Daniels interpretation of the four kingdoms:

1. The “head of gold” represented Babylon; Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom (2:38)
2. The “breast and arms of silver” represented the kingdom that followed Babylon, the kingdom of the Medes and Persians (538-333 B.C.)
3. The “belly and thighs of bronze” stood for Greece under Alexander the Great (333-63 B.C.)
4. The “legs of iron” and “feet partly of iron and partly of clay” represented the Roman Empire which followed Greece and extended into the centuries following the life of Christ on earth and the founding of the church.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Charles Ryrie, Ryrie Study Bible: NASB, footnotes *pg. 1350*, Moody Press, 1995

Dr. John Walvoord says of Daniel 2:

“Nowhere else in Scripture, except in Daniel 7, is a more comprehensive picture given of world history as it stretched from the time of Daniel, 600 years before Christ, to the consummation at the second advent of Christ.”⁵¹

Daniel speaks of the Roman Empire of the past:

“A single great statue... with its legs of iron... (2:32)”

“Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these pieces.” (2:40)

“The Roman legions were noted for their ability to crush all resistance with an iron heel. In spite of Roman law and Roman roads and civilization, the destructive work outweighed all else, so we see the double verb in vs. 2:40 ‘crush’ and ‘shatter.’”⁵²

“The legs of iron represent the Roman Empire. This fourth kingdom conquered the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great in 63 B.C. Though the Roman Empire divided into “two legs” (Western and Eastern {Byzantine} empires) it was still one empire. This empire was characterized by its strength, as iron is stronger than bronze, silver, and gold. The Roman Empire was stronger than any of the previous empires which it “crushed.” Rome in its cruel conquest swallowed up lands and peoples that had been parts of the three previous empires and assimilated those lands and peoples into itself.”⁵³

In 364 A.D., under Emperor Valentinian I, the Roman Empire was politically split into two empires; the Eastern Empire and its capital in Constantinople and the Western Empire had its capital in Rome. The Western Empire only lasted into the fifth century A.D. and the Eastern Empire lasted until 1453 A.D.

Daniel goes on in vs. 2:33 & 41-43 to speak of this fourth kingdom (Rome) as having “its feet made up partly of iron and partly of clay (2:33).” He says this kingdom will have the “toughness of iron mixed with common potter’s clay...thus, part of the kingdom will be strong and part will be brittle...and the two elements will not adhere to one another as iron does not combine with pottery (vs. 2:41-43).”

Robert Culver notes that Daniel’s image as a whole “indicates ‘a progressive division’ and ‘a progressive deterioration’ of Gentile sovereignty.”⁵⁴ “The empire that began as iron regressed to a state of clay mixed with iron. The Roman Empire was characterized by division...it never could unite the peoples it conquered to form a united empire. It was divided morally, culturally, and politically.”⁵⁵

⁵¹ John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: Key to Prophetic Revelation*, pg. 44, Moody, 1971

⁵² H.C. Leupold, *Exposition on Daniel*, pg. 61

⁵³ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Daniel: Bible Knowledge Commentary Vol. 1 OT*, pg. 1335

⁵⁴ Robert D. Culver, *Daniel and the Latter Days*, pg. 115-20

⁵⁵ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Daniel: Bible Knowledge Commentary Vol. 1 OT*, pg. 1335-36

Daniel speaks of the Revived Roman Empire of the future.

“Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff and the wind carried them away... But the stone that struck them became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.” Dan. 2:35

“In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.” Dan. 2:44

Daniel’s final description of Nebuchadnezzar’s statue included “feet partly of iron and clay.” Feet have five toes each, so altogether, it can be assumed that ten toes exist on two anatomical feet. Speaking in “kingdom terms” as Daniel has been doing, we can note that as a fact of history the old Roman Empire never consisted of “ten toes” or ten political subdivisions. “The familiar attempts by some commentators to find a ‘ten-toe stage’ of Daniel’s image in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. do not correspond to the actual facts of history and do not fulfill the ‘ten toe stage’ of the image.”⁵⁶ The Roman Empire of the past never consisted of ten separate political, geographic, or cultural regions which existed at the same time. In fact, one commentator has pointed out that during most of the history of ancient Rome, the empire “stood on one leg.”⁵⁷ However, when the hordes of invaders from the north conquered the western empire in the fifth century A.D., they did not unite to form another empire, but instead individual nations emerged, some of which continue into our day. But the Rome of the past never took on a ten nation form. According to Daniel’s prophecy, the time period of the two feet refers to a time when these two feet (with ten toes) will exist side by side and will be destroyed by one sudden catastrophic blow from heaven (v 2:44).

We can conclude that the “ten toes of iron and clay” represent some future revival of the old Roman Empire which will consist of ten regions whether geographic or political. This is why Daniel 2:44 speaks of “the days of those kings” referring to this ten nation federation of the future. In “those days the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed (2:44).”

“Daniel’s prophecy actually passes over the present age, the period between the first and second coming of Christ or, more specifically, the period between Pentecost and the rapture of the church.”⁵⁸

Daniel 7:24 speaks of “a fourth kingdom on the earth,” which “will devour the whole earth and tread it down...as for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise...” Charles Ryrie says this verse refers to “the final form of the Roman world power which will be a confederation of ten nations who will arise simultaneously in the tribulation days.”⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Walvoord, *pg. 72*

⁵⁷ Geoffrey R. King, *Daniel, pg. 49*

⁵⁸ Walvoord, *pg. 72*

⁵⁹ Charles Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible, NASB, pg. 1362, Moody, 1995*

Daniel refers to the Millennial Kingdom on Earth, and the Eternal State.

“The Kingdom which will never be destroyed,” mentioned in Daniel 2:44, is also a kingdom which is described as a “rock, not of human hands, that destroyed Nebuchadnezzar’s entire statue and became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. (2:35).” It “crushed and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever (2:44).”

In Scripture a rock often refers to Jesus Christ, Israel’s Messiah (Ps. 118:22; Isa. 8:14; 28:16; 1 Peter 2:6-8). God, who had enthroned Nebuchadnezzar and would transfer authority from Babylon to Medo-Persia, then to Greece, and ultimately to Rome, will one day invest political power in a King who will rule over all the earth, subduing it to His authority, thus culminating God’s original design for man (Gen. 1:27).

In Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, the smashing rock became a mountain (Dan. 2:35) that filled the whole earth. In Scripture a mountain is a symbol for a kingdom. So Daniel explained that the four empires which would rule over the land and people of Israel would not be destroyed by human means, but rather by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the striking Stone. When He comes He will establish His Messianic Kingdom promised to Israel through David (2 Sam. 7:16). At His coming He will subjugate all kingdoms to Himself thus bringing them to an end. Then He will rule forever in the Millennial Kingdom and in eternity.⁶⁰

This kingdom that “fills the whole earth” (Dan. 2:35) indicates the earthly realm of His kingdom. This kingdom that “will not be destroyed” (Dan. 2:44) and that “will endure forever” refers to an indefinite future of continuous existence. Since the kingdom that God establishes is itself earthly, yet endures forever, the term “kingdom” (*malku* in the Aramaic language of Daniel’s prophecy) itself must have both earthly and heavenly aspects. In Daniel 2, the kingdom begins within space-time history on earth and continues into the eternal state on the new earth (Rev. 21:1-3).⁶¹

⁶⁰ Pentecost, Daniel, pg. 1336

⁶¹ Walvoord, pg. 139

2. Daniel's vision of the "Little Horn and the Ten horns" from Dan. 7

"In the first year of Belshazzar (Nebuchadnezzar) of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind (Dan. 7:1)...and I saw a **fourth beast**, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was **different from all the other beasts** that were before it, and it **had ten horns**. While I was contemplating the horns, behold, **another horn, a little one**, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great boasts." Daniel 7:7-8

"Then I desired to know the meaning of the fourth beast... and the meaning of the ten horns that were on its head and the other horn which came up..." Daniel 7:19-20

"The future empire represented by this mongrel beast will crush and assimilate into itself three previous world empires, as ancient Rome did. We have already discussed why ancient Rome did not consist of ten "horns" at any point in its history. The "ten horns" according to Dan. 7:24 represent 10 kings who will emerge in the future. (Daniel 7:23-24 states this directly). When the "little horn" emerges it will have an insignificant beginning but in its growth it will be able to uproot other "horns." This little horn is to be known for its intelligence and blasphemous claims. Charles Ryrie directly relates that the "little horn" of Daniel 7 is the Anti-Christ of Revelation.⁶² The little horn of Daniel 8:9 is not the same "horn" in that it refers to the historical figure who was Antiochus Epiphanes, who came to power in 175 B.C. and plundered the temple in Jerusalem by sacrificing a pig on the altar.

Toward the end of the times of the Gentiles, worldwide authority will be exercised by this "little horn" who will seek to prevent Christ's rule on earth by destroying God's covenant people Israel (7:25). His short reign of seven years will be terminated by the second advent of Christ. At His coming Christ will establish His millennial kingdom on earth in fulfillment of God's covenant with Israel.

We know this is a future figure because no such ruler has ever attained worldwide status (7:23), or subdued three of ten kings who were ruling at the same time (7:24), or persecuted Israel for three and one half years (7:25) while she was in her homeland.⁶³

⁶² Ryrie, *pg. 1361*

⁶³ Pentecost, Daniel, *pg. 1354*

3. Daniel's Prophecy of "70 Weeks."

In Daniel 7:25 a time period is mentioned in which the Anti-Christ will be able to persecute the saints and speak out against the Most High. It is noted that this persecution will last **"for a time, times, and half a times."**

Pentecost notes that this refers to "three and one half years of the Great Tribulation, with a 'time' meaning one year, 'times' meaning two years, and 'half a time' meaning six months. This equals 1260 days in Revelation 12:6 and the 42 months in Revelation 11:2 & 13:5.⁶⁴

In Daniel 9:24 the prophecy of Daniel says;

"Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up the vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place."

Daniel was informed in a vision that God's program would be consummated in **70 "sevens."** Since Daniel had been thinking of God's program in terms of years, it would be most natural for him to think of these "sevens" as years. **A "week" to Daniel equaled seven years.** So, "70 sevens" (7 x 70) equals 490 years. The Jewish calendar accounts a year as 360 days, not 365 as our present calendar does.

Messiah is "cut off" (crucified) at the end of the 69th week (9:25 & 26).
 $62+7 = 69$ weeks.

You can observe the diagram on the next page which refers to these "weeks." This diagram corresponds, in Daniel's method of counting, to the time frame mentioned in Daniel 9:25-27.

It is important to note that an unspecified time "gap" exists between the very end of Dan. 7:26 and the start of Dan. 7:27.

This literary "gap" occurs between Daniel's 69th and 70th "week."

This "gap" is the church age of which we are now participating.

The 70th week for Daniel begins with the Tribulation period of Revelation.

⁶⁴ *ibid*, pg. 1354

When Abraham's 'Seed,' the Person of Jesus Christ, introduced Himself into the history of the world in days past, He came and offered His kingdom to the Nation of Israel.

Israel rejected that kingdom offer. As a result, the Gospel of Matthew has much to say about the change in the kingdom program of God.

Paul, in the Book of Romans, takes time to explain Israel's past, present, and future position in God's kingdom program in light of their rejection of God's Son, and His kingdom offer in the past.

The Gospel of Matthew

The Change in the Kingdom Program

Matthew's gospel is Jewish at heart. It is for the Jewish people, about the Jewish nation, and presents the Jewish Messiah. Matthew recorded selected events from the life and ministry of Jesus Christ in order to confirm to a Jewish audience that Jesus is indeed the Messianic King.

We all know the nation and its leaders rejected Jesus as Lord and Messiah during his first advent. The Jewish leadership conspired with Roman, Gentile authorities to have Christ crucified. In terms of the kingdom program, **Matthew explains the change in the kingdom program in the present age in light of Israel's rejection of her King.**

"Matthew deals primarily with the life of Jesus Christ as fulfilling Old Testament prophecies relating to the coming King, and, on the other hand, it explains why the prophecies relating to the **kingdom of Christ on earth are delayed** in fulfillment until the second coming of Christ."⁶⁵

Matthew is a gospel account of Jesus offering the kingdom program to Israel in the first twelve chapters. The entire book turns, as does human history, on the fact that **the leadership of the nation rejects Jesus' offer of the kingdom.** When they accuse Jesus of doing a miracle "by the power of Satan," Jesus responds by saying that what they have done is "unpardonable" in that the leadership has "blasphemed the Spirit." It is at this point that **Jesus goes to the Gentiles and offers them the kingdom** as well as to the believing remnant of Israel. It is from this point (Matt. 12ff) and to the end of the gospel that Jesus speaks in parables so that His message of the kingdom is veiled to those who won't believe, and understood by those who by faith receive His kingdom offer.

"Clearly then Jesus is portrayed not only as the Christ, but as the royal Messiah."⁶⁶

"The royal aspect of Jesus' career is stressed in Matthew. Not only was He descended from royal stock, but in infancy He was also the recipient of gifts such as would be given a king – gold, frankincense, and myrrh (2:11). His famous Sermon on the Mount was really the inaugural address of a king, embodying the essential principles of a new policy. **His conflict with evil was the clash of two antagonistic kingdoms** (12:26-27). The parables of chapter 13 are the 'parables of the kingdom.' The transfiguration was a sample of the Son of Man coming in His kingdom (16:28, 17:1, 2), and from the transfiguration to the Passion in Jerusalem Jesus proclaimed insistently that He would come again "in His kingdom (20:20-23; 25:31-46)."⁶⁷

⁶⁵ John F. Walvoord, *Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come. A commentary on the first gospel.* Pg. 9

⁶⁶ Stanley Toussaint; *Behold The King; A Study of Matthew,* pg. 21

⁶⁷ Merrill C. Tenney; *The Genius of the Gospels,* pg. 53

Matthew 24 – “Signs of the End of the Age”

Matthew 24 is one of four major discourses of Jesus in the gospels. It is known as ‘The Olivet Discourse,’ simply because it was delivered on the Mount of Olives. Matthew 24 follows a scathing dialogue Jesus had with the Pharisees in the previous chapter. He widely condemned their hypocrisy and false religion based on works. As Jesus and His disciples walked past the Temple He asked, “Do you see these things? Truly I say to you that not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down. (Matt. 24:2).” This prophecy was later fulfilled when Roman legions under Titus marched into Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple in 70 A.D. But that day, the disciples viewed the Temple as a sign of Jewish solidarity, of their religious life, and of God’s blessing. They wondered how the Temple’s destruction related to the promise of the coming kingdom and their hope that Jesus would reign over the nation of Israel?

It is then that the disciples ask Jesus, “When will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming and the end of the age (24:3)?”

It is important to note that “those who believe that the rapture, or translation of the church, occurs before the time of trouble at the end of the age **do not** believe that the rapture is in view at all in this discourse. The rapture was first mentioned by Jesus in John 14:1-4, the night Jesus was crucified, and sometime after the Olivet Discourse.”⁶⁸ The rapture is revealed in even more detail in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4. The Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24 is in some sense a summary of the period of the tribulation as depicted in Revelation 4 -19.⁶⁹

Matthew 24 can be subdivided according to the following outline:

24:1-3; Jesus’ pronouncement and the disciples’ questions

24:4-14; The course of the present age and *general signs of the age*:

false Christs (v4-5); war (v6-7); famines (v 7); pestilence (v7); earthquakes (v7); martyrs (v8-10); false prophets (v 11); increasing evil, loss of love (v12); worldwide preaching of the gospel of the kingdom (v13-14).

“Taken as a whole, these 10 verses itemize general signs which mark the progress of the age and indicate that the end is approaching. Although they are increasing with growing intensity, they do not constitute a direct answer to the question of the “sign” of the coming of the Lord.”⁷⁰

24:15-25; Sign of the Great Tribulation – “*The abomination of desolation*” (v15)

Dr. John Walvoord considers Matthew 24:15-22 the most important portion of the discourse and is crucial to understanding what Christ reveals about the end of the age.⁷¹

24:26-31; Second Coming of Christ – *preceded by astral phenomenon*

“He will appear in the sky...coming with power and great glory”

⁶⁸ Walvoord, *pg. 181*

⁶⁹ *ibid*

⁷⁰ *ibid, pg. 184*

⁷¹ *ibid, pg. 185*

Romans 9, 10, & 11

Israel's past, present, and future Position

The Apostle Paul ended Roman 8 with some of the most beautiful words and assurances in all of Scripture.

“In all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him Who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God...(8:37-39)”

Up until this point, any good Orthodox Jew of the first century would have given a big old hearty “Amen” to Paul’s proclamation. Of course, they would part ways on the most critical portion of this passage which says;

“...which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Nevertheless, a first century Jew, now facing a new religion in Christianity which is rapidly gaining popularity and opposition at the same time, might look at Paul’s words and remember the day when Judaism was the talk of the town.

An Orthodox Jew might look at these words and respond;

“Oh yea? Nothing can separate us? We used to be the big dogs around Jerusalem... we used to be the ones thought of as God’s people on earth. Things have changed!”

Paul, as if prompted by his “brethren, *his* kinsmen according to the flesh (9:3),” responds with three chapters explaining Israel’s past, present, and future position in light of the change in the kingdom program due to the rejection of their Messiah.

Romans 9: in regard to Israel’s past.

Israel did not pursue the kingdom by faith.

Israel, “to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ...” vs. 9:4-5

“But it is not as though the Word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all descendents because they are Abraham’s descendents... (v9:6-7)...What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith.”

Romans 9:30-32a

Romans 10: in regard to Israel's present position.

Israel needs the salvation only Christ provides by faith, but they continue to reject His word and so miss the kingdom of God.

Paul's main concern, his "heart's desire and prayer to God is for their salvation ...for they have a zeal for God... but not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God (10:1-3)."

"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ...but I say, surely Israel did not know did they? But as for Israel, He says, 'all day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.'"
Romans 9:17, 19, 21

Romans 11: in regard to Israel's future.

The extent of Israel's rejection is only temporary. (vs. 11:1-10)

Some Jews are included, the 'remnant according to God's gracious choice (vs. 5)' who already believe by faith, while the rest were "hardened (v7)" to the message of the gospel.

The purpose of Israel's rejection was to bring Gentiles into the kingdom program. (vs. 11:11-24)

"By Israel's transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous...(v11)...they were broken off that Gentiles might be grafted in...they were broken off for their unbelief (vs. 12)...and Israel, if they do not continue in their unbelief, they will be grafted in again, for God is able to graft them in again (v23)... a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, and so all Israel will be saved 'when' the Deliverer comes from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. This is My covenant with them, when, I take away their sins (v 25-27)."

"Israel's hardening is 'partial' (Jews are being saved by faith in our day) and 'temporary' (until they acknowledge Jesus at His second coming). "The fullness of the Gentiles" is a reference to the full number of non-Jewish Gentile believers who will be saved during the church age and tribulation period. After that, God will turn again to the Jewish people and will save "all Israel" at the Lord's return (v11:26)."⁷²

⁷² Ryrie, Ryrie Study Bible; NASB: Footnote on Romans 11:25, pg. 1808

Present Day Israel and Her Ancient Homeland *“Isaiah 66:7-9; The Rebirth of Israel”*

- 7 “Before she travailed, she brought forth;
Before her pain came, she gave birth to a boy.
- 8 “Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things?
Can a land be born in one day?
Can a nation be brought forth all at once?
As soon as Zion travailed, she also brought forth her sons.
- 9 “Shall I bring to the point of birth and not give delivery?”
says the LORD.
“Or shall I who gives delivery shut *the womb*?” says your God.

The subject of prophecy is “Zion,” a metaphorical reference to Jerusalem pictured as a “mother” (v8). As a pregnant woman, Isaiah pictured “Zion” delivering a baby without pain. She would give birth to a boy before she began experiencing labor pains. This is, of course, the opposite of what usually happens. It seems that the boy is the nation of Israel. Israel’s return to the land will be so remarkably quick that it will be like a woman giving birth to a son before (v7) or as soon as (v8) she has any labor pains.

Israel will come back into existence quickly and painlessly through a supernatural work of God at the time of Messiah’s second coming. He will recreate Israel as a nation after Antichrist and the combined Gentile nations of the world have sought to destroy her (Dan. 11:40-45; Rev. 12).

It is easy to assume that the modern present day nation of Israel may have fulfilled this prophecy. Yet, one could hardly say that the Israel of the present day came into being without “birth pains,” although one could say that modern Israel is presently, though partially, enjoying the “land” provision of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Indeed, the holocaust was so horrific in nature that it garnered sympathy for the Jewish people worldwide, prompting the United Nations to partition the Land of Palestine into two sections, with one set out as a Jewish homeland. Modern Israel was born on May, 14, 1948, but the ‘new Israel’ will be ‘born in a day’ when they believe on Jesus Christ.⁷³

It is interesting to hear an Israeli’s perspective on that day in May, 1948 when the Jews again were home in the land. It is surely a reflection of what the Millennial celebration will entail when Jesus is ruling from David’s throne in Jerusalem.

“In the afternoon of Saturday, November 29, 1947, in a cavernous gray building that had once housed an ice-skating rink, in Flushing Meadow, New York, the delegates of fifty-six or the fifty-seven members of the General Assembly of the United Nations were called upon to decide the future of a sliver of land set on the eastern rim of the Mediterranean. Half the size of Denmark, harboring fewer people than the city of

⁷³ Thomas Constable, Class Notes on Isaiah, DTS, pg. 294-95

St. Louis, it had been the center of the universe for the cartographers of antiquity, the destination of all the roads of man when the world was young: Palestine.

No debate in the history of the United Nations had stirred passions comparable to those aroused by the controversy over that land...before the General Assembly was a proposal to cut the ancient territory into two separate states...

In Jerusalem, the wire room of the Palestinian Broadcasting System brought the news of each nation's vote which was ripped from a teletype machine as it came in. "The General Assembly of the United Nations," the broadcaster read, "by a vote of thirty-three in favor, thirteen against and ten abstentions, has voted to partition Palestine.

Outside the night was still. From his balcony, Israel Rosenblatt stared with an almost mystic awe at the panorama spread out before him in the cool dark air: Suleiman's Citadel, the Tower of David, Old Jerusalem's walls, the domes of her churches and synagogues, her slender minarets all glowing with an alabaster sheen in the moonlight. From across the courtyard came the sounds of the first jubilant shouts of the Jewish nation.

Then, from some hidden court yard, a sound erupted in the night. It was the primeval bleating of a shofar, the ram's horn trumpet with which Joshua's hosts had laid down the walls of Jericho. Rosenblatt remembered the words of a solemn Yom Kippur prayer. "My God," he whispered, "the shofar has sounded our freedom at last!" From courtyards and synagogues all across the city, other shofars took up the call until that harsh and primitive sound seemed to claw apart the night...softly, almost imperceptibly, Rosenblatt began to mumble a prayer of thanksgiving."⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Larry Collins, *O Jerusalem*, pg. 37, Simon & Schuster, 1972

The next event on the prophetic calendar is the “catching up,” (Rapture) of the church.

We need to understand this great event prior to our study of the Revelation due to the fact that the rapture of the church is not mentioned in Revelation; it is assumed to have already taken place in Revelation 4.

The Rapture of the Church

Introduction: The next event on the prophetic calendar is the “catching up” of the church in the sky to meet the Lord and forever be with Him. Nothing needs to happen historically; nothing needs to be fulfilled prophetically; and nothing must occur spiritually in the lives of men and nations to clear the way for this great event. It could occur at any moment, and indeed, from the signs of the times, very well may occur before the end of our study on the subject. We could say that the rapture of the church is imminently close.

The “Rapture” of the church (1 Thess. 4:16-17) is a different event than “the second coming of Christ (Revelation 19).” While the differences will be spelled out below as we look at key passages on the subject, we can say that the “rapture of the church” refers to an event where Jesus comes “in the air” and calls the church from earth to the sky and then on to heaven. The “second coming” is an event where Jesus bodily returns to earth and touches the Mount of Olives as a prerequisite to establishing His kingdom on the earth. At the rapture, the church goes up from the earth. At the second coming, the Lord comes down to the earth. These are two separate events which occur seven years apart.

One of the most common misconceptions about the Rapture comes when we look at the Book of Revelation. The rapture of the church is mentioned only briefly in Rev. 2:25 where the church of Thyatira is told to “hold fast until I come,” and in Rev. 3:10-11 where Jesus said, “I am coming quickly.” No detailed or descriptive explanation of what the rapture includes is given by John in Revelation. However, it is heavily implied and assumed literarily beginning with chapter four of Revelation. There the scene switches from earth to heaven where worship around the throne of God is portrayed. It is assumed that the church has already been “caught up together in the clouds” and is in heaven enjoying the worship scene portrayed in Revelation chapters four and five. The rapture itself is discussed in several other important passages throughout the New Testament.

John 14:1-4; In the upper room, on the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus told His disciples, “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so I would have told you. If I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again and receive you to Myself**, that where I am, there you may be also.” It is interesting to note that John wrote both the Gospel of John and the Revelation.

In this passage the focus is:

1. Jesus going first to heaven to prepare for the arrival of His disciples;
2. Jesus coming back to receive His disciples to Himself
3. Jesus bringing His disciples to be where He is, in heaven.

Most conservative scholars would say that the phrase “I will come again,” in John 14 refers to the Rapture of the church when Christ will return for His sheep.⁷⁵ This is not to deny that John uses “coming” in more than one sense, nor that in a very real sense Jesus comes to His followers in the here and now. But the thought is not confined to this life. Now and then John looks forward to the ‘Parousia’ (literally His, ‘*being by*,’ meaning ‘*presence, coming or arrival*.’).⁷⁶

While the language used of Jesus’ coming back in various places in the New Testament refers to different things: sometimes to Jesus’ return after His resurrection, sometimes to Jesus’ coming to them by the Spirit after He has been exalted to the glory of the Father, and sometimes to His coming at the end of the age,⁷⁷ it is used in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-16 to designate His coming to raise the righteous dead and catch believers up to be with Him.⁷⁸ This will be the next key passage we examine.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18; “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep (died). For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first (be resurrected). Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore, comfort one another with these words.”

“It is not too much to say that 1 Thessalonians 4-5 is probably the most important passage dealing with the rapture in the New Testament.”⁷⁹ The event here described includes a return of Christ in the air, a resurrection of the dead in Christ, a rapture of living believers, and a reunion with those who have died.⁸⁰

The believers in Thessalonica were concerned about the status of fellow believers who had already died. How would the dead fit into the prophetic calendar of events? Paul makes clear that at the future rapture of the church, when Christ comes He will bring with Him those who are ‘asleep’ in Christ. By this He was referring to Christians who had died and whose souls had gone to heaven. When Jesus returns from heaven to the sky (air) above the earth, He will bring those souls with Him. This will make possible the reentry of these returning souls (a phenomenon explained in 1 Cor. 15) into their suddenly resurrected bodies; and together with those living saints who are ‘caught up’ from the earth, they will together meet the Lord in the air. All believers both past and present will meet the Lord in the air in their resurrected and ‘glorified’ bodies. These will all be ‘immortal’ at this event.

⁷⁵ Walvoord & Zuck, Bible Knowledge Commentary; John 14:3-4, pg. 322

⁷⁶ Leon Morris, The Gospel According to John, NICNT, pg. 568

⁷⁷ D.A. Carson, The Gospel According to John, PNTCS, pg. 488

⁷⁸ Walter L. Elwell, Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, pg. 993

⁷⁹ John F. Walvoord, The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation, pg. 94

⁸⁰ Charles Ryrie, Ryrie Study Bible, NASB, footnote on 1 Thess. 4:16-17, pg. 1909

To summarize this incredible event we can conclude:

The coming of the Lord at the Rapture will be ‘with a loud command’ in keeping with the earlier revelation of the authority of Christ to raise the dead (Lazarus - John 5:25). The voice of the archangel Michael (Jude 1:9) will also be heard, probably as a shout of triumph. This will be a great victory for the archangel who had led the forces of the holy angels against Satan and the demonic world throughout the centuries. The final step will be ‘the trumpet call of God,’ the signal for the dead to rise and the living to be translated. At the command of Christ and the trumpet call, Christians who have died will be resurrected from the grave and living Christians on earth at the time ‘will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will forever be with the Lord.’⁸¹

To put it in simple terms, we will literally be at 30,000 feet in a nano-second without an airplane or a parachute. We will look around the sky at believers from every tribe, tongue, and nation who will be just as surprised as we are to be floating on the clouds. We will see friends and relatives there with us who have died before us. Best of all, we will see the Lord Jesus Christ who has called this spectacular meeting. We will be in ‘glorified bodies’ which are equipped to allow for our sudden ability to defy gravity, and death. With a sudden, “let’s go!” we will all follow Jesus to our heavenly ‘dwelling places’ and to the magnificent worship service going on before His throne in heaven (Rev. 4 & 5). We will enjoy heaven for the next seven years until we make a return trip to earth with the Lord in the lead, riding a magnificent white horse into battle (Rev. 19:11 & 14).

How all this is possible is better explained in 1 Corinthians 15:51-57;

‘Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep (those who are alive at the time of the rapture of the church will not experience physical death), but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and will be changed. For this perishable must put on imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.’ Here Paul deals with the nature of our resurrection bodies which we will inherit at the time of the rapture of the church. It is the same body in which we have lived and in which some have died; and it is the same body that is related to the one in which we spend our physical lives. It will be our same physical body but different in that it is like the immortal body in which Jesus came up from the grave. Paul says earlier, “it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body...brethren, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable (1 Cor. 15: 44 & 50).”

⁸¹ Walvoord, *pg. 201-02*

I hold that the rapture of the church occurs prior to the tribulation period described in Revelation 4-19. 2 Thessalonians 2 is often used to support the idea of a “post-tribulational” rapture of the church.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:1-9, Paul is concerned “with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him.” Some in the church of Thessalonica were concerned that the rapture had already occurred and they had missed it. They were concerned that they had been left behind and were now experiencing the events of the tribulation. This assumes that they’d read Paul’s first letter to that church and knew of his teaching on the rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4-5.

He said in 1 Thessalonians 5:2, “the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying peace and safety! Then destruction will come upon them suddenly...and they will not escape.” Here Paul focuses on the beginning of the “day of the Lord” which will begin suddenly in a moment of time. This is an indication the tribulation period will be preceded by the rapture of the church.

While life is becoming much more difficult for many in our nation, it has always been difficult for many believers in other nations who do not have the freedom to worship as we do. The terrible events which will occur during the tribulation has always caused some to assume they are living through it in the present day. In the last century many believed Adolf Hitler was the “anti-Christ.” While he is about as close as you can come to the real thing, he was not the “lawless one” described in the Book of Revelation. Paul went on in 2 Thessalonians 2 to describe certain events that must occur as the tribulation period begins. He is not saying the tribulation events must occur before the rapture of the church can occur.

Paul tells them not to be “quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit, or a message, or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.” In other words, “take it easy, you haven’t missed the rapture!”

Most importantly: We should never try to predict the date of the rapture.

Acts 1:6-11; When Jesus was leaving earth for heaven after his resurrection, His followers asked Him, “Lord, is it at this time that you are restoring the kingdom to Israel? He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority...’”

In the Olivet Discourse recorded in **Matthew 24:36**, Jesus said “Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, not the Son, but the Father alone...therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.”

We must be prepared to meet the Lord in the air whenever He returns.

“Therefore, comfort one another with these words.” 1 Thessalonians 4:1

The Revelation to John is:

- *The fulfillment of God's unconditional promise to Abraham, and other supporting covenants*
- *The realization of New Covenant blessings for the church and the faithful remnant of Israel*
- *The judging of the world and Satan*
- *The destruction of Satan's counterfeit kingdom*
- *The ushering in of the Millennial Kingdom*
- *The Coming of the New Jerusalem – and eternity*

- *The Visible Revelation of Jesus Christ*
 - *His Person*
 - *His Power*
 - *His Kingdom Program*

The Revelation to John

Author: The opening verse of the book states John wrote it (1:1, 4, 9; cf 22:8). Traditionally this John has been identified as John the Apostle, the son of Zebedee. From the first century to the present day almost all orthodox scholars have concluded that this means the Apostle John.⁸² Two notable exceptions were Luther and Zwingli, whose eschatological position followed that of Augustine. Some of the early church fathers, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, and Irenaeus wrote that the Apostle John experienced exile on the island of Patmos during the harsh reign of that warped personality Domitian (from 81 A.D. – 96 A.D.).⁸³ They wrote that the Roman government allowed John to return to Ephesus after the death of Domitian who died in 96 A.D. During the Olivet Discourse, (Matthew 24) Jesus was clearly anticipating what He was to show John in much greater detail more than six decades later as John was imprisoned on the Isle of Patmos.⁸⁴

Time of Writing: This is an important issue due to differing interpretive approaches to the Revelation to John. One point of view, the “Preterist” perspective, sees the book as describing the events that occurred when the Roman General Titus marched into Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and destroyed the temple.

Clearly the Revelation was written in a period when Christians were threatened by Rome, undoubtedly by pressure to make them recant their faith and accept the cult of emperor worship. Some maintain that the book was written during Emperor Nero’s persecution of Christians after the burning of Rome in 64 A.D. Some would identify the Antichrist as Nero. However, Nero was not the only Christian persecutor. The identity of the author as John the Son of Zebedee, and the date of Emperor Domitian’s reign and death which came later than the destruction of the temple, points to a date of writing that calls into question the proposed 70 A.D. date.

John himself clearly sets the date as during Domitian’s reign (81-96 A.D.) when he says, “I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God...” (Rev. 1:9). Consequently, many conservative interpreters date the writing of the book near 95 or 96 A.D. (e.g. J.N. Darby, Walvoord, Constable, Pentecost, Ryrie, Scofield, Chaffer, Graham, McGee, Ironside, Bock) It was in all probability the last book written in the Bible.

⁸² Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1-7: An Exegetical Commentary*, pg. 2-19.

⁸³ Isbon T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John*, pg. 366-93

⁸⁴ Thomas, pg. 53-54

The Purpose and Message of the Revelation to John

The purpose and message of the Revelation is stated in the very first part of the very first verse of John's vision: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ."

As we have studied the development of competing kingdoms, that of God and the counterfeit kingdom of Satan, we have seen this conflict run throughout the history of man, and even before. We have seen God establish His kingdom on earth through chosen mediators who were to lead under His direction. We have seen those administrators fail to rule God's 'theocracy' effectively and righteously. We've discussed how God made an unconditional covenant with Abraham, promising him possession of the land of Canaan, a descendent from whom would come One who would bless all the nations of the world. The covenant with Abraham was expanded through God's promise of the land as an eternal possession, to King David who would never lack an heir for his throne, and through the prophet Jeremiah who promised the blessings that only comes through a personal indwelling covenant keeping God. He made these promises to national ethnic Israel.

To date there has been only a partial fulfillment of these promises with the faithful remnant of believing Jews. The Jews are now back in only part of the land promised to Abraham, and possess it with the threat on annihilation hanging over their heads. There is no king reigning over Israel from a restored temple in Jerusalem, as Ezekiel prophesied. In addition, no descendant of David now sits enthroned forever in Israel who is ruling actively over a redeemed people. Only a small portion of the Jews of our day have discovered the blessings of the New Covenant spoken of by Jeremiah through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. However, the Revelation to John is a vision that describes a radical change in these conditions through an abrupt, drastic, and absolute intervention of the Lord Jesus Christ in human history.

We have seen Jesus Christ at His first coming initiate the kingdom of God through His finished work on the cross and in His heavenly enthronement following His resurrection. At the beginning of the book of Revelation, there is something left unfinished. There is a part of God's plan that is still challenged by Satan, part of the "turf" on earth that is left in enemy hands. Revelation remedies these conditions. Jesus Christ comes again; not in humility, not in a manger, and not bloodied and hanging on a cross for the sins of mankind. He comes this final time as the resurrected Lord of lords, and King of kings. He comes as the All Powerful Judge of all men, of all opposition whether spiritual, economic, or geographic. He is absolute in His righteous glory and majestic in His appearance. He comes to rule over His kingdom and to reign eternally unchallenged and unequalled.

A.W. Tozer said, "God's wrath is His utter intolerance of whatever degrades and destroys." The end result of man's being "given over to a depraved mind (Rom. 1)," to the sin which ultimately degrades and destroys, is manifested in the counterfeit kingdom of the Beast and his ability to deceive the whole world. But this final phase

of his kingdom, Babylon the Great, is on its last legs and its days are numbered as John relays his great vision of the future.

The plan of God for the ages is seen in the three series of judgments executed by the Lamb of God Who is “worthy,” and Who is “The Lord God, the Almighty, Who was, and Who is, and Who is to come.” Dr. Ron Allen provides a telling observation in noting that “the most endangered species of life on this planet is the species of wicked men. No congressional bill or ecological action committee shall be able to help save this species. One day God will say, ‘Enough is enough!’ Then the drums of heaven will begin to roll.” They roll throughout the Book of Revelation.

The Revelation to John is also a vindication of personal faith. It is a profound and absolute statement that what God promises He can and will accomplish. As the Supreme Object of our faith, Jesus Christ sets all things right. He abolishes all evil, all opposition, and with it He abolishes all doubt. He is left unquestioned in His right to rule over the expanse of the realm of His authority, and as seen in the active way in which He is involved in human and personal history. He is able.

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!
For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has become His counselor?
Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again?
For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.
To Him be the glory forever. Amen.”

Romans 11:33-36

The Message of the Revelation to John

The Subject of the Book of Revelation is:
Jesus Christ: His Person, His Power, His Program.

First, is the revelation of: The Person of Jesus Christ
Who, and what Jesus is - All Powerful

Notice what the book first reveals about His Person: Who Jesus is.

1. It clarifies that Jesus was the same human who was born in Bethlehem of Mary. Jesus was “Son of Man (1:13)” – fully human
2. Jesus is fully Divine (1:12-18 & 3:14)
Jesus is Deity, Exactly the Word of God (19:13)
3. Jesus Christ is Eternal God (1:8, 21:6, 22:13)
Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega – these are the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet. Jesus is the beginning and the end.

Notice also what the book of Revelation reveals about: What Jesus is.

	<u>Time</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Testimony</u>
1.	Past	Messiah (3:7; 5:5; 22:16)	Baptism (Matt 3:17)
2.	Past	Lamb of God (5:6, 12-13; 6:1)	Death
3.	Past	Firstborn from the dead (1:5-6; 2:8)	Resurrection (1 Cor. 15)
4.	Present	Lord of the Churches (2:1; 3:1; 22:20)	Church Age
5.	Future	Judge of Man (2:12, 18; 3:14; 6:1)	Tribulation: (Rev. 4-19)
6.	Future	King of kings & Lord of lords (1:5; 17:14, 16, 19)	Millennium (Rev. 20)
7.	Future	Morning Star (22:16) (ruling ,sovereign, victorious)	New Heavens and New Earth (Rev. 22)

Secondly, the book is also a revelation of the Power of Jesus Christ.

The Power of Jesus Christ is demonstrated in the book repeatedly.

He has all Power Personally.

1. Personal power inherently – the ability to accomplish and control
2. Acquired power – delegated to Him by His Father.
The Father gives Jesus the power to open the books and judge.

He has Instrumental Power.

1. Over material objects and forces. He uses all things, including people, storms, disease, death...) to accomplish His will.
2. Power over all spiritual entities and authorities (13:15)
Both the physical and unseen world.

He has Effectual Power.

1. Destructive power over anything in the present physical universe or in the spiritual realm which is raised up against Him.
2. Constructive power – He creates a new and glorified earth; people; new cities, new planets, new systems, New Jerusalem.

Thirdly, is the revelation of the Program of Jesus Christ.

The immediate Purpose is to Defeat and Destroy Satan and Sin.

1. We see Him doing this in the present Church Age.
 - a. We see this in Rev. 2-3 where He addresses the seven churches.
 - b. He wants to purify a Kingdom of Priests for receiving His grace.
2. We also see Him doing this in The Tribulation of Revelation 4-19.
He pours out His wrath on unbelievers for rejecting His grace.
He disciplines national Israel for not accepting Him as their Messiah.
Israel has had more opportunity to believe than any other people.
Snubbing God will not go unpunished.

Note: In the chapters of Revelation 4 through 19, the church (*ecclesia*) is never mentioned, but Israel is mentioned 59 times. Clearly the focus of the tribulation includes bringing Israel to belief in her Messiah.

Jesus Christ's ultimate purpose is to dwell among His people.

1. He will enjoy intimate fellowship with the saints of the OT, who believed by faith (Abraham), the redeemed of the church age, Gentile and Jews who are raptured prior to the tribulation; and the redeemed believing remnant of national ethnic Israel, and tribulation saints saved during the tribulation period.

We see Him doing this in the Millennial Kingdom on Earth (Rev. 20)

We see Him doing this in the New Heavens and New Earth (Rev. 22)

The Book of Revelation then is an unveiling of Jesus Christ for all eternity. As Jesus is the subject of prophecy, so Revelation is all about Jesus.

Outline of the Revelation to John

Theme Verse: Revelation 11:15

“The Kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.”

Outline Verse: Revelation 1:19

*“Write the things which you have seen, (Rev. 1:1-20)
and the things which are, (Rev. 2:1-3:22)
and the things which will take place after these things.” (Rev. 4:1-22:21)*

Outline of Revelation:

- I. The things which you have seen...Jesus in risen glory 1:1 – 1:20
 - 1. The superscription and salutation 1:1-8
 - 2. The Risen Christ Seated in Glory 1:9 – 1:20

- II. The things which are...Jesus and His churches 2:1 – 3:22
 - 1. Message to the church at Ephesus 2:1-7
 - 2. Message to the church at Smyrna 2:8-11
 - 3. Message to the church at Pergamum 2:12-17
 - 4. Message to the church at Thyatira 2:18-29
 - 5. Message to the church at Sardis 3:1-6
 - 6. Message to the church at Philadelphia 3:7-13
 - 7. Message to the church at Laodicea 3:14-22

- III. The things which will take place after these things...Jesus ruling 4:1-22:21
 - 1. Jesus worshipped in heaven 4:1- 5:14
 - a. The Throne 4:1-3
 - b. The Throng before the throne 4:4-8
 - c. The Theme of worship 4:9-11
 - d. The Book in heaven 5:1-5
 - e. The Savior-Sovereign 5:6-7
 - f. The Song of Praise 5:8-14

 - 2. Jesus Ruling in judgment on earth from heaven 6:1 – 20:15
 - a. Seven Seal judgments 6:1 – 6:17
 - b. The Believing Remnant of Israel 7:1-17
 - c. The Seven Trumpet judgments 8:1 – 9:21 & 11:15-19
 - d. The Little Book 10:1-11
 - e. The Two Witnesses 11:1-14
 - f. War on Earth/Phase 1 12:1-6
 - War in Heaven 12:7-12

	War on Earth/Phase 2	12:13-17	
g.	The Beast	13:1-10	
	The false prophet	13:11-18	
h.	The Song of the Redeemed	14:1-7	
i.	The End of Beast Worshipers	14:8-13	
j.	The Harvesting of the Earth	14:14-20	
k.	Prelude to the Bowl Judgments	15:1-8	
l.	Seven bowl judgments	16:1 – 16:21	
3.	Religious Babylon	17:1 – 18	
4.	Commercial Babylon	18:1- 24	
5.	The Triumphal Return of the Faithful and True King	19:1 – 20:15	
a.	Four Hallelujahs	19:1-6	
b.	Marriage supper of the Lamb	19:7-10	
c.	The Second Coming of Christ	19:11-19	
d.	Armageddon – Doom of the Beast	19:20-20:3	
6.	Jesus Reigning in the Millennial Kingdom	20:4 - 15	
a.	Tribulation saints resurrected	20:4-10	
b.	Sinners rebelling	20:7-9	
c.	Satan doomed	20:10	
d.	Great White Throne judgment	20:11-15	
7.	The Eternal State – The New Jerusalem	21:1- 22:21	
a.	Descent of the New Jerusalem	21:1-8	
b.	Description of the New Jerusalem	21:9-27	
c.	Delights of the New Jerusalem	22:1-5	
8.	Closing Remarks	22:6-21	
a.	Words of comfort	22:6-17	
b.	Words of warning	22:18-19	
c.	Closing Benediction	22:20-21	

Revelation Summation:

The Book is the termination and completion of earlier books of the Bible:

- It ends with the recreation of that which was lost in the Garden of Eden
- It is the fulfillment of OT prophecy concerning the Nation of Israel
- It is the fulfillment of the promises given to all the saints of all the ages
- It is the climax and end of human history on earth
- It portrays Jesus as the victorious and reigning King of Kings, in contrast to His first advent where He is seen as the humble and suffering Servant.
- It portrays the ultimate triumph of good over evil.

I. ***“Write the things which you have seen... Jesus in risen glory”***
Rev. 1:1 – 1:20

1. **Salutation and superscription:** **vs. 1:1-8**

The Apostle John is exiled on a Roman prison colony on an island called Patmos at the time of writing. Patmos is an island in the Aegean Sea off the southwest coast of modern day Turkey. It is ten miles long and six miles wide. It is harsh in its environment. John is experiencing harsh personal conditions as he is older now and fighting loneliness (vs. 1:9-11). John said, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet...(vs. 1:10).” Ryrie says that John was “in a state of spiritual ecstasy”⁸⁵ when he received the vision.

It is interesting to note that the Holy Spirit used John’s harsh situation to write Revelation in the same way He had Moses write the Pentateuch in the wilderness; and as David wrote Psalms while fleeing from Saul; as Jeremiah wrote among the ruins of Jerusalem; and as Paul wrote from a prison cell.

John was projected forward to the future Day of the Lord. It is interesting to note whether the amazing Revelation given to him occurred in one 24 hour day, or as is more probable, through a series of visions which make up the whole book.⁸⁶

The Path of the Revelation is as follows:

God the Father (vs1:1) > to Jesus Christ (vs. 1:1) > to His angel (vs. 1:1) > to John (vs. 1:1) > to the seven churches of Asia (vs. 1:4 & 11).

2. **The Risen Christ Seated in Glory** **vs. 1:9-1:20**

Jesus is:

- The Source of the Revelation vs. 1:1
- The One Who gives testimony vs. 1:2
- The One Who promises blessing vs. 1:3
- The One Who is eternally related to the Father vs. 1:4
- The One Who is faithful, firstborn, lover of saints vs. 1:5
- The One Who released us from our sins by His blood vs. 1:5
- The One Who made us priests vs. 1:6
- The One Who is coming again vs. 1:7
- The One Who is eternal vs. 1:8

⁸⁵ Charles Ryrie, Ryrie Study Bible, NASB, *footnote on Rev. 1:9, pg. 2013*

⁸⁶ John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*.

Jesus is seen by John in Risen Glory:

- “In the middle of the seven lampstands” (= churches of 1:20)
He is pictured as dwelling among His people. vs.1:12
- Wearing a “clothed in a robe reaching to the feet and a golden sash across His chest” which designates Him as priest and judge.
vs.1:13
- “head and hair like white wool...and snow” pictures Christ’s
purity and wisdom vs.1:14
- “eyes like flames of fire” = His piercing and penetrating holiness
vs.1:14
- “feet like burnished bronze,” acquired on His first trip to earth
vs.1:15
- “in His right hand (place of honor) He held seven stars” which is
probably a reference to the human leader of each of the churches.
vs.1:16 & 20
- “a two edged sword coming from His mouth” is a clear reference
to the Word of God (Heb. 4:12). It is true and severe, never more
so than in the Revelation to John. vs.1:16
- “The Alpha and Omega; first and last” vs. 1:8 & 17
There was no one before Him, and there will be no one who
follows Him in authority.
- “I hold the keys of death and of Hades” which He certainly
demonstrates in the events which are described. vs. 1:18
- “Alive forevermore” demonstrates His eternal essence vs.1:18

II. “Write the things which are...Jesus and His Churches on Earth.”
Rev. 2:1-3:22

John wrote to “the seven churches that are in Asia:” vs. 1:4

The “loud voice” John heard (1:10) said, “write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches...” vs. 1:11

Jesus is seen by John as “in the middle of the seven lampstands,” vs. 1:13 and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.” vs. 1:20

Jesus wrote, by means of the Apostle John, important letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor. These were actual letters written and sent to seven historical churches at the end of the first century. The risen and glorified Jesus dictated these brief “love letters” to John for each of these seven congregations. Each one is a pointed reminder of the special relationship the risen Lord had with a congregation He loved.⁸⁷

Furthermore, there is a remarkable parallel between conditions in these seven local early churches and conditions in the universal history of the church as history has unfolded from the first century to the twenty first. The situation these churches faced represent characteristic situations the church has faced at any given time in various geographic locations. Though their order has proven prophetic, there is no statement in the text that God intended them to be prophetic.⁸⁸ The chart below may be of assistance.

The Prophetic History of the Church in Revelation 2 & 3

2:1-7	Ephesus	Apostolic Era	c 33-64 A.D.
2:8-11	Smyrna	Period of Persecution	c 64-313 A.D.
2:12-17	Pergamum	Era of Official Patronage	c313-606 A.D.
2:18-29	Thyatira	Middle Ages	c 606-1520 A.D.
3:1-6	Sardis	Protestant Reformation	c 1520-1750 A.D.
3:7-13	Philadelphia	Missionary Era	c 1750-1900 A.D.
3:14-22	Laodicea	Modern Period	c 1900 - ??? A.D.

⁸⁷ Kendall H. Easley, Revelation: Holman NT Commentary Series, pg. 33

⁸⁸ Thomas Constable, DTS class notes on Revelation, pg. 22

The pointed message of Christ to each of these churches is the capstone to New Testament Epistles dealing with the practical life of those committed to the Christian faith.⁸⁹

The delivery of each letter was by the “angel” of each church (1:20; 2:1; 2:8; 2:12; 2:18; 3:1; 3:7; 3:14). The “angel,” who was the primary recipient of each letter was probably the human representative of each church⁹⁰ who carried the letter, along with the rest of the Revelation, to the church at each location.⁹¹ He would have made the letter known to the congregation when he read it publicly. It seems unlikely that God would have sent a letter to a spirit being. The word translated “angel” is used to indicate a human messenger in James 2:25 & Luke 9:52.

Jesus created a letter writing formula, seen in each letter, found nowhere else in Scripture. The formula can be seen as follows:

- a **Characteristic** of Jesus, the Sender
- a **Compliment** to the recipient
- a **Criticism** laid on each of the recipients
- a **Command** to the recipient
- a **Commitment** to all who overcome

1. **Message to the Church in Ephesus** 2:1-7
“Don’t leave your first love.”

- | | |
|--|-------|
| Characteristic of Jesus – He is present with His church | 2:1 |
| Compliment – good deeds in remaining faithful | 2:2-3 |
| This church had remained faithful for over 40 years. They toiled in service to Christ; endured patiently under harsh circumstances; disciplined evil men; they persevered under pressure. ⁹² | |
| Criticism – They’d “left their first love.” | 2:4 |
| They were in danger of loosing their fresh passion for Jesus Himself. Earlier, Paul had commended this church (Eph. 1:15-16) for its’ love “for all the saints.” Most of these believers were second generation believers who had abandoned their eagerness to please, and their devotion to Christ as expressed in their love for one another. They were maintaining orthodoxy in place of love for Christ. | |
| Command – Remember, Repent, Return | 2:5 |
| Commitment – He who overcomes will “eat from the tree of life” which is located in the heavenly New Jerusalem. ⁹³ | |

⁸⁹ John F. Walvoord, Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament, pg. 927

⁹⁰ Charles Ryrie, Ryrie Study Bible, notes on Rev. 1:20, pg. 2014

⁹¹ Robert Thomas, Revelation 1-7, pg. 128

⁹² Constable, pg. 23

2. **Message to the Church in Smyrna** **2:8-11**
“Do not fear suffering and persecution.”

Smyrna was a seaport on the Aegean Sea. It stood about 40 miles north of Ephesus. Late in the first century it was a large wealthy city with a population of about 100,000. It still thrives today as the city of Izmir with a population of 200,000.

Smyrna had died as a city several times due to earthquakes and invasions. The residents worshipped a goddess whom they regarded as the yearly personification of the Spring-time rebirth in nature. Her devotees claimed she rose from the dead every spring. Believers there were experiencing persecution and poverty for their devotion to Jesus.

Characteristic of Jesus – the first and the last Who “was dead, and has come to life.” **v 2:8**

These believers would have found encouragement in this letter even though the prospect of death threatened them. As Jesus had died and risen from the grave, so John tells them their own resurrection and eternal life are a certainty.

Compliment – you are patient in afflictions **v 2:9**

Criticism – **None given.** Jesus has no criticism of a church bearing up in the face of persecution and hardship.

Command – Do not fear short term, temporal persecution. **v 2:10**

Commitment – I will give you the “crown of life.” **v 2:10**

The “second death” will not come to you. **v 2:11**

These persecuted Christians did not need to fear their adversaries since they would live forever with Jesus Christ.

Vs. 2:10 says, “the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days.” In the first century Roman world, prison was usually the prelude to execution, so Jesus says, “be faithful even to the point of death.”

The “ten days” (2:10) of persecution may refer to a period of persecution under ten Roman emperors:

Nero – 64 A.D.; Trajan – 81 A.D.; Adrian – 117 A.D.;

Septimus Servus – 193 A.D.; Maximus – 235 A.D.;

Decius – 249 A.D.; Valerian – 254 A.D.;

Aurelian – 270 A.D.; Diocletian – 284 A.D.⁹⁴

⁹³ Ryrie, footnote on Rev. 2:7, pg. 2016

⁹⁴ Thomas, pg. 169

2. **Message to the Church in Pergamum** 2:12-17
“Hold on to the Truth (doctrinally and morally).”

Pergamum lay about 55 miles north of Smyrna inland a few miles from the Aegean coast. The town was a center for many pagan religious cults, Roman emperor worship, and a university with a large library. Pergamum was a city to which Rome had given the power (the *sword*) of capital punishment. Christians are reminded that though the sword hangs over their heads, they were citizens of another kingdom ruled by the One who needs no other sword than His word.⁹⁵

The church in Pergamum was faced with the constant danger of doctrinal compromise. They are encouraged in their faithfulness to Christ and are urged to reject the false teaching in their midst.

Characteristic of Jesus – “The One who has the sharp two-edged sword” v2:12

The “sword” is symbolic of Jesus’ power to judge and conquer His enemies, as we will see later in Revelation. (Rev. 19:15)

Compliment – You have been true to Jesus (held fast) v2:13
“You did not deny My faith.”

“Satan’s throne” may refer to one or more of the pagan temples in the city, possibly the temple of Zeus. It may also be a reference to Roman emperor worship which was stronger in Pergamum than any other place.

Criticism – “You have some who hold to the teaching of Balaam, and the teaching of the Nicolaitians.” v 2:14-15

The pagans in Pergamum were evidently encouraging the Christians to join in their pagan feasts and the sexual immorality that accompanied them. By participating, some in the church had given tacit approval to Balaam’s teaching.

Command – Repent! v 2:16

If these erring believers would not judge themselves and turn from these evil practices they could anticipate God’s judgment (cf. 1 Cor. 11:31). This coming judgment would be by the unyielding standard of God’s revealed Word that clearly condemns such behavior. Having taken sides with the enemy they could expect God to oppose them in His war against evil.

Commitment – repent and you receive “manna” = spiritual nourishment and “a white stone” = acquittal v 2:17

⁹⁵ C.B. Caird, *The Revelation to St. John the Divine*, pg. 38

4. **Message to the Church in Thyatira** **2:18-29**
“Avoid the Danger of Moral Compromise-Be Morally Pure.”

Thyatira, the smallest of the seven cities of Asia, lay about 40 miles to the southeast of Pergamum. It was famous for textiles, especially the production of purple dye, and its trade guilds. The city worshipped a local god called Tyrimnas, who was said to be a son of the gods. He was pictured on coins as a warrior riding a horse and wielding a double-edged battle axe in judgment.⁹⁶

Jesus Christ sent His letter, the longest of the seven, to commend some in the church for their service, orthodoxy, and fidelity to the truth, and to warn others in it to turn from false teaching and sinful practices.

Characteristic of Jesus – “The Son of God” with...

“Eyes like a flame of fire and burnished bronze feet.” **v 2:18**

Son of God emphasizes Jesus’ deity and right to judge.

Flame like eyes suggest discerning and severe judgment.

Burnished bronze feet picture a warrior with protected feet.

Compliment – They are increasing in good works **v 2:19**

They are strong in good deeds, love for others, trust in God, service to their Savior, and patient endurance in trials.

Criticism – Tolerance for immorality and idolatry **v 2:20**

“You tolerate the woman Jezebel...false prophetess

Who leads Christians astray, into immorality and idolatry.

A woman claiming to be a prophetess had been influencing some in the church to join the local trade union or else they couldn’t work. This brought them into participation in the union pagan feasts. As the Jezebel of old had been judged, so this false prophetess would be judged. She and her followers will experience severe “tribulation” like disciplines.

Command – Hold fast to moral purity – don’t compromise. **v2:22b-25**

The prize for faithfulness was and is the privilege of reigning with Jesus Christ in His earthly kingdom (Rev. 20:4-6).

The promise is for those who would resist and overcome the temptation that this Jezebel held out. The Lord intended this blessing to motivate the unfaithful in the church to return to God’s will for them and to encourage the faithful to remain.

Believers who are faithful will receive authority in heaven from Jesus Christ and will “rule” (shepherd) others during the Millennial Kingdom. (Lk. 19:11-27; 1 Cor. 6:2-3; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 3:21; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Commitment – The faithful receive authority, and Christ Himself, in an especially close and personal relationship in the kingdom.

⁹⁶ Constable, pg. 33

5. **Message to the Church in Sardis** 3:1-6
“Wake up and return to True Spiritual Life.”

Sardis had been the capital of the ancient kingdom of Lydia. It was famous for military history, jewelry, dye, and textiles. The religion of the city was a worship of the forces of nature, viewed as having both as subject to death and the power of self-reproduction.⁹⁷

“The people of Sardis were idolaters – they worshipped the mother of the goddess Cybele. The worship was of the most debasing character, and orgies like those of Dionysios were practiced at festivals in her honor. The sins were so debase and depraved that it is hard to imagine how a small church in Sardis was not swallowed up and pulled down into the great vortex.”⁹⁸

Characteristic of Jesus – The Lord presented Himself to this congregation as the all-wise God. The “Seven Spirits” probably here refers to the fullness of God’s Spirit. His mention of the “Seven Stars” is another reminder of His lordship over the churches. v 3:1

Compliment – none is given! They are alive in name only. v 3:1b
The church at Sardis was holding to a form of godliness but denying the true power of God. They were more concerned with systems of worship and programs than on Jesus Christ. They were more focused on the flesh than on the Spirit.

Criticism – You are spiritually dead. v 3:2-4
This church was living on its reputation. They were really a dead church and their good works were not as impressive as they had been. Only a “few people in Sardis have not soiled their garments,” meaning that only a few had not been compromised by the culture of the city.

Command – Awaken from your spiritual slumber! v 3:2-4
These believers were not watching expectantly for the Lord’s return. These believers needed to awaken spiritually, examine their condition, realize their need and turn back to God. They needed to remember the rich spiritual heritage they once knew and return to the attitudes and activities their teachers had taught them. Failure to do so would result in surprising and severe judgment.

Commitment – To those who “overcome” Jesus promises to: v3:5

- “cloth them in garments of white” – God will eventually clothe all overcomers with special garments that declare their inward purity and justification before God. (see Rev. 19:8 & 14)

⁹⁷ Thomas, pg. 243

⁹⁸ Andrew Tait, DTS Class Notes on Revelation, pg. 36

- to “NOT erase their names from the book of life”
This is not a threat but a promise that saved people’s names will always be in the book of life.⁹⁹
- “I will confess his name before My Father and His angels.”

“The “Book of Life” is not the roll of those who are saved but rather a list of those for whom Christ died (1 Jn. 2:2), that is, all humanity who have possessed physical life. As they come to maturity and are faced with the responsibility of accepting or rejecting Christ, their names are erased if they fail to receive Jesus Christ as Savior; whereas those who do accept Jesus as Savior are confirmed in their position in the book of life, and their names are confessed before the Father and the heavenly angels.”¹⁰⁰

6. Message to the Church in Philadelphia **3:7-13**
“Be sure of the Kingdom.”

Philadelphia lay about 30 miles southwest of Sardis. It was founded by a king with a special devotion to his brother, thus the name “brother lover,” or “Philadelphus.” It was a missionary city, founded to promote the ideas of Hellenism. It had frequent earthquakes, thus much of the population of the city lived outside the city and away from falling objects.

Christ encourages the congregation of Philadelphia to take heart that the open door to heaven is theirs despite human and satanic hostility and to “hold on” as Christ promises to protect them in the face of a coming worldwide trial. The Lord offers praise to the Christians in Philadelphia for their faithfulness in spite of persecution and offers them an escape from the coming storm as a reward for their faithfulness. “Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I will also keep you from the hour of testing which is about to come on the whole world (3:10).”

Characteristic of Jesus – Jesus presents Himself as holy, true, and authoritative. The “key of David,” seems to refer to Isaiah 22:20-23, where Hezekiah’s servant, Eliakim, received authority over David’s house including access to all the king’s treasures. Jesus claimed to have God’s full administrative authority to distribute or not distribute all God’s resources according to His will.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Ryrie, footnote on Rev. 3:5, *pg. 2018*

¹⁰⁰ Walvoord, *Revelation Commentary*.

¹⁰¹ Constable, *pg. 38*

Compliment –

“You have kept My Word; have not denied My name. **v3:8b**
“You have kept the word of My perseverance...” **v3:10a**
They had faithfully obeyed God’s Word, and they had maintained a faithful testimony for the Lord in the past.
They had seized upon missionary opportunities despite their being small in actual membership.

Criticism – None is given to this faithful church.

Command – Hold fast to what you have; reward is coming. **v 3:11**

Since Jesus Christ’s return is imminent the believers should remain faithful to Him so their detractors would not rob them of the reward that would be theirs for steadfast faith.

Commitment - a five-fold promise is given to these believers:

1. Their Jewish antagonists would eventually have to acknowledge that these Christians were the true followers of God, in this world or the next. **v 3:9**
2. God promised these believers that they would not go through the Tribulation that is about to come upon the whole earth (Rev. 6-19). He promised to keep them from the “hour of testing.” The combination of the verb and the preposition in the Greek in this verse (3:10) clearly means that God would keep them out of it (Greek = *ek*) altogether. It does not mean He would keep them safe as they went through (requiring usage of the Greek preposition *dia* which is not used here) the tribulation or remove them when it gets bad at the mid-point of the tribulation.
Likewise, Paul told the church in Thessalonica that “God did not appoint us (all Christians) for wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thes. 1:10 & 5:9; key passages dealing with the ‘Day of the Lord).”
3. The Lord also promised to “Come quickly.” **v 3:11**
“In light of the concept of the imminent coming of Christ and the fact that the NT does teach His imminent coming, we can conclude that the Pre-tribulational Rapture view is the only view of the Rapture the church that comfortably fits the NT teaching of the imminent return of Christ. It is the only view that can honestly say that Christ could return at any moment, because it alone teaches that Christ will come to rapture the church before the 70th week of Daniel 9 or the Tribulation period begins and that nothing else must happen before His return.”¹⁰²

¹⁰² Ronald Showers, Maranatha: Our Lord Come! A Definitive Study of the Rapture of the Church, pgs. 176-91, for evidence the Rapture and the Second Coming cannot occur back to back.

4. “I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God.” v 3:12
God will not only honor overcomers by erecting a pillar in their name in heaven as was the custom in Philadelphia, He will also make them pillars in the spiritual temple of God, the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21-22).

5. “He will not go out anymore...” v 3:12
Like pillars in Solomon’s temple, these Christians will occupy sure, secure, firmly established positions of strength and power, positions which will be realized when they rule and reign as co-heirs with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom.¹⁰³

7. **Message to the Church in Laodicea** 3:14-22
“Repent of Self Sufficiency.”

Laodicea, a city about 90 miles due east of Ephesus was under Roman rule at the time John wrote. It was a wealthy affluent city. This church was a ‘money church’ if there ever was one. It was a wealthy materialistic church whose economic sufficiency had lulled them to sleep spiritually. As always, money provides the opportunity for self reliance, arrogance, abuse of power, and creates an independent spirit in man. The lack of economic needs had blinded these believers to their true spiritual need and lack of spiritual riches. Archippus (Col. 4:17) was the pastor of this church. The condition of the church may well have been due to the faulty ministry and lack of leadership on the part of this leader.

Jesus sent this letter to shake the Laodicean Christians out of their self-sufficient complacency and to exhort them to self-sacrifice for higher spiritual goals.

Characteristic of Jesus – “The faithful and true Witness” v 3:14
Jesus is the One who guarantees confirmation and certainty of all He says He will do.

Compliment – None given!

Criticism – You are lukewarm. I wish you were hot or cold. v 3:15-16

The deeds of the Laodicean church manifested their heart attitude. The Lord would prefer deeds from a fervent heart (like the near by hot springs of Heiropolis, good for medicinal treatment), or indifferent coolness in preference rather than the luke-warmness of those who should know better.

They knew how the Lord felt because their drinking water came from cold springs six miles away in Colosse, via an aqueduct, which gave it plenty of time to reach a disgustingly warm room temperature.

¹⁰³ Arlen L. Chitwood; Judgment Seat of Christ; pg. 101

Command – “Buy from Me... so that you may become rich” **v3:18**

Jesus encouraged them to “buy from Me” (things associated with local goods produced for material wealth.) The idea is, buy from Me, and gain true spiritual riches.

“Be zealous and repent” of dependence on materialism.

Commitment – “I will grant to him to sit down on My throne.”

v 3:21

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into him and will dine with him, and he with Me.”

v 3:20

Believers will be co-rulers with Christ in His coming kingdom. Christ is appealing to the worldly, comfortable believers in this church to return and enjoy full fellowship with Him in preparation for the coming kingdom. How incredible it is that Christ should ever be kept outside His church and still seek entrance!

The Lord’s “spitting them (His own people) out of His mouth” does not mean they would lose their salvation. The Scriptures nowhere teaches this possibility. This simply implies His deep disgust. He did not mean that he would rather we be spiritually cold than that we be spiritually luke-warm either. He would rather us be spiritually (cold) refreshing or (hot) as healthful hot waters rather than spiritually indifferent.

III. *“Write the things which will take place after these things.”*

Rev. 4:1 – 22:21

Introduction: John’s vision now switches from earth back to heaven. He has finished addressing the seven churches of Asia and his attention is once again turned upward toward “a door standing open in heaven (4:1a).” From this point forward, everything that John sees concerns “what must take place after these things (4:1b).” Everything he describes lays in the future for John and for a 21st century reader as well. Nothing of the magnitude of the events John describes from this point forward has ever occurred in the past.

As was mentioned in our previous discussion on the rapture of the church, this section of Revelation “assumes” the church is already in heaven. There is no mention of the rapture in the Revelation to John, but as John’s heavenly vision continues in Rev. 4:1, Jesus is seen as enthroned in heaven receiving praise and worship while sitting in judgment over the earth and its inhabitants.

It is Jesus, “who rescues us (the church) from the wrath to come (1 Thes. 1:10b).” It is Jesus who said to the church at Philadelphia, “I will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world (Rev. 3:10).” The hour of testing has now arrived in John’s vision and Christ and His bride are out of the line of fire.

The Church in Revelation 4-18

In support of the assumption that the church has already been raptured and is now in heaven, we must again turn our attention to national ethnic Israel. Israel again takes center stage in her dealings with the Beast and Gentile world powers. In Revelation chapters 1 – 3, the focus was the seven churches of Asia. In those first three chapters, the Greek word for the church (*ecclesia*) is used 19 times, while the Greek word for Israel (‘Israh’l) only mentioned three times.

In Revelation chapters 4 -18, all of which view Jesus in heaven judging the earth, there are 26 references to Israel (‘Israh’l), and not a single reference to the church (i.e. *ecclesia* is not used even once). This is a clear indication that the focus has changed and the church is out of the picture concerning events on earth.

In Revelation chapters 19-22, chapters which include the second coming of Christ to earth and the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom, there is one reference to Israel (‘Israh’l) and six references to the church (*ecclesia*). This is a strong indication that the church has returned to earth (Rev. 19:14) and is now ruling and reigning with Christ in His Earthly Kingdom.

The Use of “Symbols” in the Revelation to John

The Apostle John envisioned things which he did not understand, yet he relayed descriptions of events, institutions, and individuals in his Revelation that we need some interpretation.

The use of symbolism in Revelation does not negate the fact that John is describing very real and yet future world history. While he often uses what seems to us as bizarre descriptions, he is nevertheless telling us about a very real future events. It is not the assumption of this course to interpret the Revelation to John as “symbolic,” or to “spiritualize” its meaning as some sort of description of an ‘other worldly’ cosmic battle between good and evil. As historic events have occurred, and Israel’s past history has indicated, biblical prophets have a remarkable ability to give precise an exact foretelling of what we can expect in the future. This pattern continues in Revelation.

It may be helpful to refer to some of these symbols and their interpretation before we go any further in our study. The late Dr. John F. Walvoord, ThM., ThD., past president of Dallas Theological Seminary was one of the leading scholars on end time events. He was the heir apparent to such men as J.N. Darby, C.I. Scofield, Lewis Sperry Chafer, and Harry Ironside, as a leading expert on the teaching of the Revelation to John. As he notes in his commentary on Revelation.¹⁰⁴

“The wide use of symbolism is attended by frequent interpretations in the book of Revelation itself either by direct reference or by implication. Symbols can often be explained by usage elsewhere in Scripture.

The following list may be helpful:

The seven stars (1:16) represent seven angels (1:20)

The seven lampstands (1:13) represent seven churches (1:20)

The hidden manna (2:17) speaks of Christ in glory (cf. Exodus 16:33-34; Heb. 9:4)

The morning star (2:28) refers to Christ returning before the dawn, suggesting the rapture of the church before the establishment of the Kingdom (cf. Rev. 22:16; 2 Peter 1:19).

The key of David (3:7) represents the power to open and close doors (Isa. 22:22).

The seven lamps of fire represent the sevenfold Spirit of God (4:5).

The living creatures (4:7) portray the attributes of God himself.

The seven eyes represent the sevenfold Spirit of God (5:6).

The odors of the golden vials symbolize the prayers of the saints (5:8).

The four horses and their riders (6:1ff) represent successive events in the developing tribulation on earth.

The fallen star (9:1) is the angel of the abyss, probably Satan (9:11).

Many references are made to Jerusalem: the great city (11:8); Sodom and Egypt (11:8); which stands in contrast to the New Jerusalem the heavenly city.

The stars of heaven (12:4) refer to fallen angels (12:9).

The woman and the child (12:1-2) seem to represent Israel and Christ (12:5-6).

¹⁰⁴ John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Moody Press, 1966, *pg. 29-30*

Satan is variously described as the great dragon, the old serpent, and the devil (12:9; 20:2).

The times, time, and half a time (12:14) are the same as the 1260 days (12:6).

The beast out of the sea (13:1-10) is the future world ruler and his empire.

The beast out of the earth (13:11-17) is the false prophet (19:20).

The harlot (17:1) variously described as the great city (17:18); as Babylon the Great (17:5); as the one who sits on seven hills (17:9); is usually interpreted as apostate Christendom.

The waters (17:1) on which the woman sits represent the peoples of the world (17:15).

The ten horns (17:12) are the ten kings associated with the beast (13:1; 17:3; 7, 8, 11-13, 16-17).

The Lamb is Lord of lords and King of kings (17:14).

Fine linen is symbolic of the righteous deeds of the saints (19:8).

The rider of the white horse (19:11-16, 19) is clearly identified as Christ, the King of kings.

The lake of fire is described as the second death (20:14).

Jesus Christ is the Root and Offspring of David (22:16).

As we go through the Book this list can be used as a reference tool. Other symbolic language will be explained as we encounter it in our study.

1. **“Write the things which will take place after these things.”**

Jesus enthroned and worshipped in Heaven

Rev. 4:1 – 5:14

a. **The Throne in heaven**

4:1-3

Rev. 3:21 ended the last section with both Jesus and His Father on the throne of heaven.

The description includes the mention of precious stones to described the enthroned Christ:

Jasper, which is clear as crystal represents the purity of God.

It was also the color for Rueben, the 1st born of the heads of the 12 tribes of Israel. It was a color worn by a priest.

Sardis, which is blood red in color represents the price paid for our redemption. It is also the color for Benjamin, the youngest of the heads of the 2 tribes of Israel. These two stones are representative of the first and last of the tribes which includes all of the covenant people of Israel.

Emerald Rainbow, which is green in color provides a visual backdrop for the glorious scene John is seeing.

“The word Benjamin (i.e. sardis) means “son of my right hand.” Like Benjamin, Christ is the “son of my right hand” in relationship to His Father. The Person whom John sees on the throne is, therefore, God in relation to the nation of Israel.”¹⁰⁵

b. **The Throng before the Throne**

4:4-8

John sees 24 thrones with 24 elders sitting on them, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.

It is interesting to speculate that these are the 12 heads of the 12 tribes of Israel, and the 12 disciples of Jesus Christ. It may also represent the entire redeemed body of believers raptured before the tribulation begins.

As Ryrie notes, “Some understand these to be angelic beings, though it is likely that the 24 elders represent redeemed people who are glorified, crowned, and enthroned. Angels are never said to be given crowns, though believers are (2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:4; Rev. 2:10).”¹⁰⁶

The Greek word for crown is also representative of what is known as “the victor’s crown (*stephanos*)” given to saints who overcome by faith. A sovereign ruler would wear a different crown (i.e. a *diadem*).

¹⁰⁵ *ibid*, pg. 104

¹⁰⁶ Charles Ryrie, Ryrie Study Bible, NASB, footnote on Rev. 4:4, pg. 2019.

Around the throne John also sees the Holy Spirit (v5), and four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind.

This is symbolic of the omniscience and omnipresence of God who knows all and sees everything at all times. The four living creatures are a physical embodiment, as seen by John, of that which would otherwise be invisible to the natural eye of man.

The creatures are symbolic of the attributes of God:

Lion = the majesty of God

Calf = (chief domestic animal) patience and continuous service

Man = intelligence and dominion over creation

Eagle = sovereign and supreme bird of the skies

c. The Theme of Worship Rev. 4:9-11

The giving back and casting of crowns before the throne demonstrates the absolute subjection of every creature in heaven to the Holy Creator God.

Five hymns of praise in Rev. 4 & 5

The sequence of hymns in these two chapters are addressed as follows: The first two are to God the Father (4:8 & 11); the next two are to the Lamb (5:9 & 12); the fifth and last is to both the Father and Son. (5:13-14).

There is also a gradual enlargement in the size of each choir. The internal movement builds as the last hymn is sung “by every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth to Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb (5:13-14).”

Donald W. McCullough, in his book, The Trivialization of God: The Dangerous Illusion of a Manageable Deity,¹⁰⁷ writes this in regard to our reverence before the “Wholly Other:”

“Yes, there is joy in worship, but this joy in no way cancels another primal emotion in the presence of holiness; an awe that improbably results from both terror and attraction. It’s as though our joy in being saved by God’s grace in Christ fills us with childlike abandon and we happily dance into the throne room of the universe. But once there, we suddenly become aware of our surroundings, conscious of our true situation, and we feel embarrassed and unworthy and even out of place.

Worship has drawn us into an ever-deepening awareness of the mystery of God; our illusions of a manageable Deity have been blown away.

¹⁰⁷ Donald W. McCullough, *The Trivialization of God*, NavPress, 1995, *pg. 107-108*

God is so much more – more in every way – than we had imagined. Everything within us wants to back away from the danger. And yet, and yet... We can't make ourselves move. We're terrified, to be sure, but there's more delight in the terror than we've ever before experienced. Not able to go forward toward the throne because of the fear, but also not able to move away because of the joy, we do the only thing we can do; we fall to our faces in awe. Only a God who is wholly other and wholly other-in-love could inspire such a response."

d. The Sealed Book in Heaven 5:1-5

When the prophet Daniel finished his prophecy of the future, was told, "conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time (Dan. 12:4)." It was not that the book was to eternally be left unexplained, but it was sealed for a future day so those living in the future would understand the days of the tribulation.¹⁰⁸

In Rev. 5:1, God is seen as holding a scroll in His right hand, this same scroll which Daniel was told to seal. The time has come to reveal its contents.

John is here introduced to an item of central importance, namely, this book contains the prophecy of impending events to be unfolded in the remainder of the Book of Revelation.

The book is actually a scroll, which is given prominence in the scene by the fact that it is in the right hand of God who is on the throne. The scroll has writing on both sides, and it is sealed in seven places, apparently fixed on the edges of the scroll in such a way that the seals must be successively broken if the scroll is to be unrolled and read.¹⁰⁹

e. The Savior – Sovereign Is Worthy to Open the Book 5:6-7

The language of these verses demonstrates that no one other than the "Lamb who was slain (v5)" at his first advent is worthy to open the book. Jesus' victory entitles Him to open the scroll and execute its judgments.

He is also described as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," (v5) a reference to the position He holds at His second coming.

We see the Lamb 'standing' (v6) to complete the plan.

He is said to have "seven horns" indicated fullness of power. He is said to have "seven eyes" indicating his perfect wisdom. These are said to be "the seven Spirits of God," a reference to the Holy Spirit who is the one who carries out the commands.

¹⁰⁸ Ryrie, Ryrie Study Bible, footnote on Dan. 12:4, pg. 1372

¹⁰⁹ Walvoord, *ibid*, pg. 113

- f. **The Song of Praise** **5:8-14**
The Savior is worthy to open the book because,
“You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood...”
He has provided redemption for His people.

The citizens of His coming kingdom will include,
“Men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.”
He has included all people by faith in His kingdom plans.

The citizens of the kingdom will be,
“A kingdom of priests to our God; and they will reign upon
the earth.”
He will shower blessings on His people in His kingdom.

**The angels (v11) use seven expressions to indicate the wonder
of the Lamb of God (v12):** Power; riches; wisdom; might;
honor; glory; blessing. He is also praised as having “dominion
forever and ever (v13).”

2. ***“Write the things which will take place after these things.”***

Jesus Ruling in Judgment on earth from heaven. Rev. 6:1 – 20:15

- a. **Seven Seal Judgments** **6:1-6:17**

Note of Chronological Importance:

We have noted that the scene in heaven which began in Rev. 4:1 indicated that the rapture of the church (1 Thes. 4:13-17) had already occurred and the church is in heaven with the Lamb participating in the great worship scene of Rev. 4 & 5.

We need to note that the tribulation on earth has also begun.

The question we have to answer is:

When did the tribulation begin?

With what event did the tribulation begin?

The rapture of the church is not the starting point of the tribulation on earth; an agreement between the Anti-Christ and unsaved Israel is the start of the tribulation.

Following the prophet Daniel’s literary “gap” after Daniel 9:26, we are told, “he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.” Daniel 9:27

The “Prince” of Daniel 9:26, is the Anti-Christ of Daniel 9:27, who was previously introduced in Daniel 7:8, 24-26 as “the little horn.”

While the church is in heaven following the rapture of the church, **the Anti-Christ will make a pact** with “many” (of the Jewish people left on earth) to begin the 70th week of Daniel which we know as the seven years of “the tribulation.”

This agreement will last 3 ½ years until “the middle of the week.” At that time **the Anti-Christ will break his agreement** with Israel and desecrate the Temple (the abomination of desolation; Matt. 24:15) by demanding worship of himself in it. At the midpoint of the tribulation period, the Anti-Christ will literally desecrate the temple in Jerusalem by placing himself there to be worshipped. Those who resist will be persecuted, and many will be martyred.

The first 3 ½ years of the tribulation are referred to as “the tribulation,” while the later half of the tribulation events on earth become so intense and unbearable that this second 3 ½ years are referred to as “the Great Tribulation.”

The Seven Seal Judgments

6:1-6:17

At what point in the chronological pouring out of God’s judgments does the Anti-Christ break his agreement with Israel? When does the mid-point of the tribulation occur?

Walvoord holds that the mid-point of the tribulation occurs **following the third seal judgment, and before the fourth seal.** “The divine judgments being poured out on the earth are not trivial in character but describe a period of world history awful beyond any words, a period without precedent in its character and extent. There remains the important problem of determining when in the sequence of Revelation the great tribulation (last 3 ½ years) predicted by our Lord (Matt. 24:15-26) begins in relationship to the seal judgments of Revelation 6. In as much as the judgment described in the fourth seal is unparalleled, it seems to correspond with greater accuracy to the later half of Daniel’s 70th week than to the earlier half. If the supreme mark of this great tribulation is unprecedented trouble, the fourth seal certainly qualifies as describing this period. The wars and famines predicted in the second and third seals are not unfamiliar events in the history of the world, but never before or since the time of Noah has a judgment so devastating been consummated as to destroy one-fourth of the earth’s population with one stroke.”¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Walvoord, *ibid*, pg. 131-132

Note on the “overlap” of the Seal Judgments:

In the Revelation to John, there are three sets of judgments. Each of these three sets includes seven individual judgments each. These judgments become more and more intense as we move forward in the book.

It is important to note, that these judgments overlap each other. In other words, the seven “seal” judgments span the entire seven year tribulation period.

For example, the seventh seal is in itself seven new judgments called the seven “trumpet” judgments. In like manner, the seventh trumpet is a new set of seven judgments called the “bowl” judgments (which are part of the seventh seal judgment by way of being the seventh trumpet judgment).

Note on the progress of the narrative of Revelation:

The story of the tribulation from Revelation 4:1 to Revelation 19:1 is not one continuous ongoing story line. The narrative action of the story is interrupted by interludes that give additional details on the people and events of the period.

For example, we can chart the forward narrative of events of the book as:

Rev. 4& 5: worship goes on throughout the whole period of the tribulation.

Rev. 6:1-6: Tells of the first 3 ½ years of the tribulation.

Rev. 6:7-17: Tells of the events of the second half of the tribulation with the fourth seal and up until the seventh seal is broken. Rev. 6 takes the action of the story forward.

Rev. 7:1-17: is non-chronological. It does not take the action of the story forward. It gives additional details for clarification only.

Rev. 8:1- 11:19: takes the action forward through the blowing of the seventh trumpet judgment.

Rev. 12:1 – 14:20: is non-chronological. It does not take the action of the story forward. It gives additional details for clarification only.

Rev. 15:1 – 16:21: takes the action forward through the pouring out of the seventh bowl judgment.

Rev. 17:1 - 18:1-24: is non-chronological. It does not take the action of the story forward. It gives additional details for clarification only.

Rev. 19:1 – 22:21: takes the action forward through the second coming of Christ, Armageddon, and the coming of the New Jerusalem.

“The wrath of God is His utter intolerance of whatever degrades and destroys.”

A.W. Tozer

1. **The first seal is “cold war.” (The White Horse) 6:1-2**
 The rider of the white horse is none other than the “prince that shall come” of Daniel 9:26, the anti-Christ himself. He will head up the revived Roman Empire and ultimately become the world ruler. From Daniel 7:8, 20; 8:9 and 11:40-43, it is made plain that Anti-Christ first conducts a period of sweeping, victorious political maneuvers as he sets up his political and military alliances across the world. In biblical times, it was customary for a Roman conqueror to ride in triumph on a white horse. This is a power struggle which he is allowed to win. It is a reference to the rise and career of a mighty imperial ruler after the rapture of the church, who brings under his sway a vast territory in an endeavour to maintain peace, order, and prosperity.¹¹¹

2. **The second seal is “open warfare.” (The Red Horse) 6:3-4**
 As the second seal is broken, military warfare breaks out and peace is taken from the world. The constant tension among nations and the ambitions of men have their climax in this period before Christ comes. No doubt, as the one world ruler begins his ploy for power, some object which results in open warfare. All efforts on the part of man to bring peace are gone until the Prince of Peace arrives to remedy the situation worldwide.

3. **The third seal is “famine.” (The Black Horse) 6:5-6**
 The result of open warfare across the globe results in worldwide famine and hyper-inflation. An entire day’s wage will only buy enough food for one person, much less a family.

The mid-point of the tribulation occurs after the third seal and before the fourth seal judgment. The severity of the fourth seal indicates that God’s wrath is being poured out with new intensity.

It is at this point that Israel is awakened to their deception as the Beast breaks his agreement and defiles the temple in Jerusalem.

¹¹¹ F.A. Tatford, Prophecy’s Last Word, pg. 68

4. **The fourth Seal, “Death.” (The Ashen Horse) 6:7-8**
This horse and rider has been given authority over one fourth of the population of the inhabited earth. It is a picture of dramatic divine judgment on the earth. Not only is the rider described as “Death,” but it is also noted that “Hell and Hades follows” him.

This sickly, yellowish green beast and its rider probably indicative of a situation that is the inevitable result of the disease that follows war and famine. “Death claims the bodies and Hades claims the souls and spirits of 1/4th of the world’s population in this single judgment.”¹¹²

5. **The fifth Seal, “Martyrdom.” 6:9-11**
Following the third seal judgment, the Beast defiles the temple and demands worship of himself, there will be many who will refuse to do so. This will result in their deaths.
In contrast to those who were taken to hell in the fourth seal judgment, these tribulation saints are seen as “the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God,” and who are “under the altar in heaven,” as John looks again upward toward heaven.

This brings up a significant question regarding the nature of salvation during the tribulation:

- **Will it be possible for a person to accept Jesus Christ as Savior if they miss the rapture of the church due to unbelief?**
- **Yes, they can come to faith in Christ during the tribulation but with much greater difficulty than in our day.**

Since John hears them crying for revenge upon their persecutors “who are on the earth (in the tribulation period)” it is evident these saints have come from among a group of new believers who have believed following the rapture, facilitated by remaining copies of the bible, and an honest look at the situation on earth, as well as the prophetic word which they have lived out to their own detriment.

“It may be that a majority of those who trust Christ as Savior in that day will be put to death. This is confirmed in chapter seven where another picture of the martyred dead of the tribulation is given, and in chapter 13 where death is inflicted on all who will not worship the beast by taking his mark.

¹¹² Ryrie, footnote on Rev. 6:7-8.

6. **The Sixth Seal, “Ecological Physical Disturbances.” 6:12-17**

Up until this point, these first five seals have been judgments that God has allowed Satan to inflict upon the earth. This sixth seal is a result of the direct intervention of God on the state of the physical universe.

The tendency among many scholars has been to interpret these judgments as symbolic rather than as real ecological events.

The motive has been a reluctance to accept a literal interpretation of these events. Perhaps it is because those who hold this view also hold that God is so loving and kind that He will never judge people who have not received His Son.

Though the modern mind is reluctant to accept the fact that God will judge the wicked and unbelieving, the Bible clearly teaches that He always has, and always will. He is both a God of love and of justice.

All the elements of a great catastrophic judgment of God are levied all at once, namely a great earthquake (see also Matt. 24:7), the sun becoming black (see also Joel 2:2, 10, 30-31), the moon becoming as blood, and the stars of heaven falling like ripe figs, the heavens departing as a scroll (see also Isa. 13:6-13), and every mountain and island moving. In view of the catastrophic and climatic character of the period of the tribulation, there is no good reason why there should not be precisely the disturbances described here in the heavens and earthquakes on the earth.

Prophetically, this indicates a direct divine judgment upon an unbelieving world. The impression upon the unbelieving world is that the time of the judgment of God has come. They realize their blasphemous unbelief and worship of the beast are in defiance of the true God. They therefore see refuge from the One sitting on the throne and apparently realize that their time is up.

It is clear that the only protection from God’s wrath, is our personal acceptance of His grace while it is available.

7. **The seventh Seal Judgment**

In some sense Chapter 6 of Revelation is the outline of the important facts of the period of great tribulation, and the rest of the events of the book of Revelation are comprehended in the seventh seal judgment which is not introduced until Chapter 8.

b. Interlude: The Redeemed of the Tribulation. 7:1-17

Chapter 7 of Revelation does not advance the narrative of the tribulation period. Rather, it is a brief pause in the action in order for John to see that God is faithful to His promises.

7:1-3; John envisions angels holding back the ecological and climatic catastrophic judgment of God for a brief time in order to point out two groups of believers.

7:4-8; The 144,000 Redeemed of Israel

John “heard” of 144,000 believing Jews who are “sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel.” Each of the twelve original tribes of Israel are mentioned as having 12,000 converts each (12,000 X 12 = 144,000). These are “sealed,” with a mark of ownership on their foreheads (7:3) which provides them supernatural protection from the beast.

As we have noted, this occurs following the fourth seal which we determined to be the mid-point of the tribulation period. It is at the mid-point that the beast who had deceived national Israel into some type of peace agreement (Dan. 9:27), defiles the Temple by enthroning himself and demanding personal worship. No doubt, as a result of this deception being exposed, many Jews of that day will turn to their leadership for answers. Evidently, the identity of the “Servant” of Isaiah 53 finally is realized to be the same Jesus who was crucified. Many will turn to the Lamb and are saved. This is a partial fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant provision of blessing. Complete fulfillment of the covenant at this point, is only a short time in the future when complete fulfillment will be realized by Israel in the Millennial Kingdom.

7:9-17; A second group of tribulation saints is seen by John “standing before the throne in heaven.” These are saints who have come to faith in Christ during the tribulation period “from every nation and all the tribes and peoples and tongues.” Vs 14, identifies them as “the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

An important distinction: The prevalent idea that the church is the true Israel, or that the church has inherited the promises God gave to Israel, is not sustained by any explicit reference in the Bible. The word “Israel” is never used of Gentile believers and refers only to those who are racially descendants of Israel or Jacob.”¹¹³

¹¹³ Walvoord, *pg. 142*

c. The Seventh Seal; the Trumpet Judgments. 8:1-9:21

Revelation 8 resumes the narrative of tribulation events. God is ready to increase the severity of His judgments on an unbelieving earth. The seventh seal is itself, the seven trumpet judgments. The 'seventh seal' would then be seven new judgments rather than just one additional 'seal' judgment.

8:1-6; The 'censor' mentioned in v8:3 is symbolic of divine judgment, which in this case is a direct response "to the prayers of all the saints who are before the throne (those of chap. 7)" who have been martyred for their faith. The "prayers of the saints went up before God." God will not allow the neglect and persecution of His chosen ones to go unpunished by evil men as we shall shortly observe.

The Seven Trumpet Judgments: 8:7 - 9:21

In order to understand the impact of these events on the counterfeit kingdom of the beast, we must think of the impact the following judgments will have on the world economy, housing, shipping, health care, transportation, the stock market, and the world food supply. It will be catastrophic.

We can compare the following judgments to Exodus 9:18-26 and God's judgment on unbelieving and arrogant Pharaoh. God is consistent in His judgment of unbelief and rebellion.

- 1. First Trumpet:** Flaming hail stones large enough to burn up a third of the surface of the earth.
- 2. Second Trumpet:** A volcanic eruption poisons 1/3 of the salt water on the planet, killing 1/3 of fish, and 1/3 of the ships that are unfortunate enough to be out to sea at the time. Evidently, a Tsunami of immense proportions swamps these ships.
- 3. Third Trumpet:** A large meteor or heavenly body enters earth's atmosphere in a catastrophic way, causing a poisoning of 1/3 of earth's fresh water supply and rendering it unfit for human consumption. "Wormwood" is a bitter plant grown in Palestine and is a symbol of calamity.
- 4. Fourth Trumpet:** The Sun, and Moon, and some of the stars are impacted next, evidently reducing their ability to provide daylight and at night by 1/3. This will drastically impact the amount of time available during a typical work day which will devastate worldwide production of goods and services.

Note on the interpretation of the 5th Trumpet judgment:

As Rev. 8:13 said, “Woe, woe, woe (three ‘woes’ indicates the last three trumpets) to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet.”

The judgment of the 5th trumpet is of a different nature than those which preceded it; this judgment is concerned with personal spiritual judgment on unbelieving men and women who remain on earth at the time.

The language of Rev. 9:1-12 requires a careful explanation of the meaning behind these very symbolic, yet real developments primarily as a result of God’s allowance of demonic activity.

5. Fifth Trumpet: Demonic Oppression on Unbelievers

9:1-2; John saw, “A star fall from heaven. (9:1a)”

The star mentioned seems to refer to a person rather than a literal star or meteor as has been described in (6:12-17 & 8:12-13). No explanation is offered in the passage itself concerning the identity of this person.¹¹⁴ The “star” was an intelligent being. If this being is fallen (Greek, *peptokaka*) the star may refer to Satan or some other fallen angel.

If on the other hand, “fallen” simply means having come to earth from heaven, an unfallen angel is probably in view. Since the angel is “given the key to the bottomless pit,” and carries out God’s command, an unfallen angel is probably in view.¹¹⁵

9:2; The Bottomless Pit: The angel opens the bottomless pit (lit. shaft of the abyss) which is the abode of Satan (v11; 20:1-3), some demons (Jude 6), and the beast (Rev. 11:7; 17:8). It is evidently a preliminary prison, not the final abode, which is the lake of fire (i.e. hell itself, Rev. 19:20; 20:10; Matt. 25:41).

John saw smoke rising from the shaft leading to an underground chamber. The smoke represents the terrible atmosphere of the place. What John saw resembled smoke billowing out of an active volcano.¹¹⁶

9:3-5; Locusts come out of the smoking pit upon the earth, and scorpion like stinging power is given to them to inflict pain on the people of earth who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads (Rev. 7:3). This torment goes on for five months.

The scorpion belongs to the largest and most malignant of all insect tribes. Its general appearance is like a lobster, but much more hideous. Its stinger is located near the end of its tail and

¹¹⁴ *ibid*, pg. 158

¹¹⁵ Thomas Constable, DTS Class Notes on course 307; Hebrews, General Epistles, and Revelation, pg. 81

¹¹⁶ *ibid*. pg. 82

though not always fatal, it can be. It ranks with the snake in its hostility toward human beings.¹¹⁷ Two glands in the tail of a scorpion emit a poison that produces a painful wound.¹¹⁸ Normally, locusts eat vegetation, but not these demonic creatures. They are described as having the ability to sting as the scorpions and not eating the grass or crops as ordinary locusts do. Instead, they torment men in a way comparable to the torment of a scorpion. These hordes of demonic creatures assume some of the characteristics of locusts in that they swarm over the entire earth. Apparently, the entire human race is open to their activity except those who are sealed by God in their foreheads.¹¹⁹

A note on the method of interpretation is helpful here:

“These descriptions were meant by the author to be taken very literally. They are not figures of speech; and if we are to be true to the writer’s thought we can scarcely represent the scenes to our imagination with too much realism. And quite literally, the scorpion locusts are quite literally intended. They are uncanny denizens of the abyss, locusts of a hellish species, animated by devilish instincts and equipped with infernal powers.”¹²⁰

9:7-11; The Characteristics of the “Locusts.”

- Locusts like horses prepared for battle
- crowns on their heads like gold – victory over men
- faces like the faces of men - intelligence
- Hair like women – a picture of their wildness
- Teeth of the lion – voracity to attack
- Breastplates of iron – immune to destruction
- Wings that sound like a battle – literal results
- Tails like scorpions – they hurt people

What John is describing is what he sees in his vision.

Inasmuch as demons do not have physical shape, these creatures are described to John having physical features, yet these literal creatures also operate in the spiritual domain. What John sees, is comparative as indicated by his use of the word “like” in describing the characteristics of the locusts. What John sees symbolizes demonic creatures who possess the men of the earth. The awesome combination of characteristics of men and of beasts depicts the utterly fearful character of this judgment. It is an unmasking of the true nature of Satan and of evil.

¹¹⁷ Robert Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, pg. 30

¹¹⁸ Ryrie, footnote on Rev. 9:10, pg. 2025

¹¹⁹ Walvoord, pg. 161

¹²⁰ A.S. Peake, *The Revelation of John*, pg. 181

9:11; They have a king over them.

Their king is the (leading) angel of the abyss. This is further confirmation that the locusts represent demons. The names “Abaddon” in Hebrew and “Apollyon” in Greek both mean “destroyer.” The objective of these demons is to destroy people. God grants this lead creature permission here to carry out his objective against unbelievers as part of God’s outpouring of wrath of earth-dwellers. Probably we should identify this angel as one of the hierarchy of fallen angels that emerges from the abyss with the other demons (Eph. 6:12). The revelation of his name simply expresses his objective. Identifying him as Satan is tempting, but the text only calls him an angel. The appearance of Satan later (12:3,9) is much more dramatic than the introduction of this angel.¹²¹

Rev. 9:6; The true impact of this judgment on men.

“In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them.”

The worst aspect of these demonic creatures is that they possess the unsaved of the earth. The unsaved will become demon possessed to such a degree that they will desire death as an escape but the demons will not allow it. Suicide will not be an option. While the creatures inflict physical pain as seen by those possessed by demons in the gospels, these tribulation era people will be in the spiritual grip of demons as well. Men will lose their ability to make free choices (suicide) and are in agony in body and soul. Even the hope of death is taken away from them in that dark hour.¹²²

6. 6th Trumpet: Warfare and Massive Loss of Life 6:12-21

The four angels bound at the Euphrates River are evil angels who are released by divine directive at the sounding of the sixth trumpet in order to execute judgment on mankind. It is declared that they are to slay a third of all mankind and that this is to be done at a specified time. Judgment comes at exactly the hour God ordains that it comes.

They are ordered to slay a third of the earth’s population, which taken with the other fourth killed at the fourth seal judgment (6:4), constitutes the death of half the world’s population with the saints excluded. This is done through three plagues (v18).

¹²¹ Constable, *pg.* 83-84

¹²² Walvoord, *pg.* 162

The “horsemen” may be humans under the control of these four evil angels or more likely the horsemen are demons. The description of these horses (v17) argues for a demonic army as does its leadership of the four fallen angels (v14-15).

Ryrie notes that “the 200,000,000 creatures (v16 & 19) who compose this supernatural cavalry may be human beings or demons, or demon-possessed humans.”¹²³ These horses kill with their tails (v19) as the locusts earlier did, thus the connection to demonic activity.

Years ago, China claimed to have an army of 200 million (Time, May 21, 1965, pg. 35). This point, along with the location of the Euphrates River being east of Jerusalem, has led some to conclude that this is the army from the east at the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16:12). This conclusion is out of sequence of this specifically timed (v15) event during the tribulation.

The Survivors’ Response

9:20-21

Ironically, these survivors refuse to “repent of the works of their hands.” They refuse to stop worshipped idols, the beast, and the very demons which are the source of their personal pain. This is a clear picture of how Satan treats those who belong to him. Most people living on earth at that time will have hearts so hardened to God that they will never repent.

7. Seventh Trumpet: The bowl judgments. Rev. 11:15-19 and The Announcement of the Kingdom of God on Earth.

As John hears “the seventh angel sound,” he hears:

“The Kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.”

Just as the seven trumpets are comprehended in the seventh seal, so **the seven bowls which are announced in Rev. 16:1, are themselves the seventh trumpet.** It is a notice that the end is now so near that the kingdom can be announced. The final bowl judgments are the final destruction of the earthly kingdom of the beast which makes way for the kingdom of God on earth. Never again will the earth be under the control and lordship of man.

¹²³ Ryrie, footnote on Rev. 9:16, pg. 2026

Supplemental Information in John’s Revelation is given prior to the Final Seven Bowl Judgments (which leads to the establishment of the Kingdom of God on Earth) are described in Revelation 10 to 19.

With the exception of the information on the seventh trumpet which is mentioned in Revelation 11:15-19, and all of chapter 16 which describes the seven bowl judgments, the Revelation of John is non-narrative from Rev. 10:1 to Rev. 19:1. The information given in these chapters describe many important details concerning the tribulation period and the beast. This information is given as a general description of personalities and events during the tribulation period. Thus, the things described occur in accordance with the chronological events we’ve discussed thus far. However, these chapters do not advance the historic narrative of the prophetic future John envisioned. This is why we will look at the individually before we resume our focus on the chronological order of events beginning with the bowl judgments.

d. Revelation 10:1-11; the Little Book

This scene marks a significant change in John’s literary method. Now, for the first and last time in this drama, he leaves the role of observer and occupies center stage in the scene. This new role involves a change in location from heaven to earth, as the angel descends from heaven (10:1) and stands upon the earth where John hears a voice from heaven (10:4,8) and goes to him (10:8). This scene heightens the anticipation and accentuates the solemnity of the apocalyptic events to follow.¹²⁴

The “strong angel” John sees in 10:1 is probably the same angel he saw before in 5:2. The angel is robed in a cloud (10:1), indicating he is of divine origin and connected with judgment, his crown symbolizes God’s faithfulness, his appearance is indicative of the glory of God; his feet and legs are reminiscent of the pillar of fire in the wilderness, which was then as now, a manifestation of God’s holiness, mercy, and judgment.¹²⁵

The “little scroll” in his hand indicates it is a new judgment from God. Its “sweetness in the mouth and bitterness to the stomach” is indicative of the pleasure of seeing the wicked punished, while realizing the severity of God’s judgments.

“There will no longer be any delay (10:6)” indicates that at the sound of the seventh trumpet, the seven bowl judgments will be poured out (16:1-21), and the Tribulation will come to an end with the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

¹²⁴ Thomas, *pg.* 59

¹²⁵ Constable, *pg.* 87

e. **Revelation 11:1-14; the Two Witnesses**

John is now given instruction to measure the temple of God.

The “temple” refers to both the holy place and the holy of holies excluding the courtyards. This is evidently the temple the Jews will build just before or during the first half of the tribulation. It is altogether possible that the rebuilding of the temple is part of the agreement (Dan. 9:27) the beast makes with Israel to appease them and lull them to sleep.

John is told to “leave out the court which is outside the temple (v2),” when he measures the temple. The court outside the temple corresponds to the court to which Gentiles had access in the first century, which lay outside the portions of the temple which only Jews had access to. The Gentiles will dominate the outer courts of the temple as well as all of Jerusalem for the 42 months (3 ½ years) of the last half of the tribulation. They will oppose God so there is no need for measuring them or their domain.

Anti-Semitism will peak at the mid-point of the tribulation after the Beast breaks his covenant with Israel. Because of this probability, it is safe to assume the two witnesses appear and are present in the last half of the tribulation.

The identity of the two witnesses is not revealed in Revelation, although many commentators believe them to be Moses and Elijah reincarnated.¹²⁶ These will probably be men of that era who will “**prophecy**” in God’s name the things God wants communicated. They wear “sackcloth” which signifies approaching judgment and needed repentance. They will resemble Zerubbabel and Joshua (Zech. 14:4) in that they will be God’s anointed servants who bear the light of His truth. They are dependent on the Spirit and speak for the God who controls the whole earth.

These witnesses will be able to protect themselves by **calling down fire** on their enemies who try to harm them, as Elijah did on Mt. Carmel. No one will be able to kill them until God permits them to at the very end of their ministry (v7). They will do many miracles to substantiate their testimony.

The beast will be permitted by God to kill these two witnesses who no doubt have been a thorn in his side for these 42 months. The beast will add insult to injury by allowing their dead bodies to lie in the streets for 3 ½ days. Those who follow the beast rejoice and celebrate by gift giving when they hear of these deaths.

They are resurrected by God as stunned onlookers watch. These men are “raptured” into heaven, an event followed by a killer earthquake.

¹²⁶ e.g. Smith, *A Revelation*, pg. 169; Merrill C. Tenney, pg. 191

f. **Revelation 12:1-13; War in Heaven and on Earth**

War on Earth: Phase 1 (12:1-6); the beast persecutes Israel.

Symbolic usage is heavy in this chapter.

Here is a list of symbols and their identity:

1. The woman with twelve stars = National Ethnic Israel
2. The Great Red Dragon = Satan
3. The “third of the angels swept away” = rebellious angels
4. The Male Child who is to rule the nations = Jesus Christ
5. Fleeing woman (v5) = faithful remnant of Israel

A large “gap” of time occurs between v12:5 & 12:6.

The male child who will rule the nations with a rod of iron is first “caught up to heaven and to His throne;” an event that occurred following the resurrection following the first advent of Christ.

“Then the woman fled into the wilderness for 1,462 days (v6).”

This is the faithful remnant of Israel under divine protection during the last half of the tribulation when persecution from the beast is most intense.

War in Heaven: 12:7-12; Satan is thrown out of heaven forever.

“Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of the brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night (v10).”

One of several of the judgments passed against Satan occurs here. He is no longer allowed the kind of access to God as he had in the case of Job. He is permanently barred from heaven as his kingdom realm is now confined to earth alone.

Two of Satan’s activities are to deceive the world and to accuse the brethren. The believer’s defense here as always has been (v11) to Bank on the merits of the death of Christ, to be active in witnessing, and to be willing to make any sacrifice, including death.

War on Earth/ Phase 2: 12:13-17

Satan, knowing his days are few (v12), “has great wrath on the earth.” Like a wounded and dying animal, Satan will lash out with increased vengeance upon all who call on the name of the Lord.

This event no doubt occurs at the mid-point of the tribulation period which is followed by an intensive increase in demonic and oppressive persecution of the believing remnant of Israel.

g. Revelation 13:1-18; the Beast and the False Prophet

Satan has always known he cannot defeat God Himself. Instead, he's tried to defeat God's plan by attempting to destroy Israel, thus stopping God from fulfilling His covenant promises to Israel. From Babylon and Assyria to present day Islamic radicals, those who have persecuted Israel had in mind the destruction of that nation. But, like Hitler, they are always been stopped just short of totally annihilating the nation and are instead used as pawns in the hand of God to further His kingdom program.

Beast #1 – The Political World Ruler

13:1; The dragon (Satan) is not “the beast coming up out of the sea.”

This beast is the Satanically empowered and controlled political world ruler, the “little horn” of Daniel 7:8; the prince that shall come of Dan. 9:26; the “willful king” of Dan. 11:36-45; and the “man of sin and lawless one,” of 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

Satan gives this beast “his power and his throne and great authority (v13:2),” only over the domain God has allowed him.

The beast is the head of a revived Roman Empire (v2) which combines the same strengths as the four empires of old described by Daniel.

These four empires are now under one governmental authority led by the beast. **This empire is far more dreadful than any that have come before it. It is a counterfeit empire to that of Jesus Christ.**

At one point, (v3) apparently the beast suffers a “fatal wound of the sword and was healed and came back to life (v3 & 14).” While Satan cannot resurrect the dead, this is a phony vestige of a resurrection, probably trickery performed by the false prophet of the beast, deludes many into believing the beast is God. The result (v4 & 8) is that “all the unsaved who dwell on the earth worshipped Satan, and the beast saying “who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?” Antichrist's rule will extend to all except believers “whose names have been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world.”

Assurance that God will punish evildoers sustains the faith of those who are persecuted (v7) during these terrible days.¹²⁷

Beast #2 – The False Prophet & Religious World Ruler

This man is Antichrist's lieutenant, who will enforce the worship of Antichrist by performing phony miracles (v13), by making an animated image of the beast (v14-15); and by sentencing to death all who will not worship the image (v15); and by requiring the beast's #666 on the forehead or hand in order to buy or sell needed goods.

Satan, the beast, and the false prophet make an unholy trinity.

¹²⁷ Ryrie, footnotes of Rev. 13:1,2, 3, 7-8, 10. pg. 2030-31

h. Revelation 14:1-7; The Song of the Redeemed of Israel

In contrast to the evil portrayed in the previous chapter, Revelation 14 gives assurance that those who refuse the mark of the Beast will ultimately triumph, and that those who succumb to the beast and his false prophet incur the judgment of God at the end of the tribulation.

14:1; John saw in this scene a time yet future at the end of the Great Tribulation when Jesus will return to the earth. Zechariah 14:4a says, “In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem...” Jesus’ second coming to earth does not take place in chapter 14, but later as recorded in Rev. 19:11-21.

John only saw it as happening in his vision here. He saw the Lamb standing on Mount Zion (referring to Jerusalem; 2 Sam. 5:7 Ps. 48:1; Joel 2:32), with the 144,000 Jewish witnesses (same group as in Rev. 7) that God had sealed with the mark of ultimate victory.

14:2; A second group of redeemed and martyred saints in heaven, “sings a new song before the throne in heaven.”

A new song in the Old Testament was a song of praise to God. This new song is one that is a consequence of the mighty deeds of God. It comes from a new impulse of gratitude in the heart.¹²⁸

14:3; This song is one that “no one except the 144,000 could learn.” The 144,000 were the only ones who could learn it in the sense that they were the only ones who could appreciate what it expressed. God had purchased them for the earth for their special ministry.

14:4-5; These redeemed Israelites were “not defiled by women,” meaning that they followed Paul’s advice in 2 Cor. 11:2 that they remain single for the sake of ministry to better focus on the ministry at hand. This would be especially important during the short time of the tribulation period.

They “follow the Lamb wherever He goes,” which meant they remained faithful in the face of intense and targeted persecution. They “are the first fruits,” meaning they are the first to be saved among their fellow Jews.

Also true of these is that “No lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless.” They will speak the truth in a time when deception will abound, and therefore will be acceptable to God as first fruits.

¹²⁸ Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, 1:402.

14:6-7; The angel gives the last call to receive the eternal gospel. This is a world wide gospel presentation given with urgency and concern. The angel proclaims that God is right in judging those who killed the saints...the angel says, "They deserve it."

The reason for fearing God is that the hour of His final judgment has come. The final bowl judgments are about to be poured out on what is left on the earth and the counterfeit kingdom of the beast. This is the very last chance that these unbelievers have to change their allegiance from Satan to God before the end.

i. Revelation 14:8-13: The "end" for beast worshippers.

With the last gospel offer proclaimed, and rejected (v14:9) by those who "worship the beast and his image," and who "receive his mark," God's "wrath" is poured out with fury upon the earth and its unbelieving inhabitants "in full strength in the cup of His anger." First will come the "seven bowls of the wrath of God (Rev. 16)," poured out on this side of eternity, and then comes an eternal literal hell for the beast and those who are his. The wicked will be tormented in the lake of fire "forever and ever," with no hope for annihilation to end "their torment in fire and brimstone." They will have "no rest day and night" for all eternity.

Positive incentive is given to the faithful on earth during this time to keep the commandments of God and their faith in the Lord. The Holy Spirit added that they would soon experience blessing and rest beyond the grave.

j. Revelation 14:14-20; the Harvesting of the Earth.

The Lord is seen in heaven with a "sharp sickle in His hand." This is symbolic for the catastrophic judgments that will fall on the earth at His second coming. The "harvest of the earth is ripe," which implies that judgment is due.

An angel also comes out and encourages the Lord to "put in his sickle." The harvesting is so severe that blood runs deep for 200 miles around Jerusalem (v20). This is apparently a look forward to the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 19:15, 17-19, 21) when the blood from the slaughter of both men and horses will cause this river of blood.¹²⁹

This chapter contains a prophetic preview of the major events yet future from John's perspective in his vision. That is, they deal with events that lead up to the end of the Great Tribulation.

¹²⁹ Ryrie, Ryrie Study Bible, footnote on Rev. 14:20, pg. 2033

k. Revelation 15:1-8; Prelude to the Bowl Judgments.

At this point, the narrative of the book moves forward chronologically to the last events of the tribulation prior to the coming of the Lord. With these plagues, “the wrath of God is finished (15:1).”

Upon the sea stand an innumerable company of those who “had been victorious over the beast, and his image, and had not taken his mark.” These are unmistakably the martyred dead destroyed by the beast, yet who stayed faithful to the death rather than yielding to persecution. “Harps” belong clearly to these saints.

This multitude sings two songs in praise of God and what He alone has done; The “Song of Moses,” and the “Song of the Lamb.” Both recount the historic faithfulness of God to Israel as a nation and to these of the faithful remnant of Israel whom God has saved out of the tribulation. Soon, “all the nations will come and worship before You,” in the Kingdom of God on earth.

The temple scene described here is most symbolic of what is about to happen. The judgment God is about to bring stem from His holiness, seen by the fact that the bowl judgments originate in “the temple of the tabernacle of Your holiness,” a clear reference to the Holy of Holies in the innermost part of the Temple.¹³⁰

L. Revelation 16:1-21; the Seven “Bowl” Judgments

“Seven bowls full of the wrath of God” are given to seven angels who will administer these “plagues.”

These “seven bowls,” in themselves, constitute the last of the seven trumpet judgments. These “bowls” are seven new and distinct judgments that are come rapidly and are more severe and intense that any previous judgment.

- 1. First bowl (16:1-2) - loathsome and malignant sores on the people who have followed the beast and who worshipped his image.**
- 2. Second bowl (16:3)– the salt seas turn into blood killing every living thing in the oceans. Not only is a major food source gone, but stench and disease no doubt soon follow.**

¹³⁰ Walvoord, Revelation, pg. 229

3. **Third bowl (16:4-7)**– fresh water rivers turned to blood. In a symbolic reminder of the fact that these beast worshippers have murdered a multitude of saints, God turns their drinking supply to blood since they had shed so much of it. John is reminded that, “they deserve it (v 16:6).”

4. **Fourth bowl (16:8-9)**– the sun is heated up to the point that it scorches men with “fierce heat.” This intense heat will drastically affect the climate, possible including excessive evaporation and melting of the polar ice cap and Antarctica.¹³¹ This is “global warming” on steroids!
Their amazing response (v9): “They blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory.” It is amazing that in a very short period of time, their knees will be those among “every knee which will bow.”

5. **Fifth bowl (16:10-11)**– Darkness is specifically directed toward the beast’s seat of power and his domain. This could include electrical failure due to the harsh conditions, or it could be a darkness like that which fell on Egypt when Pharaoh hardened his heart against an earlier generation of Israelites. In addition to darkness, pain becomes so intense that people “gnawed their tongues.”
Their amazing response (v11): “They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and sores, and they did not repent of their deeds.”

6. **Sixth bowl (16:12-16)** – **Euphrates River dries up to create a super highway in preparation for invasion and war.**

Setting the Stage for War:

The Antichrist (Beast), will have entered into a covenant with the people of Israel, binding that nation as part of his domain (Dan. 9:27). Any attack, then, against the land of Israel will be an attack against him with whom Israel will be joined by covenant.¹³² Ezekiel 38:11-12, says that Israel will be living in security, whether real or imagined. The believing remnant of Israel, always his target, will be worshipping in the temple (Rev. 11:1-2; 16:15) in Jerusalem. Three armies invade Israel; one from the East, one from the South, and one from the North.

¹³¹ Ryrie, Footnote on Rev. 16:8

¹³² Walvoord & Zuck, Bible Knowledge Commentary – Vol. 1 - OT; Daniel, pg. 1371

The Invaders from the East:

The Euphrates River is the eastern boundary of the land God promised Abraham (Gen. 15:8; Deut. 1:7; 11:24; Josh. 1:4). The river dries “so the way would be prepared for the kings from the east (Rev. 16:12).” A simple glance at a map will reveal that most of modern Israel’s enemies lie to her east, or northeast including Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and China who is one of the largest weapons suppliers to the terrorist states of the Middle East. North Korea is also east of Israel and is a “puppet state” of China.

The Euphrates River runs through modern day Iraq in a line running southeast to northwest. Any “eastern” army following this dried up riverbed would follow a line that would take them on roughly the same route that Abraham took on his way into the Promised Land. These armies would follow the “fertile crescent” in a north-westward arch bringing them into Israel through modern day Syria and over the Golan Heights into The Valley of Megiddo. The drying up of the river begins a war which will consist of several battles.

The Battle Begins as Antichrist gathers his armies:

The “king of the south (Egypt; vs. 11:42-43)” will attack Israel along with “Put,” which refers to Arab nations in the Sinai area. Fighting with them will be “Cush,” which refers to nations in the Persian Gulf region. These armies will attack up through the Sinai desert, Gaza, and lower Judea northward toward Jerusalem.

When Antichrist hears of this invasion, John tells us, “Three unclean spirits (Rev. 16:13)...go out to the kings of the earth to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.” The beast sends out these three unholy ambassadors to gather the kings of the entire earth for battle.

Antichrist will move his army from Europe into the Middle East sweeping through any country that gets in his way “like a flood (Dan. 11:40).” He will move quickly into the Beautiful Land (Dan. 11:41) according to his agreement with Israel.

The battle from the south:

The Antichrist (Beast), as head of a revived ten nation Roman Empire, will lead his army from Europe. He and his army will no doubt enter Jerusalem from the south through Egypt. He will hit the southern Islamic alliance of Egypt, Libya, and

Ethiopia first (Dan. 11:43), as they initiated their challenge to him.

After the Antichrist (Beast) concludes his campaign into Egypt (described in Daniel 11:40-45) “at the end time,” he “will then enter the Beautiful Land [Israel], and many countries will fall (Dan. 11:41).” The beast will then lay siege to Jerusalem, just prior to the Lord’s return (Zechariah 14:1-2). “All the nations will be gathered against Jerusalem to do battle, and the city will be captured...” as a result of this invasion.

However, all is not all clear sailing for the beast. Daniel 11:44-45 tells us, “rumors from the East and the North will disturb him (Dan. 11:44).” Antichrist will “pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain (Dan. 11:45); yet he will come to his end, and no one will be able to help him.” At this point in the battle, it will be Antichrist and his army against all comers.

The battle from the north:

Simultaneous with the invasion from “the king of the South” will be an invasion from the “king of the North (Dan.11:40).” These kings coming from the north and the south, will perform a “pincer” military maneuver against Israel. This could be a coordinated movement, or a desperate land grab in the middle of the chaotic end times. This is exactly the pattern that Arab nations have used in past attempted military invasions of Israel (1948 War of Independence; The Six Day War- 1967; The Yom Kippur War - 1973). All these past invasion failed as will this end time invasion.

These northern kings are known in Ezekiel’s prophecy as “Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 38 - 39).” “Gog,” probably refers to the ruler of the people who live in Magog, identified by the Jewish historian Josephus as the land of the Scythians, the region north and northeast of the Black Sea and east of the Caspian Sea (now occupied by three members of the Commonwealth of Independent States: Russia, the Ukraine, and Kazakstan).¹³³

Ezekiel chapters 38-39 describes a future attack on Israel from the north, and God’s deliverance of His people. The invading armies come “out of the remote parts of the north (38:15).” This could include modern day Russia, Syria, and any number of Islamic Baltic States of the former Soviet Union. These

¹³³ Ryrie, Ryrie Study Bible, NASB, footnote on Ezek. 38:2, pg. 1323

invaders are not destroyed by Antichrist, whose attention and armies are suddenly focused heavenward, but by supernatural intervention (Ezek. 39:3). Seven months will be required to bury their corpses (39:11-15), and their weapons will supply fuel for Israel “for seven years (39:9-12).” Throughout the remainder of the Tribulation period and into the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom years, Israel will be burning these weapons, as “she will not need to cut down trees.”

The timing of this northern part of the invasion seems to have begun earlier in the tribulation. Perhaps the first thrust will have begun just before the middle of the Tribulation, with successive waves of the invasion continuing throughout the last part of that period and building up to Armageddon.¹³⁴

(It is important to note that Ezekiel 38-39 describes a different battle than the one which occurs at the end of the 1,000 year millennial kingdom, mentioned in Revelation 20:7-9 involving “Gog and Magog,” the worldwide enemies of Christ.¹³⁵)

“This situation probably represents a conflict among the nations themselves in the latter portion of the Great Tribulation as the world empire so hastily put together begins to disintegrate. The armies of the world contending for honors on the battlefield at the very time of the second coming of Christ turn suddenly at the appearance of The King of kings and the Lord of lords. In utter futility, they combine their military efforts against Christ and His army from heaven when the glorious events surrounding the second coming of Christ appears in the heavens.”¹³⁶

The battle turns heavenward:

John tells us the Lord is, “coming like a thief (Rev. 16:15a).” As Antichrist lays siege to Jerusalem, “the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle (Zechariah 14:3).” The sudden return of the Lord and his armies in the air will no doubt surprise the beast and the gathered armies who are suddenly forced to unite against this impenetrable supernatural force in one last final battle, The Battle of Armageddon.

This whole series of battles described by the prophets, leads up to the final battle at Armageddon. Armageddon will be the

¹³⁴ Ryrie, Ryrie Study Bible, NASB, footnote on Ezek. 38:1ff, *pg. 1323*

¹³⁵ Ryrie, footnote on Revelation 20:8, *pg. 2041*

¹³⁶ Walvoord, *pg. 237*

final phase of this military campaign in the very last days of the Great Tribulation as described in Revelation 19:17-21.

“Har-Magedon,” or “Armageddon,” literally means “Mount of Megiddo.” This is a location near the city of Megiddo at the head of the plain of Esdraelon in north central Israel. Napoleon said the Valley of Megiddo is the greatest battlefield in the world. This valley is fourteen miles wide and twenty miles long.

What Scripture seems to indicate is that this valley is the central point for the military conflict. According to Revelation 14:20, the armies of Satan are deployed over a 200 mile area up and down from this central location.

Earlier, at the blowing of the sixth trumpet (Rev. 9:13-16), an army of 200 million men is let loose to kill a third of the people on earth. This is the army that brings “bloodshed to the depth of the bridle of a horse, outside the city of Jerusalem. (Rev. 14:16).”

“Probably the best explanation is that the seven bowl judgments follow very rapidly after the trumpet judgments. The sixth trumpet (Rev. 9:13-18) signals the start of warfare that reaches its peak at the sixth bowl judgment (Rev. 16:17-21). The time sequence here may be measured in days rather than months or years.”¹³⁷

Before we proceed to a description of the finish of that final battle at Armageddon, God has one last “bowl” to pour out on the beast and his “kingdom.”

7. **Seventh bowl (16:17-21)** – Widespread destruction on earth. No doubt the armies of the East, south, and north will do their share of damage on their way into Jerusalem. However, they will do nothing like the damage inflicted from heaven which causes John to say, “It is done (v16:17).”

The “Big One” really is a “big one” in this case. An earthquake of global proportions rocks the entire planet. The “great city,” Babylon (v16:19) is split in three places. The topography of the earth will also drastically change as 100 pound hailstones pummel the population of earth like a “severe plague.”
Their amazing response (v 16:21): “They blasphemed God.”

¹³⁷ *ibid*, pg. 239

In 90 A.D. John told us (Revelation 16:18 & 21) of this catastrophic earthquake and huge hailstones falling from heaven upon the unrighteous followers of the beast. In 570 B.C. the prophet Ezekiel told us that “when Gog comes against the land of Israel (Ezek. 38:18),” God “in His blazing wrath, declares that on that day there will surely be a great earthquake in the land of Israel (Ezek. 38:19).” In addition, “With pestilence and with blood I shall enter into judgment with him; and I shall rain on him and on his troops, and on the many people who are with him, a torrential rain with hailstones, fire, and brimstone (Ezek. 38:22).”

When the armies reach Israel, God’s anger will be aroused against them. He will cause a massive earthquake in Israel that will interrupt Gog’s invasion plans and spread fear and confusion throughout the ranks of the invading forces. In the pandemonium, communications between the invading armies will break down and they will begin attacking each other. “Every man’s sword will be against his brother (Ezek. 38:21). Fear and panic will sweep through the forces so each army will shoot indiscriminately at the others. The slaughter of the armies will be aided by “natural” catastrophes, including torrents of rain, hailstones, and burning sulphur (v22). The rain will combine with dirt and debris from the earthquake to produce massive mud slides and floods. The burning sulphur will be volcanic ash.¹³⁸

¹³⁸ Walvoord & Zuck, Bible Knowledge Commentary – Vol. 1 – OT; Ezekiel 38:1-16, *pg. 1301*

3. ***“Write the things which will take place after these things.”***
The Judgment on Religious Babylon, the “Great Harlot.”
Revelation 17:1-18

This is another supplemental insert into the chronological sequence of events. Chapter 17 & 18 describe the ultimate end of the religious and commercial kingdom of the Beast. The narrative of events resumes in Chapter 20:1 with the Second Coming of Christ to earth.

The Fall of Religious Babylon; the Great Harlot.

It is interesting to note that the only form of a “one world church” recognized in the Bible is this apostate church destined to come into power after the true church is raptured. This apostate church influences the people of “many waters,” or nations.

The second beast of Rev. 13:11 had “two horns.” Walvoord notes that there is “some evidence pointing to the conclusion that the second beast is head of the apostate church during the first half of the tribulation.¹³⁹ He has “two horns” in that he speaks like a lamb religiously, and a dragon at the same time. His speaking as a dragon indicates he is motivated by the power of Satan who is “the dragon.” He is also associated with the first beast religiously in that he makes an image to the beast, demands worship of the beast, and performs “miracles.” The alliance of the apostate church, “the great harlot” with the political powers of the world during this future period not only destroys the true spiritual character that was characteristic of the true church, but the testimony of this false church is compromised by definition from the very start. False religion is always the worst enemy of true faith, and the moral wickedness involved in the union of the church and state imposes a drunken stupor on religion that smacks of power and political manipulation. This usurping of true spirituality is why this church is consider “adulteress.”

The fact that the woman “is drunk with immorality” has much to do with the fact that idolatry and sexual perversions and practices in false worship, have always been the pattern since the days of Israel and the Golden Calf in the wilderness. She is also “drunk with the blood of the saints (v17:6)” indicating she has openly been part of the persecution of tribulation saints and the believing remnant of Israel.

The fact that the woman “is riding the beast” signifies that she represents ecclesiastical power as distinct from the beast.

¹³⁹ Walvoord, Revelation, pg. 205

On her head is written “Babylon the Great, The Mother of Harlots.”

This is not a reference to Babylon the city which was located on the Euphrates River in ancient days. It is an indication that the woman corresponds religiously to what Babylon always was religiously, a false center of pagan worship. Babylon is actually a counterfeit religion which plagued Israel in the Old Testament as well as the church in the New Testament. This is the same false “kingdom of Satan,” which Nimrod established in Genesis 10 & 11, which he called Babel. In Genesis 11 Babel became the center of Satan’s kingdom when men attempted to make a city and a tower that would reach to heaven in defiance of God.

Rev. 17:8-18; The beast that “was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss,” is this religious false prophet of Rev. 13:11. That which seemingly went out of historic existence, is here revived.

The “seven heads,” and “ten horns,” are another reference to nations and governments. These nations are bewitched by the harlot, and court the apostate church for what they can get from her.

We are brought to the identification of these seven mountain kings as the seven great world-powers, which stretch from the beginning of our present world to the end of it. Here the account looks backward as well as forward. By these seven great powers then, filling up the whole interval of world history, this Harlot is said to be carried.¹⁴⁰

The final stage of the world empire will have a nucleus of ten kings joined in an alliance, which is the revived Roman Empire under the beast (v17:12). These ten kings destroy the woman riding the beast in a most graphic action. Both the ten horns and the beast join in this effort to bring down the world church of the future.

This event probably occurs at the mid-point of the tribulation.

During the first half of the tribulation, this false church flourishes and is unmolested by the beast establishing religious power over the whole world. There is a measure of religious freedom so long as it is done in this false church. However, with the beginning of the second half of the tribulation, the beast establishes himself as “God,” and proclaims himself world dictator and demands worship of himself and his image. In this capacity he no longer needs the help and power of any church. He therefore destroys the world church and substitutes himself as the only object of worship.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Joseph A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse*, pg. 391-94

¹⁴¹ Walvoord, pg. 256

4. ***“Write the things which will take place after these things.”***

The Judgment on Commercial “Babylon the Great.”

Revelation 18:1-24

“In one day, and in one hour your judgment has come.”

The one world system of government and commerce, controlled by the beast is destroyed in one day. This is done in a single day at the time of Christ’s return to earth. As the beast and his armies are gathered in Israel, the Lord returns to destroy what is left of his false “kingdom.” All commercial trade, shipping, buying and selling (18:11-15), and the false sense of security that has been part of the deception from the beginning is brought to an abrupt end. In the “cup she has mixed, will be judgment twice as much for her (v18:6).” “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great (v2)! Woe, woe (v10), woe, woe (v16), Woe, woe... the great city has been laid waste (v19).” “Babylon the great is thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer (v21).” It is over.

18:4; The faithful remaining on earth at this time are told to “come out of her, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive her plagues.” There will be no mercy shown in this judgment, as there can be no compromise with this system of deception (v23) and opposition to all that is holy (sorcery - v23) and good.

18:20; The judgment God brings on Babylon for her treatment of the saints is a cause of rejoicing and celebration for the occupants of heaven, including those who were slain by the beast for their faith.

18:22-23; No money, no music, no worker, no machinery, no light, no marriages, no happiness shall be found in Babylon anymore. No pity is shown.

The mourning of those who made fortunes off this world system now weep (v19) because their wealth is gone and any possibility of making a new fortune is gone.

In contrast, the true fortunes of faith, devotion, and service to God laid up in heaven beyond the destructive hands of man and protected by the righteous power of God is all that is left standing in the end.

The destruction of religious and commercial Babylon ends the control of the souls of men. Persecution is at an end, as is the persecutor.

No longer can ancient Babylon control the world religiously, politically, or economically.¹⁴²

¹⁴² *ibid*

5. ***“Write the things which will take place after these things.”***

The Triumphal Return of the Faithful and True King

Revelation 19:1 – 20:15

“Chapter 19 ushers in the greatest event for this earth – the Second Coming of Christ. It is the bridge between the Great Tribulation and the Millennium.”

J. Vernon McGee

a. The Four Hallelujahs, = “Praise the Lord.”

19:1-6

The Great multitude in heaven praise God for:

1. Salvation (v 1)
2. Righteous retribution – ‘pay back’ in this case is literally “hell.” (v2)
3. For God Himself (v3) who “sits on the throne.”
4. For God’s Reign (v6) now uncontested and unopposed

b. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

19:7-10

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb has come and the bride has made herself ready (v7).” Its party time in heaven!

In a Jewish household, three things would happen to complete a marriage ceremony:

1. The marriage contract was signed long before the wedding ceremony.
2. The bridegroom would go to the home of the bride and escort her back to the home of his father.
3. The bridegroom would bring his bride to his home and the marriage supper, to which the guests are invited would take place.

When Christ comes for His church (His bride) at the rapture, the second phase of the wedding is fulfilled, namely the Bridegroom has gone and received His bride. The next thing to happen is the wedding feast, which will take place in the place where the bride and Bridegroom are to be found, in heaven. This presumes the rapture has already taken place, supporting the idea of a pre-wrath rapture.

The identity of the “wife” is defined as that of the “bride” which is distinctly those who are members of the Bride during the church age. This marriage supper is “the final aspect of the marriage relationship between Christ and His church.”¹⁴³ The wife of the Lamb is distinguished from those who are the invited guests to the feast. The fact that the divine purpose is not the same for Israel, the church, and the martyred saints of Rev. 7 is plain in the Word of God. Just as no two individuals have exactly the same destiny, so no two nations, or groups of believers in God’s program across the ages, are treated exactly alike. In all these relationships God is completely sovereign, righteous, and wise.

¹⁴³ *ibid*, pg. 272

c. **The Second Coming of Christ**

19:11-19

“The Second Coming of Christ is not only the high point of the Book of Revelation but in many respects the high point of all history.”

Dr. John F. Walvoord

This is the visible, revelation from heaven of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ which “every eye shall behold.”

As John envisions, on that day the world will see and know the revealed Word of God. The heavens will open...a great white horse and its Rider will gallop out of heaven as a “righteous and true warrior (v19:11).” On His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, ‘KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.’

In Revelation 4:4, John saw those around the throne who were “clothed in white garments...in Revelation 7:9 John saw “a great multitude before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes...in Revelation 19:8, the bride of Christ is “given clothes of fine linen, bright and clean; for the linen is the righteous acts of the saints...” and behind the Lord Jesus as He rides down from heaven will be “the armies which are in heaven, “clothed in fine linen, white and clean, following Him on white horses. (Rev. 19:14).”

The church will follow the Lord out of heaven on white horses of our own to wage war against the enemy of our souls. The outcome of the battle is a forgone conclusion.

Note on differences between Rapture (1 Thes. 4:13-18) and Second Coming of Christ (Rev. 19:11-16).

Rapture

The Lord comes “in the air.”

The church goes up in the air.

The church is on earth and then in the air and then taken to heaven.

No events need to precede the rapture.

The rapture is imminent.

Second Coming

Christ returns from the air.

The church comes from the air to the earth with Christ.

The church is pictured as already in heaven, worshipping and feasting

The tribulation events precedes the Second coming. Known time line.

The Second coming follows known prophetic events.

Touchdown! Zechariah 14:4-11

“In that day **His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives**, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south (v14:4).” In Acts 1:9-12 tells us this is exactly the same place where Jesus was “taken up into heaven,” following His resurrection.

Jesus Christ will personally and visibly return to the earth and literally touch down on the Mount of Olives, causing a tremendous earthquake that not only changes the topography of the area but provides an escape path for the faithful residing in the area who are under attack by the beast and his army.

“The coming of Christ (YHWH) to do battle will bring about cataclysmic changes in the terrain itself, as well as in the patterns of light and darkness and in the seasons (Zech. 14:4-8). Such cosmic phenomenon are a regular part of the biblical description on events leading to the establishment of YHWH’s rule in the ages to come and attest to His power as Creator and to the new creation that will be founded upon the ashes of the old. The shaking of the heavens as Haggai 2:6-7 points out, will accompany the shaking of the nations as YHWH comes to assert His domain over them.

The splitting of the mountain creates a new valley, one that is on an east-west axis. The great valley that emerges from this becomes a route of escape for Jerusalem’s population so that the enemy forces alone are left in the valley awaiting judgment.”¹⁴⁴

Jesus proceeds from Jerusalem, leading His people across the Kidron Valley to the Mount of Olives. The scene in Zechariah 14 is that of invading armies that surround Jerusalem, pouring in from the north and south, thus preventing any escape in that direction. When all is lost, Jesus leads His people out of danger, and, like Moses at the Red Sea, parts the mountain by the very act of treading upon it.

This change in topography will also provide an enormous new geographic foundation for the Millennial Temple, described in Ezekiel 40, from which Jesus will rule the nations with a rod of iron.

¹⁴⁴ Eugene H. Merrill, *Commentary on Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, pg. 347

d. Armageddon – Doom of the Beast.

Rev. 19:20-20:3

This resumes the narrative at the end of Revelation 16:21 and the pouring out of the seventh bowl.

The beast and what is left of his army, along with the kings of the east, south, and north are gathered below in the Valley of Megiddo.

“The beast and the kings of the earth and their armies were assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army (v19:19).” They will realize their absolute defeat. He will “strike down the nations, and will rule them with a rod of iron.”

Not a pretty sight!

Zechariah 14:12ff tells of the aftermath of the Lord’s return to earth:

“Now this is the plague with which the Lord will strike all the peoples who have gone to war against Jerusalem; their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet, and their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongue will rot in their mouths...great panic from the Lord will fall on them...”

19:17-19; The carnage is so great that an angel summons all the carnivorous birds on earth to come and eat their fill, and clean up the mess following the battle of Armageddon. All four armies on earth are annihilated, destroyed, and dead. There will be no survivors (v19:21).

This is an important point in that there will be no unrighteous followers of Satan left on earth following the Second Coming of Christ to earth. However, there will be tribulation Gentiles who believed and took God’s advice to flee to safety, who were supernaturally protected by having the “seal” on their foreheads, and who are now poised and ready to enter the Millennial Kingdom. The surviving 144,000 redeemed Jews will also remain on earth at this point.

These two groups will be in physical bodies that are capable of reproducing offspring, and yet will enjoy the health benefits of a renewed environment and perfect conditions in the coming kingdom. These two groups will make up the population of the Millennial Kingdom along with Old Testament and Church Age saints.

19:20-20:3; Satan, The Beast and the false Prophet seized.

The Prophet Isaiah once spoke of the judgment upon the eschatological “King of Babylon.” He said, “You will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit. Those who see you will gaze at you, they will ponder over you, saying, ‘is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms (Isa. 14:15-17)?”

When Christ is through judging this unholy trinity, those who look on them will certainly be amazed at the insignificance of their opposition. Those who followed him will then feel the absolute foolishness of their mistaken loyalty. Unfortunately, they will be in the same situation as he is.

“The beast, the false prophet, and those who worshipped the beast are seized and cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:19-20). Then the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, is bound and thrown into the abyss (Rev. 20:1-3) for a thousand years.”

6. ***“Write the things which will take place after these things.”***

Jesus Reigning and Ruling in the Millennial Kingdom

Revelation 20:4 - 15

The Abrahamic Covenant is fulfilled with the believing remnant of Israel including the 144,000 redeemed from the twelve tribes during the tribulation, and the faithful remnant of believing Jews who trusted Christ during the Old Testament and the church age.

Israel is finally back in all of their land; one of David’s descendents sits enthroned in absolute power in Jerusalem; and the blessings of the New Covenant are enjoyed by the redeemed of Israel in the kingdom. The 1,000 year (mentioned six times in Rev. 20), Millennial Kingdom of Christ on earth is the final aspect of the Theocratic kingdom program of God in fulfillment of the promise given to David that his kingdom and throne would continue forever over the house of Israel.

The Millennium is a period in which Christ will literally reign on earth as its supreme political leader, and in which the many promises of the Old Testament relating to the kingdom on earth in which Israel will be prominent and Gentiles will be blessed, will have complete and literal fulfillment. Such a reign requires Christ to be in the present earth in a physical way participating directly in the government of the world.¹⁴⁵

One of the major features of the kingdom will be Christ’s righteous rule upon earth that will make possible peace and tranquility and an absence of spiritual warfare. This will be the only period in history when Satan will not execute his work of deception and destruction.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid*, pg. 297

The Millennial Temple:

Ezekiel 40:1- 42:20

Although a subject of much debate, the Temple described by the Prophet Ezekiel best fits the time period following Christ's return to earth. The construction of the edifice cannot take place until after the second coming of Christ, who in His glorious advent will effect necessary physical changes to the landscape of Palestine.

The whole central portion of the land will be converted into a "very great valley" or "plain" from Geba, about six miles northeast of Jerusalem, to Rimmon (En-rimmon), identified with Umm er Ramamin, some thirty miles south of Jerusalem (Zech 14:4, 10).

The holy oblation, or land devoted to Jesus Christ, in the middle of which is located the sanctuary (Ezek. 48:8, 10), may comprise this very portion. It is therefore clear that Ezekiel's temple cannot be built until after the glorious second advent of Christ. It is His feet standing upon the Mount of Olives which will bring about the radical change in the topography of the land essential to the exalted location and unique construction of the millennial seat of worship.

In a general way the sanctuary will be located in the heart of Palestine, which will be the religious and governmental centre of the millennial earth.¹⁴⁶ The temple area itself will be a spacious square, according to Ezekiel's precise measurements. It will be a square which is 34 miles on each side, totally 1160 square miles. The temple itself would be located in the middle of the square (not in the city of Jerusalem) and upon a very high mountain, which will be miraculously made when the temple is ready for construction.

The gates and courts of the temple will be part of what will be the most sacred and glorious place in all the world during the millennial kingdom. From this magnificent structure the power and blessing of God will flow forth to the ends of the earth.¹⁴⁷

The temple has gates and courts (40:5-47); an inner court (40:28-46); an altar (40:47); the house itself (40:48-41:4) into which the Shekinah glory, the very presence of God himself will enter and abide during the millennium era; a porch (40:48, 49); the holy place (41:1,2) the most holy place (41:3,4); chambers, a separate place for guarding the house, and interior details that far exceed anything that Solomon, Nehemiah, or Herod ever built or dreamed of.

It will be a place that demonstrates God's holiness; that provides a dwelling place for the Divine Glory; that provides a place for perpetual commemorative sacrifice to reflect on Israel's past history; to provide a center for divine governance; and to remind all of Christ's victory over the curse (47:1-12).

¹⁴⁶ Merrill F. Unger, *Bib Sac* – V106 #422 – April 49 - 178

¹⁴⁷ *ibid*, pg. Part 2, pg. 1

Conditions on earth will be ideal. Everything which was destroyed as a result of Satan’s counterfeit kingdom activity, and the resulting ravages of war, is reversed. The prophet Isaiah spoke of the conditions on earth during the Millennial Kingdom:

New Heavens and a New Earth

17 “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth;
And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.
18 “But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create;
For behold, I create Jerusalem *for* rejoicing and her people *for* gladness.
19 “I will also rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in My people;
And there will no longer be heard in her the voice of weeping and the
sound of crying.
20 “No longer will there be in it an infant *who lives but a few days*,
Or an old man who does not live out his days;
For the youth will die at the age of one hundred and the one who does not
reach the age of one hundred will be *thought* accursed.
21 “They will build houses and inhabit *them*; they will also plant
vineyards and eat their fruit.
22 “They will not build and another inhabit, they will not plant and
another eat; For as the lifetime of a tree, *so will be* the days of My people,
And My chosen ones will wear out the work of their hands.
23 “They will not labor in vain, or bear *children* for calamity;
For they are the offspring of those blessed by the LORD, and their
descendants with them.
24 “It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and
while they are still speaking, I will hear.
25 “The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw
like the ox; and dust will be the serpent’s food. They will do no evil or
harm in all My holy mountain,” says the Lord. **Isaiah 65:17-25**

a. Tribulation Saints Resurrected Rev. 20:4-10

The most probable explanation for who the 24 (v20:4) is that they are elders who are said to reign on earth (5:10 & Rev. 20:6). Jesus said in Luke 22:29-30, “Those who have stood with Me in My trials...and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

There are several stages of divine judgment at this stage in history:

- **Matthew 25:31-46** says the Gentiles will be judged following Christ’s return to earth.
- **Ezekiel 20:33-38** the House of Israel is judged in a similar manner.
- **Rev. 20:4** Tribulation saints resurrected from the dead are also judged and rewarded. Specific mention is made of those who

were “beheaded” for Jesus (Rev. 13:15-17). Included would be the two witnesses who were killed and resurrected earlier in the tribulation (Rev. 11). AS Culver points out, “if the saints are going to reign with Christ (Rev. 20:6), they will need to be alive in the same sense that He is, namely, having a resurrection body.”¹⁴⁸

- b. Sinners Rebelling and Judged** **Rev. 20:7-9**
“When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, to deceive the nations and gather them for war...”
“On being relieved from his confinement, Satan loses no time in resuming his nefarious activities and plunges into his campaign to deceive the nations of the entire earth. Those who are tempted are the descendants of the tribulation saints who survive the tribulation and enter the millennium in their physical, natural bodies. B.F. Atkinson believes infants born during the millennium will live to its conclusion and will not be required to make a choice between the devil and Christ until the very end. The children of those entering the millennium far outnumber the parents, and undoubtedly the earth is teeming with inhabitants at the conclusion of the thousand year reign of Christ. Outwardly they have been required to conform to the rule of the king, who “rules with a rod of iron.” They make a profession of obedience to Christ. In many cases, however, this was merely an outward conformity without inward reality, and in their inexperience in the absence of real temptation, they are easy victims of Satan’s wiles.”¹⁴⁹
It will be proved once more that man whatever his advantages and environment, apart from the grace of God and the new birth, remains in his heart only evil and at enmity with God.¹⁵⁰

Rev. 20:9; The Very Last Battle

Even under the ideal conditions and offerings in the kingdom, Satan raises innumerable armies who respond to his war call. This is the last thrust at Christ and His kingdom as Satan and his armies gather around the capital of the kingdom in Jerusalem, “the beloved city.” Apparently Christ permits the army to assemble and encircle the city. This city will be Christ’s capital city during the Millennium, the place of the temple where Christ rules. It is the center of the world.¹⁵¹

“They come up on the great plain of the earth and surround the camp of the saints and the beloved city...(v20:9).”

No doubt, they are out in the open so that Christ could annihilate them in one shot! No sooner has the army of Satan been assembled, than fire comes down from God in heaven and devours them as Elijah

¹⁴⁸ Culver, *pg. 211*

¹⁴⁹ Walvoord, *Revelation, pg. 302*

¹⁵⁰ William Hoste, *The Visions of John the Divine, pgs. 160-61*

¹⁵¹ Tom Constable, *DTS class notes on Rev. 20:9*

witnessed on Mount Carmel with the prophets of Baal. This “last battle,” is really no battle at all.

“Gog and Magog” are mentioned again in Rev. 20:9.

As we noted earlier, it is important to note that Ezekiel 38-39 describes a different battle than the one which occurs at the end of the 1,000 year millennial kingdom, mentioned in Revelation 20:7-9 involving “Gog and Magog,” the worldwide enemies of Christ.¹⁵²

While the Net Bible notes, “The battle with Gog and Magog is described in the OT in Ezek. 38:1-39:20,”¹⁵³ I prefer to take the advice of Dr. Charles Ryrie who says, “Gog and Magog represent the worldwide enemies of Christ. **This is not the same battle as described in Ezek. 38:1.**”¹⁵⁴ Dr. John Walvoord further supports Ryrie in saying, “the terms Gog and Magog are used here without any explanation. It would seem from the context that this is not the same event as described in Ezekiel 38 & 39 where Gog and Magog are prominent; the battle that follows is entirely different and separated by at least a thousand years from that of Ezekiel’s prophecy.”¹⁵⁵

T. B. Baines also adds this; **“God and Magog are here used in a wider sense than in Ezekiel, and their invasion differs in time and details,** though agreeing in character and object, with that which he foretells. Ezekiel predicts an incursion by a great northern power called Gog, which from certain geographic indications is easily identified as Russia. In the Revelation, however, Gog and Magog are used to designate the nations, not merely from the north, but from all parts, “the four corners of the earth.” Again, the invasion named by Ezekiel is at the beginning of Christ’s reign; that in Revelation at the end. The hosts in Ezekiel fall on the mountains, and their bodies are buried; whereas the forces assembled in Revelation are devoured by fire from heaven.”¹⁵⁶ Even under the ideal government, environment, and Ruler during the Millennial reign of Christ, innumerable hosts immediately respond to the first temptation to rebel. However, this is the end of the road for the nations who rebel against God as well as for the career of Satan.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² Ryrie, footnote on Revelation 20:8, *pg. 2041*

¹⁵³ NET Bible, First Edition, www.bible.org, 1996-2005; footnote on Rev. 20:9

¹⁵⁴ Charles Ryrie, Ryrie Study Bible, NASB, 1995, footnote on Rev. 20:9

¹⁵⁵ Walvoord, Commentary on Revelation, note on Rev. 20:9, *pg. 303*

¹⁵⁶ T.B. Baines, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, *pg. 270-71*

¹⁵⁷ Walvoord, *pg. 304*

Rev. 20:10; Satan Doomed.

Following the destruction of the armies of Satan, the devil is cast into the Lake of Fire, where he joins the beast and the false prophet who preceded him by a thousand years. They will be “tormented day and night forever and ever.” So much for the theory of annihilationism!

Rev. 20:11-15; the Great White Throne Judgment

At this point, all believers have already been judged and rewarded. Now it is time for the unbelieving throughout history to be judged. God’s throne is seen in “space” as the present heavens and earth will soon “pass away (Rev. 21:1).”

This judgment occurs at the end of the millennial kingdom era.

It is interesting that these are judged “according to their deeds (20:12b), every one of them according to their deeds (20:13b).” They have already been judged according to Hebrews 9:28; “It is appointed unto men to die once and after this comes judgment.” They are in Hades because they rejected Christ during their life time. Hades is a temporary place of suffering for the unsaved dead prior to their judgment at the Great White Throne. The temporary intermediate state called “Hades,” and the “sea” give up their dead to be judged eternally. These are all unbelievers who bought into the counterfeit kingdom and program of Satan. They are judged by their good works, by which “no man can be saved (Rom 3:20).” There is no grace, there is no mercy, and there are none who escape this judgment. Eternity rolls as the depths of hell fill with the lost of all time.

7. *“Write the things which will take place after these things.”*

The Eternal State – The New Jerusalem

Revelation 21:1 – 22:21

- a. **Descent of the New Jerusalem** **21:1-8**
“The first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea (Rev. 21:1).”

2 Peter 3:7 & 10 states: “By His Word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.”

“The Day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.”

The reason God will destroy the present heaven and earth is that He originally made them as the habitat for humanity. However, sin so thoroughly corrupted not only the human race but the race's environment that He will destroy it and create a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. This is His final stage in His plan to deliver humanity into the blessing He originally intended people to enjoy. This is an entirely new creation, not just a renovation of the present heavens and earth.¹⁵⁸ In contrast to Isaiah's prophecy of conditions during the Millennial Kingdom era, John described conditions on and surrounding a new planet that God will create after He destroys the present earth (2 Peter 3:10).

The new earth will have no seas. The sea is an evil in the sense that it opposes humankind. For example, it was the sea that kept John imprisoned on Patmos as he recorded the Revelation. There will also be no death, no mourning, no weeping, no pain, no curse, no night (v 21:4, 25; 22:3, 5) in the New Jerusalem. People will enjoy a new intimacy with God and the elimination of those sorrows that sin brings.

As God did with Sodom, so he will do with what is left of the environment of this world. The ashes of Sodom and Gomorrah lie under the desert sands of the Middle East to this day. **With the coming of the New Jerusalem, the eternal state will commence.** The fulfillment of all covenant promises to Abraham will have been completed, the Lord will have reclaimed all that Satan attempted to steal from him of the earth, all His enemies will be "his footstool," and the wicked dead will have been judged. **Who needs an old planet? It's time to go home!**

- b. **Description of the New Jerusalem.** **Rev. 21:9-27**
"And I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband."
Rev. 21:2

The holy city descending from God out of heaven should be understood as a 'real event'...the city comes down from God meaning that the eternal blessedness is not an achievement of man, but a gift from God.

As the old Jerusalem was Christ's capital during the Millennium, so the New Jerusalem will be His capital city in the new earth.

¹⁵⁸ Thomas, Revelation 8-22, pg. 439-40

In the bride-husband simile, the city is the bride, and Christ is the husband. The use of the bride figure to describe the New Jerusalem should not lead us to conclude that the New Jerusalem is identical with the church.

The NT uses the bride to describe the church (2 Cor. 11:2) and the OT used the bride as a figure to describe Israel's relationship to God (Is. 62:5; Jer. 2:2). This does not mean that the church, Israel, and the New Jerusalem are three names for the same entity. However, this bride of Christ, the New Jerusalem, now evidently encompasses two previous brides of Christ, Israel and the church. **The city is a corporate identity of those who reside in it.**¹⁵⁹

“He will dwell among them...” **Rev. 21:3**

The essence of v3 is the focal point of John's whole description of the New Jerusalem: God's immediate presence with redeemed men and women. The prominence of the theme is evident by virtue of a five time repetition of the same essential truth in one verse (v3). It is repeated in 21:3; 21:7; 21:11; 22:3-4.

From the description that follows it also seems clear that the New Jerusalem is a city with actual physical features in John's vision. Jesus said in John 14:2, “I will go and prepare a place for you.” This is the place!

For example:

21:11; It was extremely bright and glowing in appearance. “Crystal clear jasper” will allow the glory to shine through.

21:12; The city walls have 12 gate towers. The city appeared to be perfectly square, so there were three towers on each wall. There are angelic guards on each tower. These towers represent the security of the city, and provide access to the city. Each tower has the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel, again supporting the fact that God has kept His promise to the nation of Israel.

21:14; Since there are foundations to the city, it will apparently rest on the new earth, not hang in the sky. Each section of the wall, between the gate towers has its own foundation. “And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The Israel of old and the Christian church are united in God's city.

¹⁵⁹ Constable, DTS class notes on Revelation 21:2

21:16; The dimensions of the city were 1,380 miles square. This description describes a cube shaped city, with its “length as great as its width, and its height as equal.” The walls of the city are 72 feet thick. Ryrie notes that, “if only 25 % of this space were used for dwellings, 20 billion people could be accommodated spaciouly.”¹⁶⁰

21:21; The Pearly Gates and the Streets of Gold.

The foundation of the city is overlaid with every precious gem known to man, which creates a rainbow of colors.

The twelve gates of the city were “made of a single pearl.”

“Among the ancients, pearls were ranked highest among precious stones, because their beauty derives entirely from nature, improvement by human workmanship being impossible.”¹⁶¹

The whole city appears as pure gold, with the transparent golden streets being underfoot. This is a clear indication of a reversal of priorities in the new city. What we held so precious in the present world is used to pave streets in heaven. It is also an indication of the purity of the city.

21:22-27; The illumination of the city.

The whole city will be a temple as we worship the Lamb.

The need for light sources will not be needed because the Creator Himself lives among His people and illuminates the city with His presence as He once illuminated the Temple.

The inhabitants of the city will be the redeemed who will have unrestricted access in and out of the city. The gates will remain open at all times because there will be opposition.

d. Delights of the New Jerusalem

Rev. 22:1-5

The Lamb: The emphasis on the Lamb is prominent as John’s vision is closed out. The Lamb will be the best part of the city. The Lamb is the one who dwells among His people; has the 12 apostles; who is in Himself, the temple of the city; who is the lamp of the city; the One who owns the book of life; the Source of life and blessing; the remover of the curse; and the One whose face we will see and Whose name will be on our foreheads.

¹⁶⁰ Ryrie, footnote on Rev. 21:16-17

¹⁶¹ Thomas, *pg. 473*

The Life: the river of life runs from the throne of God and the Lamb. It is a literal river that is pure and refreshing running out from the throne which stands at the head of the main street. The point of the passage is to teach that in the eternal state God's people will live at the very source of the life-giving stream, in the very presence of God Himself.¹⁶²

The Tree of Life: The very tree that Adam and Eve sinfully partook of, and which has been restricted from man throughout the ages, is now available again. This tree is perpetually in season producing its fruit. The curse placed on man by sin will be lifted as man again partakes of the life giving tree. Perfect fellowship is restored, our ability to view God in all His glory is unrestricted and fellowship unhindered.

Reigning with Christ: Faithful believers will have more authority in the new creation than unfaithful believers, as will be true during the Millennium. However, the ruling will have no oppressive aspect and no subordination of others.

Forever and ever: There will be no time in eternity. There will be an extension of time as far back and as far forward as one can imagine – 'time in its wholeness' in a sense of time past and future. 'Timelessness' is not the point, the continuation of time without end is.¹⁶³

8. ***“Write the things which will take place after these things.”***

Closing Remarks:

Revelation 22:6-21

a. **Words of comfort:** *from the angel to John.*

As the book started out with promised blessing, so it ends with one.

“Blessed is he who reads and who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things written in it (Rev. 1:3).”

“Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book (Rev. 22:7).”

The promise of reward:

“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.”

¹⁶² *ibid*, pg. 386

¹⁶³ Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation, Apocalypse and Empire*, pg. 67

b. **Words of warning;**

Rev. 22:18-19

There is a contrast between saints and sinners in these verses:

Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong...

Let the one who is holy, still keep himself holy...

Blessed are those who wash their robes and enter into the city.
Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the immoral persons.

Let the one who hears come, and he who is thirsty come...

Don't tamper with Scripture:

"If anyone adds to the prophecy of this book, God will add to them the plagues which are written in this book...

if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the holy city..."

This is a call for all who read and hear these words to take the message in total, believe every part, and don't forsake to teach and believe the events portrayed. You do so at your own peril.

c. **Closing benediction –**

The closing benediction wishes God's enabling grace on all who read the book. This is an unusual way to end an apocalyptic book. *"Come quickly Lord Jesus."*

"And there shall be no more curse" – perfect restoration

"The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it"

- perfect administration

"His servants shall serve Him," – perfect submission

"And they shall see His face," – perfect transformation

**"And His name shall be in their foreheads,"
- perfect identification**

**"And there shall be no night there; and they will need no
candle; neither light or the sun, for the Lord gives them
light," – perfect illumination**

**"And they shall reign forever and ever,"
- perfect exaltation**

A. T. Pierson