

Biblical Prophecy

What God Has Determined for Our Future

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

1 Corinthians 2:9 (KJV)

Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

Daniel 12:2-3 (NIV)

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:19-21 (NKJV)

"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.

Revelation 22:12 (NIV)

Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.

Matthew 24:42 (NASB)

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About Phil Benedict

I (Phil Benedict) grew up in a godly Christian home and was saved as a young child. I was active in our church youth group in Boise, Idaho, where I met my wife, Linda. We married when we were young and God has blessed our marriage. We have now been married for over fifty-four years (as of January 2021). We have four children, all of whom are actively serving the Lord. We both graduated from Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois, and from Boise State University in Boise, Idaho. I have also taken classes in secondary school administration at the College of Idaho in Caldwell, Idaho, as well as classes in Cherokee heritage from Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, and classes in drug and alcohol counseling at Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma. We have served as “full time” Christian workers for over thirty-five years. We have been members of UIM International (United Indian Missions) for over twenty-five years.

Thanks to My Wife

God has given me an exceptional wife. She is a very talented person and she chose to be a stay-at-home mom and to be a ministry partner with me. She has been a huge blessing in my life. She has been my co-worker and partner throughout life. Without exaggerating, she has spent many hundreds of hours editing, checking for mistakes, making suggestions, printing, and binding this and other study guides that we have put together. Without her, these study guides would not exist.

My Prayer

It is my prayer and my desire that the Lord Jesus Christ will be honored and glorified through this Bible study. I pray that the Spirit of God will draw some close to Himself as they go through this study. I pray that there will be some who, empowered by the Spirit of God, will be committed to living a transformed life of obedience and faithful service to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Introduction to This Study of Prophecy

The purpose of this study is to help ordinary people understand fundamental Biblical teaching relating to Biblical prophecy. It does not go into great detail; yet, it is comprehensive enough to get a fairly complete view of what will take place in the future. It is my prayer that some will learn and then apply and live-in accordance with what they learn.

In this study, our approach is to interpret Scripture literally, including the prophetic passages of Scripture. We hold to this position unless the language or the context of the passage of Scripture itself indicates that the passage is to be understood otherwise. This is important, because to interpret the Bible allegorically, symbolically, or “spiritually” can result in an endless number of invalid interpretations that cannot be substantiated by Scripture itself.

I (Phil Benedict) have tried to be very careful in what I have written. I have tried to carefully and accurately teach the Word of God. When a passage of Scripture or topic is interpreted differently by different Bible scholars, I have followed the teaching of trusted conservative scholars who are committed to the literal interpretation of the Bible.

This study does not attempt to explain all the different interpretations given to some parts of Biblical prophecy by various Biblical scholars. This study is in line with what very well qualified conservative Biblical scholars teach. The three scholars used most in the preparation of this study are Dr. Dwight Pentecost, Dr. John MacArthur, and Dr. John F. Walvoord. Many books by other authors were used in preparing this study, but were not used as often as these three.

At the end of this study there is a list of recommended books on prophecy if someone would like to do more study on Biblical prophecy.

Why Study Biblical Prophecy?

Teaching that relates to the future permeates the Bible. It deals with future things here on earth and it deals with the future in eternity. The more we understand of what is ahead, the more we will understand what the Word of God is all about.

This is not just so much talk. It is true. If you want to grow in your walk with the Lord and be obedient to Him, you need to have a fundamental understanding of the Bible’s teaching on prophecy. Notice that in the following verse it says to “*set your hope fully*”. This is not a halfhearted commitment.

Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. 1 Peter 1:13 (NIV)

Here are some more specific reasons to learn about Biblical prophecy.

1. To make us aware of our future and to encourage us to focus on what is eternal, while experiencing God-given protection and blessing now.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 1 Peter 1:3-5 (NASB)

2. To encourage us to prepare ourselves for being with and being like our Lord by living a godly life now as we wait for His coming again.

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. John 3:2-3 (NKJV)

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, Titus 2:11-13 (NIV)

3. To motivate us to focus on laying up treasure in heaven which will last forever instead of focusing on short term pleasure on earth. Serve the Lord now with all our heart.

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-21 (NKJV)

4. To eagerly anticipate being with the Lord and enjoying all that He has prepared for us. To be optimistic and joyful now rather than continually focusing on the here and now and often feeling dissatisfied, unhappy, and defeated.

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 1 Corinthians 2:9 (KJV)

Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. "Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. Daniel 12:2-3 (NASB)

5. Most of all, this study should cause us to examine ourselves. Am I genuinely a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ? If not, my eternal destiny is to be forever separated from God in the eternal hell.

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you--unless, of course, you fail the test? 2 Corinthians 13:5 (NIV)

How to Get the Most from These Study Guides

The subject matter in these studies deals with fundamental Biblical truths. It is not light or frivolous. Take your time as you go through these studies. If you go over the material too quickly without much thought, it will have little or no lasting impact on your life.

It is important that one take time to read, to digest, and to absorb the Scriptures in this study. Take time to carefully read and think about them. Meditate on them and the truths they teach. Regularly ask God for a right understanding of Scriptural truths and then make them part of you. Learn to love God and His Word. Commit yourself to making Biblical truths the foundation of your life and to putting them into practice every day of your life.

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

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)

About Scripture Verses Quoted in This Study

When quoting Scripture in this study, I have tried to use the translation which most clearly states the Biblical truth being covered in that part of the study. Therefore, no particular translation has been exclusively used. After each verse that is quoted, the translation is identified by giving the initials of the translation.

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Chapter One

Past and Future World Empires Daniel, Chapters 2 and 7

In Daniel 2 God gives the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar a dream in which God reveals future world empires to the king and to the prophet Daniel.

This dream covers world empires from Daniel's time until the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. After the second coming, Jesus sets up an empire that will never be destroyed and will last forever.

When God gave this dream to King Nebuchadnezzar, the northern part of the country of Israel had been taken into captivity and exile by the Assyrians. Judah, the southern part of Israel, had been taken into exile by the Babylonians. This captivity begins what the Bible calls the "times of the gentiles".

...and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.
Luke 21:24 (NASB)

The "times of the gentiles" will last until the second coming of Christ. When God gave this dream to King Nebuchadnezzar, He was letting the Jewish people know that gentile domination will not last forever. God will keep the promises He made to Israel. God's promises have not been negated and God has not forgotten His promises to Israel.

In the following passages from Daniel 2:31-45, Daniel is talking to King Nebuchadnezzar, recounting the dream and explaining the meaning or interpretation of this God-given dream.

You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. 32 "The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, 33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. 34 "You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. 35 "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. Daniel 2:31-35 (NASB)

In his dream King Nebuchadnezzar saw a statute of a person that was made from four different kinds of metal.

The head was made of gold.
The chest and arms were made of silver.
The stomach and waist were made of bronze.
The legs were made of iron.
The feet were made of iron mixed with clay.

The Interpretation of the Dream

According to the God-given interpretation of this God-given dream, each part of the statue represented a different kingdom that would rule the earth, beginning with the Babylonian empire under King Nebuchadnezzar at Daniel's time and ending with a revived Roman empire which will dominate the world rule during the tribulation period, especially in the last three and one-half years.

Babylon, the First World Kingdom

36 "This was the dream; now we will tell its interpretation before the king. 37 "You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory; 38 and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold. Daniel 2:36-38 (NASB)

Notice the last statement, "*you are the head of gold.*" Daniel was talking to King Nebuchadnezzar, so the "you" is King Nebuchadnezzar. The head, which was made of gold, represented the Babylonian empire under King Nebuchadnezzar. Babylon was the first world empire.

Medo-Persia, the Second World Kingdom

The chest and arms were made of silver.

"After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, ... Daniel 2:39a (NASB)

The chest and arms which were made of silver, represented the Medo-Persian empire which followed the Babylonian empire. Like the statute which had two arms, the Medo-Persian empire was an amalgamation of two countries, Media and Persia.

Greece, the Third World Kingdom

The stomach and waist were made of bronze.

..then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth. Daniel 2:39b (NASB)

Greece, under Alexander the Great, followed the Medo-Persian empire. The Greek empire covered present day Europe, Egypt, and India, which was essentially all the known world at that time.

This kingdom is prophesied and described in greater detail in Daniel 8:5-8. In this chapter, the power of its leader, Alexander the Great, is vividly described.

The Roman Empire, the Fourth World Kingdom

The legs were made of iron.

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 in pieces.

Daniel 2:40 (NASB)

The Roman empire was the strongest and the largest empire yet. Rome ruled with an iron rod, crushing and subduing its enemies. Like the two legs of the statue, the Roman empire had a western and an eastern division. The western empire lasted some 500 years. The eastern division lasted clear up into the middle ages. The Roman empire was never defeated and replaced by another world empire. Rather than being crushed and replaced, they essentially disintegrated from the inside out.

41 "In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. 42 "As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. 43 "And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery. Daniel 2:41-43 (NASB)

Note that when describing Rome, the last world empire, the legs are described as made of iron, but the feet and ten toes are iron mixed with clay. This is an indication that there is something different about this part of the empire. This indicates that in its final form, the Roman empire will not be the same as the original empire.

The Divine Kingdom

34 "You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. 35 "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. Daniel 2:34-35 (NASB)

A stone cut out without hands strikes the feet of the statute which are made of iron and clay. The stone smashes and crushes the whole statue and then it "filled the whole earth". This is a reference to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus returns to earth, He will smash all world powers and establish what is sometimes called the millennial kingdom, in which Jesus will personally rule and reign over the whole earth for a thousand years.

This kingdom will never be destroyed. It will go on beyond the millennial reign of Christ into eternity and it will never be destroyed. Notice in the following verses, the kingdom established by Jesus will "never be destroyed" and will "endure forever".

44 "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. 45 "Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy." Daniel 2:44-45 (NASB)

In Daniel 7, God gives Daniel a vision which parallels much of what is covered in Daniel 2.

In the prophesy of Daniel 7, the same four world empires are described but are described as four kinds of animals (beasts).

The first (Babylon) was described as a lion with eagle's wings.

The second (Medo-Persia) is described as a bear.

The third (Greece) is described as a leopard with four heads and four wings like a bird.

The fourth (Rome) was a terrifying powerful beast with large iron teeth that crushed and devoured its victims. Historians have said that this is an accurate description of Rome.

In this vision in Daniel 7, the fourth kingdom and its resurgence in latter times is covered in much greater detail than in chapter 2. Notice that the fourth beast (Rome) had ten horns. From these ten horns, a small horn arises, destroys three of the other horns and then takes control of the ten horns (which are said to be ten nations).

After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, 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 beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. 8 "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 (NASB)

These verses are further explained in the following verses in Daniel 7.

Thus he said: 'The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it. 24 'As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings.

Daniel 7:23-24 (NASB)

Scholars believe that the ten toes of the statute in Daniel 2 correspond with the ten horns of the beast in Daniel 7. They are both descriptions of Rome.

The Future Revived Roman Empire

These verses in Daniel 7 contain prophecy concerning the Roman empire that has never yet been fulfilled – “and it had ten horns.” Verse 24 explains that “the ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom.” There is no room for speculation. The ten horns clearly are rulers of ten countries. Since no such arrangement has ever existed in the history of the Roman Empire, this has to take place in the future.

Essentially all solid prophetic Bible teachers believe that the ten horns foretell a future ten nation confederacy which will be a revived Roman empire.

In Daniel 7:9-10, there is a vivid description of Jesus, the “Ancient of Days”, establishing His kingdom. Like the rock cut out without hands in Daniel 2, Jesus takes control and establishes a world-wide kingdom.

In verses 11 and 12, the last beast, the antichrist, is dethroned and destroyed. In verses 13 and 14, the eternal throne that will never be destroyed is described. In verses 15 through the end of the chapter, it describes the antichrist rising to power in the revived Roman Empire.

The old Roman empire controlled much of what is Europe today. While we must be very careful and not be dogmatic, one can speculate that the European Common Market or the European Union could very quickly develop into this revived Roman empire. This is a process that could occur quickly in the first half of the seven-year tribulation period.

From among this confederacy of ten nations there will arise one individual, often referred to as the antichrist, who will have control over the whole dominion of the ten kings or the ten nations. In gaining this authority, three of the ten kings are overthrown.

This individual, the antichrist, will be controlled by Satan. He will be empowered by Satan and will hate and oppose God. He will have world-wide influence and will gain world-wide control.

"The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place. Daniel 11:36 (NIV)

At the second coming of Jesus following the seven-year tribulation period, Jesus will return to earth and rule and reign for 1000 years in what is known as the millennial kingdom. The kingdom of Jesus will never be destroyed and He will be on His throne forever. The second coming of Jesus will put an end to all earthly kingdoms forever.

Carefully read the Biblical account of the second coming taken from the book of Revelation.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. 12 His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. 13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. 15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. 16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." Revelation 19:11-16 (NASB)

Notice that when Jesus returns, He will strike down the nations and rule them with a "rod of iron". This begins the millennial reign of Christ, and His reign will last forever on into eternity.

The Role of the United States in the Prophetic Future

As much as we would like it to be otherwise, there is no reference to the United States in Biblical prophecy. If we do have a role in future events, it is not spoken of in the Bible. Some have tried to squeeze it in, but there really is no valid way to do so. We can speculate as to why this is true, but that is all it is – speculation. The simple fact is that we are not mentioned or referred to in the Bible.

God is sovereign and in total control.

To finish this chapter, it would be well to remind ourselves that God is in total control of all that goes on in the universe and that includes the rise and fall of earthly kings and kingdoms. God is in total control and He is working out His will and purpose on earth.

The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, And His sovereignty rules over all.

Psalm 103:19 (NASB)

The LORD shall reign for ever and ever." Exodus 15:18 (KJV)

God is in control of all nations on earth. He sets up and removes rulers and all who are in authority. Although we do not always understand His plan or thoughts, the nations are under His control and through them He is accomplishing His own will and purpose.

God reigns over the nations, God sits on His holy throne. Psalm 47:8 (NASB)

He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them. Daniel 2:21b (NIV)

The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes. Proverbs 21:1 (NASB)

...all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?" Daniel 4:35 (ESV)

Chapter Two

Israel in Bible Prophecy -- Past, Present, and Future

Of all the nations spoken of in the Bible, Israel is by far the most prominent. Israel was a nation brought into existence by the hand of God. They were chosen by God to bring His Son into the world and, in so doing, make salvation available to all who choose to believe in Him.

God chose the nation of Israel to bring His message to the world through the Bible.

Think about it. The Bible has some 40 different authors. They were all Jewish except for Luke who is the author of the books of Luke and Acts. The Bible was written over a period of about 1500 years. God chose a big variety of individuals to write His Word. He used fishermen, farmers, shepherds, kings, prophets, priests, a tax collector, and others to bring us His message. Some were educated and some were not. Some were rich and some were poor. They lived in very different situations. Parts of the Bible were written in the Middle East, some in Asia, and some in Africa. Some were written in times of peace and some in times of war. Parts were written in Hebrew, some in Greek and a little in Aramaic. Most of the writers did not know each other. Yet in spite of all these vast differences, they spoke and wrote in complete harmony and unity. The Bible is truly a God-given inspired book, given primarily through individuals from the nation of Israel.

God loved the Israelite people and deeply desired for them to worship and serve Him. Unfortunately, most of the Israelite people, like the rest of humanity, rejected the Lord and chose to go their own way. This resulted in judgments by God, of which Israel is still suffering the consequences today.

However, God has not given up on or rejected the nation of Israel. In the tribulation period they will be the world's leading evangelists. At the end of the tribulation period, they, as individuals and as a nation, will turn back to the Lord. In the 1000-year millennial reign of Christ, they, as individuals and as a nation, will serve and worship the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus will personally rule the world from the nation of Israel.

The story of Israel begins with the call of Abraham. God told Abraham...

**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 the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."** Genesis 12:2-3 (NASB)

Notice how many different areas these promises cover. Personal blessing, protection, many descendants, the whole world would be blessed, and they will be a great nation. These promises or these covenants are unconditional. The ultimate fulfillment is not conditional on Israel's faithfulness as a nation.

In the following verses, God promises to give them land which will be their land forever.

...for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever.

Genesis 13:15 (NASB)

"I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you. "I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. "I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

Genesis 17:6-8 (NASB)

In the following verses, the extent of the land promised by God is more closely described. The description describes a large portion of the current Middle East. It is a much larger land area than the country of Israel now has.

On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates-- the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, 21 Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites." Genesis 15:18-21 (NIV)

Yet, in spite of all these promises, the nation of Israel repeatedly turned their back on the Lord.

When Moses was addressing the nation of Israel shortly before his death, he said,

For I know that after my death you are sure to become utterly corrupt and to turn from the way I have commanded you. In days to come, disaster will fall upon you because you will do evil in the sight of the LORD and provoke him to anger by what your hands have made."

Deuteronomy 31:29 (NIV)

Moses was right. The Biblical history of Israel is a history of rejecting God and rebelling against Him. Following is a passage from the book of Judges which speaks of this ongoing rebellion and rejection.

But it came about when the judge died, that they would turn back and act more corruptly than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them and bow down to them; they did not abandon their practices or their stubborn ways. 20 So the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He said, "Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers and has not listened to My voice, 21 I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died," Judges 2:19-21 (NASB)

From about 1400 B.C. to 70 A.D. Israel, as a nation, rebelled against God. Many of their religious leaders would put on a show of human righteousness but, in reality, their hearts and their actions were far from the Lord.

As a nation, they rejected the Lord. However, there was always a remnant who were faithful to the Lord.

And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved, for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay." Romans 9:27-28 (ESV)

Because of their continued rejection of the Lord, the ten northern tribes of Israel were conquered by Assyria and taken into captivity in 722 B.C.

Then the king of Assyria invaded the whole land and went up to Samaria and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and carried Israel away into exile to Assyria, and settled them in Halah and Habor, on the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

Now this came about because the sons of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and they had feared other gods and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD had driven out before the sons of Israel, and in the customs of the kings of Israel which they had introduced. The sons of Israel did things secretly which were not right against the LORD their God. Moreover, they built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city. 2 Kings 17:5-9 (NASB)

The southern two tribes of Israel were taken in captivity by the Babylonians for essentially the same reasons. They were taken into captivity by Babylon in 605 B.C. Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C.

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, ... Daniel 1:1-2 (NASB)

Then he led away into exile all Jerusalem and all the captains and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths. None remained except the poorest people of the land. 2 Kings 24:14 (NASB)

But they refused to pay attention; stubbornly they turned their backs and stopped up their ears. They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the LORD Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. So the LORD Almighty was very angry. When I called, they did not listen; so when they called, I would not listen,' says the LORD Almighty. 'I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations, where they were strangers. The land was left so desolate behind them that no one could come or go. This is how they made the pleasant land desolate'. Zechariah 7:11-14 (NIV)

God promised that after seventy years, Judah (southern Israel) could return to their land.

"For thus says the LORD, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place. 'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. 'Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.

One would wonder if these events would be the end of the nation of Israel. The answer is a loud "NO". Keep reading.

'You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. 14 'I will be found by you,' declares the LORD, 'and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you,' declares the LORD, 'and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.' Jeremiah 29:10-14 (NASB)

There are many prophecies in the Bible relating to the future of Israel and Judah. Some of them are as follows:

A. Israel will be scattered.

Then the LORD will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship other gods—gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known. Deuteronomy 28:64 (NIV)

After the Babylonian captivity some Jewish people returned to the land, but most of them have been scattered throughout the nations. The ones who did return from the Babylonian exile existed as a small nation until 70 A.D. when what was left of Israel and Jerusalem and Judah was totally and completely destroyed by the Romans.

From 70 A.D. until 1948, Israel did not exist as a nation. They had no homeland or country of their own. They were literally scattered throughout the nations of the world.

B. After Jerusalem was destroyed, the land would become desolate.

I will lay waste the land, so that your enemies who live there will be appalled. 33 I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins. Leviticus 26:32-33 (NIV)

From 70 A.D. until about 1900, the land was largely desolate.

C. The Israelites would suffer constant persecution, fear, and despair among the nations.

"Among those nations you shall find no rest, and there will be no resting place for the sole of your foot; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul. 66 "So your life shall hang in doubt before you; and you will be in dread night and day, and shall have no assurance of your life. Deuteronomy 28:65-66 (NASB)

Again, from 70 A.D. to 1948, the Jews had no home. They were known as the wandering Jews.

The Jews were expelled from England in 1290 AD. From France in 1306 and 1394. From Hungary in 1421. From Austria in 1421. From Germany in the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries. From Lithuania in 1445 and 1495. From Spain in 1492. From Portugal in 1497. From Bohemia and Moravia in 1744-1745. From the 15th to the 18th centuries, they were not permitted in Russia.

The Jews have been persecuted in Arab countries from the seventh century onward. From 1948-1967 the Jews in all these countries lived in fear for their lives.

D. Moses wrote that the Jews would retain their identity.

Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, nor shall I

abhor them, to utterly destroy them and break My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God. 45 But for their sake I will remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the LORD. "
 Leviticus 26:44-45 (NKJV)

The fulfilment of all these prophecies requires a supernatural intervention. Against all odds, the Jews have for nearly 2000 years maintained their identity as Jews, even though they have been scattered throughout the world. This can only be explained as a work of God. Many other ethnic groups or cultures have ceased to exist after losing their homeland. It is miraculous that the Jews still retain their identity as Jews after nearly 2000 years of dispersion.

E. Moses wrote that one day God would return the Jews to their own country.

...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. Deuteronomy 30:3-5 (NASB)

"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. "I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD," declares the Lord GOD, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. "For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. "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. "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. "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. "You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God. "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. Ezekiel 36:22-29 (NASB)

"Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Behold, I am going to save My people from the land of the east and from the land of the west; and I will bring them back and they will live in the midst of Jerusalem; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God in truth and righteousness.'" Zechariah 8:7-8 (NASB)

In Ezekiel 37, the regathering or resurrection of Israel is vividly pictured and foretold.

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

I said, "O Sovereign LORD, you alone know."

Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'"

So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'" So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet--a vast army.

Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.' Therefore prophecy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.'" Ezekiel 37:1-14 (NIV)

The Word of God is absolutely clear. There is yet a great future for the Israelite people and for Israel as a nation.

The last part of the seven-year tribulation period will be a horrific time for the Jewish people. Up to two out of three of them will die. In the middle of the tribulation period, the antichrist will turn against the Jewish people and begin a murderous time of persecution and vengeance against the Jewish people. However, those who are left at the end of the tribulation period will, as individuals and as a nation, turn to the Lord Jesus Christ.

**"It will come about in all the land,"
Declares the LORD,
"That two parts in it will be cut off and perish;
But the third will be left in it.
"And I will bring the third part through the fire,
Refine them as silver is refined,
And test them as gold is tested.
They will call on My name,
And I will answer them;
I will say, 'They are My people,'
And they will say, 'The LORD is my God.' "**
Zechariah 13:8-9 (NASB)

"I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter

weeping over a firstborn. Zechariah 12:10 (NASB)

And so all Israel will be saved, Romans 11:26a (NIV)

**"This is the covenant I will make with them
after that time, says the Lord.**

**I will put my laws in their hearts,
and I will write them on their minds."**

Then he adds:

**"Their sins and lawless acts
I will remember no more."** Hebrews 10:16-17 (NIV)

'I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the LORD; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart. Jeremiah 24:7 (NASB)

**"Do not fear, for I am with you;
I will bring your offspring from the east,
And gather you from the west.**

**"I will say to the north, 'Give them up!'
And to the south, 'Do not hold them back.'**

**Bring My sons from afar
And My daughters from the ends of the earth,** Isaiah 43:5-6 (NASB)

The Role of Israel in the 1000 Year Millennial Reign of Christ

Israel's returning to the Lord at the second coming of Christ will occur at the end of the seven-year tribulation period. At this time the 1000-year millennial reign of Christ will begin. All the Israelite people who turn to God at the end of the seven-year tribulation period will go on into the 1000-year reign of Christ and be part of the earthly 1000-year reign of Christ. In the millennium, Jesus Himself will rule the world and Jerusalem (Mt. Zion) will be His capital city.

**"I will make the lame a remnant
And the outcasts a strong nation,
And the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion
From now on and forever.** Micah 4:7 (NASB)

At that time they will call Jerusalem 'The Throne of the LORD,' and all the nations will be gathered to it, to Jerusalem, for the name of the LORD; nor will they walk anymore after the stubbornness of their evil heart. Jeremiah 3:17 (NASB)

"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 31:33-34 (NASB)

Has the church replaced Israel in God's prophetic plan?

The answer to this question is a loud "NO". In recent years there is a teaching by some that God has replaced Israel with the church, and that the future prophecies relating to Israel now refer to the church. This is sometimes known as "replacement theology". The prophecies in Scripture concerning the blessing and restoration of Israel to the Promised Land are spiritualized or allegorized into promises of God's blessing for the church.

There are hundreds of promises made to Israel in the Old Testament and in the New Testament as well. If God were to not fulfill these promises, then how could we trust Him to keep any of the promises made in the Bible? God Himself would have told many untruths and the Word of God would be full of half-truths and many outright untruths.

Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. John 17:17 (NKJV)

**The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul.
The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.** Psalm 19:7 (NIV)

There are major problems with the view that that Israel has no future in God's prophetic plan.

All the many promises given specifically to Israel would be untrue. And how does one explain the present-day existence of the country of Israel? How did they maintain their identity and continuing existence throughout the centuries? How can we explain the revival of the modern state of Israel? If Israel has been condemned by God and there is no future for the Jewish nation, how do we explain the supernatural survival of the Jewish people over the past 2,000 years?

The New Testament never teaches that Israel and the church are the same or will have the same future here on earth. Biblically, the church is distinct from Israel, and the terms *church* and *Israel* are never used interchangeably. The church has no specific role in the curses and blessings given to the nation of Israel. The covenants, promises, and warnings of the covenants given to Israel are valid only for Israel. We will both share together many eternal blessings, but we are not the recipients of God's specific promises to the nation of Israel.

"For the LORD will not abandon His people on account of His great name, because the LORD has been pleased to make you a people for Himself. 1 Samuel 12:22 (NASB)

I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Romans 11:1-2 (NKJV)

**If they violate My statutes
And do not keep My commandments,
Then I will punish their transgression with the rod
And their iniquity with stripes.
"But I will not break off My lovingkindness from him,
Nor deal falsely in My faithfulness.
"My covenant I will not violate,**

Nor will I alter the utterance of My lips.

"Once I have sworn by My holiness;

I will not lie to David.

"His descendants shall endure forever

And his throne as the sun before Me.

"It shall be established forever like the moon,

And the witness in the sky is faithful." Psalm 89:31-37 (NASB)

God deeply loves His people. He still longs for His people to come to Him.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! Luke 13:34 (NIV)

Chapter Three

Daniel 9 The Tribulation Period

In Daniel 9 there is a key prophecy relating to the future of Israel and the future seven-year tribulation period.

"Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place. "So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. "And 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 9:24-27 (NASB)

In these verses the word "week" or "weeks" is used six times. For example, the opening statement is, *Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city*". In the Hebrew language, the word "week" refers to any seven-unit time period. In these passages the word "week" does not refer to a regular seven-day week. Essentially all conservative Bible scholars agree that a "week" in this passage and in several other Bible passages is referring to a time period of seven years. Therefore, seventy weeks is referring to a time period of 490 years. (70 times 7 years = 490 years)

The accuracy of this understanding is not really in question when we see how this passage fits into the time frame of other prophecies, including those in the New Testament book of Revelation. There are times when the number of days are given, and it is clearly talking about years, not a regular seven day week.

In this passage (Daniel 9) there are four different time periods mentioned.

- Seventy weeks which equal 490 years.
- Seven weeks which equal 49 years.
- Sixty-two weeks which equal 434 years.
- One week which equals 7 years.

This prophecy begins by stating that 70 weeks (490 years) have been decreed on your (Daniel's) people and on the "holy city". This is clearly a reference to Israel and its capitol city, Jerusalem.

In this prophecy, there are six purposes given for this 490-year period of time.

1. To finish transgression
2. To make an end of sin
3. To make atonement for iniquity
4. To bring everlasting righteousness

5. To seal up vision and prophecy. End of visions and prophecy or of revelation to man. After this, God Himself will be our teacher.
6. To anoint the most holy place. Re-establish Jerusalem which apparently includes the building of a temple to replace the one that will be destroyed.

By looking at these six purposes, it becomes very clear that at least part of this prophecy will be fulfilled in the future. No one thinks that transgression, sin, and iniquity are now gone from the earth and that righteousness has taken their place. *At least part of the 490 years has to be in the future.*

This 490-year period of time begins with the “issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem”.

In 445 B.C., Artaxerxes decreed that the city of Jerusalem, which had been destroyed, was to be rebuilt, including the finishing of the temple. This decree is recorded in the first two chapters of Nehemiah. *This decree of Artaxerxes begins the 490-year time period which is what this prophecy is all about.*

The following is from this passage in Daniel 9:

“from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. 26 "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing”.

Notice the two time periods in this passage. Seven weeks (49 years) and sixty-two weeks (434 years). These total 483 years. This is a key part of this prophecy. From the issuing of the decree by Artaxerxes until the coming of “Messiah the Prince” will be 483 years.

By using the 360-day long calendar year used by the Jewish people at that time, the “triumphal entry” of Jesus into Jerusalem was exactly 483 years -- to the day -- after King Artaxerxes issued his decree. This was calculated by Sir Robert Anderson in his book, The Coming Prince, and it has been verified by other scholars as well.

Notice that this 483-year long period of time is divided into two periods of seven weeks (49 years) and sixty-two weeks (434 years). The first 49 years covered from Artaxerxes’ decree until the finishing of the temple and city walls. The second period covered from the completion of the city until the coming of Jesus the Messiah.

Notice that “*after*” the coming of the Messiah (the triumphal entry), the Messiah would be cut off. The Hebrew word for “cut off” speaks of a violent death. This is an accurate portrayal of the death of Jesus. Three days after the culmination of the 483 years, which was at His presentation at the triumphal entry, Jesus was crucified.

So far, we have seen how the 69 sevens (483 years) have fit into the Jewish calendar. However, the prophecy is a total of 70 weeks or 490 years, not 69 weeks (483 years).

So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will

be war; desolations are determined. Daniel 9:25-26 (NASB)

Notice that after Jesus the Messiah is cut off it states, “*And its end will come*”.

It is important to understand that it does not say how long after the death of Jesus that the end will come.

It is also important to understand that there are two princes spoken of in these verses. In verse 25 it identifies the Messiah (Jesus) as “Prince” (notice the capital “P”). In verse 26 it speaks of the “prince who is to come”. Notice the small letter “p”. The people of the “prince who is to come” will destroy the city (Jerusalem) and the sanctuary (the rebuilt temple?). The second prince who destroys Jerusalem and the temple is certainly not speaking of Jesus the Messiah who is the first prince. Conservative Biblical scholars identify this second prince as the leader of the revived Roman empire that we covered in chapter one of this study. In Scripture this leader is identified as the beast, who is commonly known as the “antichrist”.

It is interesting to note that historically it was the Roman empire that totally destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 70 A.D. From 70 A.D. until 1948 Israel did not exist as a nation and the Jewish people were scattered throughout the world. It is the future revived Roman empire that will be the political base of the antichrist.

There is no time frame given for the fulfilment of the remaining 70th week, the (seven year) time period which is the seven-year tribulation period. It will happen after the crucifixion of Jesus but it does not say how long after.

There is a gap between the 69th week and the 70th week, but it does not say how long that gap is. This gap is the present-day church age in which we are now living.

Essentially all conservative Bible scholars agree this one week or seven-year period of time is referring to the future seven-year tribulation period. That is the major theme of the book of Revelation and is prophesied and spoken of in many other Old and New Testament Bible passages, including other passages in the book of Daniel.

For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

Matthew 24:21-22 (ESV)

Many times, in both the Old and New Testaments, the tribulation period is described as a time of wrath. God is judging the people on earth for their long-time rejection of Him.

**A day of wrath is that day,
A day of trouble and distress,
A day of destruction and desolation,
A day of darkness and gloom,
A day of clouds and thick darkness,** Zephaniah 1:15 (NASB)

Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, cruel, with fury and burning anger, to make the land a desolation; and He will exterminate its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their

constellations will not flash forth their light; the sun will be dark when it rises and the moon will not shed its light. Thus I will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud and abase the haughtiness of the ruthless. I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold and mankind than the gold of Ophir. Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken from its place at the fury of the LORD of hosts in the day of His burning anger. Isaiah 13:9-13 (NASB)

During this period of time -- the tribulation -- a world leader (identified in the Bible as the “beast” and commonly referred to as the “antichrist”) will emerge from the revived Roman empire. The antichrist will hate God and will set himself up as the god to be worshiped. He will be authenticated to the people by miracles that are empowered by Satan.

Revelation 13:1- 10 gives a more complete description of the antichrist which is called the “beast” in this passage.

And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names. And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority. I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast; they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?" There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven.

It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. Revelation 13:1-8 (NASB)

Daniel 11:36-45 is another important passage in understanding this time of the tribulation and the time of the antichrist. However, this is not an exhaustive study so we will not try to cover this passage in this study.

In 2 Thessalonians we are told that the second coming of Christ will not occur until the antichrist sets himself up as a god to be worshiped.

Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not 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. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 (NASB)

In the following verse in Daniel 9, more information is given about the antichrist.

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

In this verse (Daniel 9:27), it states that he (the antichrist) will make a covenant with Israel for one week (seven years). The antichrist will make a peace treaty with Israel for seven years. At the beginning of the tribulation, he will protect Israel and completely fool them into thinking that he is their protector. He apparently even rebuilds the temple in Jerusalem at this time. It seems that Israel will feel they are finally secure after thousands of years of insecurity and fear. They let down their guard. Ezekiel describes them as living in unwalled villages.

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

However, half way through the tribulation the antichrist will show his true colors and set up an "abomination that causes desolation" and will begin a horrific time of persecution of the Jews. This will last for 3 1/2 years until the end of the tribulation at the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The "*abomination that causes desolation*" (verse 27) will be covered in more detail in chapter 5 of this study.

Following are more Scriptures describing this seven-year period of time known as the tribulation:

The great day of the Lord is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the Lord is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there. A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements. I will bring distress on mankind, so that they shall walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the Lord; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung. Zephaniah 1:14-17 (ESV)

**Wail, for the day of the LORD is near!
It will come as destruction from the Almighty.
Therefore all hands will fall limp,
And every man's heart will melt.
They will be terrified,
Pains and anguish will take hold of them;
They will writhe like a woman in labor,
They will look at one another in astonishment,
Their faces aflame.
Behold, the day of the LORD is coming,
Cruel, with fury and burning anger,
To make the land a desolation;
And He will exterminate its sinners from it.
For the stars of heaven and their constellations
Will not flash forth their light;
The sun will be dark when it rises
And the moon will not shed its light.
Thus I will punish the world for its evil**

**And the wicked for their iniquity;
 I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud
 And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless.
 I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold
 And mankind than the gold of Ophir.
 Therefore I will make the heavens tremble,
 And the earth will be shaken from its place
 At the fury of the LORD of hosts
 In the day of His burning anger. Isaiah 13:6-13 (NASB)**

There are many other prophecies related to the tribulation period. A few of them are: Joel 2:1-2, Joel 3:14-15, Zephaniah 1:14-18, Zephaniah 2:1-3, and Zechariah 14:1-3.

The Purposes of the Tribulation Period

Three reasons have been set forth as purposes for the tribulation period.

1. Intensive evangelism
2. To bring Israel to repentance
3. The wrath of God is shown on unbelieving rebellious people, both Jews and Gentiles.

Following is a thumbnail sketch of some of the events which take place in the seven-year tribulation period.

These are not in a precise order. Many of them will apparently occur at the same time.

...Just prior to the seven-year tribulation, the church or all believers living at that time will be taken out of the world in the rapture of the church. They will go to be with the Lord Jesus Christ forever. They will join believers who have already died and gone to be with the Lord. The rapture will be covered in the following chapter of this study.

...Signing of a peace treaty with Israel. The tribulation period begins.

...The revived Roman empire gains power.

...During this time, the antichrist will emerge. He is empowered by Satan himself and will oppose God with all his being. Those who receive his mark will be condemned by God forever.

...144,000 protected Jewish evangelists preach the gospel throughout the world.

There will be many people saved in this period of time; however, many, probably most, of them will be put to death because of their faith. We can be glad that, at this time, we who are believers living in the church age will be with Christ, in heaven, enjoying the blessings of forever being with Him.

...In the tribulation period there will be three series of judgments sent by God. There will be the seal judgments, the trumpet judgments, and the bowl judgments.

The Seven Seal Judgments -- Revelation 6

Intense war, famine, disease, death. One third of the world's population will die. One third of the earth's population today would be about two and a half billion people. This would be an average of almost two million people a day. In addition to this, many multitudes of Christians are martyred for their faith. There will also be many earthquakes and catastrophic cosmic disturbances in space.

Midway through the seven years the antichrist, or the beast, shows his true colors. The peace pact with Israel is broken. The "abomination that causes desolation" will take place. A horrific persecution of Jews follows the breaking of the peace treaty.

This begins the second half of the tribulation which is called "the great tribulation" and the "time of Jacob's trouble".

**A day of wrath is that day,
A day of trouble and distress,
A day of destruction and desolation,
A day of darkness and gloom,
A day of clouds and thick darkness,** Zephaniah 1:15 (NASB)

The Seven Trumpet Judgments — Revelation 8

The first trumpet judgment --- **The first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.** Revelation 8:7 (NASB)

The second trumpet judgment — **something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood, and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.** Revelation 8:8-9 (NASB)

The third trumpet judgment — **The third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters. The name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter.** Revelation 8:10-11 (NASB)

The fourth trumpet judgment — **The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.** Revelation 8:12 (NASB)

The fifth trumpet judgment --- **When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. And out of the smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were not given power to kill them, but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes a man. During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.** Revelation 9:2-6 (NASB)

The appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; their teeth were like the teeth of lions. They had breastplates like breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle. They have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months. From Revelation 9:7-10

The sixth trumpet judgment --- The four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number. Revelation 9:15-16 (NASB)

In the sixth trumpet judgment another one third of the people left on earth are killed. Today this would be about 1.6 billion people.

The seventh trumpet is a little different. When this trumpet is sounded, there is praise given to God in heaven, but on earth there is lightning, thunder, an earthquake, and a great hailstorm.
Revelation 11:15-19

The trumpet judgments are followed by the final Bowl Judgments.

The first bowl judgment --- The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly and painful sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. Revelation 16:2 (NIV)

The second bowl judgment --- The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like that of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died. Revelation 16:3 (NIV)

The third bowl judgment --- Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood. Revelation 16:4 (NIV)

The fourth bowl judgment --- The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire. 9 They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him. Revelation 16:8-9 (NIV)

The fifth bowl judgment --- Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, 11 and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds. Revelation 16:10-11 (NIV)

The sixth bowl judgment --- The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east Revelation 16:12 (NIV)

The seventh bowl judgment --- Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done." And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty. The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. And every island

fled away, and the mountains were not found. And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.

Revelation 16:17-21 (NIV)

Throughout the seven-year tribulation there will be warfare. At least two major battles will be fought during the seven-year tribulation period.

One battle is described in Ezekiel 38-39.

The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal; prophesy against him and say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. I will turn you around, put hooks in your jaws and bring you out with your whole army--your horses, your horsemen fully armed, and a great horde with large and small shields, all of them brandishing their swords. Persia, Cush and Put will be with them, all with shields and helmets, also Gomer with all its troops, and Beth Togarmah from the far north with all its troops--the many nations with you.

"Get ready; be prepared, you and all the hordes gathered about you, and take command of them. 8 After many days you will be called to arms. In future years you will invade a land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate. They had been brought out from the nations, and now all of them live in safety. 9 You and all your troops and the many nations with you will go up, advancing like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land. Ezekiel 38:1-9 (NIV)

These verses describe a mammoth coalition of nations and armies that will come against Israel. Biblical scholars have analyzed all these names and have concluded that this coalition includes Russia, and the former soviet countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. The coalition also includes Persia (present day Iran), Ethiopia, Lybia, Egypt, and Turkey.

Notice the phrase in verse 9, "the many nations with you". Apparently, there will also be others who are not mentioned in this list who join this coalition of countries and armies to fight against Israel.

This will be a coalition of forces that, from a human standpoint, would overwhelm the tiny country of Israel in a very short time. However, God is protecting Israel and He will totally destroy these armies. It is interesting to note that most of these nations are Islamic nations that today are committed to annihilating Israel. It would seem that the current world is lining up for this battle.

"I will strike your bow from your left hand and dash down your arrows from your right hand. 4 "You will fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples who are with you; I will give you as food to every kind of predatory bird and beast of the field. "You will fall on the open field; for it is I who have spoken," declares the Lord GOD. "And I will send fire upon Magog and those who inhabit the coastlands in safety; and they will know that I am the LORD.

"My holy name I will make known in the midst of My people Israel; and I will not let My holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in

Israel. "Behold, it is coming and it shall be done," declares the Lord GOD. "That is the day of which I have spoken. Ezekiel 39:3-8 (NASB)

There is some disagreement as to exactly when this battle will take place. Some believe it will occur just before the seven-year tribulation starts; some believe it will occur shortly after the tribulation starts; some believe it will occur in the middle; and a few believe it will occur at the end of the tribulation period. I personally lean toward a mid-tribulation occurrence, but I would not be at all dogmatic about it.

With this coalition of forces destroyed it seems that the antichrist, who is in control of the revived Roman empire, is now better able to exercise world-wide power. However, widespread warfare is not over.

Another major battle which will take place is known as the battle of Armageddon. At the end of the tribulation period, world armies, including the armies of the antichrist and a huge army from the east, are gathered together engaging in warfare. When the Lord Jesus Christ appears at His second coming with the armies of heaven, apparently the world forces now join forces to fight against the armies of heaven.

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, "Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, small and great."

Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh. Revelation 19:11-21 (NIV)

With this, the second coming of Christ, the seven-year tribulation period comes to a close and the 1000-year millennial reign of Christ begins.

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

While all this is going on in the tribulation period here on earth, Christians who are in heaven will participate in the marriage supper of the Lamb. Most scholars identify those of us who make up the church as the bride. The timing of this event is after the rapture and before the second coming.

"Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Revelation 19:7-8 (NASB)

Scholars do not agree on many of the details of this; however, they are in general agreement that we, the church, will be the bride.

All this should cause us all to examine ourselves. Are we genuinely saved and looking forward to being with God and His Son during the seven years of the tribulation period or are we going to risk being here on earth experiencing the wrath of God?

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you--unless, of course, you fail the test? 2 Corinthians 13:5 (NIV)

The Rapture

Why We Believe in a Pre-tribulation Rapture

We, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, can look forward to His return with eager anticipation. We look forward to being with Him and enjoying all the blessings of being with Him for eternity. We look forward to a time in which there will be no more sin or temptations to sin, when we will not have mental or physical pain or any of the many hardships that are all part of life here on earth. We will be through with all the frustrations, disappointments, and other hard times that we now experience here on earth.

When we use the word “rapture”, we are referring to the future time when Jesus will come and take home to be with Him the Christians who are alive at that time. They will be with the Lord in heaven forever. At the same time, the bodies of those who lived in the church age but have already died will be resurrected and reunited with their spirits. They, too, will go to be with the Lord forever. This event will end the present church age.

The word “rapture” is not used in the Bible. In Christian circles, the use of the word “rapture” stems from the Greek word “*harpazo*” which means “caught up”, or “to snatch”, “to seize”, or “to take suddenly”. In 1 Thessalonians 4:17 it says “**Then we who are alive and remain will be “caught up” together**”. The Greek word “*harpazo*” is used fourteen times in the New Testament. The English word “rapture” is an appropriate word to use in describing our being “caught up” to be with the Lord.

Most conservative Bible scholars believe that the rapture of the church occurs before the seven-year tribulation period. The rapture is not the same as the second coming when Jesus returns to earth at the end of the seven-year tribulation period and begins to rule and reign on earth for 1000 years.

Scripture suggests that the second coming of Christ occurs in two stages—first, the rapture, when He comes *for* His saints and they are caught up to meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17), and second, His return to earth, when He comes *with* His saints (Jude 1:14) to execute judgment. Daniel’s seventieth week, which is the seven-year tribulation period, falls *between* the rapture and the second coming. This understanding reconciles the imminency of Christ’s coming *for* His saints with the yet unfulfilled signs that signal His final return *with* the saints. In the Bible, the term “second coming” sometimes refers to any or all of the events that occur in this future time period.

Most Biblical scholars who believe in a basic literal interpretation of Scripture, including the prophetic sections of Scripture, believe that the next event on God’s prophetic calendar is the rapture of the church.

The rapture is described in the following verses:

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

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 (KJV)

Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the

perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, 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 we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

1 Corinthians 15:50-53 (NASB)

Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. John 14:1-3 (ESV)

And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

Acts 1:9-11 (NASB)

The spirits of Christians who die before the rapture go immediately to be with the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven.

Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— for we walk by faith, not by sight — we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.

2 Corinthians 5:6-8 (NASB)

I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Philippians 1:23-24 (NIV)

At the rapture, the bodies of those who die before the rapture will be resurrected from the grave and their bodies will be transformed into a body like the glorified post resurrection heavenly body of Jesus. Their new glorified body will be reunited with their spirit and they will be with the Lord Jesus Christ forever. (1 Corinthians 15)

Christians who are still alive when the rapture occurs will be caught up to be with the Lord and will be with Him forever. When this happens, their bodies will also be transformed to be like the glorified heavenly body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (NIV)

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

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 (NIV)

These are phenomenal truths!!! We who know the Lord do not have to fear death. ☺ I can personally attest to this truth. As one who faced death twice with viral encephalitis, I can honestly say that I did not fear death.

We do not know when or how soon the rapture will take place.

The rapture of the church is imminent, but it is clear from Scripture that we do not know exactly when the rapture will take place. Yet in spite of this, from time to time some have claimed to have some kind of insight or revelation and have set specific dates for the rapture. They have obviously all been wrong. It is a good idea to be very skeptical when anyone, including well-known preachers and teachers, teach that because of some world event, they know or predict that the rapture will happen in the immediate future or even on a certain date in the near future.

While it is interesting, and even exciting, to speculate and to think about when our Lord will return, the bottom line is that we simply do not know when Jesus will be coming back to earth.

But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only
Matthew 24:36 (NKJV)

Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.
Matthew 24:42 (NASB)

So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him. Matthew 24:44 (NIV)

For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.
1 Thessalonians 5:2 (ESV)

7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. Acts 1:7 (NIV)

The truths in these verses apply to the rapture and the events following the rapture, including the second coming which follows the seven-year tribulation period.

The rapture will be sudden.

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (NIV)

It is a little mind boggling to think of all that could happen at the rapture when all Christians suddenly disappear and go to be with the Lord.

A million conversations will end mid-sentence.

A million phone calls will suddenly end.

A basketball player could make a length-of-the-floor pass to a teammate running down court and find there is no one there to receive it. And no referee to call it out-of-bounds.

A mother could pull back the covers in a bassinet, but suddenly find herself kissing empty space and looking into empty blankets.

In many areas there will be chaos. A million cars will suddenly be driverless and hundreds of airborne planes will be pilotless. Many workplaces will suddenly find that workers have disappeared. Government and businesses will suddenly lose some of their best leaders. Families will suddenly be torn apart.

Why We Believe in a Pre-tribulation Rapture

Not all Christians believe that the rapture will occur before the seven-year tribulation period. Those who believe in a “post-tribulation” rapture believe that Christians who are alive at the beginning of the tribulation will go through the tribulation period and that there will be no rapture until Christ returns following the seven year tribulation period. They believe that the rapture happens just before the second coming or they believe they happen at essentially the same time. This understanding is known as the post-tribulation rapture view.

Some believe that the rapture will occur in the middle of the seven year tribulation period, which is often called the “mid-tribulation” view. The partial rapture view believes that only the “spiritual” Christians will be raptured. The pre-wrath view believes the rapture will take place in the second half of the tribulation, supposedly before the wrath of God begins.

The post-tribulation view is the most common among those who reject the pre-tribulation understanding of the rapture. All four of these positions have major problems that bring us back to the pre-tribulation understanding of the rapture.

Following are several key Biblical teachings that strongly support a pre-tribulation understanding of the rapture:

1. The focus of the tribulation period is primarily on Israel and to some extent the unsaved gentiles. The focus is not on the church.

This is clear from the remarkable prophecy relating to Israel’s future in Daniel 9:20-27. This is also evident from many other Biblical prophecies relating to the tribulation.

In the tribulation, God will severely judge Israel, drawing them back to Himself. By the end of this period, all Israelites who are still alive will accept Jesus as their Messiah and will choose to believe in and serve Him.

Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble;
 Jeremiah 30:7a (KJV)

And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob". Romans 11:26 (NIV)

**Blow a trumpet in Zion,
And sound an alarm on My holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
For the day of the LORD is coming;
Surely it is near,** Joel 2:1 (NASB)

Throughout the prophecies of the Old Testament prophets, there are many references to the coming tribulation period or the coming “day of the Lord”. These prophecies are clearly given to the people of Israel, not to the church.

Israel and the church are not the same. It is a mistake to essentially equate them as some are prone to do. They are distinct and God has different plans for each of them. The blessings and judgments that God promises to Israel are not the same as God’s program for the church.

Again, the primary purpose of the tribulation is a judgment on Israel and a time in which Israel will, as a nation, turn back to God. The tribulation period is described in some detail in Revelation, chapters four through eighteen. *Never once in all these passages is the church even mentioned.* If the church, which is the bride of Christ, was going to experience unimaginable suffering as will occur in the tribulation period, then God who loves His adopted children would certainly give them some direction and offer some hope and comfort to His people. The reason this does not happen is because the church is not there. They have already been raptured.

The tribulation period is a seven-year period of severe judgment because of the sin of unbelieving Israel and of unbelieving gentile people. The Bible uses words like wrath, judgment, indignation, trial, trouble, and destruction to describe this period of time. There is no Biblical reason why the church should be part of the tribulation period. For the genuine Christian, sin has already been judged and forgiven. There is no reason for severely judging the Christian’s sin for seven more years. Believing that genuinely saved people will undergo seven more years of severe judgment for sin discounts the sufficiency of the death of Christ on the cross as the complete payment for the penalty of our sin.

2. About twenty times in the Word of God, the tribulation period is identified as a time of God’s wrath.

Ten times in Revelation chapters four through nineteen alone, and numerous times in Old Testament prophecies as well, the tribulation is identified as a time of God’s wrath. Other words used to describe this time period are judgment, indignation, trial, trouble, and destruction.

**A day of wrath is that day,
A day of trouble and distress,
A day of destruction and desolation,
A day of darkness and gloom,
A day of clouds and thick darkness,** Zephaniah 1:15 (NASB)

Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" Revelation 6:15-17 (NASB)

Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever. Revelation 15:7 (NASB)

Some other Scriptures are Luke 21:23, Colossians 3:5-6, Revelation 6:16-17, Revelation 15:1, Revelation 15:7-8, Revelation 16:1, Revelation 16:19, and Revelation 19:15.

The following verses clearly state that believers are not destined to experience God's wrath. God's wrath is a time of judgment on those who reject the Lord, not for His own children.

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. Romans 5:9 (NKJV)

Notice that in the following verse Paul states that we will be delivered from “*the*” wrath to come.

...and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. 1 Thessalonians 1:10 (ESV)

For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11 (NASB)

In the following verse, the church at Philadelphia is specifically promised to be delivered from the hour of testing that will come on the whole earth. This is a clear reference to the coming tribulation time.

Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Revelation 3:10 (NASB)

These verses are strong indicators that we will not go through the tribulation which is a severe time of God's wrath.

Again, look at the following verses in 1 Thessalonians 5.

For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11 (NASB)

Paul's letter to the Thessalonians and his teaching about the rapture was meant to be an encouragement to his readers. If we were to go through the tribulation period as some believe, we would hardly look forward to and eagerly anticipate the coming of Christ and our going through seven years of God's wrath. If we have to endure seven years of wrath in the tribulation, teaching about the second coming would hardly be an encouragement to us.

3. The rapture of the church is imminent.

The rapture of the church is imminent; it could happen at any time now. There are numerous Scriptures which instruct us to eagerly look for His coming. While we do not know when He will come, we are instructed to be alert and to eagerly anticipate His coming.

If the rapture did not occur until about halfway through the tribulation or at the end of the tribulation, we could not expect His coming until the antichrist and the tribulation came first. Instead of looking forward to being with the Lord in heaven, we would have to look forward to the coming of antichrist and expect to go through all or part of the tribulation first.

In the tribulation period many people will genuinely come to belief in Jesus. Many, perhaps most, of them will be martyred. Again, this is not something we would eagerly look forward to.

Throughout the New Testament they eagerly looked forward to the imminent return of Jesus, and we, too, are instructed to do so. In each of the following verses we look forward to the coming of Jesus, not the coming of antichrist and the tribulation.

...so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 1:7 (NASB)

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; Philippians 3:20 (NASB)

...awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 1:7 (NASB)

...looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, Titus 2:13 (NASB)

...and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. 1 Thessalonians 1:10 (ESV)

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, Titus 2:11-13 (NASB)

Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. James 5:7-8 (NIV)

Three times in the last chapter of the Bible, Jesus says that he is coming soon or quickly.

Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. Revelation 22:12 (NIV)

If we reject the pre-tribulation rapture of the church, we cannot joyfully look forward to the soon coming of Jesus; rather, we would have to look forward with dread to the coming of the antichrist that would most likely result in our being martyred because of our faith in God. This is hardly a “blessed

hope” or a source of encouragement to Christians.

4. The Word of God states many times that we do not know when Jesus will return to earth.

Prior to the rapture and the following events, people will be living normal lives, many with a sense of peace and security. The rapture will be a totally unexpected event.

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-3 (ESV)

Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Matthew 24:42-44 (NIV)

But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. "For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. "Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. "Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left. Matthew 24:36-41 (NASB)

Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour. Matthew 25:13 (NASB)

These verses make perfect sense when applied to a pre-tribulation rapture. Before the rapture, things will be going along as normal. People will be eating, drinking, and marrying; then Jesus will come for His people and the destruction of the tribulation period will follow.

However, these verses make little or no sense if they are applied exclusively to the second coming following the seven-year tribulation. The tribulation is of a known length or period of time. The second coming follows the order of events given in Revelation 4-19. It is anything but a normal peaceful time as described in Matthew 24. There are many violent signs that immediately precede the second coming. To anyone who reads these chapters in the book of Revelation, the second coming will be anything but a surprise. In fact, people will know that it is at hand simply by correlating the flow of world events with the prophecies in the book of Revelation.

5. There are major differences between the rapture and the second coming.

When you read the account of Christ’s return following the seven-year tribulation period in Revelation 19, you read of great power, the total destruction of many great armies, and blood flowing several feet deep, and of vultures eating the flesh of generals and world leaders. You read of Jesus ruling with a rod of iron and of anti-Christ being cast into hell.

However, when you read of the rapture it is a totally and completely different picture. It is a sudden joyful event as we go to be with the Lord. The verses describing the rapture and the verses describing the second coming at the end of the tribulation could hardly be more different. To believe in a post-tribulation rapture you have to believe that all these verses are describing the same event or period of time. It is a huge stretch to believe that all these passages describe the same event or that they happen simultaneously.

6. Most conservative trusted Bible scholars believe in a pre-tribulation rapture.

Today the pre-tribulation rapture of the church is accepted and taught by most conservative Bible teachers and scholars who believe that the Bible, including the prophetic passages, should be interpreted literally. Those who are more receptive to allegorical or spiritualizing methods of interpretation of Scripture are more likely to take a post-tribulation viewpoint and many of them completely reject the reality of the future millennial reign of Christ.

Many who believe in a post-tribulation or mid-tribulation rapture like to point out that there is no key Scripture that specifically states that the rapture will occur before the tribulation. This is true; however, many of them fail to acknowledge that there are also no verses teaching that it will happen in the middle or after the seven-year tribulation period. Our understanding of this future event has to be understood by the overall teaching of the Word of God which relates to the second coming. Often those who believe in a mid-tribulation or a post-tribulation rapture defend their position by knocking the pre-tribulation position, but they give little or no real Scriptural evidence for believing in a mid-tribulation or post-tribulation rapture.

When one honestly looks at Biblical teaching relating to the rapture and the second coming of Christ, it seems evident that Jesus will come for us before the tribulation, and that we can and should look forward to His coming with joy and great anticipation.

Following is an overview of what takes place in the rapture:

This section is taken from Tim LaHaye's book, No Fear of the Storm, pages 28 and 29.

1. The Lord Himself will descend from His Father's house, where He is preparing a place for us (John 14:1-3 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16).
2. He will come again to receive us to Himself (John 14:1-3).
3. He resurrects those who have fallen asleep in Him (deceased believers whom we will not precede, 1 Thessalonians 4:14-15).
4. The Lord shouts as He descends ("loud command," 1 Thessalonians 4:16, NIV). All this takes place in the "twinkling of an eye" (1 Corinthians 15:52).
5. We will hear the voice of the archangel (perhaps to lead Israel during the seven years of Tribulation as he did in the Old Testament, 1 Thessalonians 4:16).
6. We will also hear the trumpet call of God (1 Thessalonians 4:16), His last trumpet for the church.

(Don't confuse this with the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11:15).

7. The dead in Christ will rise first. (The corruptible ashes of their dead bodies are made incorruptible and joined together with their spirit, which Jesus brings with Him (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

8. Then we which are alive and remain shall be changed (made incorruptible by having our bodies made "immortal," 1 Corinthians 15:51, 53).

9. Then we shall be caught up [raptured] together (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

10. With them in the clouds (where we assume the dead and living believers will have a monumental reunion; 1 Thessalonians 4:17).

11. To meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

12. To "receive you to Myself." Jesus takes us to the Father's house "that where I am, you may be also" (John 14:3).

13. "And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Be encouraged and be faithful. The Lord Jesus Christ is coming soon!!!

Chapter Five

Matthew 24 - The Olivet Discourse

Events Leading Up to the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ

The Second Coming

Matthew 24 and 25 is commonly known as the “Olivet Discourse”. It is an important passage in understanding events which will take place before the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. In this chapter we will carefully look at Matthew 24.

This discourse by Jesus is also covered in Mark 13 and in Luke 21.

Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. 2 But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”

Matthew 24:1-2 (ESV)

The disciples, like most of the other Jewish people, were awed by the temple in Jerusalem. They had reason to be awed. In 18 B.C., Herod the Great, who ruled Judea for Rome, began the process of rebuilding and enlarging the temple. It was not completed until about 82 years later in 64 A.D., long after Herod had died. When Jesus first began His ministry, the temple was in about its 46th year of reconstruction. It was apparently an awesome building. One Rabbi wrote, “One who did not see Herod’s temple missed seeing one of the most beautiful buildings in the world.” The temple and the accompanying buildings and grounds covered some 26 acres.

The response of Jesus to their admiration of the temple must have shocked them to the core. Jesus stated, “*You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.*”

The temple construction was completed in 64 A.D. Only six years later, in 70 A.D., the Romans came and totally destroyed all of Jerusalem, including the temple. According to historical reports, there literally was not one stone left on top of another. Physically, it was little more than a pile of rubble.

Not only did they destroy the city and the temple, they killed over a million Jews. Day after day, up to 500 Jews were crucified. Those who managed to escape were scattered throughout the known world of that time.

Israel ceased to exist as a nation in 70 A.D. They did not become an organized nation again until 1948.

A short time after this reply by Jesus, the disciples came to Jesus privately and asked Him two key questions.

3 As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?”

Matthew 24:3 (ESV)

The disciples wanted to know two things. The first was, “When will these things be?”. “These things”, within this context, was referring back to the destruction of the temple. What they were

asking is, “When will the temple be destroyed?” The second question was, “*what will be the sign of your coming and of the close (end) of the age?*”. In the minds of the disciples, they undoubtedly thought that the destruction of the temple would signal the end of this age and usher in the kingdom reign of Jesus. They did not have any concept or understanding that there would be about a 2000-year (or more) gap in between these events.

Jesus did not answer their first question relating to the destruction of the temple, but He spent the next two chapters (Matthew 24 and 25) answering the second question which was “*what will be the sign of your coming and of the close (end) of the age?*”.

As one spends time reading and digesting these chapters, it becomes clear that Jesus’ answer is referring primarily to events that take place in the future seven-year tribulation period prophesied in Daniel 9. Essentially all conservative Biblical prophecy scholars agree on this. At the end of the tribulation period, the second coming or the end of this age will occur.

4 And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray. 5 For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray. 6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

Matthew 24:4-8 (ESV)

The first half of the tribulation period will apparently be a time of major deception with many claiming to be Christ. It is a time of war, famine, and disease with at least one fourth of the world’s population dying. There will also be many earthquakes in various places.

Jesus said that all of this was “*the beginning of birth pains*”. The most severe birth pains were yet to come.

9 “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. 10 And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. 11 And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. 12 And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. 13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. Matthew 24:9-14 (ESV)

The descriptions given above are vivid and not hard to understand. Many professing Christians will turn from their faith, betray one another, and follow the antichrist.

In verse 13, Jesus says “*But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved*”. Jesus is not teaching that a person’s endurance will produce salvation. He is stating that the endurance of a genuine believer will be proof that he is saved. Neither the high cost of discipleship nor the deception of false prophets nor the enticement of sin will cause genuine true believers to renounce Christ, because Christ Himself will protect them from defection.

In this time (tribulation) the “gospel of the kingdom” will be preached to the entire world. In addition to individual Christians who are witnesses, there will be others who will be world-wide witnesses.

1. Most conservative Bible scholars believe that the 144,000 Jewish men in Revelation 7 and 14 serve as very effective world-wide protected evangelists.

2. There are two witnesses who have a world-wide audience.

"And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. And if anyone wants to harm them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way. These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire. Revelation 11:3-6 (NASB)

3. An angel.

And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters." Revelation 14:6-7 (NASB)

Matthew 24:15 opens up another topic that is critical to understanding what takes place in the middle of the seven-year tribulation period.

"So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, 18 and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

Matthew 24:15-22 (ESV)

These verses lead us into the second half of the tribulation which will be a time of horrific persecution of the Jews. This three- and one-half-year time period begins with the "*abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel*" (In verse 15). This is referring to the following verses in the book of Daniel:

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

This "*abomination of desolation*" is mentioned several times in Scripture. In this verse (Daniel 9:27) "he" is referring to the antichrist who has gained world power by this time. Remember that the antichrist makes a covenant or peace treaty with Israel for seven years. This peace treaty signals the beginning of the seven-year tribulation period. Remember that a "seven" in Daniel 9 is a seven year period of time.

In the middle of the tribulation the anti-Christ shows his true colors and renounces the peace treaty he made with Israel. The “*abomination of desolation*” occurs in the middle of the tribulation and triggers the final 3 1/2 years of the seven-year tribulation period.

"From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. Daniel 12:11 (NASB)

There is a historical event which occurred that was called the “abomination that causes desolation”. The “*abomination of desolation*” in Matthew 24 refers back to that event and follows the same overall pattern. Being familiar with the historical event helps to enlighten us as to what Matthew 24:15 is all about.

After the death of the Greek king, Alexander the Great, his empire was taken over by four generals who fought for control of various parts of the empire for many years after Alexander’s death. Israel became an ongoing battle ground where the generals or kings who controlled Egypt fought for supremacy with the generals or kings who controlled Syria. (See the prophecies in Daniel 11.)

The historical event which was called the “abomination that causes desolation” occurred in 168 B.C. when the Syrian king, Antiochus Epiphanes, built an altar to Zeus in the temple in Jerusalem in an attempt to destroy the worship of Jehovah in Israel. Antiochus offered a pig on the altar in the temple and forced the priests to eat it. Antiochus Epiphanes believed that he was a god to be worshiped. He fancied himself to be a god who closely resembled Zeus. Antiochus demanded that he himself be worshiped instead of the one true God, and he desecrated the temple and the altar in the temple. This is what is known as the “*abomination of desolation*”.

In the following verse, “his” is referring to Antiochus Epiphanes.

His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation. Daniel 11:31 (NIV)

In the middle of the tribulation period, the antichrist will do a very similar thing. He will stop the worship of God in the temple in Jerusalem and set himself up as the god to be worshiped. He will sacrifice a pig on the altar and he will apparently make a statue of himself and set it up in the temple to be worshiped. He will be empowered by Satan who will enable him to do miracles that supposedly authenticate him to people.

In the following verse “he” is referring to the antichrist.

And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven. Revelation 13:6 (NASB)

Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 (NASB)

A false prophet will also arise who causes the antichrist or the beast to be worshiped. Revelation 13 describes this duo -- the false prophet and the beast or the antichrist. Apparently, the false prophet sets up an image of the antichrist in the temple and causes it to be worshiped by the people on the earth.

Because of the signs he (the false prophet) was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. 15 He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. Revelation 13:14-15 (NIV)

Refusing to worship the antichrist could lead to one's death.

Now back to Matthew 24.

Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. 24 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

Matthew 24:23-28 (ESV)

These verses are a warning against following false christs. They are referring to the tribulation period; however, even today we would do well to be careful of who we listen to or follow. Many false teachers claim to be teaching the Word of Truth. We must use discernment.

The last 3 1/2 years of the seven-year tribulation period will be a horrific time of severe persecution of the Israelite people and of gentile Christians as well. At the end of the tribulation period, Israel, as a nation and as individuals, will turn to the Lord.

I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. 11 "In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem,

Zechariah 12:10-11 (NASB)

After the seven-year tribulation period has run its course, the second coming of Jesus will take place.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." Revelation 19:11-16 (NASB)

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect

from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Matthew 24:29-31 (ESV)

“But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. Mark 13:24-27 (ESV)

And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” Luke 21:25-28 (ESV)

The end of the antichrist, or the beast, and his false prophet.

And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. 21 And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh. Revelation 19:20-21 (NASB)

When Jesus returns, He will destroy the armies of the earth, and will rule the world with a “rod of iron”. He will put an end to the fighting and will begin the 1000-year millennial reign of Christ.

Chapter Six

The 1000 Year Millennial Reign of the Lord Jesus Christ

After the second coming, when Jesus comes back to earth at the end of the seven-year tribulation period, He will set up His 1000-year rule and reign on earth. This is sometimes referred to as the “millennium” or the “millennial reign” of Christ.

Notice that in the following passage a thousand years is mentioned five times. Some have questioned if there really will be a 1000-year reign of Christ. If we interpret the Bible literally there will, without question, be a 1000-year reign of Christ.

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. Revelation 20:1-6 (NASB)

According to Dwight Pentecost, a leading solid conservative Biblical prophecy scholar, there are more prophecies in the Bible relating to this 1000-year reign of Christ than there are prophecies on any other topic. The Old Testament is filled with prophecies relating to the millennium.

The Old Testament records the failure of the Israelite people to follow the Lord, and it records the many judgments that have occurred and will occur because of their disbelief in the Lord. However, it is not all doom and gloom. Repeatedly the Scriptural prophecies look ahead to a time in which the Israelite people, as individuals and as a nation, will serve and worship Jesus, their Messiah. Jesus Himself will physically rule the whole earth from Jerusalem, the capital of Israel.

God made many promises to the Israelite people, beginning with the Abrahamic Covenant. He promised them many blessings. Yet, in their rebellion against Him, many of these promised blessings have not been fully fulfilled. In the 1000-year millennium, these promises of blessing will be abundantly fulfilled.

Just a few of the prophecies relating to the 1000-year millennial reign of Jesus are as follows:

"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. Daniel 2:44 (NASB)

**I will bring back my exiled
people Israel;
they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them.
They will plant vineyards and drink their wine;
they will make gardens and eat their fruit.
I will plant Israel in their own land,
never again to be uprooted
from the land I have given them,"
says the LORD your God. Amos 9:14-15 (NIV)**

Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands. They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them. Before they call, I will answer; while they are still speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the LORD.

Isaiah 65:20-25 (NIV)

I will save you from all your uncleanness. I will call for the grain and make it plentiful and will not bring famine upon you. I will increase the fruit of the trees and the crops of the field, so that you will no longer suffer disgrace among the nations because of famine. Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices. Ezekiel 36:29-31 (NIV)

**And the wolf will dwell with the lamb,
And the leopard will lie down with the young goat,
And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together;
And a little boy will lead them.
Also the cow and the bear will graze,
Their young will lie down together,
And the lion will eat straw like the ox.
The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra,
And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den.
They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain,
For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
As the waters cover the sea. Isaiah 11:6-9 (NASB)**

Then the word of the LORD of hosts came, saying, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'I am exceedingly jealous for Zion, yes, with great wrath I am jealous for her.' "Thus says the LORD, 'I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts will be called the Holy Mountain.' "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Old men and old women will again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each man with his staff in his hand because of age. 'And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in its streets.' "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'If it is too difficult in the sight of the remnant of this people in those days, will it also be too difficult in My sight?' declares the

LORD of hosts. "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Behold, I am going to save My people from the land of the east and from the land of the west; 8 and I will bring them back and they will live in the midst of Jerusalem; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God in truth and righteousness.' Zechariah 8:1-8 (NASB)

I will make them and the places around My hill a blessing. And I will cause showers to come down in their season; they will be showers of blessing. "Also the tree of the field will yield its fruit and the earth will yield its increase, and they will be secure on their land. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bars of their yoke and have delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them. "They will no longer be a prey to the nations, and the beasts of the earth will not devour them; but they will live securely, and no one will make them afraid. Ezekiel 34:26-28 (NASB)

The one-thousand-year reign of Christ will be a time of peace and blessing. The antichrist and his false prophet will have been permanently cast into hell forever. Satan will be bound in the “abyss” until the end of the 1000 years. He will be unable to tempt or influence people until the very end of the one thousand years.

And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh. Revelation 19:19-21 (NASB)

In the 1000-year millennial reign of Christ, the government will be a theocracy.

During this time, Jesus will physically rule the world with a “rod of iron”. Jesus will be King and no one can challenge His rule.

14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. 15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. Revelation 19:14-16 (NKJV)

**For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness
From then on and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this. Isaiah 9:6-7 (NASB)**

**Then the kingdom and dominion,
And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven,
Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High.
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And all dominions shall serve and obey Him.'** Daniel 7:27 (NKJV)

**I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
And the horse from Jerusalem;
And the bow of war will be cut off.
And He will speak peace to the nations;
And His dominion will be from sea to sea,
And from the River to the ends of the earth.** Zechariah 9:10 (NASB)

During this time, the resurrected Old Testament Israelite King David will serve as a regent to King Jesus.

"My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. "They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons' sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever.
Ezekiel 37:24-25 (NASB)

And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the Lord; I have spoken. Ezekiel 34:23-24 (ESV)

'It shall come about on that day,' declares the LORD of hosts, 'that I will break his yoke from off their neck and will tear off their bonds; and strangers will no longer make them their slaves. 'But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.
Jeremiah 30:8-9 (NASB)

Who will be the subjects of the kingdom?

All the saved Jews and gentiles who are alive at the end of the seven-year tribulation period will go into the millennial kingdom and begin re-populating the earth. All the people going into the kingdom will be saved people. However, their children will need to choose to believe in Jesus, just as we today have to make the choice to believe in Him.

'But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.' Daniel 7:18 (NKJV)

I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom. Daniel 7:21-22 (NASB)

'Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.' Daniel 7:27 (NASB)

What will be our role or the role of the church in the millennium?

In the millennium Israel will be the center of Jesus's rule. Jesus will rule from Jerusalem which will be their capital city. We (the church) will be involved as well and will "rule and reign" with Him, although our role is not clearly spelled out. We do not need to feel left out like we are not important in this time. Remember from chapter 3 of this study, we are the bride of Christ, and Jesus does not relegate His bride to a second-class role in His plan for us.

While the Bible does not clearly say exactly what our role will be in the 1000-year millennial reign of Christ, it does say that we will be priests of God and we will rule and reign with Him. It does not give any more details than this.

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. Revelation 20:6 (NASB)

There are other Scriptures that teach or imply that we will have a part in the administration of God's kingdom.

We do not know exactly how this will take place, but we will be in an exalted place of responsibility and authority in the kingdom of God.

It should be noted that in Revelation 20:5- 6, the "first resurrection" refers to the resurrection of all genuine believers although their resurrection will occur at different times. The second resurrection refers to the resurrection of unbelieving unsaved people following the millennial reign of Christ at the great white throne judgement.

What will the 1000-year millennial kingdom be like?

The 1000-year millennial reign of Christ will be characterized by the following blessings:

A. The fullness of the Holy Spirit

**"And it shall come to pass afterward,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.
Even on the male and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit.** Joel 2:28-29 (ESV)

"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. "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.
Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NASB)

**'For I will pour out water on the thirsty land
And streams on the dry ground;
I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring
And My blessing on your descendants; Isaiah 44:3 (NASB)**

**"I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land.
Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken and done it," declares the LORD.' "**
Ezekiel 37:14 (NASB)

It is a little awesome to think about what a world filled with the Spirit of God will be like. The rest of these qualities all reflect the fullness of the Spirit of God.

B. Holiness

Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. "I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD," declares the Lord GOD, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. "For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. "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. Ezekiel 36:22-25 (NASB)

"My holy name I will make known in the midst of My people Israel; and I will not let My holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel. Ezekiel 39:7 (NASB)

**The LORD roars from Zion
And utters His voice from Jerusalem,
And the heavens and the earth tremble.
But the LORD is a refuge for His people
And a stronghold to the sons of Israel.
Then you will know that I am the LORD your God,
Dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain.
So Jerusalem will be holy,
And strangers will pass through it no more. Joel 3:16-17 (NASB)**

C. Righteousness

**Then all your people will be righteous; They will possess the land forever,
Isaiah 60:21 (NASB)**

**For He is coming to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness
And the peoples in His faithfulness. Psalm 96:13b (NASB)**

**Behold, a king will reign righteously
And princes will rule justly. Isaiah 32:1 (NASB)**

D. Truth

"Thus says the LORD, 'I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts will be called the Holy Mountain.' Zechariah 8:3 (NASB)

Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Behold, I am going to save My people from the land of the east and from the land of the west; and I will bring them back and they will live in the midst of Jerusalem; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God in truth and righteousness.' Zechariah 8:7-8 (NASB)

E. Justice

**"Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold;
My chosen one in whom My soul delights.
I have put My Spirit upon Him;
He will bring forth justice to the nations. Isaiah 42:1 (NASB)**

**There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness
From then on and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this. Isaiah 9:7 (NASB)**

F. Peace

**4 And He will judge between the nations,
And will render decisions for many peoples;
And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not lift up sword against nation,
And never again will they learn war. Isaiah 2:4 (NASB)**

**For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness
From then on and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this. Isaiah 9:6-7 (NASB)**

**I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
And the horse from Jerusalem;
And the bow of war will be cut off.
And He will speak peace to the nations;
And His dominion will be from sea to sea,
And from the River to the ends of the earth. Zechariah 9:10 (NASB)**

**"The whole earth is at rest and is quiet;
They break forth into shouts of joy. Isaiah 14:7 (NASB)**

G. Joy

**Instead of your shame there shall be a double portion;
instead of dishonor they shall rejoice in their lot;
therefore in their land they shall possess a double portion;
they shall have everlasting joy. Isaiah 61:7 (ESV)**

**Then the virgin will rejoice in the dance,
And the young men and the old, together,
For I will turn their mourning into joy
And will comfort them and give them joy for their sorrow. Jeremiah 31:13 (NASB)**

**Ephraim will be like a mighty man,
And their heart will be glad as if from wine;
Indeed, their children will see it and be glad,
Their heart will rejoice in the LORD. Zechariah 10:7 (NASB)**

H. Comfort

**Then you will say on that day,
"I will give thanks to You, O LORD;
For although You were angry with me,
Your anger is turned away,
And You comfort me. Isaiah 12:1 (NASB)**

**Indeed, the LORD will comfort Zion;
He will comfort all her waste places.
And her wilderness He will make like Eden,
And her desert like the garden of the LORD;
Joy and gladness will be found in her,
Thanksgiving and sound of a melody. Isaiah 51:3 (NASB)**

In the millennium much of the curse put on the earth in Genesis 3, will be lifted.

**The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;**

and a little child will lead them.
 The cow will feed with the bear,
 their young will lie down together,
 and the lion will eat straw like the ox.
 The infant will play near the hole of the cobra,
 and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest.
 They will neither harm nor destroy
 on all my holy mountain,
 for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
 as the waters cover the sea. Isaiah 11:6-9 (NIV)

"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 65:25 (NASB)

At the end of the one thousand years, Satan will be released from the abyss for a short time and he will lead one final rebellion against God. His rebellion will be crushed and Satan will be thrown into hell forever, never to be released or influence people again.

When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Revelation 20:7-10 (NASB)

Very soon after the thousand-year millennial reign is over, eternity begins. Many of the blessings of the millennial reign will carry right on over into the eternal state, only in a perfect sinless state. This will be dealt with in more depth in chapter eight.

Chapter Seven

Future Judgments and Rewards

The Bible teaches that every person will give an account of himself to God. Understanding this should motivate us to live in such a way as to honor and glorify our Lord.

Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Hebrews 4:13 (NIV)

Both Christians and non-Christians will have to give an account to God for the way in which they lived their life.

Christians do not have to fear God's judgment. Christians will be judged for rewards. Non-Christians will be judged according to their works and then be eternally separated from God.

In this chapter we will look at three major judgments that are prophesied in the Bible. We will also cover the purpose and what will be the outcome of each of these three judgments. There are other judgments spoken of in the Bible, but these are three that stand out in the Word of God.

1. The First Resurrection and the Judgment of Christians for Rewards

The bodies of Christians who have died or will die in this age (the church age) will be resurrected from the grave at the rapture. Their spirits, which are already with the Lord in heaven, will be reunited with their bodies and they will be with our Lord Jesus Christ forever. (1 Corinthians 15)

It is important to understand that no unsaved person will be resurrected at this time. This resurrection is for Christians and only Christians.

The resurrection of Christians is identified in the Bible as the first resurrection, even though individual Christians or followers of our Lord Jesus Christ will be resurrected at different times depending on when they lived.

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. Revelation 20:6 (NASB)

The following verses are teaching about the rapture. In these verses, "those who are asleep" refers to Christians who die before the rapture occurs. Their spirits are already with the Lord in heaven.

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will

be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (ESV)

After the rapture takes place, there will be a judgment of believers for rewards. Most conservative theologians believe that this judgment for rewards will take place in heaven very soon after the rapture.

In Christian circles, this judgment is sometimes called the “bema seat” judgment. We don’t use the word “bema” in everyday English, but a “bema seat” is simply a raised platform used by a judge or other military or government officials.

In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul tells us that there is only one foundation on which Christians can build their lives. That foundation is our Lord Jesus Christ. However, according to the following Scripture, we can build on that foundation using various kinds of building material – gold, silver, costly stones, or wood, hay, or straw. We build on our foundation by the way we live our life or by our actions and our works. Our works or our deeds will be “tested by fire”, and some of our work will stand the test and some will not.

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using, gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames. 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 (NIV)

At this judgment, our works will be tested. They will be “*tried by fire*”. We do not understand exactly how this will happen, but it will happen. Our works will either be burned up or they will survive the test and be rewarded by God. Those who build on the right foundation with *gold, silver, or costly stones* will be rewarded for their service to Him.

The works of those who build with *wood, hay, or straw* will be burned up. Those Christians whose works are burned up will still be saved, “*but only as one escaping through the flames*”. They will still spend eternity enjoying the glories and the wonders of heaven, but they will receive few rewards for service to the Lord while here on earth.

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. James 3:1 (ESV)

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Colossians 3:23-24 (NIV)

There are other Scriptures which teach us that we will have to give an account of ourselves to God.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

2 Corinthians 5:10 (NKJV)

I will repay each of you according to your deeds. Revelation 2:23 (NIV)

So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God. Romans 14:12 (NASB)

Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Hebrews 4:13 (NIV)

Many of us may stand before God speechless, unable to defend the way we ignored and disobeyed Him and did not put much faith in Him while we lived here on earth. Others may hear Him say, "*Well done good and faithful servant*".

His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' Matthew 25:21 (ESV)

Again, it needs to be emphasized that the bema seat judgment is not a judgment to determine if we are saved or not. It has nothing to do with salvation or eternal destiny. If we were not saved, we would not even be at this judgment. Only Christians are there and their future eternal life with Christ in heaven is absolutely secure.

Our salvation is secure. However, while our salvation is not in question, we will still have to give account to God for the way we have lived our lives.

The fact that we, as Christians, will have to give an account of our lives to God should be a major motivation for us to faithfully serve Him with a deep level of commitment while we are here on earth.

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Colossians 3:23-24 (NIV)

Christians will be rewarded for their service to the Lord while they lived on earth.

The Word of God is clear that we will be rewarded for our service to our Lord.

Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. Revelation 22:12 (NASB)

"For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Matthew 16:27 (NKJV)

And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward. Matthew 10:42 (ESV)

We will be rewarded according to what we have done and the quality of our service to Him while on earth. It is clear from the Word of God that our service here on earth will affect our life in heaven. In the following verses we are specifically instructed to "*lay up treasures in heaven*".

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth

nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-21 (NASB)

As Christians, we should put our whole heart into living a godly life and into our service to Him.

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Colossians 3:23-24 (NIV)

It is not real clear what the nature of all our rewards will be; however, we do know that the rewards will be worth whatever sacrifices we might make while we are here on earth. It will be worth it a million times over.

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. Romans 8:18 (NIV)

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Matthew 5:12 (NASB)

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. Daniel 12:2-3 (ESV)

The following verse is a little awesome. We will receive praise from God!!!

Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God. 1 Corinthians 4:5 (NASB)

Another source of joy in heaven will be seeing those there whom we have played a role in encouraging or helping them to begin or to grow in their walk with the Lord.

The following verse was written by Paul to a church he had helped to establish.

For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy. 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 (NASB)

Part of our reward will be to rule and reign with Him.

This is a little hard to grasp, but in some way we will have responsibilities and authority over some part of the new heavens and new earth. The Bible does not give many details, but it does state that we will reign with Him.

...and they will reign forever and ever. Revelation 22:5 (NASB)

If we endure, we will also reign with Him; 2 Timothy 2:12a (NASB)

The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, Revelation 2:26 (ESV)

To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. Revelation 3:21 (NIV)

Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? 1 Corinthians 6:2a (NKJV)

The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us;
2 Timothy 2:11-12 (ESV)

There are at least two parables that clearly teach that there will be rewards for faithful service. Those who are faithful will be given positions of authority in the kingdom of God. In this study we will not go into these parables, but it would be helpful to read them and digest what they teach. These two parables are, the parable of the talents in Matthew 25, and the parable of the ten minas in Luke 19.

We, as Christians, have a glorious future!!! We have heaven and all that goes with it to look forward to. It's great to be an adopted son of God and to know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

In heaven we will be “crowned” for our service to Him.

There are several crowns promised to those who serve Him here on earth. These do not appear to be physical crowns but rather joy and recognition for faithful service to Him.

And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.
1 Peter 5:4 (NASB)

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. James 1:12 (ESV)

For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy. 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 (NASB)

...in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. 2 Timothy 4:8 (NASB)

In Revelation 4:10-11, the “twenty-four elders” cast their crowns at Jesus feet and worship and exalt Him.

...the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 11 “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.” Revelation 4:10-11 (ESV)

We will be rewarded for our service that is done with the right motives. Self-glorifying service will not result in rewards in heaven.

"Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 6:1 (NASB)

Warning Against Losing Rewards

In the little Biblical book of 2 John, there are warnings against false teachers who do not teach the truth. In the following verses there is a serious warning. Do not let anyone who teaches untruth deceive you and cause you to lose rewards that would have been yours for faithful service to Him. If we fail to live by the truth, we will lose the rewards that are promised to those who are faithful servants.

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. 2 John 1:7-8 (NASB)

Christians will never lose their salvation, but we can clearly lose rewards that could have been ours forever in heaven. Our service to the Lord is not to be half-hearted and sporadic. It is to be with all our heart, knowing that we will be richly rewarded by our Lord.

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Colossians 3:23-24 (NIV)

2. The "Sheep and the Goats" Judgment

In Matthew 25:31-46, it records what is sometimes known as the "sheep and the goats" judgment. It is also sometimes called the "judgment of the nations". This is a judgment that takes place following the tribulation and before the one-thousand-year reign of Christ. *It will be a judgment of all of those (saved and unsaved) who lived through the seven-year tribulation period.*

At this judgment our Lord Jesus Christ will separate those who were saved during the seven-year tribulation period from the unsaved or those who rejected Him in the tribulation period.

But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. "All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

"Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Matthew 25:31-34 (NASB)

Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; Matthew 25:41 (NASB)

The purpose of this judgment is to separate the believers from the non-believers.

Those who are saved during the tribulation, called the “sheep”, will go on into the 1000-year rule of Christ. Only saved people will go into the 1000-year millennial reign of Christ.

Those who rejected Christ, or the “goats”, will be sent into Hades (hell). After the one thousand year⁴⁴⁴ rule of Christ, all unsaved people will be brought out again to be judged at the “great white throne judgment”.

Remember, this “sheep and goats” judgment follows the seven-year tribulation, before the 1000-year reign of Christ begins. Christians who are alive today will not be in this judgment. We will have already been judged at the “bema seat” judgment where Christians are judged for rewards. The “bema seat” judgment takes place in heaven shortly after the rapture. The “sheep and the goats” judgment follows the seven-year tribulation period.

In this passage (Matthew 25:35-45), the sheep are recognized and commended for their caring for the hungry, the thirsty, the naked (insufficiently clothed), the sick, and for strangers and for those in prison. Remember that this is taking place just after the tribulation period. Genuine believers did not accept the mark of the beast (antichrist) and as a consequence they could not buy or sell anything. They would have been unable to buy food, clothing, or any of the other basic necessities of life. Most of them who lived through all this would have been in very hard circumstances. Christians who were able would have shared what provisions they had with their fellow believers. Jesus states that those who shared what they had were, in fact, giving to Jesus Himself. These “sheep” were given eternal life and went on to be the heart of the one-thousand-year reign of Christ.

On the other hand, those who had received the mark of the beast and had followed him and the false prophet did not share with those who refused to follow the antichrist and were in desperate circumstances. Jesus stated that since they refused to assist His followers, they were refusing and rejecting Him. Their destiny was to be eternal punishment or hell.

Some would interpret this to mean that a person is saved by doing good works. However, the Bible is crystal clear. We are saved by putting our faith in the death of Jesus as the payment for our sin. We are saved because of our faith in Him. Our good works have nothing to do with our being saved.

In the book of James, we are taught that genuine faith will result in good works. Good works are the result of our being saved -- they are not the cause of our being saved. If we are depending on our works for our salvation, then we are not saved. This “sheep and goats” passage is an illustration of this Biblical truth. The sheep pleased the Lord by sharing and caring for those who were in need.

3. Resurrection and Judgment of Those Who Are Not Christians

At the end of the one-thousand-year millennial reign of our Lord Jesus Christ here on earth, *all unsaved people from every age or time period will be resurrected, and they will all stand before God to be judged.* This is often called the “great white throne” judgment.

It is important to understand that *no saved people will be at this judgment.* This judgment is only for unsaved people. Saved people will already have been judged and rewarded and are already with the Lord forever.

Every person who rejected the Lord, no matter when he was alive on earth, will be resurrected at this time and will be in this judgement.

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:11-15 (NASB)

But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Revelation 21:8 (NASB)

The purpose of this judgment is to determine and pronounce the degree of punishment of those who rejected the Lord Jesus Christ in their lifetime. At this judgment, unsaved people will be judged according to their deeds or their works -- *"and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds."*

All unsaved people will spend eternity separated from God in hell, but not all individuals in hell will suffer the same degree of punishment. The degree of punishment of an unsaved person will be based on their actions and attitudes while alive on earth and on the amount of light (knowledge of the truth) they had while they lived on earth.

The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Revelation 20:13 (NKJV)

Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. "Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you." Matthew 11:20-24 (NIV)

It is important to recognize that the following verses are not referring to Christians. They are referring to people who have had knowledge of the truth and they even appeared to have benefitted from that knowledge, but they never genuinely believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Instead of believing they turned away from and rejected that knowledge.

For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. 2 Peter 2:20-21 (NASB)

How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Hebrews 10:29-31 (ESV)

Those who knew the truth but deliberately rejected it will experience the wrath and the vengeance of God. This will be a fearful experience and outcome for those who deliberately rejected the truth.

And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.

Luke 12:47-48 (ESV)

Not all belief in Christ and service to Him is genuine.

There will be many people who thought they were saved but they will stand before God in this judgment and be sent to an eternal hell. Satan and false teaching deceived them. This is tragic.

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

Matthew 7:21-23 (NIV)

Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man. John 2:23-25 (NASB)

In the Bible we are instructed to examine ourselves. Are we genuinely saved? By far the most important thing one who is not sure about his salvation can do is to examine himself and make sure of his salvation.

Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! 2 Corinthians 13:5 (NASB)

It is hard to think about an eternity in hell, separated from God forever, but that is the eternal destiny of unsaved people. As Christians, we need to remember that we are ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ here on earth. He has given us the responsibility of taking the good news of salvation to lost people. We need to take this responsibility very seriously.

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20 (NASB)

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; 6 for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.
Psalm 1:5-6 (ESV)

All these Biblical truths should motivate us to actively serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. Colossians 3:23-24 (ESV)

Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. 1 Corinthians 9:25 (NIV)

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 2 Corinthians 4:17 (NIV)

Chapter Eight

Eternity

Without question, the greatest blessing for a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ is knowing that we will spend eternity with our Lord. We will be free from all the effects of sin and corruption and will enjoy perfect fellowship with our Lord and with fellow believers forever.

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, Philippians 3:20 (NIV)

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 1 Corinthians 2:9 (KJV).

Eternity with Our Lord

Many times in Scripture God promises eternal life with Him to those who believe on Him. This is in stark contrast with the destiny of unsaved people, which is the “second death” or eternal hell.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16 (NASB)

I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; John 10:28a (NIV)

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. John 5:24 (ESV)

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23 (NASB)

Those who have received eternal life look forward to being with the Lord forever. Understanding what is ahead for us is a powerful motivation to live godly lives and to prepare for being with our Lord.

Both Old and New Testament saints who have died are now in heaven with the Lord.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. Psalm 23:6 (KJV)

I can remember sitting with my family shortly after the death of my mother. I was not feeling sorrow or grief. I can remember feeling guilty for not grieving. However, both my mother and father were with the Lord in heaven. While I would miss them, how could I grieve when they had both gone to be with the Lord, no longer suffering from multiple health issues and experiencing the many hardships they had endured while here on earth.

It is my prayer that this short study of heaven and our eternal destiny will encourage some to refocus on what is ahead for us.

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-21 (ESV)

Those who receive eternal life will spend eternity with God and our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. In this section we will attempt to give a tiny glimpse of what eternity with our Lord will be like. This will not be easy; in fact, it is essentially impossible since our human minds cannot begin to grasp what God is preparing for us in heaven.

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 1 Corinthians 2:9 (KJV).

Biblical Uses of the Word “Heaven” or “Heavens”

The Bible uses the word “heaven” or “heavens” in at least three different ways.

1. The word “heaven” or “heavens” is sometimes used as the space above the earth or the earth’s atmosphere.

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, ... Isaiah 55:10a (NASB)

Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

James 5:18 (NIV)

2. The word “heaven” or “heavens” is sometimes used to refer to our entire universe. In a number of places, it speaks of the stars in the heavens.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1:1 (NASB)

But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, 25 and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

Mark 13:24-25 (ESV)

For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light. Isaiah 13:10 (ESV)

3. In many Scriptures, “heaven” is the dwelling place of God. It is where God’s throne is.

Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 5:16 (NASB)

But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,...

Matthew 5:34 (ESV)

"Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 6:1 (NASB)

The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven: Psalm 11:4 (KJV)

This present earth and the "heavens" will be destroyed and recreated by God.

God created this world perfect. There were no effects of sin or the curse. However, when Adam and Eve sinned, it not only brought a curse on mankind but also on the earth which is the habitation of man. Not only are people corrupted by sin, the earth and the universe itself have also been corrupted because of man's sin.

Cursed is the ground because of you; Genesis 3:17b (NASB)

For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. Romans 8:20-22 (NASB)

One of the final acts of God before ushering in eternity will be to destroy this corrupted earth and to create a totally earth and new heavens (the universe). All the consequences and the effects of sin and the curse on creation will be gone.

There are numerous Scripture passages that tell us that this present world will come to an end and that God is going to create new heavens (the universe) and a new earth that will never come to an end.

A few of these verses are as follows:

But 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. 2 Peter 3:10 (NASB)

But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. 2 Peter 3:13 (NIV)

**All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved
and the sky rolled up like a scroll;
all the starry host will fall
like withered leaves from the vine,
like shriveled figs from the fig tree. Isaiah 34:4 (NIV)**

Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. Matthew 24:35 (NASB)

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. Isaiah 65:17 (ESV)

**Of old You founded the earth,
And the heavens are the work of Your hands.**

**"Even they will perish, but You endure;
And all of them will wear out like a garment;
Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed." Psalm 102:25-26 (NASB)**

**Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away,
and there is no longer any sea. Revelation 21:1a (NASB)**

When the Bible speaks of creating a new heaven or "heavens" and earth, it is not heaven, the dwelling place of God, that will be destroyed and recreated. Instead, it is referring to the "heavens" or the atmosphere and the heavenly bodies of the universe beyond. It does not say that God is going to destroy heaven, His home and throne, with fire and burn them up.

The new heavens and the new earth will be free of all the negative effects of sin and the curse. They will be very pleasant places to live and to serve.

The New Jerusalem

The New Jerusalem is a heavenly city built by God, which comes out of heaven (God's dwelling place) to earth. It will be the new dwelling place of God and the new location of the throne of God. The New Jerusalem has been identified by scholars as the new "capital city" of heaven.

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." Revelation 21:2-4 (ESV)

Notice that in verse 3 it states, *Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.* The throne of God will be in the New Jerusalem and His dwelling will be in the New Jerusalem with His people.

No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. Revelation 22:3-4 (NIV)

In John 14 Jesus promises to "*prepare a place for you*" and to "*receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also*".

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; for I go to prepare a place for 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. John 14:1-3 (NASB)

Scholars do not all agree as to the exact location of the New Jerusalem. Some believe that it will rest on the earth while others believe it stays a little above the earth. Either way, in the eternal state God will be in it and He will dwell with His people. This is a phenomenal truth. What blessings we have ahead of us.

In Revelation 21:10-27 there is a description of the physical characteristics of the New Jerusalem. This is an awesome description. The apostle John is trying to describe in human language what he sees in the New Jerusalem. Even with John's description it is hard to visualize its beauty and what it will be like.

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed—on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal. He also measured its wall, 144 cubits by human measurement, which is also an angel's measurement. The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass. And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Revelation 21:10-27 (ESV)

This is an enormous city. It is about 1300 miles long, 1300 miles wide, and 1300 miles tall. Its beauty is beyond description. What's more, the dwelling and the throne of God will be in this city.

The New Jerusalem will be a literal physical city. It is not just a word picture or some kind of illusion.

While the descriptions of the physical city in Revelation 21 are awesome, there are two even greater things about this city.

First, it will be the eternal home of God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Second, in this city there will be no sin or any consequences of sin. In the New Jerusalem there will be no corruption. We will all be made holy and we will be in the presence of God. We will have perfect fellowship with God and with each other. We will see and experience the fullness of God's glory of which we are now totally incapable of grasping. The glory of God lights the city.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. Revelation 21:3 (ESV)

No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his

servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

Revelation 22:3-4 (NIV)

Where will “heaven” be in eternity?

Heaven is referred to in the Bible many times. It is an important topic in the Word of God.

Everybody, in every age, who has genuinely believed in the Lord Jesus Christ will spend eternity with the Lord in heaven.

The Bible clearly teaches that heaven is a literal physical place, not just a spiritual concept. It is not just an emotion or state of mind as Morgan Freeman and the National Geographic and others would have us believe.

As we have already seen, heaven is God’s current dwelling place. We are not told where the present heaven is now except that it is “up”. Numerous Scriptures indicate this.

...And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven. 2 Kings 2:11b (NASB)

After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. Mark 16:19 (NIV)

After the New Jerusalem comes to earth, things change. The dwelling and the throne of God will then be with man in the New Jerusalem.

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. Revelation 21:2-3 (ESV)

We have looked at Scriptures which clearly teach that there will be a new recreated earth and that the eternal dwelling and throne of God will be in the New Jerusalem which will be either near or on the recreated earth.

There are good conservative theologians who define the future “heaven” as all of the New Jerusalem, the newly recreated earth, and perhaps even all of the newly recreated universe. This seems to me to be a good understanding of the future heaven.

God is bigger than any one place. His presence will fill the New Jerusalem, the new heavens, and the new earth. It seems reasonable to believe that it can all be identified as “heaven”, the eternal dwelling place of God.

Where will we spend eternity?

A key question is, “exactly where will we spend eternity?”. By putting together, the Biblical truths we can reasonably conclude that our eternal home will be in the New Jerusalem with the recreated earth

playing a significant role. Remember, the earth will be totally recreated and all of the effects of sin and the curse will be gone forever.

Again, it is clear that God is coming with the New Jerusalem to the earth, or close to the earth, where He will dwell with man.

According to Dwight Pentecost, this city will be occupied for eternity by the church saints, the redeemed of Israel, and by the redeemed of all ages. The angels who did not follow Satan will also be there.

No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

Revelation 22:3-4 (NIV)

It clearly states we will serve Him in eternity. I do not want to be dogmatic or go beyond what the Bible teaches, but since the whole universe will be recreated, I suspect that in our service to the Lord we will have duties to fulfill throughout the endless reaches of our universe. It will be exciting to explore the universe!!!

In referring to the New Jerusalem, the following verse states that nations will walk by “its light” and the “kings of the earth” will have access to the New Jerusalem.

The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.

Revelation 21:24 (NASB)

The city has twelve gates. This certainly suggests that there will be people going in and out of the city.

There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. Revelation 21:13 (NASB)

In the millennium Jesus will rule and reign on earth. His headquarters will be Jerusalem, the capital of Israel. The Jewish people will be in their homeland which God has promised to them many times in the Word of God. (See chapter 2.)

God promised the Jewish people that they would live in their land forever. It will be an everlasting possession. This certainly appears to go beyond the millennium into eternity.

...for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever.

Genesis 13:15 (NASB)

and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."

Luke 1:33 (NASB)

"I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you. "I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. "I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

Genesis 17:6-8 (NASB)

The millennial kingdom set up by our Lord on earth is an everlasting kingdom that will endure or last forever. The millennial rule and reign of Christ will never end. After the 1000 years are over, He will go right on into eternity as the sovereign of His everlasting kingdom.

In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. Daniel 2:44 (NIV)

He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. Daniel 7:14 (NIV)

Again, this seems to support the understanding that there will be people on earth for eternity.

Many Christians picture heaven as some surreal place in the universe where Christians will do little but sit on a cloud, play a harp, and sing. There is no question that worship will be an ongoing eternal priority in heaven, and this should not in any way be downplayed. However, there is more to eternity than that.

From all that Scripture teaches and implies, we can conclude that the New Jerusalem, with the newly created earth playing a role, will be our primary dwelling place and we will be actively serving the Lord in ways that He will determine. Again, this could very well be throughout the whole universe.

What will heaven be like?

In Ezekiel 1, God gives Ezekiel a vision of heaven and in Revelation 4, John sees the glorified Lord in all the splendor of heaven.

In **Ezekiel 1**, Ezekiel does his best to describe the wonders of heaven in human language; however, his descriptions leave us with a lot more awe and questions than with genuine understanding.

In **Revelation 4**, there is a somewhat similar scene. Here the apostle John describes what he sees around the throne of God in heaven as God reveals future events to John that will take place in heaven and on earth.

Before continuing in this section of study, it would be good to read both of these chapters (Ezekiel 1 and Revelation 4) at least a couple of times each, in order to get a small appreciation of the wonders of heaven.

We are unable to grasp what Ezekiel and John are attempting to describe. As one thinks about what is described in these two chapters, we are left in awe and wonder because of what we read. One thing that does become clear is that we will never be able to conceive or begin to grasp what God has prepared for us until we arrive there in our totally transformed spirit, soul, and body. Heaven is a display of the glory of God, and we, in our current sinful state, cannot begin to conceive of what it is like.

The apostle Paul was given a glimpse of heaven and he could not describe what he saw and heard.

...was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell. 2 Corinthians 12:4 (NIV)

These are all descriptions of the current heaven, which is now the dwelling place of God. There is no reason to believe that the future heaven will be any less glorious, especially when one considers the descriptions of the New Jerusalem, the future dwelling place and throne of God.

We have looked at Scriptures which describe some physical characteristics of heaven; however, other characteristics of heaven are even more appealing. Following are some passages which describe other characteristics of our eternal home in heaven:

And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."
Revelation 21:3-4 (NASB)

**You will make known to me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.** Psalm 16:11 (NASB)

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:4-7 (NASB)

Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. Revelation 21:27 (NIV)

In our eternity there will be only righteousness. Satan will be cast into hell forever, never to influence people again. God is in total control.

Considering all of these things, it is interesting to think of what there will *not* be in heaven.

There will be no sin, or temptations to sin, and there will be no rebellion against God. There will be no crime, no jails, no police, no war, and no armies. There will be no sorrow or grief and we will never have to worry. We will never have to go to the doctor or get any tests done. There will be no physical or emotional pain. There will be no cancer, no heart disease, no sexually transmitted diseases nor any other kind of diseases or sickness. There will be no anger, no fear, no guilt, no shame, and no regret. There will be no neglect or abuse of children, or anyone else. There will be no financial problems, and there will be no debt. There will not even be any taxes to pay. There will be no corrupt governments or judicial systems. There will be no prejudices or disharmony between the sexes or between different races. We will never have to apologize. We will always be busy, never idle, but we will never be tired or weary. There will never be any car wrecks, homes burning down, or disasters, tornados, tsunamis, ice storms, power failures, hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, or droughts. No personal failures. No arguing, fighting or anger, no divorces, no guilt, no fear, no jealousy or envy. No boredom, no drugs or addictions. No funeral homes, no hospitals, no divorce courts, no suicide, no worry, no false teachers. No hunger, and no one will be overweight. ☺

Instead of these things there will righteousness, pure worship, peace, a lot of very good music, continual joy and happiness, service, responsibility, unlimited travel throughout the universe, millions of very close friends, genuine fellowship, plenty of good food, and we will always be learning.

Wow!!! No wonder Paul said that to “die is gain”.

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Philippians 1:21 (ESV)

In heaven there will be no marriages. This may sound a little disappointing to some of us who have had good marriages here on earth. However, in eternity we will have perfect love, joy, fellowship, and harmony in all of our relationships with fellow citizens of heaven. Our love for and our relationship with all our brothers and sisters in the Lord will surpass anything we have known on earth. These relationships will surpass even the best of marriages here on earth.

Heaven is also the dwelling place of many multitudes of angels.

And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; 12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. Revelation 5:11-12 (KJV)

In spite of all these Biblical teachings, it seems as if most of those who identify themselves as Christians do not focus on heaven. The emphasis of many today is on having a good life here and now with little thought given to eternity. Instead of preparing for future blessings in heaven, we focus on satisfying our human desires here and now. Money, status, entertainment, sensual pleasure, and many other things take priority over our focus on heaven. This is a distorted unbiblical view.

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-21 (ESV)

What will we be like in heaven?

The bodies of everyone who dies will be resurrected. No matter how or where they died and were buried, or not buried, God will resurrect them.

We all wonder from time to time what our bodies will be like in eternity. The Word of God tells us that the resurrected bodies of believers will be like Jesus' resurrected body.

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

And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven. 1 Corinthians 15:49 (NIV)

Our resurrected bodies will be like Jesus' resurrected body. After Jesus was resurrected, He was

recognized by those who knew Him. He walked, ate, talked and functioned in many ways like an individual with a normal body. However, he was not limited by space, and closed doors were not a barrier. In our resurrected eternal bodies, we will move around and function as Jesus did.

However, just attempting to describe the physical characteristics of our bodies does not begin to describe what we will be like.

So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 (NKJV)

Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 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 we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. 54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

“O death, where is your victory?”

“O death, where is your sting?” 1 Corinthians 15:51-55 (ESV)

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, 23 and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, Hebrews 12:22-23 (ESV)

Notice the phrase, “*the spirits of the righteous made perfect*”. In heaven not only will we have perfect bodies, we will also have perfect spirits.

A rich and secure inheritance is waiting for us in heaven.

In the Bible there are several references to our inheritance in heaven. Our inheritance refers to all that God has for us in heaven. Notice that our inheritance is “reserved” in heaven for us. It is waiting for us and will be there for us as soon as we get there.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 1 Peter 1:3-4 (NASB)

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Colossians 3:23-24 (NIV)

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge

of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. Ephesians 1:13-14 (NASB)

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints,
Ephesians 1:18 (NIV)

How will we relate to God?

In heaven we will be with God. We will talk with Him, and have full and perfect fellowship with God.

While on earth people could not even look at God, but in heaven we will be face to face with Him. In eternity we will have an indescribable closeness, oneness, and fellowship with God.

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. 1 Corinthians 13:12 (NASB)

**As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness;
I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake.** Psalm 17:15 (NASB)

No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.
Revelation 22:3-4 (NIV)

An amazing truth is that Jesus wants to be with us.

Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am,
John 17:24a (NASB)

The next verse teaches us that Jesus will share His glory with us, so that we can be one with Him and with His Father. This begins on earth, but in our sinful state it is hard for us to visualize or understand and live as a glorified child of God.

"The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. John 17:22-23 (NASB)

This next verse tells us that God will praise us after He has brought to light the "hidden things" in our life and our motives. It is hard to imagine us receiving praise from God.

Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God. 1 Corinthians 4:5 (NASB)

Jesus will also serve us.

It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you

the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. Luke 12:37 (NIV)

These verses are amazing once you begin to digest them. From our perspective on earth, it is hard to imagine this kind of eternal relationship.

What will we do in heaven?

As we have seen, in heaven we will never do wrong, sin, confess sin, apologize, have to explain our actions, fix or repair anything, deal with Satan, be counseled, or grieve. The following verses tell us some of what we will do.

1. Worship God

Heaven is a place of eternal genuine pure praise and worship. Our praise will be genuine and we will not have wrong motives.

From the book of Revelation, we find that praise and worship permeate heaven. Praise is spoken and sung, in small groups and in very large groups.

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang:

**"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!"** Revelation 5:11-12 (NIV)

I, for one, am looking forward to hearing and maybe even joining a choir of many millions of angels.

And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" 14 And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped. Revelation 5:13-14 (ESV)

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" Revelation 7:9-10 (ESV)

After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting:

**"Hallelujah!
Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,
for true and just are his judgments.
He has condemned the great prostitute
who corrupted the earth by her adulteries.
He has avenged on her the blood of his servants."**

And again they shouted:

"Hallelujah!"

The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever."

The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried:

"Amen, Hallelujah!" Revelation 19:1-8 (NIV)

2. We will rule and reign with our Lord.

Again, this is hard to grasp, but in some way, we will have responsibilities and authority over some part of the new heavens and earth. The Bible does not give any details, but it does state that we will reign with Him.

There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever. Revelation 22:3-5 (NASB)

If we endure, we will also reign with Him; 2 Timothy 2:12a (NASB)

The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, Revelation 2:26 (ESV)

To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. Revelation 3:21 (NIV)

Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? 1 Corinthians 6:2a (NKJV)

The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; 2 Timothy 2:11-12 (ESV)

The parables in Matthew 25 and in Luke 19 support the teaching that we will rule over some part of the eternal new heaven and earth. In these parables we are taught that faithful service now leads to being given authority and responsibility in eternity. Faithfulness here will result in blessing and responsibility in eternity.

His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' Matthew 25:21 (NKJV)

3. We will serve God.

In eternity we will be busy, but we will never fail or be tired. We will perform our duties to perfection. Our service to Him will always be a source of deep satisfaction.

There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His

bond-servants will serve Him; 4 they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads.
Revelation 22:3-4 (NASB)

For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them.
Revelation 7:15 (NASB)

Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them." Revelation 14:13 (NKJV)

John MacArthur believes that one of the rewards we will receive in eternity will be our capacity to serve Him. Those who have been more faithful will be the ones who receive the greatest capacity to serve and will be put in positions of authority.

In heaven we will have eternal rest. That does not mean we will not be busy. We will have responsibilities and services to perform. However, our souls will be at rest and at peace. We will be busy, but never be worn out or tired.

What does the Bible teach about hell?

The final destiny of all people who have not genuinely believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, or those who have not been saved, is the "lake of fire", or hell. This is a tragic heartbreaking Biblical truth.

Jesus taught more about hell than any other Biblical person. Jesus, who knew the most about hell, repeatedly warned about it. There are warnings about hell throughout the four gospels.

Today hell is not a popular message in churches or in Christianity as a whole. There are very few sermons preached on hell. This is understandable from a human standpoint. Hell is, without question, the most unpleasant topic in the Bible. Yet, should not those who are headed there be warned?

In Jesus' first sermon he warned about hell.

But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell. Matthew 5:22 (NASB)

After the one-thousand-year rule of Christ on earth, God will judge all unsaved people from all time at the "great white throne" judgment. Following this judgment, all unsaved people will be cast into hell.

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if

anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.
Revelation 20:11-15 (ESV)

But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death. Revelation 21:8 (NIV)

The Biblical descriptions of hell are not pleasant. The Word of God describes hell in many different ways and teaches many things about hell. These descriptions include the following:

- ...In hell there is unrelieved eternal torment -- weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- ...It is described as eternal black darkness.
- ...Both bodies and souls (physical and mental) will be tormented.
- ...It was prepared for the devil and his angels.
- ...It is where worms (which feed on rotting flesh) never die.
- ...It is a lake of fire.
- ...It is everlasting destruction.
- ...There will be shame and everlasting contempt.
- ...It is a place of God's wrath.
- ...There is unquenchable fire.
- ...There will be eternal agony.

A few of the verses which teach about hell are as follows:

...where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.'
Mark 9:48b (ESV)

Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' Matthew 22:13 (ESV)

In hell, where he was in torment,... Luke 16:23a (NIV)

"Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; Matthew 25:41 (NASB)

...in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire. Jude 1:7 (NASB)

"And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."
Revelation 14:11 (NASB)

These descriptions are not pleasant and they can break our heart, knowing the destiny of unsaved people. They should cause us to be committed to faithfully spreading the good news of the gospel.

Every day of our lives over 100,000 people go into eternity, either heaven or hell. This should challenge every one of us to seek to be godly people and to seek to bring others to belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The following verses from Romans 1 teach us that even nature plainly teaches us about God and His

divine nature. People who ignore this revelation about God are “without excuse”.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. Romans 1:18-20 (ESV)

It is a relief to know that the salvation of people is in God’s hands. Our job is to be faithful sowing the seed, and it is the Spirit of God who draws people to Himself and causes the seed to grow. When we have unsaved friends and family, we faithfully sow the seed, be a light, and we must continually and regularly pray.

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9 (NIV)

One of the very last verses of the Bible is an invitation to come to God – to accept the free gift of life.

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

Revelation 22:17 (NIV)

Once we have been saved, we must focus on “things above”.

Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. Colossians 3:1-2 (NASB)

In this chapter we have looked at the joy that awaits the believer in eternity. We have also looked at the horrors of eternity separated from God in hell. In response, let us commit ourselves to obedience to the final command of Jesus before ascending back to the Father in heaven.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20 (NASB)

Chapter Nine

A Jet Tour Through the Book of Revelation

The purpose of this study of Revelation is to give a very broad overview of the New Testament book of Revelation. It gives a broad overview of each chapter. It does not go into details or into the many different interpretations that stem from some parts of this book.

This study is based on an overall literal interpretation of the narrative in this book except for when the context calls for a symbolic understanding of the text. It is written from a pre-tribulation, pre-millennial understanding of the Word of God.

There are many books and commentaries written on the book of Revelation. Many are very good; however, some are not so good. Some reflect a poor or misdirected understanding of the Word of God. Two books that I would recommend for further study are:

1. John MacArthur. Because the Time Is Near. Moody Publishers. Chicago. 2007.
2. John F. Walvoord. The Revelation of Jesus Christ. Moody Press. Chicago. 1966.

Of these two books, the one by MacArthur is a little easier reading and a little easier to understand.

Revelation - Chapter 1

The first verse of the book of Revelation is as follows:

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, Revelation 1:1 (NASB)

The book of Revelation is a God-given revelation which came through Jesus to the apostle John, one of the original twelve disciples of Jesus. John is identified as a bond-servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What is being revealed are future things that will “soon take place”. Beginning with chapter four, the book of Revelation focuses on events that surround the second coming of Jesus. This information was given through an angel who gave the information to the apostle John.

Revelation is one of the more ignored books of the New Testament; however, in chapter 1, verse 3, there is a special blessing pronounced on those who read, hear, and heed what is taught in this book.

Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near. Revelation 1:3 (NASB)

This blessing is repeated at the end of the book.

"And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book." Revelation 22:7 (NASB)

It would be well to heed what God is saying to us in this book.

The book is addressed to the seven churches that are the focus of chapters two and three.

In chapter 1:12-20, John sees the Lord Jesus Christ in His heavenly splendor. We would be wise to digest this scene as much as we are able. We sometimes forget who Jesus really is, and we think of Him in a casual way. We must not let this happen. Jesus is God and in these verses, He is seen in His heavenly glory. This description is a good reminder of who Jesus is.

Revelation - Chapters 2 and 3

These two chapters are messages given directly to seven different churches. We can learn much from what God says to each church.

Revelation - Chapter 4

In this chapter John is taken up into heaven to see “*what must take place after this*”. This chapter begins the prophetic section of the book of Revelation. The rest of the book is about future events surrounding the second coming that take place either on the earth or in heaven.

It is interesting to note that from chapter four on, the church is not mentioned until the final chapter (chapter 22) of the book of Revelation. We believe that is because the church has been taken out of the earth (raptured) and is not present on earth when all these events take place.

The first thing John sees is the throne of God and all the activity going on around the throne. This scene is beautiful and awesome. It is beyond our ability to grasp. There are four living beings and twenty-four thrones with twenty-four elders who offer praise and worship to the Lord.

There is ongoing worship in heaven. There are four living beings which never stop saying,

**“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!”** Revelation 4:8 (ESV)

The twenty-four elders’ worship and praise the Lord by saying,

**“Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created.”** Revelation 4:11 (ESV)

Revelation - Chapter 5

Chapter five continues the scene recorded in chapter four.

John sees a scroll in the hands of God, who is seated on the throne. The scroll was sealed with seven seals. From a human standpoint, the seven seals prevented the scroll from being opened. Thus the

contents of the book could not be known without a qualified individual to open the sealed document.

At first no one was found who could open the scroll. This caused John to weep. Then one of the twenty-four elders told John that the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Christ) was able to open the scroll. Then John saw a Lamb which had been slain (Christ) take the scroll to begin opening it.

When Christ takes the scroll to open it, there is thunderous praise given by all who are in heaven, including praise from millions of angels who join in.

**And they sang a new song, saying:
 "You are worthy to take the scroll,
 And to open its seals;
 For You were slain,
 And have redeemed us to God by Your blood
 Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,
 10 And have made us kings and priests to our God;
 And we shall reign on the earth." Revelation 5:9-10 (NKJV)**

**...saying with a loud voice,
 "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and
 honor and glory and blessing." Revelation 5:12 (NASB)**

**And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in
 the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying:
 "Blessing and honor and glory and power
 Be to Him who sits on the throne,
 And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"
 Revelation 5:13 (NKJV)**

Revelation - Chapter 6

In chapter 6, the 70th week which was prophesied in Daniel 9, begins. This is the beginning of the seven-year tribulation period which was covered in chapter three of this prophecy study. The opening of these seals ushers in the first series of judgments from God during the tribulation period. The tribulation period begins after the church is caught up to heaven in the rapture.

1. Seal Judgment One. A rider on a white horse appears. He is bent on conquest, but he apparently begins his conquest by offering peace. The white horse apparently represents peace. Most scholars believe the rider is the antichrist who comes to power by brokering a peace treaty that brings a degree of peace to Israel and the middle east.
2. Seal Judgment Two. A rider on a fiery red horse takes peace from the earth and brings widespread warfare.
3. Seal Judgment Three. A rider on a black horse appears and brings widespread famine. Famine is a natural result of widespread war and devastation

4. Seal Judgment Four. A rider on a pale horse named “Death” and “Hades” appears. One fourth of the world’s population dies because of famine and disease. Today that would be almost two billion people.

This likely takes place near the middle of the seven-year tribulation period when the antichrist shows his true self and begins a reign of terror.

5. Seal Judgment Five. Now the scene changes from earth to heaven. In the tribulation period many people will come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. Many, probably most, of them will be martyred because of their faith. Here a great multitude of souls who died for their faith ask how long it will be before the world will be judged and their blood avenged. They were given white robes and were told to wait a little while longer.

6. Seal Judgment Six. Again, the scene changes and there are cataclysmic events that take place on the earth and in the universe. There is a great earthquake, the sun turns black, the moon turns red, stars fall from the sky, the sky recedes, and the mountains and islands are moved from their places. People on earth try to hide from God’s wrath by hiding in rocks and caves.

These events are consistent with other prophecies in the Bible. The tribulation period is now in full swing and the wrath of God is being poured out.

Revelation - Chapter 7

Chapter 7 is an interlude between the sixth and seventh seals. There is a pause in the judgments. In this interlude, 144,000 Jews are sealed as servants of God. There are 12,000 sealed from each of the twelve different tribes of Israel. These servants apparently become powerful evangelists who are protected from harm, and they are effective witnesses in many parts of the world.

In the last part of this chapter there is a great multitude of believers from every nation, tribe, people, and language standing before the throne of God. Those in this innumerable company are dressed in white robes and with loud voices they praise God.

Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” Revelation 7:10 (ESV)

They are joined by in their praise by the angels, the elders, and the four living beings, and together they give God praise.

**"Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom,
Thanksgiving and honor and power and might,
Be to our God forever and ever.
Amen."** Revelation 7:12 (NKJV)

In verse 14 of this chapter, this great multitude is identified as believers who were apparently saved in the tribulation, and many suffered martyrdom for their stand. Their robes had been washed white in the blood of the lamb. Now they continually serve Him. This chapter ends with some very great promises of blessing.

They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes."

Revelation 7:16-17 (NASB)

Revelation - Chapter 8

Chapter 8 begins with the opening of the seventh seal which introduces the seven trumpet judgments. There is silence in heaven for one-half hour.

In verses 3-5, incense representing the prayers of the saints is offered to God. Fire from the altar on which the incense was offered was thrown to earth resulting in "*peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake*".

The seven trumpet judgments now begin.

Trumpet Judgment One. **The first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.** Revelation 8:7 (NASB)

Trumpet Judgment Two. **something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood, and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.** Revelation 8:8-9 (NASB)

Trumpet Judgment Three. **The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water-- the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter.** Revelation 8:10-11 (NIV)

Trumpet Judgment Four. **The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.** Revelation 8:12 (NASB)

Chapter eight ends with a warning.

As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying in midair call out in a loud voice: "Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!" Revelation 8:13 (NIV)

Revelation - Chapter 9

Trumpet Judgment Five (the First Woe). Demons, under the control of Satan (Apollyon), which take on a visible form that in some ways resemble locusts, scorpions, and horses, are released from the abyss (hell) and allowed to torment (but not kill) men for five months.

Trumpet Judgment Six (the Second Woe). In this judgment, an army of 200,000,000 kills one third of the world's population. There is disagreement among scholars as to whether this is a literal human army on actual horses, or a modern army using modern weapons, or an army of demons that have been loosed from hell. Whoever they are, they kill another one-third of the world's population. This death of one-third of the world's population is in addition to the one-fourth killed in the fourth seal judgment.

With the death of another one-third of the world's population, now well over one-half of the world's population will have died. Today this would be close to four billion people.

This chapter ends with the statement that even after all this takes place, men still do not repent and turn to the Lord.

Revelation - Chapter 10

Chapter 10 and the first part of chapter 11 is an interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpet judgments.

This chapter begins with the following verse:

I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire;

Revelation 10:1 (NASB)

This is an amazing description, as are many of the things associated with God and His heavenly realm.

In this chapter, John hears thunder speaking, but he is not allowed to record what he hears.

In verses 6-7, it states that the judgments that had been revealed to the prophets earlier will soon take place.

In the angel's hand is a little book which John is instructed to eat. John states that **"in my mouth it was sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter."**

Revelation 10:10 (NASB)

It does not say what was written in the little book. Some feel that the book is the Word of God which can be sweet to our taste, but it has unpleasant truths such as what is about to take place in the judgments to follow.

Revelation - Chapter 11

Chapter 11 gives the account of two witnesses who preach the gospel for three and a half years. This is most likely the second half of the seven-year tribulation period. These witnesses are protected by God and they cannot be killed by men. They are hated by the world, but they are protected by God.

After the three- and one-half years, God allows the two witnesses to be killed by Satan himself. Their bodies lay in the street for three days while the whole world rejoices. After the three days, while the

terror-struck world watches (television?), God resurrects the two witnesses and takes them up into heaven.

There must have been a tremendous response to their ministry, considering the number of believers who die for their faith.

There has been much speculation as to who these two witnesses are. This is useless speculation. If God wanted us to know who they are, He would have told us.

Trumpet Judgment Seven.

In the last part of chapter 11, the seventh trumpet is sounded. Loud voices in heaven proclaim,

**"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ,
and he will reign for ever and ever."
And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and
worshiped God, saying:
"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,
the One who is and who was,
because you have taken your great power
and have begun to reign.
The nations were angry;
and your wrath has come.
The time has come for judging the dead,
and for rewarding your servants the prophets
and your saints and those who reverence your name,
both small and great—
and for destroying those who destroy the earth." Revelation 11:15-18 (NIV)**

This praise in heaven is followed on earth by **"flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder
and an earthquake and a great hailstorm."** Revelation 11:19 (NASB)

Revelation - Chapter 12

Chapter 12 begins with a scene in heaven. A woman, who is a symbolic representation of the nation of Israel, is about to give birth to a child. The child is clearly the Lord Jesus Christ who will rule the nations with an "iron scepter". Satan pursues the woman with the intent of destroying the child.

There is war in heaven as Satan and his forces, who are the angels who have followed him, attempt to defeat Michael and all of the angels who did not follow Satan.

Satan is defeated and cast down to earth. There is rejoicing in heaven when Satan is cast out.

Satan is enraged and on the earth, he continues his campaign to destroy the woman (Israel). God supernaturally protects Israel. After failing in the attempt to destroy the woman (Israel), Satan makes war against all the rest of the followers of the Lord.

Revelation - Chapter 13

This chapter covers the emergence of the antichrist (the beast) and his partner, the false prophet.

Both of these individuals are empowered by Satan (the dragon) and are committed to the destruction of Israel and all those who serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

The whole world worships Satan (the dragon) and the beast (the antichrist) who make war against those who follow the Lord.

The antichrist will receive what appears to be a fatal wound, but he recovers and deceives the whole world. He is an arrogant blasphemer. This continues through the last three and a half years of the tribulation period.

The last part of this chapter covers the emergence of the false prophet who is empowered by Satan to do miracles. He sets up an image of the antichrist and even causes the image to speak and deceive the world. Any who refuses to worship the image faces death at the hands of the false prophet.

The false prophet initiates a worldwide system that forces all to receive a mark of the beast on their hands or on their forehead. Without this mark, they cannot buy or sell anything and again they face death for not worshiping the antichrist.

The beast (the antichrist) is identified with “man’s number”, which is the number 666.

Revelation - Chapter 14

In chapter seven of the book of Revelation there were 144,000 Jewish men introduced. These are believing men who apparently proclaim the gospel. They are “sealed” and protected from harm and the anger of the antichrist. The 144,000 are spoken about again in this chapter (fourteen). These men have the Father’s name written on their foreheads and they have kept themselves pure from sinful defilement.

There is disagreement among the commentators as to whether this scene takes place in heaven or on earth. Most believe that the first six verses in this chapter look ahead to the time when Jesus is ruling from Jerusalem (Mt. Zion) after the seven-year tribulation period ends.

When Jesus is standing on Mt. Zion, John hears a loud voice from heaven, like the sound of harpists playing their harps. In heaven they sang a new song of praise to the Lord. The 144,000 are the only ones who could learn the song that was being sung.

In verses 6-13, three angels speak. The first angel proclaims the gospel to the whole earth and warns of more judgment to come.

The second angel announces the fall of Babylon, which is symbolic of the antichrist’s worldwide political, economic, and ecclesiastical empire. Chapters 17 and 18 of the book of Revelation cover the fall of Babylon in greater detail.

The third angel warns that anyone who worships the antichrist and receives his mark will suffer torment forever.

In contrast to the judgment on followers of the antichrist, there are blessings promised to those who are faithful to the Lord, many of whom will die for their faith.

The last part of chapter 14 warns against the coming harvest of God's wrath in the next series of judgments and of the final judgment which will occur at the second coming at the end of the seven-year tribulation period.

Revelation - Chapter 15

In this chapter, the seven last judgments, the bowl judgments, are introduced. These seven judgments will complete the execution of the judgments or the wrath of God that are the heart of the seven-year tribulation. As severe as the judgments have been up to this point, these that are coming are even more severe.

In heaven, those who had not worshiped the antichrist but were victorious over him, sang a song of praise to the Lamb (Jesus).

In the last verses of this chapter, seven angels with seven bowls filled with the wrath of God emerge from the temple. The last seven "bowl" judgments are ready to begin.

Revelation - Chapter 16

In this chapter the seven bowl judgments are poured out.

***Bowl Judgment one.* So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.** Revelation 16:2 (NASB)

***Bowl Judgment Two.* The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like that of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died.** Revelation 16:3 (NASB)

***Bowl Judgment Three.* Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood.** Revelation 16:4 (NASB)

***Bowl Judgment Four.* The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. 9 Men were scorched with fierce heat;** Revelation 16:8-9 (NASB)

***Bowl Judgment Five.* Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, 11 and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.** Revelation 16:10-11 (NASB)

***Bowl Judgment Six.* The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east .**
Revelation 16:12 (NASB)

In this judgment preparations for the battle of Armageddon are made.

***Bowl Judgment Seven.* Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done." 1And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty. The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.** Revelation 16:17-21 (NASB)

Revelation - Chapter 17

Chapters 17 and 18 cover the final destruction of Babylon, both ecclesiastical and political. In this chapter it is not referring to the actual physical city of Babylon, but rather “Babylon” is referring to the worldwide false religious systems of the world.

Chapter 17 in general deals with the “spiritual” or ecclesiastical Babylon while chapter 18 deals with both religious and political Babylon.

Chapters 17 and 18 do not chronologically follow the previous chapters. Much of what is in chapter 17 precedes the events covered in previous chapters.

In chapter 17, an evil prostitute who is symbolic of all the false religious systems of the world is identified as Babylon. She is lavishly dressed and wealthy and is described as the “*mother of harlots and abominations on earth*”. She wields worldwide influence and power and is allied with many world leaders and rulers.

In the Bible, Babylon is sometimes representative of false religions and rebellion against God and the rejection of His will and purpose for man. This goes clear back to Nimrod and the tower of Babel which was a rebellion against God and His plan for mankind. “Babel” was later called “Babylon”. Many false religions, including the worship of the stars or astrology, are associated with Babylon.

In verses 6 and 7, this woman is described as “drunk with the blood of the saints”. In the first part of the seven-year tribulation period she is carried or supported by the beast or the antichrist. The antichrist will use false religious systems to help promote his agenda in his rise to power.

In a dramatic turn of events, the harlot is stripped of her glory and power. They “**will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire**”. Revelation 17:16 (NIV).

She is replaced by the antichrist who does away with all other religious systems and sets himself up as the only god to be worshiped.

Revelation - Chapter 18

This chapter continues with the theme of the destruction of Babylon. This chapter looks ahead to the final destruction of Babylon.

Scholars do not all agree as to whether the first part of this chapter is a continuation of chapter 17 and the destruction of ecclesiastical Babylon, or whether it is the political-commercial Babylon being destroyed.

There is also some disagreement as to whether this is the actual city of Babylon, or whether it is a symbolic representation of the commercial political world system during the time of the seven-year tribulation period.

We can say that the religious ecclesiastical systems and the commercial political systems will all be intertwined at the time.

In the first part of the chapter, the destruction is announced. God's people are warned to come out of Babylon and not be part of her wickedness.

In verses 11-20, the merchants of the world mourn the loss of commercial Babylon as the world economic system fails.

In verses 21-24, Babylon's final destruction is described and the aftermath of that destruction is foretold.

With these judgments, the seven-year tribulation period draws to a close.

Revelation - Chapter 19

In chapter 19 the scene changes from earth to heaven. There is also a major change in the tone of the narrative.

In verses 1-5, there is praise and rejoicing in heaven. Our just God is in control and He has judged the evil rebellious world systems.

In verses 6-10, the "marriage supper of the Lamb" takes place. Jesus is the groom and most conservative Bible scholars believe that the church (us) will be the bride. The marriage is a cause for even more rejoicing in heaven.

In verses 11-21, one of the greatest events in the history of the world, since creation, takes place. This event is the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus comes back to earth with all His saints (us). He destroys the armies of the world and establishes the 1000-year millennial reign of Christ.

The beast or the antichrist and the false prophet are captured and sent into the "fiery lake of burning sulfur" (hell) never to be released again.

Revelation - Chapter 20

This chapter records three major events.

1. Verses 1-6 cover the establishment of the 1000-year millennial reign of Christ.
2. Verses 7-10 cover the final rebellion of Satan and his final defeat and eternal destiny in hell.
3. Verses 11-14 cover the great white throne judgment.

Revelation - Chapter 21

Chapter 21, verse 1, introduces the new heavens and the new earth.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away,
Revelation 21:1a (NASB)

Beginning in verse 2, the New Jerusalem is introduced and described.

Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, Revelation 21:3 (NASB)

and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."
Revelation 21:4 (NASB)

Overcomers are brought into the city, but sinners who reject the Lord are sent to the "fiery lake of burning sulfur" (hell).

Verses 9-21 describe the physical beauty and size of this indescribable city.

Verses 22-27 finish this section by describing the eternal glory of the city.

Revelation - Chapter 22

Revelation 22 is the last chapter in Revelation and it is the last chapter of the Bible. It is a tremendous ending to the written Word of God.

Verses 1-6 give a final description of our future home in the New Jerusalem.

There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; 4 they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads.
Revelation 22:3-4 (NASB)

In verse seven, Jesus speaks.

Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."
Revelation 22:7 (NKJV)

Jesus promises to return quickly and He promises blessings on those who keep the words of the prophecies given in this book.

In verse 12, the promise to come quickly is repeated. He also promises to reward His followers for what they have done.

Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. Revelation 22:12 (NASB)

In verse 17, one of the closing verses in the Bible, there is an invitation given to unsaved people to come and take the free gift of life.

And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. Revelation 22:17 (NKJV)

At the end of this book there is a warning not to take anything away or to add to what was written in this book.

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. Revelation 22:18-19 (NIV)

And then there is one more promise that He will come soon.

He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! Revelation 22:20 (NKJV)

Chapter Ten

How Should Biblical Teaching Related to the Future Affect Our Lives Today?

In the Bible there are many promises that relate to our well-being here on earth. God promises the strength to live godly lives; He promises to provide all our needs; He promises us His protection; He promises us peace; and He promises to love us, to be with us, and to help us through the difficult times in life. For those who, in faith, learn to faithfully follow and serve Him and to rely on His promises, life can be satisfying and productive with genuine spiritual fruit being produced in their life. Through these promises we *“partake (fellowship) of His divine nature and escape the corruption of the world”*.

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

2 Peter 1:2-4 (NASB)

God does not promise that we will have an easy life here on earth. In fact, just the opposite is true. He tells us there will be times of trials, trouble, and difficulty. For some genuine believers, life has been difficult; yet, in spite of the difficult times in our lives, all the promises of God are still in effect. Each of us must determine that we will serve the Lord now, relying on the many promises He has given us.

There is another dimension to walking with the Lord. God has also given us many promises relating to eternity. We are instructed to look forward to eternity and all that God has prepared for genuine believers. For many Christians this is a neglected part of their walk with Him.

According to the Bible, our life here on earth is just a temporary mist compared to our future eternal life which lies ahead of us. Our life here on earth now is just a tiny speck of time compared to eternity.

Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. James 4:14 (NIV)

God tells us to *“fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ”*. The revelation of Jesus refers to His coming back to earth.

Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:13 (NASB)

Knowing and understanding this should encourage us to focus on what is eternal. That is what this chapter is all about.

Believers can look forward to the future with eager anticipation. In spite of the difficulties, the hardships, and the times of grief here on earth, we can look forward to eternity where everything will be immeasurably better.

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 1 Corinthians 2:9 (KJV)

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. 1 Corinthians 13:12 (NASB)

As we have seen in chapter 8 of this study, the Bible gives us glimpses into what lies ahead for us in eternity. We have a sure and secure hope and we can look ahead with much optimism. This should affect the way we think now in essentially every area of our life here on earth.

Notice that in the following verse it says, “*So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen.*” We are to live focused on what is ahead for us in eternity.

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NIV)

Both of the following verses give instruction relating to our future in heaven. Notice the wording, “*fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*” and then “*work at it with all our hearts*”. These verses, and many others, teach that we, as Christians, are to have a long-term focus on what God has promised us in eternity.

Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:13 (NASB)

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Colossians 3:23-24 (NIV)

Again, those of us who have chosen to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ cannot begin to grasp all that God has for us in eternity. We do know that it will be never ending peace and joy, and in heaven there will be no sin or any effects of sin and the curse.

In heaven there will be perfect face-to-face fellowship with God and with Jesus, His Son. There will also be perfect fellowship with fellow believers. A family of believers can look forward to joyfully being together in heaven forever.

Throughout eternity we will actively serve Him, and our service will be enjoyable and fulfilling.

There will be perfect worship unhindered by a sinful human nature.

There are numerous blessings that result from focusing on heaven.

Looking forward to heaven is evidence that one is genuinely saved. Unbelievers do not look forward to having fellowship with God, to offering Him praise and worship, or to serving Him forever.

Heaven is a sure hope for genuine believers. The hardships and trials on earth will not last forever. With our sure hope we can have peace and joy now, even in the middle of trouble and hardship, and we can look forward to heaven with excitement, anticipation, and joy.

When we focus on heaven, it gives focus, direction, and purpose to our lives now.

When we look forward to heaven, it gives us motivation and strength to resist temptation and evil in our lives now.

When we focus on heaven, it adds commitment and vigor to our walk with the Lord now.

When we look forward to being with the Lord, it can draw others to the Lord.

When we look forward to heaven, we honor and glorify God and His son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our secure hope – being with the Lord and all the blessings which go with it.

In the Word of God, hope looks forward to all that God has for us in the future. Biblical hope is a sure thing, not just a “hope so” hope.

Our hope is as secure as God Himself. In the following verses, notice verse nineteen. *“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.”*

Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, Hebrews 6:17-19 (NIV)

It is not easy or pleasant to be in a difficult situation where one does not have any hope for a resolution to the problems. Yet, that is where individuals without the Lord are. It is a terrible place to be. However, those who know the Lord have an anchor of hope that is as sure and secure as God Himself.

In the light of these truths, we are to *“fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ”*. The revelation of Jesus is referring to His coming back to earth for us.

Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:13 (NASB)

With this hope, we are to prepare our minds for action. Serving the Lord needs to be an active, on-going commitment, not just a passive or an occasional part of our busy way of life.

With our hope, we can have joy and rejoice even in the middle of trials. In some ways it is a little hard to imagine, but when we remain faithful in trials not only is God glorified but we will be praised by the Lord for our faithfulness.

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which

is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 1 Peter 1:6-7 (NASB)

The apostle Paul knew that his time left on earth was short. In prison and facing execution, he had a secure hope and he could look forward to what was ahead for him.

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. 2 Timothy 4:6-8 (NASB)

A rich and secure inheritance is waiting for us in heaven.

In the Bible there are several references to our inheritance in heaven. Our inheritance refers to all that God has for us in heaven.

The death and resurrection of Jesus assures us that we will have an inheritance that is “*imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you*”.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 1 Peter 1:3-5 (NASB)

Notice that our inheritance is “reserved” in heaven for us and is waiting for us.

The apostle Paul prays that the eyes of our heart will be enlightened so that we will know the hope to which we are called. This hope is the “*glorious inheritance*” we have as His sons and daughters.

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, Ephesians 1:18 (NIV)

The Holy Spirit is given to us by God as a pledge that we will receive the inheritance He has promised to each one of us.

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. Ephesians 1:13-14 (NASB)

In response to these promises and these truths relating to our future with Him, we are to focus on our future with Him.

Notice that in the following verse we are to “*abide in Him*”. To abide in an on-going action. Our

service to Him is not an occasional commitment; it is an way of life. If this is characteristic of our life, we will not have to “shrink away” or be ashamed at His coming.

Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. 1 John 2:28 (NASB)

Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:13 (NASB)

We are to “*fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*”.

In the following verse, those who are believers (those who have been raised with Christ) are clearly instructed to “*set your minds on things above, not on the things that are on earth*”.

Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. Colossians 3:1-2 (NASB)

We are to live holy and godly lives now while we wait for His return.

In the following verses, we are clearly instructed to live “*self-controlled, upright and godly lives*” while we wait for His return.

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, Titus 2:11-13 (NIV)

In the following verses, notice that we are to pursue “*righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith.*” These instructions are given “in the sight of God” and “before Jesus Christ”. It is just as if God and Jesus were right here giving these instructions to us.

But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, 1 Timothy 6:11-14 (NKJV)

Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. James 5:7-8 (NASB)

The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. 1 Peter 4:7 (NASB)

Because the end is near, we are to use sound judgment and have a sober spirit so we can be effective in our prayers. Being conscious that the end is near will certainly affect the way we pray.

Living a godly life and being holy are essentially the same thing. A holy life is a life separated from sin – which is the same as a godly life.

Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.

2 Peter 3:11-12a (NIV)

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. 1 John 3:2-3 (NKJV)

But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. 2 Peter 3:13-14 (NIV)

After we are raptured, we will be judged for rewards that will be given for faithful service here on earth.

Knowing that we will be judged and rewarded should motivate us to actively serve Him with all our hearts now.

Remember that this judgment, sometimes referred to as the bema seat judgment, is not to determine if we are saved or not. No unsaved people will be at this judgment – only genuine Christians, and their position as a child of God is secure.

Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. 14 If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 (NASB)

Knowing that we will be rewarded with eternal blessings should be a motivation for us to faithfully serve Him here on earth.

In chapter 7 of this study, the topic of judgment and rewards is covered in a little more depth.

Present responsibilities of all teachers, including pastors, teachers, and parents

Because Jesus will judge both the saved and the unsaved, all Christians who teach, including pastors, teachers, and parents, are to “*Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction*”. We who teach must remember that we are helping to prepare those who hear to be judged.

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view

of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. 2 Timothy 4:1-2 (NIV)

This is the strongest kind of a command that can be given. *“I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead,”*. It is as if God and Jesus are both standing there giving this command directly to pastors, teachers, and to parents.

Pastors and teachers are to *“preach the Word”*. They are not instructed to entertain, appeal to feelings, or to try to draw a crowd; instead, they are to *“preach the Word”*. It is the Word of God that produces genuine spiritual fruit, not our oratory or ability to entertain.

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. Daniel 12:2-3 (ESV)

When Jesus comes again, He will reward Christians for their service.

God promises to reward Christians for their service.

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-21 (NKJV)

"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. Revelation 22:12 (NASB)

In the light of this truth, we are instructed to work and to serve Him *“with all our heart”*.

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Colossians 3:23-24 (NIV)

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord. 1 Corinthians 15:58 (NASB)

In the following verse, there is a warning against serving the Lord to impress people. This motive for service will not result in any awards.

Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 6:1 (NASB)

Be alert and eagerly anticipate His coming.

Three times in the very last chapter of the Bible, Jesus says that He is coming soon or quickly.

"Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book."

Revelation 22:7 (NIV)

Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. Revelation 22:12 (NIV)

He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Revelation 22:20 (NASB)

Knowing that He will be coming back, we are to be on the alert and eagerly anticipate His coming.

Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.

Matthew 24:42 (NASB)

...looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, Titus 2:13 (NASB)

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

...awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 1:7 (NASB)

We are instructed in the Word of God to eagerly wait for His coming. Most of us find ourselves caught up in the day-to-day business of life and we tend to forget about His coming. We need to discipline ourselves to eagerly await His coming.

Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. James 5:7-8 (NIV)

Looking forward and preparing for eternity is not a popular theme in most of Christianity today. We seldom hear messages relating to preparing for and eagerly anticipating eternity. If one listens to television preachers, there is message after message on how to supposedly live a fulfilled life today. But seldom are we encouraged to live a godly life, eagerly anticipating the coming of our Lord and being with Him forever.

A popular best-selling book is entitled, Your Best Life Now. In this book we are told that we should focus on using God to become prosperous, blissfully happy, and totally fulfilled now in every area of our life. The complete focus of this book is on the here and now, not on eternity. Salvation, living a godly life, and focusing on eternity are all secondary issues that are seldom dealt with. This kind of thinking permeates much of Christianity today.

In the following verse, we are instructed to *"Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth"*.

Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. Colossians 3:1-2 (NASB)

If one is not a believer and has no desire for a future with the Lord in heaven, then his best life is now. This is as good as it will ever get for him, and his eternity will be far worse.

Conclusion

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. Hebrews 12:1-3 (NIV)

Jesus Himself is our example. He endured the cross by looking forward to the joy that was to follow after the cross. We, as His disciples, need to follow His example. We must focus on eternity, be godly and faithful now, and run with patience the race before us, as we look forward to the rewards, the joy, and the many blessings that will follow our life here on earth.

Chapter Eleven

Reasons to Believe that the Return of Our Lord May Be Near

As we have already seen, Christians should eagerly look forward to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ at the rapture of the church when He will come and take us home to be with Him.

We look forward to what God has prepared for us in eternity and we look forward to being with Him forever.

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 1 Corinthians 2:9 (KJV)

Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:13 (NASB)

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

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 1 Peter 1:6-7 (NASB)

...awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 1:7 (NASB)

I (Phil Benedict) am finding that as I get older and have a number of health issues, I often think about and look forward to what is ahead for us in eternity. It is my hope and prayer that He will come soon. I am certainly not the only one with this hope. Christians around the world are eagerly anticipating the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is only natural that as we look around us and observe what is going on in the world, we look for reasons to believe that His coming is near.

However, we need to be careful. Some Scriptures have been misunderstood and have caused some to incorrectly point to “signs” of His soon coming.

In the Bible there are a number of phrases that are used to refer to some period of time after the ascension of Jesus as recorded in Acts 1.

Some of these phrases are the “last day”, or the “last days”, the “last time”, or the “last times”, the “latter days”, the “later times”, the “last hour”, and the “end times”.

A rather common mistake in Bible interpretation is to assume that the events or characteristics described in these verses all take place just prior to the rapture or just prior to the seven-year tribulation period.

When we see one of these phrases used, we must be careful to look at the context of the verse to see what period of time is actually being referred to. They do not all refer to the same period of time. Some refer to the entire church age, and others refer to a more specific time period. Others may refer specifically to the nation of Israel. We can come to some wrong conclusions by not understanding these Scriptures within their context.

Often these phrases can be legitimately applied to the period of time just before the rapture; however, we need to be careful and examine each verse carefully to genuinely and correctly understand what it is teaching.

In the following verses, the “last days” refer to the time when Jesus was on earth and to the entire church age, not just the years immediately preceding the return of our Lord to earth.

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. Hebrews 1:1-2 (NIV)

Notice that “*in these last days*” is used in the present tense describing the period of time when the book of Hebrews was written. In this case it can also be correctly applied to the entire church age.

In the following verse, actions that took place in the “last days” is not speaking of future actions, but rather it is speaking about actions that had already taken place in New Testament times. The sentence, “*You have hoarded wealth in the last days.*”, is in the past tense.

Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. James 5:3 (NIV)

In the following verses, the “latter days” is referring to the millennial reign of Christ, not the period of time before the Lord’s return.

**It shall come to pass in the latter days
that the mountain of the house of the Lord
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be lifted up above the hills;
and all the nations shall flow to it,
and many peoples shall come, and say:
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.”
For out of Zion shall go the law,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.** Isaiah 2:2-3 (ESV)

In the following verse, John is stating that as he was writing the book of 1 John, it was the “last hour”.

Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour. 1 John 2:18 (NASB)

In the following verse, the “last day” does not mean the very last day on the earth, but, in correlation with other Scriptural teaching, the “last day” is referring to the last day of the present church age. Church age saints will be resurrected at the rapture which will occur on the last day of the church age.

"For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." John 6:40 (NASB)

While we must be careful in our interpretation of verses like those above, there are some legitimate reasons to believe the coming of our Lord may be quite near.

Reasons to Believe that the Return of Our Lord May Be Near

As we go through this section, we need to remind ourselves again that, in reality, we do not know when our Lord is coming.

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 "Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.

Mark 13:32-33 (NKJV)

The coming of our Lord may be many years in the future; however, there are some legitimate reasons to believe that our Lord's coming may be quite near.

Reason One -- The Regathering of the Jewish People and the Existence of the Nation of Israel

Essentially all of the Old Testament prophecies in one way or another relate to the Jewish people and/or the nation of Israel. (Jeremiah 30:1-5, Ezekiel 34:11-24, Ezekiel 37, Zechariah 10:6-10, and many, many others.

However, in 70 A.D. the nation of Israel ceased to exist and the Jewish people were scattered over many parts of the world. This would seem to make the fulfillment of many Biblical prophecies relating to the country of Israel impossible to be fulfilled.

For example, near the beginning of the tribulation period the antichrist makes a peace treaty with the nation of Israel. How could the antichrist make a treaty with a country or nation that doesn't exist?

However, in 1948 the nation of Israel was reborn and many Jews have returned to their homeland. Today, there are still large numbers of Jew returning to their God-given homeland, the country of Israel. This makes it possible for many of these prophecies to be fulfilled.

This re-establishment of the nation of Israel is probably the number one sign that the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies relating to the seven-year tribulation and the 1000-year millennial reign of Christ may be near.

Reason Two -- Increasing Apostasy

The Word of God tells us that the last days will be characterized by apostasy or a falling away from the

truths of the Word of God. This apostasy involves both correctly understanding the Word of God and putting its truths into practice. Both the truths of the Word of God and its instructions for living will be increasingly rejected.

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God-- having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

13 while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.
2 Timothy 3:1-5 and 13 (NIV)

Notice that in these verses the apostle Paul was writing about future conditions. *“There will be terrible times in the last days.”* Also notice that in verse thirteen *“evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived”*. This indicates a progression in evil or apostasy. Today we can easily see that happening and that progression is accelerating.

In the following verses the writer, the apostle Peter, is also referring to a future time. Today it is almost 2000 years after Peter wrote these verses.

...knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. 4 They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.” 5 For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, 6 and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. 2 Peter 3:3-6 (ESV)

One example of this kind of scoffing today is in today’s world of science. Secular science has vehemently denied the truth of the Word of God, especially the Biblical accounts of creation and the flood. Prophecies in the Bible are a joke to many of them. Yet, today many who claim to be Christians accept the conclusions of secular science relating to creation and the flood. In reality, they accept man’s word as more credible than God’s Word.

The phrase, *“all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation”*, is a very accurate representation of what in science today is called “uniformitarianism”. This is a rejection of any supernatural involvement in the earth, either in the past or in the future. They believe everything, including creation and the beginning of life, was the result of natural forces. This belief has gained worldwide acceptance in the scientific world in the last 150 years or so.

This kind of rejection has led to widespread rejection of our being accountable to God, our creator. If we are not accountable to God for our actions, then anything goes as long as one can get by with it.

In the following verses, the apostles are quoted using the term “last times” in reference to future things. *“In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires”*.

But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, "In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires." These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit. But

you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.

Jude 1:17-20 (NIV)

Again, in the following verses, the apostle Paul used “later times” to predict that in the future there will be apostates who would abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits. They are liars and their consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. This seems to many of us to be an accurate description of today.

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. 2 Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. 1 Timothy 4:1-2 (NIV)

Notice that in the following verses it speaks of a time that “will come”.

For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

2 Timothy 4:3-4 (NIV)

But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them--bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping. 2 Peter 2:1-3 (NIV)

This apostasy is demonstrated today in the widespread rejection of the belief in a literal God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. God and Jesus, as our creators, is vehemently denied. The resurrection and the return of Christ is denied. The Bible is considered by many to be a “good book”, but they do not believe it is inspired by God and they certainly do not believe it is inerrant.

In many, probably most, churches today, sound doctrine is not as important as relevancy or what makes one feel good. Living a godly holy life separated from the world is an almost unknown teaching in the church. Morality has given way to tolerance. The authority of Scripture is no longer stressed and the church is experiencing a moral free fall.

Many active religious people, including church leaders, will stand before God fully expecting His approval, but He will say to them, *“I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!”*

Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' Matthew 7:22-23 (NIV)

The apostasy in the church is reflected in society as a whole. Tolerance of immorality, lying, deceit, dishonesty, etc., etc., etc. are becoming normal for societies around the world. Few people have a high standard of morality. Rebellion against authority is evident everywhere. This is reflected in our own government and court system that is often hostile to genuine Christianity. As time passes, we can see this happening more and more all the time, not just in our country, but throughout the world.

After looking at the apostasy that characterizes much of the church, we could get discouraged and think the church has lost or will lose its power and effectiveness. However, while the church may struggle, it will never be defeated.

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Matthew 16:18-19 (ESV)

Reason Three -- The Desire for Peace in the Middle East

One thing that takes place near the beginning of the seven-year tribulation period is the signing of a peace treaty with the nation of Israel by the antichrist.

This peace treaty will bring a degree of peace to the Middle East for three and a half years.

Today there is widespread turmoil and even now there is a clear danger of nuclear war in the Middle East. The world is ready for peace in the Middle East. The antichrist will bring this peace for a period of time. The world is ready and many are now clamoring for this peace.

Reason Four -- The Revival of the Roman Empire

In Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 it prophesies a future revival of the old Roman Empire. While we must not be dogmatic, the present-day European union or the common market, which is a union of countries in that area of the world, could very well be setting the foundations and leading up to this future empire. According to Daniel, the antichrist will come from this revived Roman Empire. With the foundation in place, this empire could come together very quickly in the first half of the tribulation period.

Again, we must be careful and not be dogmatic, but this is something worth watching carefully.

Reason Five -- Trends Towards Globalism

In the tribulation period there will be a worldwide government. This one world government will have extensive control over much of what happens in the world, even to the point of controlling what individuals can buy or sell.

The technology for a global government and the control of individuals is very rapidly developing and many say it is already in place. The philosophical and political orientation of many people in the world are ready for this. In a world of continual war and threats of war, famine, disease, and turmoil, many are ready for a world leader to emerge and be in control.

Many see a global economy as the best answer to many of the world's economic problems.

Reason Six -- The Alignment of Nations

Sometime in the tribulation period, probably around the middle, a huge coalition of nations will come together to make war against Israel. (Ezekiel 38 and 39) Biblical scholars have determined from the

names and titles given in Scripture that this coalition of nations will include Russia and the former Soviet countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. This coalition also includes Persia (present day Iran), Ethiopia, Lybia, Egypt, Turkey and others.

There are some Christian scholars who are up to date on middle eastern world affairs who say that these alliances are in the process of being formed now with significant movements having taken place in the last two years or so.

Again, we must be careful and not jump to conclusions, but again, this is worth watching closely.

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

In the first part of the tribulation (the beginning of birth pains) there will be war, famine, disease and severe earthquakes. Is what we see happening and what we hear about in the Middle East leading up to this? It very well could be.

Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near. Luke 21:28 (NKJV)

In this verse “redemption” is referring to the coming of our Lord. It may be time to look up and lift up our heads, because His coming is near.

He told them this parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. 31 Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Luke 21:29-31 (NIV)

The biggest reason to eagerly anticipate the coming of our Lord comes directly from the last chapter in the Bible. Jesus Himself says,

Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." Revelation 22:7 (NKJV)

Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. Revelation 22:12 (NASB)

He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Revelation 22:20 (NIV)

Also, in the last chapter of the Bible, we are invited by our Lord to come to Him and freely drink the water of life. Those who drink the water of life and receive eternal life can eagerly anticipate His return. Those who reject this offer have nothing to look forward to and everything to dread when our Lord returns.

And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. Revelation 22:17 (NKJV)

In the New International Version it says, “*let him take the free gift of the water of life*”.

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

Revelation 22:17 (NIV)

Recommended Books on Biblical Prophecy

There have been many books written about Bible prophecy. Some are Biblically sound while others are questionable and some are just plain doctrinally incorrect or wrong.

Some books that I (Phil Benedict) am familiar with and would recommend are:

1. The Final Drama by John F. Walvoord
This book gives a good solid overview of key prophetic Biblical topics. It is written by a leading scholar but is fairly easy to read.
2. The End by Mark Hitchcock
This is a much more comprehensive book that is still easy to read. It goes into various interpretations of Scriptures where there are differing interpretations or different opinions on a topic.
3. Things to Come by J. Dwight Pentecost
This is a very comprehensive scholarly book that gives the pros and cons of many different interpretations of prophetic passages of Scripture. It is a book written for serious study.
4. Every Prophecy of the Bible by John F. Walvoord
Again, this is a very good comprehensive study of Biblical prophecy written for serious study.
5. The Glory of Heaven by John MacArthur
A book centering on what the Bible teaches about heaven.
6. No Fear of the Storm by Tim LaHaye
A good book dealing with the timing of the rapture. It is written from a pre-tribulation understanding of prophecy.
7. The Most Asked Prophecy Questions by John Ankerberg & Renald Showers with Cathy Sims
This deals with just about any question one may have about Biblical prophecy.