

X. THE DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS **(Eschatology)**

Before this chapter, please read Chapter VIII, Doctrine of Israel.

Jesus said:

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)

Introduction

In Ephesians 1:1-13, the Apostle Paul lists the Christian's blessings in Christ. In verses 9 and 10 he wrote: "He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, *that is*, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth." One of the blessings the true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has is the privilege of having an inside knowledge of coming events. God lets us in on His plan for the future.

In First Thessalonians 5:4-6 Paul wrote to that church,

But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. God did not leave His children in the dark. In the Scriptures He has revealed future events to them and has given them the spiritual capacity to understand His plan for the ages. Knowing the Lord's program gives the believer hope, courage, and comfort.

As recorded in Job 19:25-27, righteous Job expressed his expectation when he said,

As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God; Whom I myself shall behold, and whom my eyes will see and not another. My heart faints within me!

This expression of conviction of Job is beyond human understanding. Unlike us, he had no written Word of God. His sources of wisdom were the study of the things God had created, the study of how things work, the study of the human race, and a good analysis of it all. He puts us, who have multiple copies of the Bible, to shame.

In Romans 8:22-23, the Apostle Paul said,

For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

The second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is the motivating expectation of all those who know Him as their Savior, but among theologians there is broad disagreement on the details. God's people do not deliberately buy into false teachings. They are seduced into error slowly, piece by piece. Paul wrote:

But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the

resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some.
(2 Timothy 2:16-18)

The book of Second Thessalonians was written to correct false teachings about the end times and our Lord's return. Hymenaeus, Philetus, and the person behind the fraudulent letter to the Thessalonians had not been careful at paying attention to the Apostles' teachings and in their studies and interpretation of God's Word as it relates to future events. Their erroneous doctrines were "like gangrene" within the church of Jesus Christ.

Jesus said to the religious leaders of His day, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me" (John 5:39). Though those critics of Jesus claimed to be spiritually devout men and God's appointed leaders, they had misinterpreted the Scriptures about the Lord's first coming. Misinterpretations of Bible passages about His second appearing have plagued the church from the first century until today.

Paul's words of admonition to Timothy are true for all who know the Lord and teach His truth: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15). It behooves us to take the utmost of care as we look into what God has revealed about events still in the future. To stand before Him in shame would be horrendous. We should desire His approval above all else.

Beside the theories and beliefs of the unbeliever and liberal, the Christian views about the return of our Lord fit into one of the three following theological positions:

A-millennialism was made a part of church dogma by Augustine of Hippo,¹ the major theologian of the Catholic Church. It is a theology of substitution in that the church of Jesus Christ replaces the nation of Israel. This view of our Lord's return teaches that the covenants the **LORD** made with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the nation of Israel, and King David were conditional. They believed that because Israel disobeyed God and killed His Son and their Messiah, those things promised to Israel now have their fulfillment in the church in a spiritual sense. A-millennialists believe that Christians today are spiritual sons of Abraham and members of that chosen and privileged family.² Jesus is the son of David, and He reigns over the church, a spiritual kingdom.³

¹ A city of north Africa on the Mediterranean Sea that today would be in Algeria. Augustine was influenced by Plato and Platonic philosophy and its allegorical approach to interpreting the Scriptures. He did not accept what we call the "literal" method. His method of Bible interpretation, his teachings about baptism removing original sin and infant baptism, his teachings that gave the church's hierarchy authority equal to Scripture, and his belief that the church replaces Israel or a-millennialism became the cardinal beliefs of the Catholic Church (both branches). This system has been in place for over a thousand years. A-millennialism was the belief system of the Reformers.

² Proponents of this belief use Matthew 21:43-44 and Galatians 3:6-9. These passages use "son" in the sense of brotherhood. Those who believe God are of the same fraternity in that it is "faith" alone that pleases God. Nowhere does the New Testament teach that believers in Christ of this dispensation are the sons of Jacob. It is his sons and their descendants who are Israelites. Abraham was the father of Ishmael and Isaac. Isaac was the father of Esau and Jacob. Ishmael and Esau are the fathers of the modern day Palestinians and most of the Arab race, most of whom have bitter hatred for Israel and the Church of Jesus Christ.

A-millennialists teach that there is no future for Israel as a nation and no future kingdom on earth for them with David's son as King. Some of this sounds like what the New Testament teaches about the church, but the elements of this belief system can only be supported by a hermeneutics that allegorizes and spiritualizes God's promises to Israel. The Catholic Church teaches that the Pope is the Vicar of Jesus Christ. He is the human substitute for Jesus on earth.⁴ This theology has given theological support for the Roman Catholic Church and Greek Orthodox Church's persecution of the Jews for some 1,500 years.

Post-millennialism was introduced by an Englishman, Daniel Whitby (1638-1725). He taught that the second coming of the Lord will be after a thousand years of peace and blessings on the earth as a result of the spread and acceptance of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This belief is presented in the hymn by H. Ernest Nichol (1862-1926), *We've a Story to Tell to the Nations*, which declares that the preaching of the gospel brings in Christ's kingdom: "For the darkness shall turn to dawning, and the dawning to noonday bright, and Christ's great kingdom shall come on earth, the kingdom of love and light." Though for many who believed in post-millennialism, World Wars I and II dispelled this doctrine. It can still pop its ugly head up in strange places. While on furlough in 1972, I met a Reformed Presbyterian in Norman, Oklahoma who was a post-millennialist.

Pre-millennialism was the belief of the Pharisees⁵ and has been the hope of Israel for millenniums.⁶ This doctrine is also known as *chiliasm*.⁷ Philip Schaft in his work on church history wrote:

The most striking point in the eschatology of the ante-Nicene age is the prominent chiliasm, or millenarianism, that is the belief of a visible reign of Christ in glory on earth with the risen saints for a thousand years, before the general resurrection and judgment. It was indeed not the doctrine of the church embodied in any creed or form of devotion, but a widely current opinion of distinguished teachers, such as Barnabas, Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Methodius, and Lactantius;

³ To support this belief they will cite verses like Luke 17:20; Matthew 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; & 12:28. It is true that Jesus has a spiritual kingdom. God reigns over the universe, angels, etc. He even reigns over the church as its head. In a sense this is a spiritual kingdom. It is my belief that through the Parables of Matthew 13, Jesus taught about His spiritual kingdom throughout this current age. These truths in no way negate the program of God promised for Israel that occupies a major part in the prophetic Scriptures and the fact that the Messiah will have a coming Kingdom with Israel who will be a "kingdom of priests" to the whole world, a kingdom that will be centered in Jerusalem with Jesus, the Son of David, as its King.

⁴ The theologians and leadership of the Catholic Church have incorrectly interpreted Matthew 16:16-20 and 18:18.

⁵ *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, © 1962, Abingdon Press, Vol. 4, page 778

⁶ We see this expectation in Luke 1:32-33; 24:21; John 19:15; Acts 1:3, 6, and in other literature not included in the Canon such as: 1 Maccabees 14:41-42 that reads: "the Jews and priests were well pleased that Simon should be their governor and high priest for ever, until there should arise a faithful prophet; moreover that he should be their captain." Sirach 45:25 "According to the covenant made with David son of Jesse, of the tribe of Juda, that the inheritance of the king should be to his posterity alone: so the inheritance of Aaron should also be unto his seed." Sirach 47:11 "The Lord took away his [David's] sins, and exalted his horn for ever: he gave him a covenant of kings, and a throne of glory in Israel."

⁷ *Chiliasm* in the Greek (from χίλια ἔτη, meaning a thousand years, see Rev. 20:2, 3), meaning *millennialism*, the Latin term for the same doctrine

while Caius, Origen, Dionysius the Great, Eusebius (as afterwards Jerome and Augustin) opposed it.⁸

Dr. Chafer notes that Justin Martyr, during the second century, said that all orthodox Christians believed in chiliasm.⁹ Dr. Walvoord points out that,

The debate between premillenarians and other millenarians hangs to a large extent upon the principles of interpretation of Scripture which each group employs. This is commonly recognized by all parties. . . .

The premillennial position is that the Bible should be interpreted in its ordinary grammatical and historical meaning in all areas of theology unless contextual or theological reasons make it clear that this was not intended by the writer. Amillenarians use the literal method in theology as a whole but spiritualize Scripture whenever its literal meaning would lead to the premillennial viewpoint. This is obviously a rather subjective principle and open to manipulation by the interpreter to sustain almost any system of theology.¹⁰

Pre-millennialism is the belief of this author and will be expounded in this chapter.

Among those in the pre-millennial camp, there are three positions taken about the return of the Lord Jesus for His Church as it relates to the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy in chapter 9, commonly called the "Tribulation," as referred to by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24).

Post-tribulationism teaches that the Lord Jesus will return for His bride and the saved of all ages after the Tribulation. These resurrected saints will join Him in His reign on earth. The church goes through the entire seven years of the Tribulation.

Mid-tribulationism teaches that the Lord Jesus will return in the clouds to call out His church, those who have already died and those still with physical life, during the middle of the Tribulation period. Though referred to as "mid-tribulationism" it is not meant that this event occurs exactly at the mid-point of those seven years. There are various positions within this camp. Because 1 Corinthians 15:52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16 refer to a trumpet call at the time of this still future event, some have tied the Lord's coming for His church to the trumpet judgments in Revelation, which occur sometime during the Tribulation, but not necessarily exactly at the three and one-half year mark. Another view places emphasis in Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 5:9, "God has not destined us for wrath." This is referred to as the "pre-wrath" position. The "pre-wrath" teachers believe that the church will experience the greater part of the Tribulation period but will be spared the worst of God's wrath sometime closer to the close of those seven years. This view was made popular if not invented by Marvin

⁸ Schaff, P. *History of the Christian Church*, © 1997, electronic edition, Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

⁹ Chafer, Dr. Lewis Sperry, *Systematic Theology*, vol IV, page 280

¹⁰ Walvoord, Dr. John in "The Theological Context of Premillennialism," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol 150, Oct-Dec 1993, page 388

Rosenthal, former executive director of Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, in his book *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church*.¹¹

Pre-tribulationism teaches that the Lord Jesus will return in the clouds to remove His Church before the Tribulation, which is commonly referred to as the “rapture of the church.” The word “rapture” comes from 1 Thessalonians 4:17, “caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.” The word translated “caught up” is a translation of ἀρπάζω (*harpazo*) in the Greek New Testament and means to take something forcefully, to snatch, to steal. Pre-tribulationist rapturists believe that our Lord’s coming for His bride is imminent (at any moment) and will be unannounced. It will be quick, and He will snatch His church out of the world before the anti-Christ is revealed and the seventieth week of Daniel’s seventy week prophecy begins.

Pre-tribulationism is the belief of this author and will be expounded in this chapter.

The Basis for the Belief in the Pre-millennial Return of Our Lord

1. Pre-millennialism finds its foundation in God’s Covenants with Israel.

A. The Foundational Covenant is the one God made with Abram,
Genesis 12:1-3 and chapters 15 and 17.

Elements of the Promise:	The Amplification:
National Territory: Genesis 12:1 (c.f. 13:15-17; 15:18-21; 17:8)	The Land Covenant: Genesis 15:18-21 with Numbers 34:1-13 (These boundaries were for initial possession. The covenant gives Israel more.); Deuteronomy 1:6-8; Joshua 1:3-6
A Son and a Great Nation: Genesis 12:2 (c.f. 12:7; 13:15-16; 17:2, 16, 19 In Hebrew “descendants” is “seed.”)	The Covenant with David: II Samuel 7:4-17; I Chronicles 17:1-15; Psalm 89:20-37; & Galatians 3:16
Blessings that overflows to all humanity: Genesis 12:2-3 (note the verse also contains a curse); 18:18; 22:18	The New Covenant: Jeremiah. 31:27-40; & 32:40-44 (God will restore Israel and will bring blessing to the world.)

B. The fulfillment of these covenants is *solely* with God.

There are no conditions placed upon man that would limit or void these contracts made by God with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the Israelites. God guarantees the coming of the Messiah and His work on behalf of Israel and the entire human race.

¹¹ For an excellent review and refutation of his book and position please consider the article by Gerald B. Stanton, “A Review of The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church,” in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 148 #589—Jan 91, Dallas, TX: Dallas Theological Seminary.

See Genesis chapter 15. (To illustrate an unconditional covenant read Genesis 9:8-17.)

C. We believe that portions of these covenants with Israel have never been fulfilled.

Israel has never possessed all of the land, David's Son has not sat on an eternal throne, and God's law has not been written in their hearts. Therefore, the logical conclusion is that at some future time God will keep every aspect of His promises.

2. Pre-millennialism bases its teaching upon conservative hermeneutics.

There are three basic methods used to interpret the Bible:

- A. The *Liberal* approach denies divine inspiration and considers the Bible a work of man, full of myths, superstitions, and legends.
- B. The *Allegorical* or *Spiritual* method recognizes divine inspiration but believes that there is a deeper meaning behind the lines that is more important. (Today most a-millennial theologians use this method only with future predictions.)
- C. The *Historical-Grammatical* method, commonly called the *Literal Method*, believes that the Bible is inspired by God and that it should be interpreted like all other literature by studying the historical context and observing the normal rules of grammar.

3. For further study consider the following:

- A. What are the boundaries that God gave for the land He promised Israel? Have they ever possessed all of that territory?
- B. Who is David's son whom God said would sit on David's throne forever? What brought you to this conclusion? Has this happened?
- C. Did God include you in His promise to Abraham? Has God written His laws in the hearts of the Israelites? When did or will God fulfill that aspect of His promise?
- D. Comparing the following prophecies with the fulfillment, were these predictions fulfilled in a metaphorical or allegorical way (in a deeper spiritual sense) or were they fulfilled literally (according to the normal meaning of words within their context and according to normal grammatical usage)?

Prediction:	Fulfillment:
Genesis 12:1-3; 18:18; 22:18	Acts 3:25; Galatians 3:15-18
Zechariah 11:12	Matthew 26:14-15
Psalms 55:12-14; Zechariah 13:6	Matthew 26:49-50
Zechariah 11:13	Matthew 2:5-7 & 9-10
Zechariah 13:7	Mark 14:27

Psalm 35:11	Matthew 26:59-60
Isaiah 50:6	Matthew 26:67; Luke 22:64
Isaiah 53:7	Matthew 27:12 & 14
Isaiah 53:5	Matthew 27:26 & 29
Psalm 109:24	Luke 23:26
Psalm 22:16	Luke 23:33
Isaiah 53:12	Mark 15:27-28
Isaiah 53:12	Luke 23:34
Psalm 109:25	Matthew 27:39
Psalm 22:7-8	Matthew 27:41 & 43
Psalm 22:18	John 19:23-24
Psalm 22:1	Matthew 27:46
Psalm 69:21	John 19:28-29
Psalm 31:5	Luke 23:46
Psalm 34:20	John 19:33 & 36
Zechariah 12:10	John 19:34-37
Isaiah 53:9	Matthew 27:57-60
Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1 & 4:5	Matthew 3:3
Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:5-6

Because I believe that hermeneutics is the foundation to any Bible-based belief system, this book began with a chapter on hermeneutics.

The Basis for the Belief in the Pre-tribulational Return of Our Lord for His Church

We believe that the Bible teaches that our Lord's return for His Church is imminent. By Church we mean the organism the Bible calls the "Body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians. 4:12; Colossians 1:18). This Body began when the Holy Spirit took up residence in the followers of Jesus who were gathered in the Upper Room on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-5), as our Lord had promised (John 14:16-18; 16:7). In this act, God united those believers into one Body (1 Corinthians 12:13) and continues to do so throughout the Church age. The Church is universal in nature because it is composed of all who have repented of their sins and appropriated the offer of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, from the time of that Upper Room experience recorded in Acts 2 until the Lord returns in the air to call His Church out of the world and into His presence. At that moment He will resurrect those members who have passed on to Glory and give them their immortal bodies. For those members still living on earth when He comes, He will give them their immortal bodies. This coming event is commonly referred to as the "Rapture of the Church." By imminent we mean it is likely to occur at *any moment*. The Bible speaks of nothing that must happen before the Rapture, though there are many prophesied events that will precede the Lord's Second Coming, when Christ comes to establish His promised Kingdom. At any moment, Christ can call His Church out of the world. I present three reasons for this belief.

1. The Bible makes a big distinction between Israel and the Church.

The purposes of God for Israel differ from those He has for the Church. In the promises of God to Israel, we notice a strong emphasis on the earthly, while those to the Church look mainly to the spiritual or heavenly. In Acts 15:12-20 and Romans chapters 9 through 11, we learn that God's use and blessing of Israel is tabled for now and that God is presently working through Christ's Body, the Universal Church. The Lord will return to fulfill His promises to Israel and to again use that nation of people as His instrument, but today He is operating through the Church. Daniel 9:24-27 tells us that 70 weeks (sabbatical weeks of seven years each, for a total of 490 years), were in God's timetable for Israel before all the prophets' words regarding God's program for Israel would be completed and before the Messiah would establish His reign on David's throne. Sixty-nine of those weeks took Israel up to the time of the crucifixion of the Messiah. Then, just before the Cross, the clock stopped. God's program for the nation of Israel is on hold. We believe that before the clock restarts, the Church will be removed *because that seventieth week is prophesied for Israel and not for the Church*. It is Jacob's distress (Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 12:1; Zephaniah 1:14-18 & Matthew 24:21), not that of the Church. The purpose of the Tribulation, the 70th week, is to bring Israel to repentance (Zechariah 12:10 & Matthew 23:37-39), not the Church. Because there is a Biblical distinction between Israel and the Church, it is my conviction that the Church will be removed before Daniel's seventieth week, the Great Tribulation, begins—perhaps even years before.

2. 1 Thessalonians 4:13 through 5:11 teaches that the Church will *not* be present on earth during the Tribulation.

After describing how the Rapture will transpire (4:13-18), Paul concludes by saying, "Therefore, comfort one another with these words." Chapter 5 speaks of the "Day of the Lord," which is discussed in Matthew 24:9-31 and Revelation chapters 6 through 19. These chapters in Revelation cover the time of the judgment of our Lord

upon the earth during the Great Tribulation, in preparation for His earthly kingdom. The Tribulation is the Day of the LORD's Wrath (Amos 5:18-20 & Zephaniah 1:14-18) and Jacob's Distress (Jeremiah 30:7). In 1 Thessalonians 5:9, Paul wrote, "God has not destined us [the recipients of these words were believers in Jesus and members of His Body, the Church] for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."¹² Again in 5:11 Paul says, "[E]ncourage [or comfort, same word as in 4:18] one another and build up one another." As a follower of the Lord Jesus, I would not be comfortable knowing that the Tribulation, the most horrible time in human history, was on my list of coming expectations. The certainty that the Church will not participate in the Tribulation gives Jesus' followers comfort and encouragement because they will be with the Savior in heaven during those terrible seven years of God's wrath on earth.

3. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-11 teaches that the saved of this dispensation will not be present on Planet Earth when the antichrist is revealed.

It should be noted that the seventy-week prophecy of Daniel was for Israel, "your people and your holy city" (Daniel 9:24), meaning Daniel's people and Jerusalem. Daniel tells us that a coming "prince"—the Antichrist—will make a "firm covenant with the many for one week" (Dan. 9:24-27). That event signals the start of the seventieth week in Daniel's prophecy and the restarting of God's clock for Israel.¹³

2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 with 3:17 indicates that the Thessalonians had received a false letter, one that claimed to be from Paul. The Apostle Paul wrote his second letter to the Thessalonians to refute those false teachings in that imposturous communication and to re-enforce the doctrines he had taught while present with the church in Thessalonica. That false message disturbed those believers because it declared that the "Day of the Lord" had already come. Far from being joyfully comfortable about their future, they were deeply distressed. Previously, Paul had been clear in teaching them that the Church would be snatched out before the Day of the Lord comes. In this passage Paul again tells them that the Day of the Lord will come after there is a departure¹⁴ and after "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" (2:3-4). The description of this man that we call the "antichrist" is like that given by Daniel in Daniel 7:8, 20-21; 7:25; and 9:24-27 (see also Matthew 24:15 and following).

¹² The a-millennialist teaches that the word "wrath" refers to eternal judgment, hell. His interpretation does not fit the context.

¹³ God established a time line for Israel in the seventy-week prophecy, with a gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks.

¹⁴ Most translations translate 2 Thessalonians 2:3 with "apostasy," indicating a departure from the faith or a rebellion that transpires before the Antichrist appears on the world scene. The Greek word can mean that, but where used elsewhere in the NT: Matthew 5:31; 19:7, Mark 10:4; and Acts 21:21, the idea is a departure. In Matthew 19:7, it is translated "divorce," which is a departure, not an apostasy. Acts 21:21 says that it was reported that Paul was teaching the converts to Christ to depart from Jewish customs, which could be rendered "apostasy" though "depart" is a better translation. I believe that "departure" is the best translation here as well, and this agrees with verse 6. The church will depart from this world before the man of sin is revealed. See this passage in *The New Testament: An expanded translation*, by Kenneth S. Wuest, (1959 through 1961).

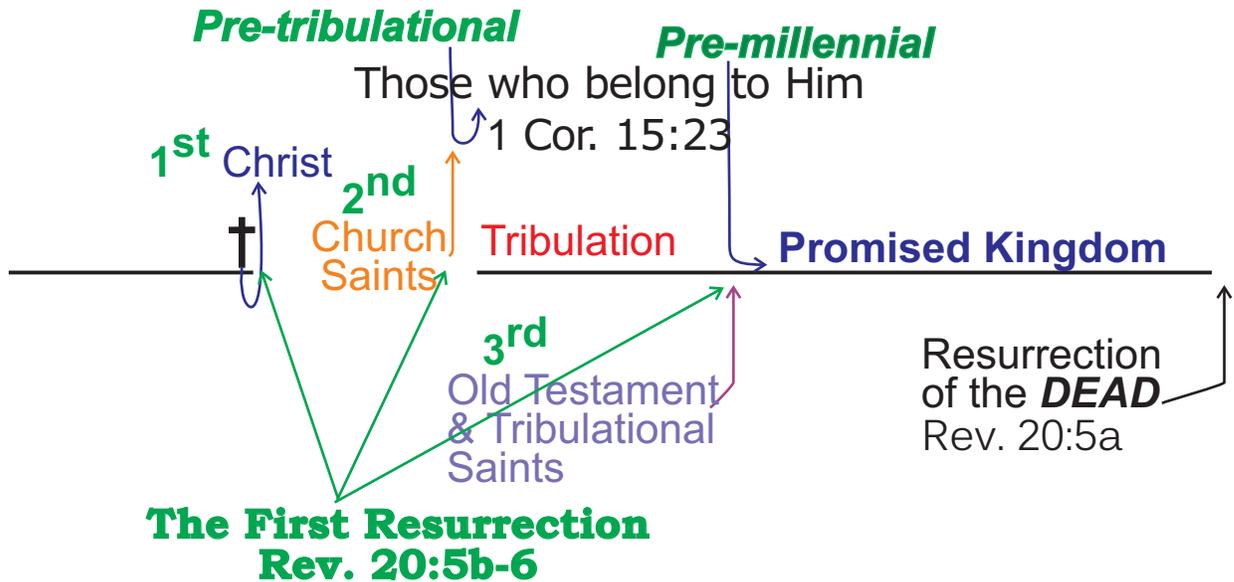
In 2 Thessalonians 2:1-11, Paul tells us that something is restraining this lawless one, who is anti-God and anti-Christ, from publicly appearing and from assuming his worldwide leadership role. Though Satan is actively working in the background (1 John 4:3), Paul tells us that Satan cannot bring this world leader—the Antichrist—to power until the Restrainer is removed. Though there are various views about who the “Restrainer” might be, the best explanation is that the Restrainer is the Holy Spirit present in the Church. God did something very unique on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). The Holy Spirit came to indwell the followers of Jesus. That indwelling unites those believers into one Body, the Church. Truthfully, I cannot think of a better explanation for the person the Apostle Paul called the Restrainer than the Holy Spirit present in the Church. The devil always has a false Messiah (Christ) ready, through whom he will deceive Israel and the world. Until the Rapture, Satan’s activities are being restrained by the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-11), who indwells the Church and works through her to exalt God’s Son and restrain lawlessness. When the Lord snatches away His Church, Satan will have full liberty to institute his programs and bring the “man of sin” into prominence.

Comments

Some believe that the Church goes through the Tribulation. Others say that the Lord will remove His Church at the middle of that seven-year period or at the “last trumpet” described in the Revelation, or before the horrible wrath of God is poured out on the earth. Those who teach such doctrines are standing on the sandy soil of unreliable hermeneutics. Their teachings create fear, causing people to hide food, arms, survival gear, etc. in caves, in the desert, country cabins, etc. Only the doctrine of the *Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church* is comforting to the saints: “Therefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:18 and 5:11). Plus it is hermeneutically accurate. The pre-millennial and pre-tribulation return of the Lord Jesus Christ is biblically sound and is the only one that brings true comfort to the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ during the current dispensation of the Church.

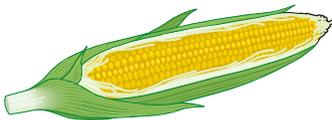
The Pre-tribulational and Pre-millennial Return of Christ and the Resurrections Presented in Graphic Form

Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection.
The second death has no power over them. (Revelation 20:6 NIV)



In 1 Corinthians 15, the Apostle Paul presents facts to prove the resurrection of Jesus Christ and all members of the human race. From verses 20 through 58 and other passages we learn the following:

1. Everyone will be resurrected and receive an eternal body.
1 Corinthians 15:20-22
2. There are two resurrections, and the first is divided into ranks.
 - A) The **first resurrection**.
 - 1st- rank — Jesus **Christ** and the first fruits. Matthew 27:51-53
 - 2nd- rank — The **Church** (The saints of this dispensation).
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
 - 3rd- rank — All of the other saints (**Old Testament and Tribulational**). Daniel 12:9-13 & Revelation 20:4-6
 - B) The **second resurrection** is of the **dead**. Revelation 20:11-15
3. Though our new body will be immortal and fit for eternity, each person will be recognizable 1 Corinthians 15:35-58 (Luke 9:33).
The body of the resurrected saints will be like Jesus', 1 John 3:1-3.



The State of Souls after Physical Death

- a) It appears that before the death of Jesus, the souls of the saved dwelt in a place called "Paradise," Luke 16:22-28. Those in Paradise were taken to heaven with the Lord after the price for sin was paid, Luke 23:39-43.
- b) The souls of the saved of this current dispensation go to be with the Lord in heaven, 2 Corinthians 5:6-8 and 1 Thessalonians 4:14.
- c) The souls of the saved during the Tribulation will go to be with the Lord in Heaven, Revelation 6:9-10.
- d) The Bible refers to those who do not appropriate salvation in Christ as **dead**. The souls of the dead are suffering in Hades. This can be compared to a holding jail cell where a criminal awaits trial. These persons will be resurrected at the end of time when they will appear before the righteous Judge to give an account and to be sentenced. Their eternal state will be in a place without God where there is much anguish and suffering. Luke 16:22-23 and Revelation 20:13-14.

The Coming Bema Seat of Christ

The Bible teaches that the members of the Body of Christ, the saved of this dispensation, will give an account of their works as God's children at the Bema Seat of Christ. This event will transpire in the heavens after the Rapture of the Church. Though I think there will be tears shed at this judgment, this is not a place where sins are brought up and an accounting required, but rather a time when rewards are distributed. The major passage teaching this truth is 2 Corinthians 5:10:

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

The word translated "judgment seat" is **βῆμα** (*bema*). In the synagogues, the raised platform, usually used when the Scriptures were read, was called the "bema." In the Olympic type games, the judges of the events were on a raised platform called the "bema." Though we would call this the "judges' bench," it is not a place where sins are addressed but one where good works are rewarded. The one who has performed poorly receives no punishment, but he loses rewards. Romans 8:1 tells us, "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Praise God, our sins were nailed to the cross, buried in the deepest sea, and removed from us and the eyes of God as far as the East is from the West.

The judgment words "good or bad" in 2 Corinthians 5:10 are not speaking of sin or the lack of it but are speaking of one's performance in his walk with the Lord. The best runner in the race has done well and receives a reward. The poor runner took part in the race, but his performance was not worthy of a prize. He is not punished for not properly doing the Lord's will, but neither is he honored with a medal.

The lazy, mediocre Christian "will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Corinthians 3:15). The "bema" seat will cause reflections that will bring tears, when we realize that we did not fulfill the Lord's purpose for our lives.

The Enemy of Israel—Esau

The covenants the Lord made with Israel and conservative hermeneutics are the foundation for our belief that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming again to fulfill those promises. Jesus, the Son of David, will sit on the throne as King over Israel. During that time, the Jews will be what God called them to be, a “kingdom of priests to all nations.” As Christians who are not sleeping but are alert and looking for the soon return of Christ, it will help us understand what is happening on the current world scene if we know about the enemy of the Jews.

Ishmael and Isaac did not get along, and the Lord instructed Abraham to send Hagar and her son away. Later we read that Esau married one of Ishmael’s daughters (Genesis 28:9). These two men are the enemies of God and Israel, and because they intermarried, we believe the prophetic Scriptures treat them as one race referring to their descendants as Esau or Edom.

When the Angel of the Lord appeared to Hagar regarding her son Ishmael, He told her: Behold, you are with child, and you will bear a son; and you shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has given heed to your affliction. He will be a wild donkey of a man, His hand will be against everyone, and everyone’s hand will be against him; and he will live to the east of all his brothers. (Genesis 16:11-12)

Though said about Ishmael, this appears to be the personality trait of both Ishmael and Esau and their descendants.

While Rebekah was carrying twins and was experiencing conflicts within her womb, we read in Genesis 25:21-26:

Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived. But the children struggled together within her; and she said, “If it is so, why then am I this way?” So she went to inquire of the LORD. The LORD said to her, “Two nations are in your womb; and two peoples will be separated from your body; and one people shall be stronger than the other; and the older shall serve the younger.” When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. Now the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau¹. Afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau’s heel, so his name was called Jacob²; and Isaac was sixty years old when she gave birth to them.

Though he was the first born and the rightful heir to the blessing of being the head of the family, Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of lentil stew (Genesis 25:29-34). In other words, that birthright had no real value to him, whereas Jacob deeply desired it. Later, when Jacob cheated his brother out of their father’s spiritual blessing, the Scriptures tell us that “Esau bore a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him; and Esau said to himself, ‘The days of

¹ Esau means “hairy.” He is the father of the Edomites (Edom means “red”), Gen. 36:8-9; Deut. 2:4-5.

² Jacob means “heel holder” or “supplanter” per the *Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon* H3290. See Hos. 12:3. Jacob strived with his brother and with God, Gen 32:28.

mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob.” (Genesis 27:41)

Over the millennia these two men represented by their descendants have hated Jacob—Israel. This is why, at the close of the Old Testament Canon, the Lord says:

“I have loved you,” says the LORD. But you say, “How have You loved us?”

“Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” declares the LORD. “Yet I have loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness.” (Malachi 1:2-3) Esau and his race have been haters of God’s chosen people and have sought after other gods.³ They have hated the true God and have been the enemies of Israel.

Genesis 16 tells us that Ishmael went to live east of his brothers. The sons of Esau, the Edomites, settled southeast of Israel, south and east of the Dead Sea in current Jordan. When Israel was deported by the Babylonians, Edom moved into the southern area of Israel. After the Romans dispersed the Jews in 70 AD, the Edomites made their home in the land of Israel. Today the people that the world calls “Palestinians” are the descendants of Ishmael and Esau. In the prophetic Scriptures they are the sons of Esau, Edom, or the Edomites and Amalekites.

Amalek was a son born to Esau through Timna (Genesis 36:12). When the sons of Esau fought against Israel at Rephidim, God told Moses, “Write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven,” and “The LORD has sworn; the LORD will have war against Amalek from generation to generation.” King Saul’s major failure was when he disobeyed the Lord’s command and did not destroy all of the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15). Later, in the book of Esther we read about an enemy of the Jews named “Haman.” Haman was the son of Hammedatha, an Agagite or an Amalekite.⁴ This hatred of Esau and his family for Israel has been persistent since he fought with Jacob in their mother’s womb.

Jimmy DeYoung writes:

The ancient Jewish prophet Obadiah revealed that the Palestinians (Edomites) would one day be completely destroyed by the Jewish people at the Second Coming of Jesus (Obadiah 15-18). The prophet Ezekiel foretold of the continuing conflict between the descendants of Jacob and Esau leading up to the return of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.⁵

God has predicted the complete annihilation of Esau. Jeremiah 49:7-22, the book of Obadiah, and Malachi 1:2-3 are cited as examples.⁶

Islam was born in Saudi Arabia. It is the religion of the Edomites and their neighbors. It is a religion of the sword—harsh and brutal. I believe this is the “prostitute” of Revelation 17

³ Most of these people are followers of Islam.

⁴ Thomas, R. L. (1998, 1981). *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries : Updated edition* (H90-91). Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc., see 90, 91, 97 and 98, and Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)* (HGK6667-6668), see 6667 and 6668.

⁵ DeYoung, Jimmy, in his newsletter “Until,” 2002 Volume seven, issue eleven

⁶ Other verses: Num. 24:20; Deut. 2:4-5; 25:17-19; Psa. 137:7-9; Isa. 11:14; 34:1-17; 63:1-6; Lam. 4:21; Ezk. 25:8-14; 35:1-15; 36:6; Amos 1:11

who sits on seven kings or kingdoms (hills). The conflict that began in the days of Abraham and Isaac will come to an end with the coming of the “King of kings and Lord of lords,” when He comes to rule over Israel sitting on His father David’s throne in fulfillment of God’s promises to Israel.

The Day of the LORD

All evidence indicates that the Apostle Paul was in Thessalonica less than three weeks and possibly just two. However, both first and second Thessalonians reveal to us that during those few weeks of ministry the Apostle and his team had taught those new believers in Jesus about the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Day of the **LORD**. In 2 Thessalonians 2:5 Paul wrote to the church, “Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?” indicating that in those few weeks the Apostle had taught that church about the Day of the **LORD**. Second Thessalonians chapter 2 was written to refute the false teaching the church had received about the Day of the **LORD** (2:2). In this passage Paul makes it clear that that Day will not come until after there is a “departure”⁷ and the “man of sin” (anti-Christ) is revealed.

Though prophetic references to the Day of the **LORD** are extensive, Isaiah 13:6-13; Joel 2:1-11; 3:14-16; Zephaniah 1:7 - 2:3; Matthew 24:9-31; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; Acts 2:20; and 2 Peter 3:10 are cited as examples. The books of Joel and Zephaniah are two books written exclusively about that coming day. Day, as used in these passages, does not mean a twenty-four-hour day but speaks of an event or time of opportunity. It is the time for the Lord Jesus Christ, when He will bring judgment and take control on earth.

As stated on the chart at the close of this section, the Day of the **LORD** follows the Rapture of the Church and includes the seventieth week of Daniel’s seventy-week prophecy in Daniel 9:24-27. It also includes the millennial reign of Christ when the Lord fills the seat of David as King of kings and Lord of lords and rules over the whole world. According to 2 Peter 3:10, the Day of the **LORD** includes the final judgment when the earth and elements will be completely destroyed. Therefore, the Day of the **LORD** covers a long span of time.

The major purposes of the Day of the **LORD** relate to Israel: 1) to bring that nation to repentance and acceptance of the Messiah (Daniel 12:1-7; Ezekiel 20:33-38; and Matthew 23:37), and 2) to bring about the evangelization of the world by 144,000 Jews during the seventieth-week, also called the “Great Tribulation” (Revelation 7:1-17; and Matthew 24:14). It is a time when God’s judgment will be poured out on the nations of the world for their sinfulness and mistreatment of His chosen people, the Jews. It is a time when God cleanses the world of sin and brings to fulfillment His promises to Israel by establishing them in the Land and His Son on the throne of David.⁸ It is when the Lord writes His law on their hearts and the Jews will become the priests to all nations as God originally intended.

⁷ See the section above that is titled “The Basis for the Belief in the Pre-tribulational Return of Our Lord for His Church” for more detail on this point.

⁸ Daniel 7:23-27

The Final Judgment

Revelation 20:11-15 teaches us that after the millennial reign God will call forth the souls of the “dead” from all ages. These peoples will be brought before the final judgment bench to give an account of their deeds and what they did in regard to the Savior. Those who do not have their names inscribed in the “book of life” will pass eternity in the “lake of fire” along with the devil and his angels.

Jesus used the name for Jerusalem’s garbage dump, *γέεννα* (*geh-en-nah*), to describe this horrible place where the ungodly shall reside throughout eternity.⁹ Gehennah was a valley south of the Jerusalem where King Ahaz worshiped the pagan god Moloch and sacrificed his son (2 Kings 16:2). During his reforms Josiah made that valley the city dump (2 Kings 23:10). I remember as a boy going on my bike to the Orlando city dump. The place stunk and smoldering fires, flies, and maggots were everywhere. That experience showed me what Jesus meant when He said “where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.” (Mark 9:48) Writing about this hell the prophet Isaiah said, “Then they will go forth and look on the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm will not die and their fire will not be quenched; and they will be an abhorrence to all mankind.” (Isaiah 66:24)

This place was formed by God for the devil and his angels.¹⁰ The spiritually dead will be there solely because they would not respond to God’s love and be saved.

Eternity for the Saved

Jesus promised, “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)

The following expressions are from Paul’s writings:

“If children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.” (Romans 8:17)

“To live is Christ and to die is gain. ” (Philippians 1:21)

“For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” (2 Corinthians 5:1)

“For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven.” (2 Corinthians 5:2)

“I . . . prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 5:8)

“If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.” (1 Corinthians 15:19)

⁹ Matthew 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15 & 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; and Luke 12:5

¹⁰ Isaiah 14:15-18; Revelation 20:1-3 & 10

The Bible presents eternity for the saved as a place of comfort, joy, peace, and contentment. It does not tell us much else. In 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 Paul relates that he was transported to the third heaven and saw things that he was unable to speak about. Because we humans are slaves to space, time, and the material, it is difficult for us to understand the spiritual realm. Heaven will not be a material world. Peter has told us that will be destroyed.¹¹ The redeemed will be heirs with Christ and will live with Him forever.

See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. (1 John 3:1-3)

The blessed hope of the saints is a motivating force for personal dedication and purity.

Recommendations

The Basis of the Premillennial Faith, by Charles Ryrie, © 1953, Pub. Loizeaux Brothers

Daniel the Key to Prophetic Revelation, by John Walvoord, © 1971, Pub. Moody Press

End Times, Understanding Today's World Events in Biblical Prophecy, by John F. Walvoord, © 1998, Word Publishing

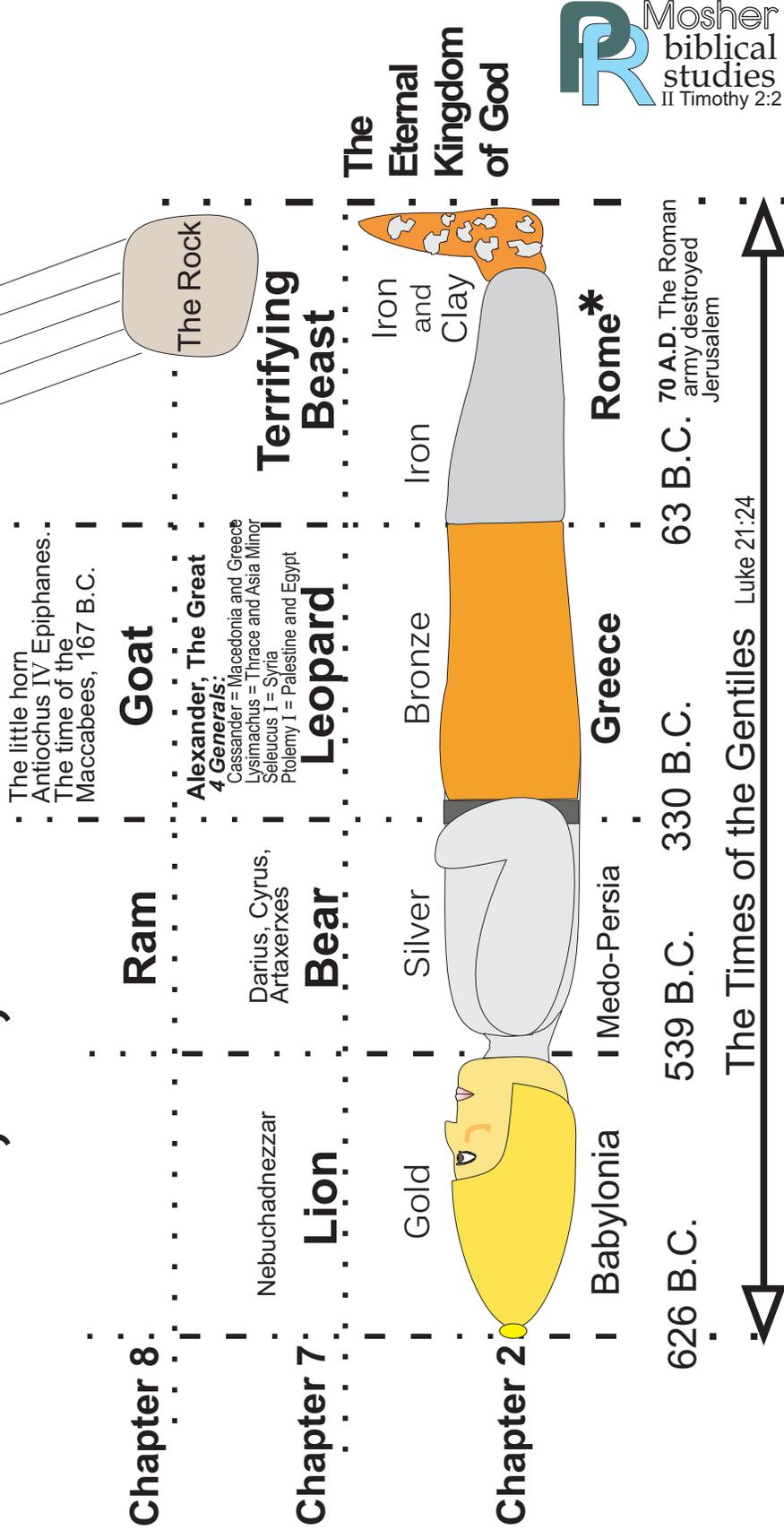
Things to Come, by J. Dwight Pentecost, © 1958, Pub. Dunham Publishing Co.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, by John Walvoord, © 1966, Pub. Moody Press

¹¹ 2 Peter 3:10

DANIEL 2, 7, & 8

The Kingdom of God



* This gentile system and specifically the Roman or European peoples will continue to have a dominant influence in the world and will continue to suppress Israel until the second coming of Christ. For over a thousand years this power was in the hands of the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox Churches. The Antichrist will be a European (Dan. 9:26-27). The feet of iron and clay symbolize the weakness of democracy (justice in the hands of the people). The 10 toes and 10 horns represent political and economic powers (the Council of Rome wants the world divided into 10 economic districts) from which the Antichrist's system will be developed. Romans 11:25 speaks of the hardening of Israel's heart "until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in." This fullness of power and sinfulness of gentile rule begins when the Antichrist makes his alliance with Israel, which also marks the start of Daniel's 70th week (Dan. 9:24-27; Jer. 30:7; Mt. 24:21 & 29) and the period of Jacob's troubles (Jer. 30:4-7). Israel will repent and accept the true Messiah during the 70th week (Mt. 23:37-39; Zec. 12:10).

The charts on Daniel are original with the author being first designed in the early 1960s and modified and improved over some 45 years of teaching.

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THE DAY OF THE LORD*

In the Book of Revelation



Heaven opened
(4:1)

The Coming of
the Bridegroom

The Rapture of
the Church -
the Lamb, and the
Book with 7 Seals:
4:1-5:14

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Heaven opened
(19:11)

The Seven Seals:

1. The White Horse: 6:1-2
2. The Red Horse: 6:3-4
3. The Black Horse: 6:5-6
4. The Pale Horse: 6:7-8
5. The Souls: 6:9-11
6. Destruction and Fear: 6:12-17

PARENTHETICAL
VISION:
a. 144,000: 7:1-8

7. Silence: 8:1

PARENTHETICAL
VISION:
Golden Censer: 8:2-6

* The Day of the Lord follows the Rapture and includes the 7th week of Dan. 9:24-27. See: Isa. 13:6-13; Joel 2:1-11; 3:14-16; Zeph. 1:7-2:3; Mat. 24:9-31; 1 Thes. 5:2; 2 Thes. 2:2; Acts 2:20; and 2 Pet. 3:10.

Purpose as related to Israel: To bring the nation of Israel to repentance and acceptance of the Messiah (Dan. 12:1-7; Ezk. 20:33-38; and Mt. 23:37), and to cause the evangelization of the world by 144,000 Jews (Rev. 7:1-17; and Mt. 24:14).

The Seven Trumpets:

1. Hail, Fire, and Blood: 8:7
2. Huge Mountain thrown into sea: 8:8-9
3. A Big Star falls: 8:10-11
4. Sun, Moon, and Stars darkened: 8:12-13
5. Woe — Locusts: 9:1-12
6. Woe — Four Angels and Large Army: 9:13

PARENTHETICAL VISION:
a. Angel and Little Book: 10:1-11
b. Two Witnesses: 11:1-14

7. Woe — Loud Voices: 11:15-19 & 15:1 to 16:1

PARENTHETICAL VISION:
a. The Woman, Dragon, and Son:
12:1-6

- b. War in Heaven: 12:7-12
- c. The Flight of the Woman: 12:13-18
- d. The First Beast: 13:1-10
- e. The Second Beast: 13:11-18
- f. The Lamb and the 144,000: 14:1-

The Seven Bowls:

1. On the Earth: 16:2
2. On the Sea: 16:3
3. On the Rivers: 16:4-7
4. On the Sun: 16:8-9
5. On the Beast's Throne: 16:10-12
6. On the Euphrates River: 16:12

PARENTHETICAL
VISION:
Demons deceive and
gather the kings for war:
16:13-16

7. Into the Air: 16:17-21

PARENTHETICAL VISION:

- a. The Destruction of Babylon: chp. 17-18
- b. Hallelujahs: 19:1-10
- c. The Coming of the KING: 19:11-16
- d. The Victory of the KING: 19:17 a 20:3
- e. The Kingdom of the KING: 20:4-6

The Coming
KING and Kingdom

THE LAST HALF OF THE WEEK†

42 MONTHS

The charts on The Day of the Lord and The Book of Revelation are original with the author being first designed in the early 1960s and modified and improved over some 45 years of teaching.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST



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THE CONCLUSION AND INVITATION OF THE BOOK (22:6-21)
 THE NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH (21:1-22:5)
 THE FINAL JUDGMENT (20:7-15)
 THE MILLENNIAL REIGN OF CHRIST (20:1-6)

Chapters
20-22

JESUS WILL REVEAL HIMSELF DURING THE TRIBULATION
THE WRATH OF GOD Poured OUT ON THE WORLD

42 months / 3.5 years : 42 months / 3.5 years

THE GREAT TRIBULATION
 Mt. 24:21-22

7 SEALS **7 TRUMPETS** **7 BOWLS**

The Antichrist will establish:

- 1. A worldwide government: Rev. 13:1-3 with Dan. 2 & 7
- 2. A worldwide religion: Rev. 13:4-15 with Dan. 9:27
- 3. A worldwide economy: Rev. 13:16-18; & 18:9-19

(2 Thes. 2:8-10)

THE ANTICHRIST REVEALED

Chapters **6 – 19**

Future — The things that are to come

JOHN RAPTURED TO HEAVEN
 Type of the Rapture of the Church

Chapters **4-5**

JESUS REVEALS HIMSELF TO THE CHURCHES
 Seven Letters from Jesus to Local Churches

- The Church satisfied with itself
Laodicea - Justice by the People
- The Church of opportunity
Philadelphia - Brotherly Love
- The dead Church that lost those with life
Sardis - The Red One
- The Church of idolatry
Thyatira - Continual Sacrifice
- The Church that compromised
Pergamum - Exalted
- The Church that suffered
Smyrna - Crushed
- The Church that loved Jesus & evangelism
Ephesus - Desirable

Chapters **2-3**

Present — The things that now are
The Mystery Body -- Ephesians 3:2-6

Jesus Revealed Himself To John

Chapter **1**

Past — The things John saw

The Mystery Kingdom — Matthew 13:1-52

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