

# The Purpose of Prophecy

Over 1/4 of the Bible is prophecy. Actually, if you put together all the prophetic passages of the Bible in one book, you would have a volume larger than the New Testament. Obviously, prophecy is important to God. Therefore, it's important to study it. For example, the Apocalypse of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, is dedicated to the study of future prophecy, and it is the only book that specifically states, *Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in* (Rev. 1:3).

Why is prophecy so important to God? It is probably not to equip us to predict the future. Jesus criticized those looking for signs of the future (Matt. 12:39; Acts 1:7). He never answered the apostles' question about "when" the future events would happen (Matt. 24:3), even though He gave many details about "what" would be the signs of His coming at the end of the age.

Prophecy is given by God not to predict the future but to confirm the past (John 13:19; 14:29). Prophecy is one of God's ways of confirming that what He said is true. He offers it to us as proof that His Word can be trusted and that He is to be taken seriously, precisely, and literally. When we see that prophecy is literally fulfilled, we know that God keeps His promises. When hundreds of details of the Messiah's life are fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, we can see that God keeps His promises. When Daniel's predictions of the future of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome are fulfilled to the letter, we can see that God keeps His promises. When the future of the Jews and the Arabs are predicted precisely, and when God gives specific points about the future of a city like Tyre, and all these came to pass exactly as God said, God has confirmed His Word as being true. Fulfilled prophecy has consistently demonstrated that the Bible is not a book of fantasy, religion, and myth but a book of truth, facts, and reality. Fact is: The Bible has never ever been one detail off in its prediction of future events.

## Why Is It Important to Study Future Prophecy?

We might be tempted to ask, "If the purpose of prophecy is to confirm the past instead of to predict the future, why study **future** prophecy?" You may have heard someone say, "I am a pan-millennialist. I believe it's going to pan out all right." This weak joke has made its way around Christian circles as sort of a humorous excuse for neglecting a study of prophecy. The idea is that God has everything under control, and it's all going to "pan out" the way God wants, so why bother studying it?

The answer is that the importance of prophecy comes not from how it's going to pan out but from the fact that God chose (1) to tell us about it and (2) to command us to be on the alert concerning it (Matt. 24:42).

All of the work of God will "pan out" as God has planned. The salvation of the lost will "pan out" the way God has planned it (Eph. 1:3-11). The spiritual development of all believers will "pan out" as God has planned it (Rom. 8:28). The church will "pan out"

as God has planned it (Matt. 16:18). But that doesn't mean we should neglect studying and applying the Scripture in those areas. So the first reason we should study future prophecy is simply because God chose to reveal it to us. It's important because it's important to God.

The second reason we should know the details of prophecy is to be **future sensitive**. Jesus Christ tells us to be on the alert to the unraveling of God's future program (Matt. 24:32-39, 42; 25:13).

Believers who are future sensitive love Christ's appearing. Paul told Timothy, *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 Tim. 4:8).

A lady once told this story at one of our Bible study groups. She said, "I have two small children who both like cookies. One day I had recently baked a fresh batch and put them in the cookie jar to keep for an activity at our house that evening. I gave my children a strict warning to not eat any of those cookies. After noticing it was unusually quiet in the kitchen, I decided to peek around the door. There were my two children sitting on the floor, the half-empty cookie jar between them, crumbs all over, and a cookie in each fist. "Now, I know that my children love me—but they did **not** love my **appearing!**" To be future sensitive is to live our lives in such a way that we not only love our Lord, but we also love His appearing.

The biggest impact for the Gospel in the 20th century came from groups and individuals who were future sensitive. Most evangelists, most Bible study, campus, and para-church groups, as well as Bible colleges, Bible seminaries, and missionary organizations were interested in the details of future prophecy. This led them to the conclusion that Jesus was coming soon. Therefore, the spread of the Gospel was urgent. This is the way the church of every generation is to live. When the church stops taking prophecy literally, they begin building earthly empires. But as long as and whenever the church looked seriously and literally at the details of future prophecy, the result was an emphasis on evangelism and discipleship. That brings us to the next point.

## **Prophecy Must Be Studied Literally**

One reason, of course, is that there is no other way to be sure we have a certain word from God. To study prophecy allegorically or figuratively or any other way is to make ourselves the judge of the future and the Bible actually has no say in it. By "literally," we mean that we must understand each text in its plain ordinary normal way. In other words, we must look for the author's intended meaning. If the author is writing poetically, then his words have poetic meaning. If he is giving a parable, then we must look for the meaning of the parable. If the author is writing history, then we must see it as history. The question is, "What does the author intend for us to understand?"

Another reason for taking prophecy literally is because we take the rest of the Bible that way. All the other great truths of Christianity come from taking the Bible at face

value. The only reason we know about salvation is because we understand that a literal Jesus Christ literally died on a literal cross for our literal sins. If we were to understand any of those things allegorically or figuratively, we would be lost for all eternity. It's by taking the Bible literally that we know about the nature of God the Father, the deity of Christ, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, the church, our sinful nature, and the spiritual life. Of course, we can only understand the Bible's predictions 100% after the event is fulfilled. Taking the Bible literally doesn't mean we will all agree, but it does give us a solid foundation upon which to base our discussion.

## **A Possible Scenario of the Future (An Overview of the Overview)**

The two most significant events in modern history are: (1) the formation of the nation of Israel in 1948 and (2) the uniting of the European Community in the 1990s. The EC (European Community) will continue its processes of uniting for the purpose of strengthening itself economically. This union could include any of the European or Mediterranean countries which were part of the ancient Roman Empire.

The new EC will experiment with different means of economic stability. They have already developed a common currency that will become the strongest currency in the world. Next they will develop a credit-card system and a centralized computer system which will allow all currency to be omitted. The next step will be to eliminate that credit card and give everyone an identifying tattoo mark (possibly invisible). Then during the Tribulation, people will need the tattoo "666" mark of the Antichrist on one's forehead or right hand in order to buy and sell.

The elimination of currency and finally credit cards will go a long way (at least it will seem to go a long way) toward solving many of the world's problems. For example, the sale of drugs or any illegal or stolen items becomes extremely difficult without cash. With the drastic reduction of drug sales will come the hope of reducing AIDS and other diseases spread through drug use and crime that is drug-related. Other crimes are reduced, too. It's of very little value to rob the neighborhood carry-out store if they have no cash. Auto theft, burglary, embezzlement, income-tax evasions, and fraud are much less inviting if cash is omitted and all transactions are done by computer and centrally monitored.

This system is actually not new. Experiments have already been carried out where large stores placed an invisible tattoo on the back of a customer's hand. When the customers made a purchase, their hand was passed under a machine and that amount was simply transferred from an account at their bank to that of the store. The same thing, of course, could be done with wages earned, thus accounting for every penny (without the existence of any actual pennies). Of course, world conditions will have to get worse than they are now for people to favor this option—but they will!

While this process is developing, some world event will cause ten nations (first three, then seven more) to unite behind one world leader. We saw a very clear example of this

back in 1991 when ten nations united behind U.S. President George Bush to throw Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait in what was called the Persian Gulf War. A few months before the war, no one would have predicted that ten nations would unite. Yet almost overnight ten nations united behind one leader for a specific cause.

Some such, as yet unknown, cause will unite ten EC and/or Mediterranean nations together behind one leader who will become Satan's man on earth—the Antichrist. This leader will then offer his successful economic plan to the powers of the world. He will make a treaty with the one whom the Bible calls the king of the North (probably Russia, who will become as strong as it once was before Communism); a king of the East (possibly China or some united oriental mega-force); and the king of the South (probably the Arab world). Finally, the Antichrist offers this peace treaty to the nation of Israel. When Israel signs the treaty, the clock starts ticking on the final seven-year or **Tribulation** period before the Second Coming of Christ.

As all this is developing, it appears that the church, the believers of this age, are **Raptured** off the earth, snatched up to meet Christ in the clouds! [The Scripture is less clear about **when** the Rapture occurs, but most people who take prophecy literally put the Rapture before the Tribulation. We recognize that many sincere literalists do see the Rapture as occurring during or after the Tribulation. We do not wish to belittle them for their interpretation, but we believe the biblical passages favor a pre-tribulation Rapture. See the Appendix for an overview of these other interpretations.]

When the true believers are missing, two things will happen. One, many people who are familiar with what the Bible says about the future will accept Christ for the first time. Two, a false prophet will set up a godless world religion (which at the present time looks like a mystical/emotional thing similar to the New Age Movement). During the seven-year Tribulation, the false prophet will turn all worship toward the Antichrist.

But things will not go well for the Antichrist. During the seven years of Tribulation, God will pour out judgments upon the earth, which the Antichrist will not be able to control. The last 3 1/2 years will be a time of great Tribulation, where a third of all mankind will die in the midst of tremendous suffering. This will cause the “kings” of the North, East, and South to rebel against the Antichrist in a bloody world war centered around battles such as that of Armageddon in Israel. In the midst of this war, Jesus Christ will return for His **Second Coming**. This will not be a quiet or secret thing but a public, dynamic event witnessed by the whole world (possibly on live television via satellite).

After the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, the war will be stopped and all the unbelievers will be put to death. All those who have become believers will go alive into the 1000-year or **Millennial Kingdom**, where Christ personally reigns over the earth. This 1000-year period will see great changes take place on earth. There will be some geological changes. For example, Jerusalem will become a seaport due to a fault line (which currently exists) splitting, thus creating a channel to the Mediterranean. Animals will once again (as in the Garden of Eden) become vegetarians, and the Spirit

of God will teach everyone from within about God. Justice will be true and righteous. Even though only believers will enter this Kingdom, many will be born over the 1000 years who will not be believers. At the end of the period, Satan will be released to deceive those unbelievers into attempting a final world war that will be abruptly stopped by Christ Himself.

When the 1000-year Kingdom is over, God will set up a judgment for all unbelievers called the **Great White Throne Judgment**, with Jesus Christ as the Judge. All the unbelievers will be judged by their deeds and cast into various places of punishment in the Lake of Fire, which is what we commonly call “hell.” All the believers will be translated into resurrected bodies. Then the present earth and its surroundings will be destroyed and a new heaven and new earth will be created. A spectacular city called the **New Jerusalem** will sit on the new earth, and all the believers will enter this city as their final home with Jesus Christ. This is what we commonly call “heaven.” The city will measure approximately 1500 miles by 1500 miles by 1500 miles high (probably shaped like a pyramid or high mountain).

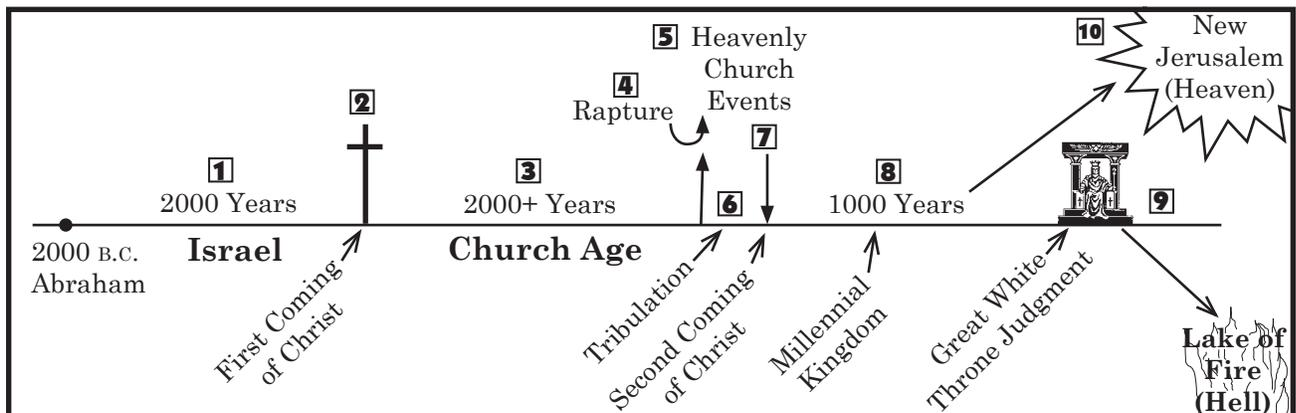
With this, God ends His revelation of the future. However, God is a creative and a sovereign adventurer, so there is no doubt an eternity of creations yet to come.

## Drawing What We Have Learned

The rest of this studybook will outline the following ten major events of the future:

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An overview can then be pictured with this diagram:



Now we shall begin to study more of the specifics about future prophecy. Of course, it is not necessary to remember all the Scripture and all the details we shall present. But some specifics should be learned. We suggest that you read over the following outlines which describe each phase of prophecy. From time to time, you will come across a page called *Drawing What We Have Learned*. These review pages will give you an opportunity to, little by little, add more to your understanding of the future.

# 1. The Promises of the Past

## (The Covenants of the Old Testament)

A study of covenants is the basis for understanding prophecy. A covenant is simply an agreement between two parties. The Bible describes covenants between man and man (Gen. 21:32) and between nation and nation (Ex. 23:32). But prophecy is the fulfillment of covenants made between God and man. There are two types of covenants:

**Conditional Covenants:** Certain things must be fulfilled by the receiver of the covenant before the giver of the covenant is obligated to fulfill that which was promised—*If you ... then God will ...*

**Unconditional Covenants:** That which was promised is given to the receiver of the covenant on the authority and integrity of the one making the covenant apart from the merit or response of the receiver—*God will ... no matter what you do.*

### Three Unconditional Covenants between God and Israel Came Out of the Abrahamic Covenant

(Genesis 12:1-3, 6-7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-14; 22:15-18)



When Abraham left his home in obedience to God, God entered into an unconditional covenant with Abraham and his descendants. He promised them three things:



**A Land**



**A Seed**

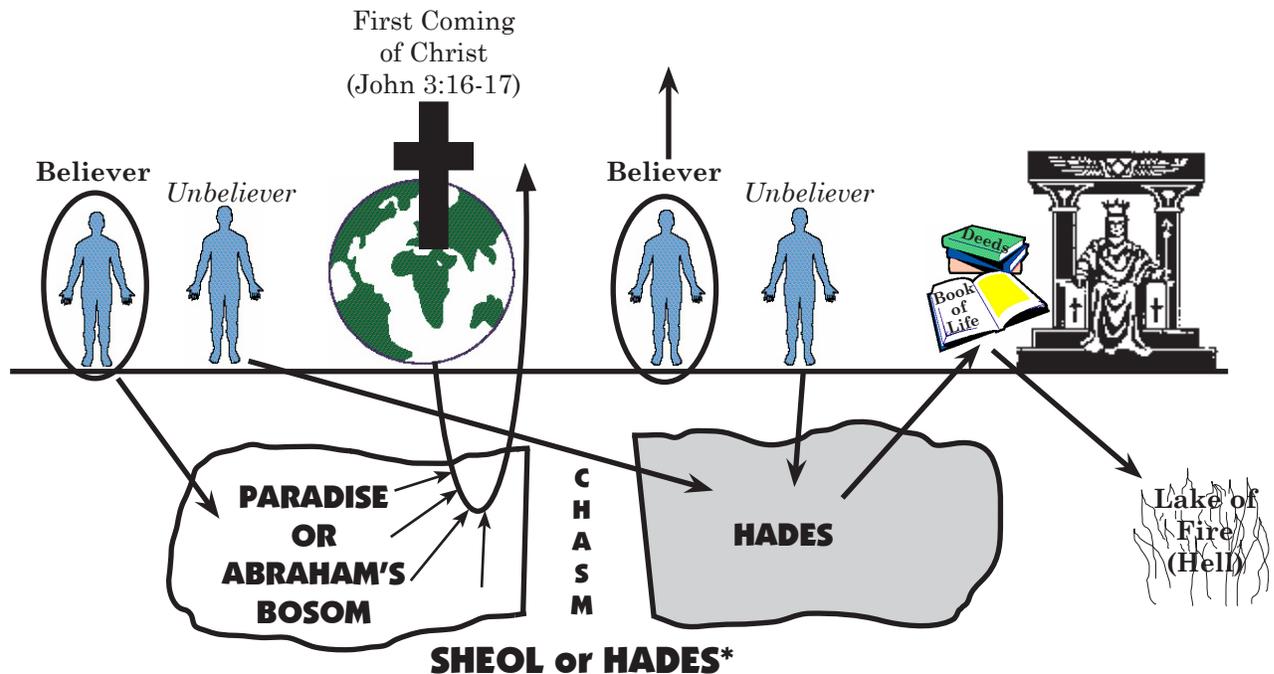


**A Blessing**

<b>A Land</b>	<b>A Seed</b>	<b>A Blessing</b>
<p><b><i>Palestinian Covenant</i></b> (Deut. 30:1-8 unconditional, 9-10 conditional)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amplifies the Abrahamic Covenant regarding the <b>land</b>.</li> <li>• God guarantees possession of the land to Israel. He will judge and remove all of Israel's enemies and give the nation a new heart prior to placing them in the land.</li> <li>• The fulfillment is during the Millennial Kingdom.</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Davidic Covenant</i></b> (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Ps. 89:3-4; Jer. 33:22, 25-26; Rev. 7:4-8)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amplifies the Abrahamic Covenant regarding the <b>seed</b>.</li> <li>• God guarantees there will be an unbroken succession of kings in David's line on the throne forever (thereby guaranteeing a seed or nation to be king over).</li> <li>• Fulfillment is in the person of Jesus Christ on the throne during the Millennial Kingdom and into eternity.</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>New Covenant</i></b> (Jer. 33:31-34; Is. 61:8-9; Ez. 37:21-28)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amplifies the Abrahamic Covenant regarding Israel being known as a nation <b>blessed</b> of God.</li> <li>• God guarantees <i>their offspring will be known among the nations ... because they are the offspring whom the Lord has blessed.</i></li> </ul>

The Old Testament closed with these covenants between God and Israel *unrealized*.

## 2. The First Coming of Christ



### Before Christ's Death

From Luke 16:19-31 we learn:

- After death, Old Testament *unbelievers* went to Hades, and apparently, they still do. It is a conscious existence (v. 23), they are in torment (v. 23), they could see to Paradise (v. 23), they are in agony in flame (v. 24), they could call out to people in Paradise (v. 24), there is a fixed chasm (v. 26)—they cannot cross over to Paradise, they want to warn those still living so they won't go there (vv. 27-28), and there is no reincarnation (vv. 30-31).
- After death, Old Testament *believers* went to Paradise (Luke 23:43), i.e., Abraham's Bosom (Luke 16:22). They were carried away by angels at death (v. 22), they were with other believers (v. 23), they were in a place of being comforted (v. 25), possibly because of hearing and seeing others suffer in Hades, and there was a fixed chasm (v. 26) so they could not cross over to help those in Hades.

### At Christ's Death

- Christ told the thief on the cross, *today you shall be with Me in Paradise* (Luke 23:43).
- Christ told Mary in the garden after the resurrection that He had not yet ascended to His Father (John 20:17).
- Christ was not abandoned to Hades (Acts 2:31; see also John 3:13).
- It is possible that Christ descended to Hades (Paradise) and then ascended to heaven with the Old Testament believers (Eph. 4:8-10). They could not go immediately to heaven at death until Christ died, making payment for their sin (Heb. 10:12).

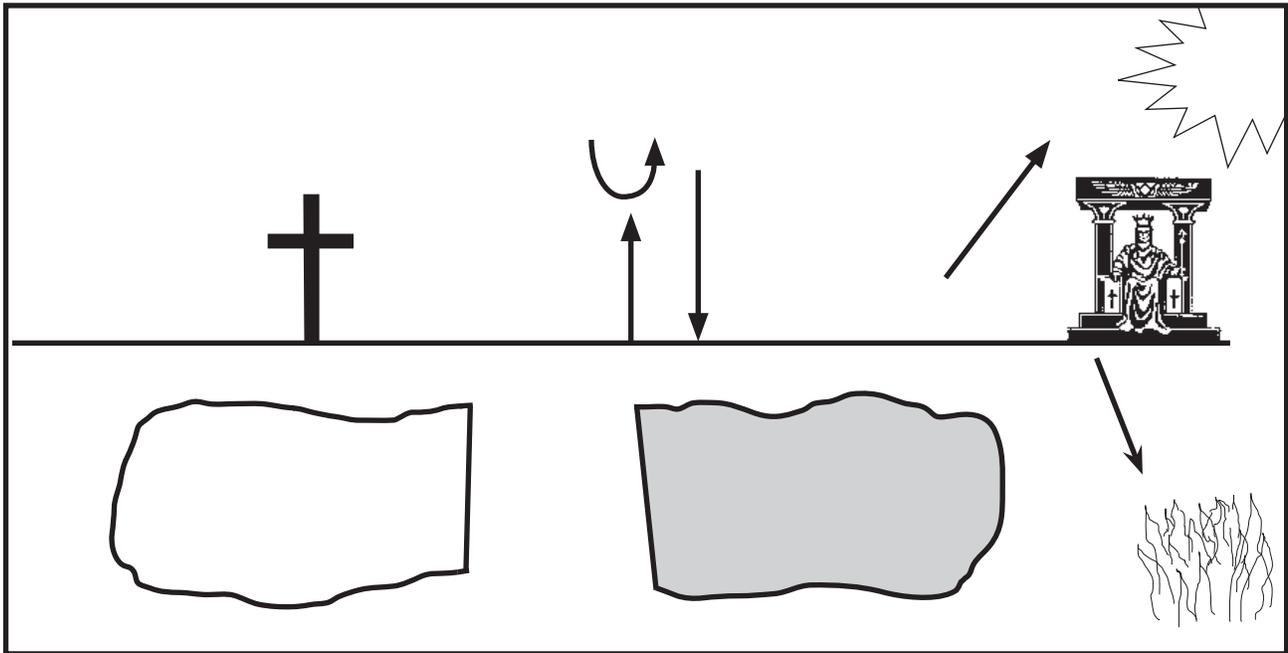
### After Christ's Death

- *Unbelievers* today apparently continue to go to Hades (Luke 16:19-31).
- *Unbelievers* will go from Hades to the Great White Throne judgment (Rev. 20:11-15) where:
  - (1) First the Book of Life is opened to show their name is not there (vv. 12, 15).
  - (2) Then the Book of Deeds is opened, from which they are judged (vv. 12-13).
  - (3) ... *if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire* (v. 15).
- *Believers* today, when they die, are *absent from the body and at home with the Lord* (2 Cor. 5:8).

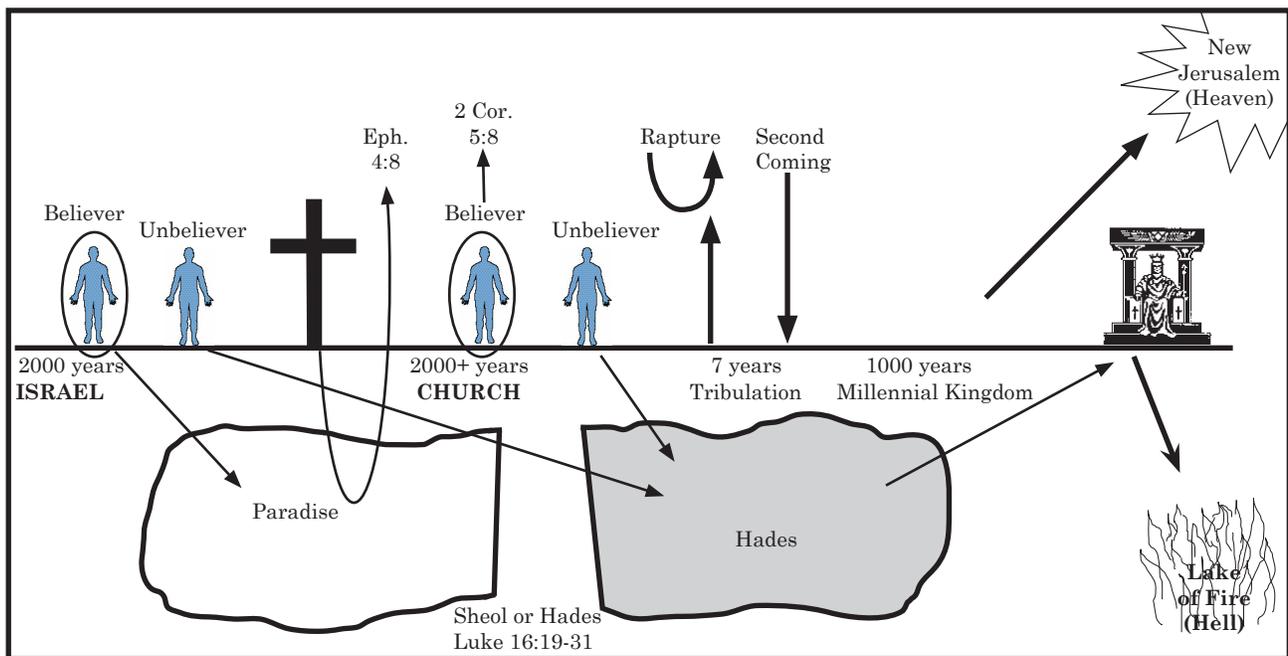
\* "Sheol" (a Hebrew word) and "Hades" (a Greek word) may be used interchangeably. The Old Testament used the word "Sheol" to refer to (1) extreme trouble, (2) death, (3) a place after death, (4) a bad place after death. "Hades" can also refer to the abode of the unsaved dead between death and the Great White Throne Judgment.

# Drawing What We Have Learned

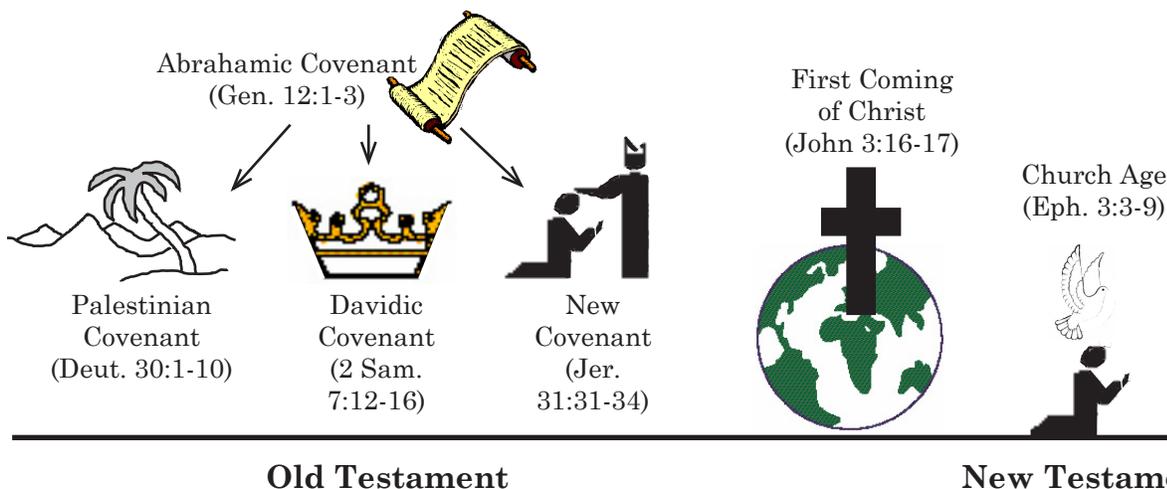
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### 3. This Present Church Age



God has divided His program into time segments called “ages” (Deut. 30:1-10; Dan. 2:31-45; 7:1-28; Hos. 3:4-5; Matt. 23:37–25:46; Acts 15:13-18; Rom. 11:13-29; Rev. 2–22).

Contrast Past Ages to this Present Age	
Past Ages (Old Testament)	Present Age (New Testament and Today)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Christ is anticipated.</li> <li>• The Holy Spirit came upon certain men to empower them to a given task.</li> <li>• The Good News is anticipated.</li> <li>• Revelation is incomplete.</li> <li>• Believers are promised blessings in this life.</li> <li>• The nation of Israel is the object of God’s dealing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Christ has come, has died, has been raised, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.</li> <li>• The Holy Spirit indwells every believer.</li> <li>• The Good News announces accomplished salvation through Christ.</li> <li>• Revelation is complete.</li> <li>• Believers are promised persecution in this life.</li> <li>• The nation of Israel is set aside as an object of God’s dealing and should not expect fulfillment of her promises during this age.</li> </ul>

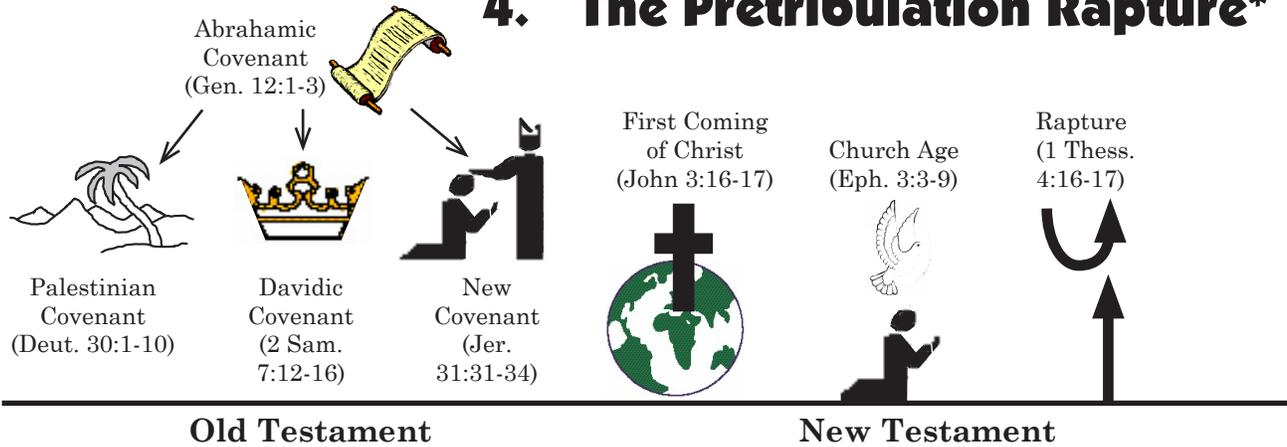
In the Old Testament age, the purpose of God for Israel is stated in covenants. The covenants were God’s idea, and God bound Himself to keeping them. Therefore, they must be fulfilled. But the Old Testament closes with those purposes **unrealized**. After the death of Christ, God set up the church age, a new divine program, **not** to fulfill or to replace the program for Israel, but to **interrupt** that program. This interruption was a **mystery** (Matt. 13:11). [A mystery is a new revelation from God, not given in the Old Testament.] This mystery, revealed in the New Testament, includes: (1) Israel being blinded so the Gentiles could be brought into relation with God (Rom. 11:25); (2) the church, the body of Christ, being made up of both Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 3:3-9; see also Eph. 2:13-16); (3) the revelation of Christ to men for redemption (Col. 2:2; 4:3); (4) a separate distinct first coming of Christ (1 Tim. 3:16); (5) the restraint of evil by God (2 Thess. 2:7); (6) the development of a great apostate religious system (Rev. 17:5, 7); and (7) a new method by which God received men into His presence apart from death (1 Cor. 15:51).

#### The End of the Age

*The condition of the false church will be:* denial of Christ (2 Pet. 2:1), denial of Christ’s return (2 Pet. 3:3-4), denial of faith (1 Tim. 4:1-2), denial of sound doctrine (2 Tim. 4:3-4), no denial of self (2 Tim. 3:1-7), denial of morals (2 Tim. 3:1-8, 13; Jude 18), and denial of authority (2 Tim. 3:4).

*The condition of the true church will be:* resurrected and translated into the presence of the Lord (John 14:1-3; 1 Cor. 1:8; 15:51-52; 2 Cor. 5:1-9; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Thess. 2:1).

## 4. The Pretribulation Rapture\*



The church, in its entirety, will, by resurrection and translation, be removed from the earth before (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9) any part of the seven-year Tribulation begins. (Revelation 6:16-17 shows the wrath of God in the first parts of the Tribulation.) *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up [raptured] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord* (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

The church and Israel are two distinct groups with whom God has a divine plan. The church is a mystery, unrevealed in the Old Testament (Eph. 2:13-16; 3:3-9). This present mystery age interrupts the program of God for Israel because of Israel's rejection of the Messiah at His first coming. This mystery program must be completed before God will resume His program with Israel and bring it to completion.

### The Doctrine of Imminence

Many signs were given to Israel which would precede the Second Coming of Christ. But to the church no such signs were given. The church was told to live in the light of the imminent (at any moment) coming of the Lord (John 14:2-3; Acts 1:11; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 1:10; 1 Tim. 6:14; Jas. 5:8). Believers are to be expecting an any-minute Rapture, not looking for signs that precede His coming.

### Distinctions between the Rapture and the Second Coming

#### The Rapture

- All believers are removed from the earth.
- Christ never appears on the earth.
- The saints are caught up into the air. (The action is up.)
- Christ comes to claim a bride.
- The Tribulation is about to begin.
- It is an imminent event.
- It brings a message of comfort.
- It is related to the church.
- It is a mystery (not revealed in the Old Testament).
- Believers are rewarded.
- Creation is unchanged.
- The Gentiles as a group are unaffected.
- Israel's covenants are unaffected.
- It takes place before the Day of Wrath.
- The expectation of the church is that *the Lord is at hand* (Phil. 4:5).
- The church is taken into the Lord's presence.
- It's a blessing for believers.

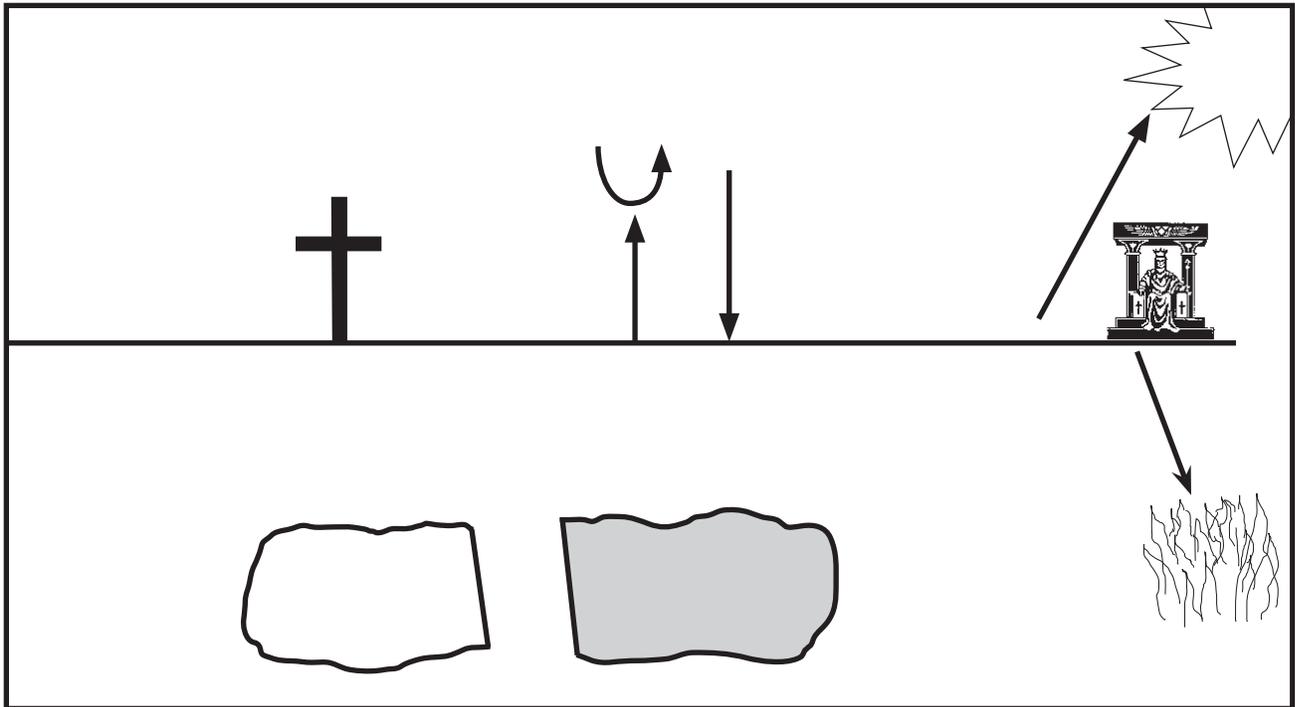
#### The Second Coming

- All unbelievers are removed from the earth.
- Christ appears to all the earth.
- Christ returns to the earth. (The action is down.)
- Christ returns with a bride.
- The Millennial Kingdom is about to begin.
- It is preceded by a multitude of signs.
- It brings a message of fear and judgment.
- It is related to Israel and the world.
- It is revealed in both Testaments.
- Gentiles and Israel are judged.
- Creation is changed.
- The Gentiles are judged.
- Israel's covenants are fulfilled.
- It follows the Day of Wrath.
- The expectation of Israel is that *the Kingdom is at hand* (Matt. 24:14).
- Israel is taken into the Kingdom.
- It's a judgment for unbelievers.

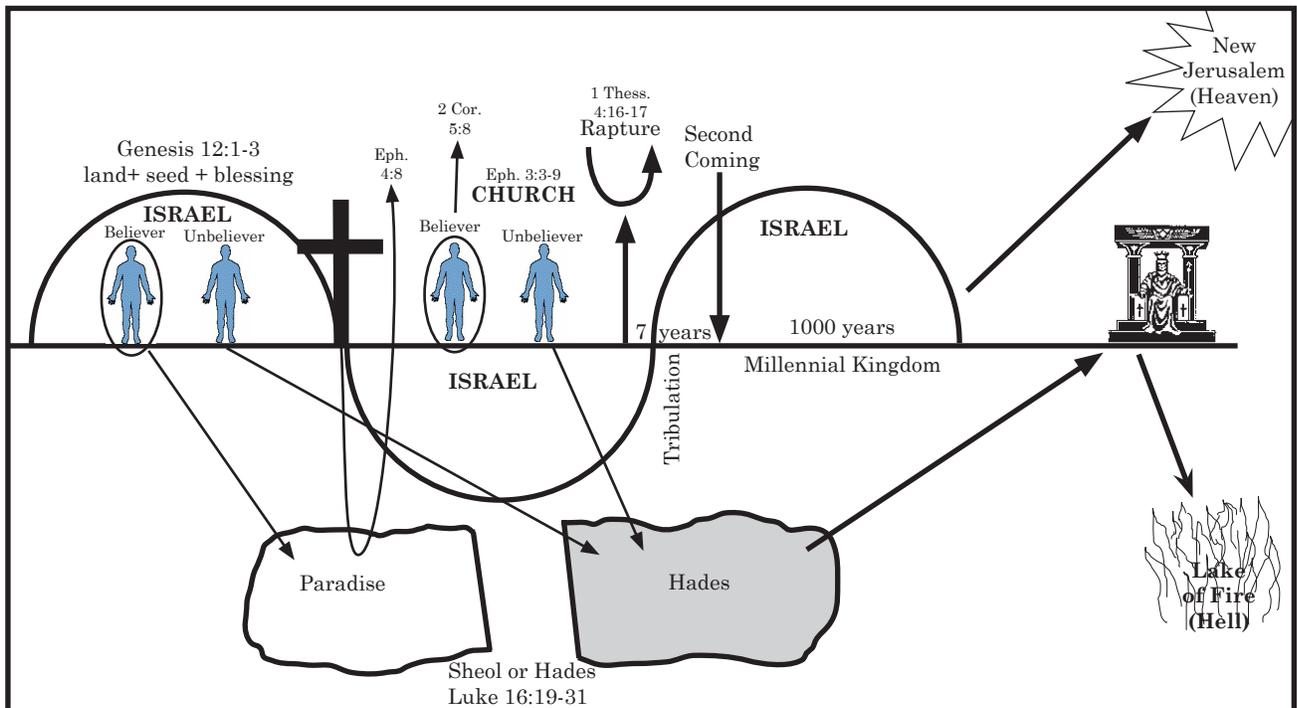
\*See the Appendix for other views of the Rapture.

# Drawing What We Have Learned

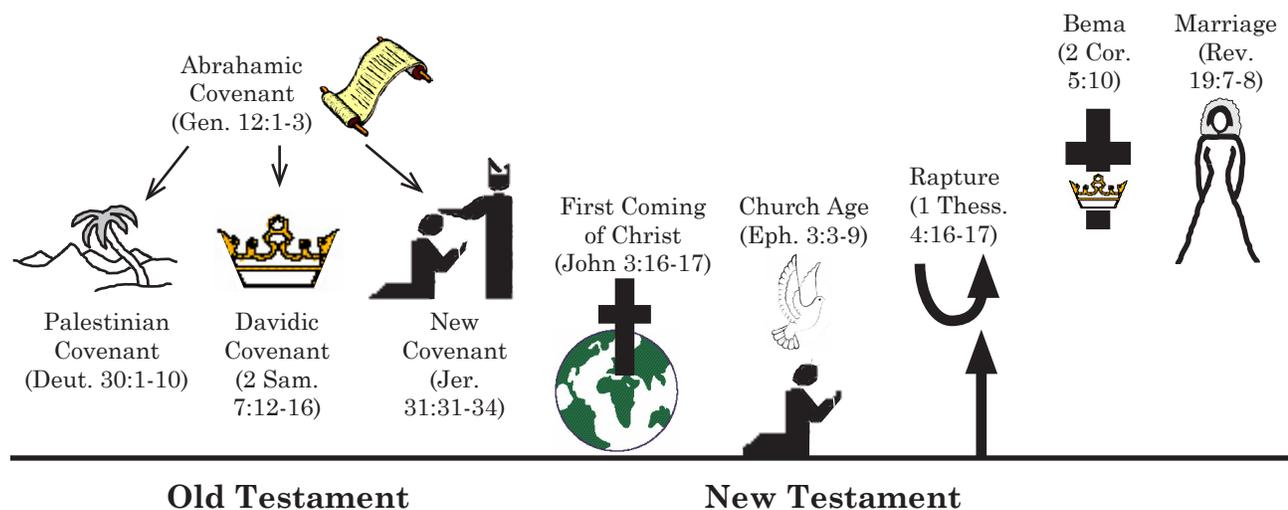
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## 5. The Events for the Church Following the Rapture



### The Bema Seat of Christ

(2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 3:9-15;  
see also 1 Corinthians 9:17, 24-27; James 5:7-9, 12; and 2 John 8)

**What does it mean?** In these passages, the Greek word *bema* is used. *In Grecian games in Athens, the old arena contained a raised platform on which the president or umpire of the arena sat. From here he rewarded all the contestants; and here he rewarded all winners. It was called the “bema” or “reward seat”* [L. Sale-Herrison, “Judgment Seat of Christ,” New York: Hepzibah House, 1938, p. 8].

**When will it happen?** It takes place following the Rapture of the church. According to Luke 14:14, reward is associated with the resurrection (1 Thess. 4:13-17), which happens at the Rapture. When the Lord returns to the earth with His bride to reign, the bride is seen as already rewarded (Rev. 19:8).

**Where does it happen?** It takes place in the Lord’s presence in the sphere of the “heavens” (1 Thess. 4:17; 2 Cor. 5:1-8).

**Who is the examiner?** The Son of God (John 5:22; Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10).

**Who are the examined?** Only believers from the church age (2 Cor. 5:1-19).

**What is the basis of examination?** The question of salvation is not being considered (Rom. 8:1). The sin issue is not being considered (*their sins and iniquities will I remember no more*—Heb. 10:17). This is an individual examination of each believer before the Lord. The *quality* of the believer’s works are examined (1 Cor. 3:13-15), called *the things done in his body* (2 Cor. 5:10), in order that it may be determined whether they are good or bad (not in the sense of moral evil but rather that which is acceptable and that which is worthless in God’s sight).

## What Are the Results of this Examination?

### Rewards:

- An imperishable crown is given for those who get mastery over the old man (1 Cor. 9:24-27).
- A crown of rejoicing is given for soul winners (1 Thess. 2:19).
- A crown of life is given for those enduring trials (James 1:12).
- A crown of righteousness is given for loving His appearing (2 Tim. 4:8).
- A crown of glory is given for being willing to feed the flock of God (1 Pet. 5:4).
- Rewards are lost for not watching yourself and losing the crown that has been already accomplished in you (1 Cor. 9:27; 2 John 8).

### Glorified:

- Each person will have a different capacity to manifest the glory of Christ, but each will be filled to his own capacity (Dan. 12:3; Matt. 13:43; Rom. 8:17; 1 Cor. 15:40-41, 49).

### Reign:

- We will reign with Christ (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:6).

## The Marriage of the Lamb

(John 3:29; Rom. 7:4; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25-33; Rev. 19:7-8; 21:1-22:7)

**What Does It Mean?** At the Rapture of the church, Christ will appear as a bridegroom to take His bride unto Himself, so that the relationship that was pledged might be consummated and that the two might become one.

**When Does It Happen?** The marriage takes place between the bema of Christ [because the bride appears in the *righteousness of the saints* (Rev. 19:8), which can only refer to those things that have been accepted at the bema seat of Christ] and the Second Coming of Christ. [*The marriage of the Lamb has come* (Rev. 19:7) is the aorist tense of the verb, indicating a completed act.]

**Where Does It Happen?** Because it follows the bema seat of Christ, which has been shown to be in the heavenlies, and because it is from the air (the church comes when the Lord returns—Rev. 19:14), the marriage must take place in heaven.

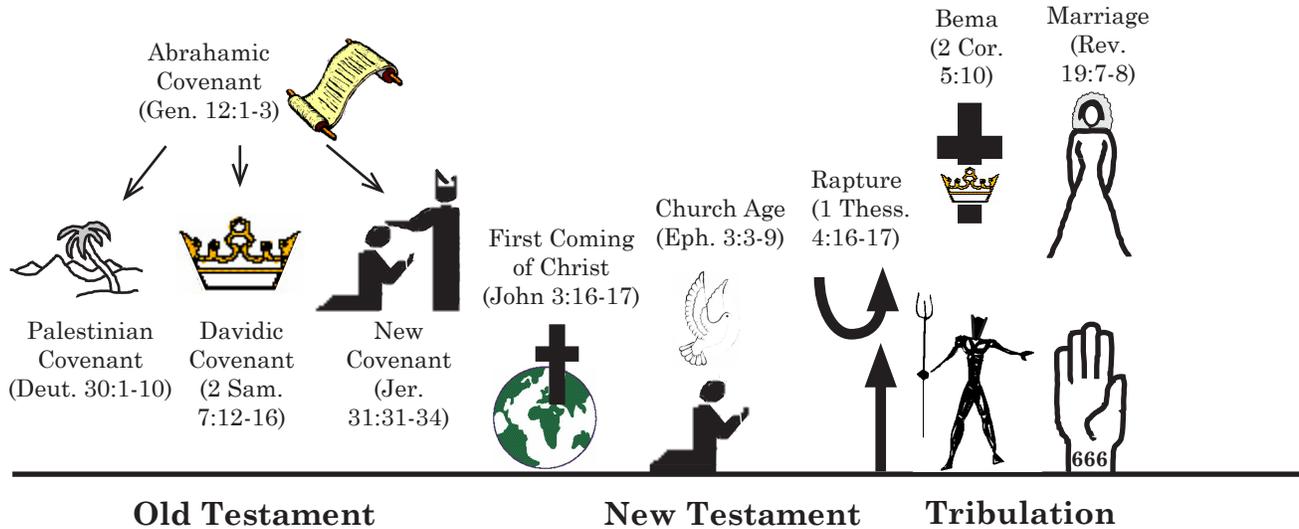
**Who Participates?** It evidently involves only Christ and the church.

It seems there is a distinction between the marriage of the Lamb and the marriage supper.\*

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\*The marriage supper is an event that involves Israel and takes place on the earth. In Matthew 22:1-14; Luke 14:16-24; and Matthew 25:1-13, Israel is waiting for the return of the bridegroom and the bride (the Second Coming). The wedding supper becomes a parable picture of the entire millennial age. During the tribulation period, Israel will be invited to enter the millennial age. Many will reject that invitation and will then be cast out. But many will accept, and they will be received into the Millennium. Because of rejection, the invitation will also go to the Gentiles so that many of them will be included in the Millennial Kingdom.

## 6. The Tribulation Period



It is impossible to set forth all the declarations of the Scripture on this subject. The line of revelation begins early in the Old Testament and continues through the New. The Apostle John summarizes this period when he writes, *And the kings of the earth and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"* (Rev. 6:15-17; emphasis mine; see also Deut. 4:30-31; Isa. 2:19; 24:1, 3, 6, 19-21; 26:20-21; Jer. 30:7; Dan. 9:27; 12:1; Joel 1:15; 2:1-2; Amos 5:18, 20; Zeph. 1:14-15, 18; Matt. 24:21-22; Luke 21:25-26; 1 Thess. 5:3; and Rev. 3:10).

### The Nature of the Tribulation

It is a time of: *wrath* (Zeph. 1:15, 18; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9; Rev. 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:10, 19; 15:1, 7); *judgment* (Rev. 14:7; 16:5, 7; 19:2); *trial* (Rev. 3:10); *trouble* (Jer. 30:7; Zeph. 1:14-15; Dan. 12:1); *destruction* (Joel 1:15; 1 Thess. 5:3); *darkness* (Joel 2:2; Amos 5:18; Zeph. 1:14-18); *desolation* (Dan. 9:27; Zeph. 1:14-15); *overturning* (Isa. 24:1-4, 19-21); and *punishment* (Isa. 24:20-21).

### The Source of the Tribulation

- (1) The wrath of Satan and his hatred for Israel (Rev. 12:12-17).
- (2) The wrath of the Beast, Satan's puppet (called the Antichrist), against the saints (Rev. 13:7).
- (3) Primarily the wrath and judgment of God Himself upon the earth (Isa. 24:1; 26:21; Joel 1:15; Zeph. 1:18; Rev. 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:10, 19; 15:4, 7; 16:1, 7, 19; 19:1-2).

### The Purpose of the Tribulation

- (1) The first purpose is to prepare the nation Israel for her Messiah, to bring about the conversion of a multitude of Jews who will enter into the blessings of the Kingdom and experience the fulfillment of all Israel's covenants (Deut. 4:30; Jer. 30:7; Ezek. 20:37; Dan. 12:1; Zech. 13:8-9; Matt. 24:9-26; Rev. 7:4-8; 12:1-2; 17). It is also God's purpose to populate the Millennium with a multitude of saved Gentiles, who are redeemed through the preaching of the believing remnant (Rev. 7:9; Matt. 25:31-46).
- (2) The second great purpose of the Tribulation is to pour out judgment on unbelieving man and nations (Rev. 3:10). God is judging the nations of the earth because of their godlessness (Jer. 25:32-33; 2 Thess. 2:12). *For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity* (Isa. 26:21). They have been deceived by the false teaching of the harlot system (Rev. 14:8), they have followed the false prophet in the worship of the beast (Rev. 13:11-18) and have *blasphemed the name of God ... and they repented not to give Him glory* (Rev. 16:9). Since the Kingdom to follow is a reign of righteousness, this judgment must be viewed as another step in the progress of God's program in dealing with sin so that the Messiah may reign.

# Major Bible Passages Outlining the Tribulation

## Matthew 24 and 25—Christ’s Chronological Order for the Tribulation

- In the first half of the Tribulation, Israel will receive chastisements (vv. 4-8, also the seals of Revelation 6), although they dwell in relative safety under the false covenant with the Antichrist (Dan. 9:27).
- In the middle of the 7 years, persecution will break out (v. 9; Rev. 12:12-17) because of the one who makes desolate [the beast, i.e., the Antichrist] (v. 15; 2 Thess. 2; Rev. 13:1-10), who will cause the Israelites to flee from the land (vv. 16-20).
- Unbelieving Israel will be deceived by the False Prophet (v. 11; Rev. 13:11-18) and go into apostasy (v. 12; 2 Thess. 2:11).
- Believing Israel will be a witnessing people, carrying the Good News that these events herald the approach of the Messiah (v. 14).
- This period will end with the Second Coming of the Messiah (vv. 27, 30-37).
- The event following the Second Coming will be the regathering of Israel to the land (Deut. 30:3-4; Ezek. 20:33-49; 37:1-14).
- The illustrative parables emphasize people occupied with the usual things of life without any thought of the Messiah’s return:
  - (a) Fig tree (24:32-36)—Shows that when the trouble begins, Christ will come soon.
  - (b) Days of Noah (24:37-39)—Shows the unpreparedness for judgment.
  - (c) Two in a field and two in the mill (24:40-41)—Pictures the unexpectedness of the Lord’s coming.
  - (d) Faithful and faithless servants (24:45-51).
  - (e) Ten virgins (25:1-13)—Predicts Christ coming with His bride (the church) and unbelieving Israelites taken into judgment and believing Israelites going on into the Millennial Kingdom.
  - (f) Ten talents (25:14-30)—The same as the ten virgins (see also Ezek. 20:37-42). These also include the same judgment of Gentiles.

## Daniel’s Description of the Tribulation

### Times of the Gentiles

The “times of the Gentiles” described by Christ in Luke 21:24 is the period in which Jerusalem will be under the authority of Gentiles. It began with the Babylonian Captivity, has continued into the present time, and will continue through the tribulation period. It ends at the Second Coming of Christ to the earth. In Daniel 2, the course of the world empires is viewed from man’s perspective as a glorious image. These same empires are viewed from the Divine viewpoint as four wild beasts which devour and destroy all before them and are worthy of judgment. The first is the Babylonian Empire, the second is the Medo-Persian Empire, the third is the Greek Empire, and the final one is the Roman Empire. The first three empires were conquered. The Roman Empire faded away but will one day return as the empire of the Antichrist. From Daniel, we see the following:

- There must be a realignment of nations to constitute the final form of the fourth world empire. This empire will be the one smitten by the “stone” [Jesus Christ] (2:35). It will be made up of ten different parts (2:33; 7:7). It will be an outgrowth from and final development of the fourth great empire (Rome). It will have one head (the Antichrist), who will have overthrown three of the existing heads of state in his ascendancy to power (7:8).
- The head of this empire (the Antichrist) will be a blasphemer (7:8, 25), a persecutor of the saints (7:25), and the special enemy of God and God’s program with Israel.
- This head of the empire will make a covenant with Israel to restore their sovereignty (9:27), which he will break (9:27).
- This leader will invade Palestine (11:41) and set up headquarters there (11:45).
- He will be judged at the return of the Lord (7:11, 26).
- The destruction of this leader and his hosts will redeem Jerusalem from Gentile control (7:18, 22, 27).
- This deliverance takes place at the Second Coming of the Messiah (7:13; 2:35).

## The Seventy "Weeks" of Daniel 9:24-27

- The 70 "weeks" are literally 70 periods of seven. So the "week" is obviously a period of seven years, as it is in Genesis 29:27. These 70 periods of seven are divided into three lesser periods: first, a period of seven "weeks," after that a period of three-score and two "weeks," and finally, a period of one "week" (vv. 25, 27).
- The beginning of the whole period of the 70 weeks is definitely fixed at *the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem* (v. 25).
- The end of the *seven weeks and threescore and two weeks* (69 weeks) will be marked by the appearance of *Messiah the Prince of Israel* (v. 25).
- After this first 69 periods of seven years, the *Messiah the Prince will be cut off and Jerusalem will again be destroyed* by the people of another "prince" who is yet to come, that is, the Antichrist (v. 26).
- After these two important events, we come to the last, or 70th, period of seven years, the beginning of which will be marked by the establishment of a firm covenant or treaty between the coming prince and the Jewish nation for one period of seven years (v. 27).
- In the midst of this period of seven, evidently breaking his treaty, the coming prince will suddenly cause the Jewish sacrifice to cease and precipitate upon this people a time of wrath (called the *abomination of desolation* by Christ in Matthew 24:15), lasting to the full end of the period of seven (v. 27).
- With the full completion of the whole period of the 70 periods of seven, there will be ushered in a time of great and unparalleled blessings for the nation of Israel.

So a brief overview of this seventy periods of 7 is:

+				
The command to rebuild Jerusalem = Artaxerxes in 444 B.C. (Nehemiah 2:1-8)	7 + 62 = 69 x 7 years = 483 years in Jewish calendar x 360 days in a prophetic year = 173,880 days	The Messiah cut off in 33 A.D., the end of the 69th Week	The Church Age Parenthesis	70th Week of Daniel = 7-year Tribulation

- So this 70th week is a period of seven years which lies prophetically between the Rapture of the church and the return of Christ in glory.
- This 70th week also provides the exact chronological framework for the great events recorded in chapters 6 to 19 in the book of Revelation.
- The 70th week will begin with the making of a *firm covenant* between the coming Roman European prince (the Antichrist) and the Jewish people.
- In the middle of the 70th week, the European prince will suddenly reverse his friendly attitude toward the Jews and *cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease*.
- The breaking of the *firm covenant* between the Jews and the European prince will make the beginning of a period of unparalleled *desolations* for the Jewish people.
- The end of this final seven-year period will bring to its close the entire series of the 70 weeks, and therefore, begin the great blessings promised to Israel in Daniel 9:24.

## The Book of Revelation

I. **The Present**—1:1 to 3:22 presents messages to the Asian churches.

II. **The Future**—4:1 to 5:14 is the scene in heaven before the throne of God when Jesus *the Lamb that was slain* is found worthy to open the seals on the book of judgment to be poured out upon the earth.

A. **The Tribulation**—chapters 6 to 18

### Seven Seals:

1st Seal—A white horse of peace (6:2)

2nd Seal—A red horse of war (6:3-4)

3rd Seal—A black horse of famine (6:5-6)

4th Seal—A pale horse of death (6:7-8)

5th Seal—Martyred believers under the altar (6:9-11)

6th Seal—Physical changes and loss of authorities (6:12-17)

[7:1-17 has further details plus the description of the 144,000 sealed Israelite evangelists]

7th Seal—Silence, golden censer, and fire from the altar, to prepare for the Trumpets (8:1-5)

#### **Seven Trumpets:**

1st Trumpet—Hail, fire, blood, 1/3 of earth is burned (8:7)

2nd Trumpet—1/3 of sea becomes blood, 1/3 of sea creatures and ships are destroyed (8:8-9)

3rd Trumpet—1/3 of rivers become bitter (8:10-11)

4th Trumpet—1/3 of the day is taken away, now 16 hours (8:12-13, see also Matt. 24:22)

5th Trumpet—Demons from the bottomless pit torment men for five months (9:1-12)

6th Trumpet—An army of 200 million kills 1/3 of mankind (9:13-19)

[10:1—11:14 gives further details and tells about God's two witnesses (their identity is unknown)]

7th Trumpet—An earthquake and hailstorm (11:15-19)

[12:1—14:20 has further details about Israel, the False Prophet, and the 666]

#### **Seven Bowls:**

1st Bowl—Boils appear on those who have the 666 mark of the beast (16:2)

2nd Bowl—Everything in the sea is killed (16:3)

3rd Bowl—All the rivers become blood (16:4-7)

4th Bowl—There is great heat (16:8-9)

5th Bowl—There is darkness and pain (16:10-11)

6th Bowl—The Euphrates River dries up (16:12)

7th Bowl—There is a great earthquake with 100-pound hail (16:17-21)

[17:1—18:24 describes the fall of Babylon, Satan's system]

**B. The Second Coming of Christ**—chapter 19

**C. The 1000-year Kingdom and the Great White Throne Judgment**—chapter 20

**D. The New Heavens and a New Earth**—chapters 21 and 22

## **The Key Persons of the Tribulation**

**Jesus Christ**—He is the only one found worthy to pour out the judgments of God upon the earth (Rev. 4 and 5). Then after the final judgment, He Himself comes as the Judge to destroy all evil from the earth (Rev. 19).

**Holy Spirit**—The work of the Holy Spirit as a restrainer of evil (2 Thess. 2:7-8) and as an indwelling presence in believers (1 Cor. 6:19, 20) stops. However, the Holy Spirit continues to be involved in the salvation of man, just as in the Old Testament. Salvation is individual (Dan. 12:1; Joel 2:31-32), accepted by faith (Heb. 11:1-40; Rom. 4:2), and is based on the blood sacrifice of the Lamb (Rev. 7:14; 12:11; 14:4).

**144,000**—These are 12,000 Israelites from each of the 12 tribes of Israel who become believers during the Tribulation time. They are evangelists who have the seal of God on their foreheads (Rev. 7:1-8; 9:4; 14:1-4).

**Two Witnesses**—These are two men who prophesy during the last half of the Tribulation. No one can harm them. Towards the end of the Tribulation, Satan kills them and allows their bodies to lie in the streets of Jerusalem for all the world to see for 3 1/2 days. The world *makes merry, and they will send gifts to one another* in their rejoicing over the death of God's witnesses. But after those 3 1/2 days, God raises them from the dead and takes them directly to heaven while their enemies watch in terror (Rev. 11:1-13). There is much speculation on the identity of these witnesses. Some think they will be Moses, Elijah, or Enoch. But the Bible is silent as to their identity.

**The Dragon**—This is Satan (Rev. 20:2). He gives his power to the Antichrist (Rev. 13:2). He is *enraged ... with those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus* (Rev. 12:17). He took 1/3 of the angels with him in his fall from heaven (Rev. 12:3-4). These are called demons, some of which are so horrible they are kept in an abyss or bottomless pit and released during the fifth trumpet (Rev. 9:1-12; Luke 8:31-32). At Christ's Second Coming, Satan is bound in the abyss for the 1000-year reign of Christ on the earth (perhaps demonstrating that man continues to sin without the temptation of Satan). *Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations ... to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore* (Rev. 20:7-10). But fire comes

from heaven to destroy the army, and Satan is thrown directly into the lake of fire and brimstone where he *will be tormented day and night forever and ever* (Rev. 20:10).

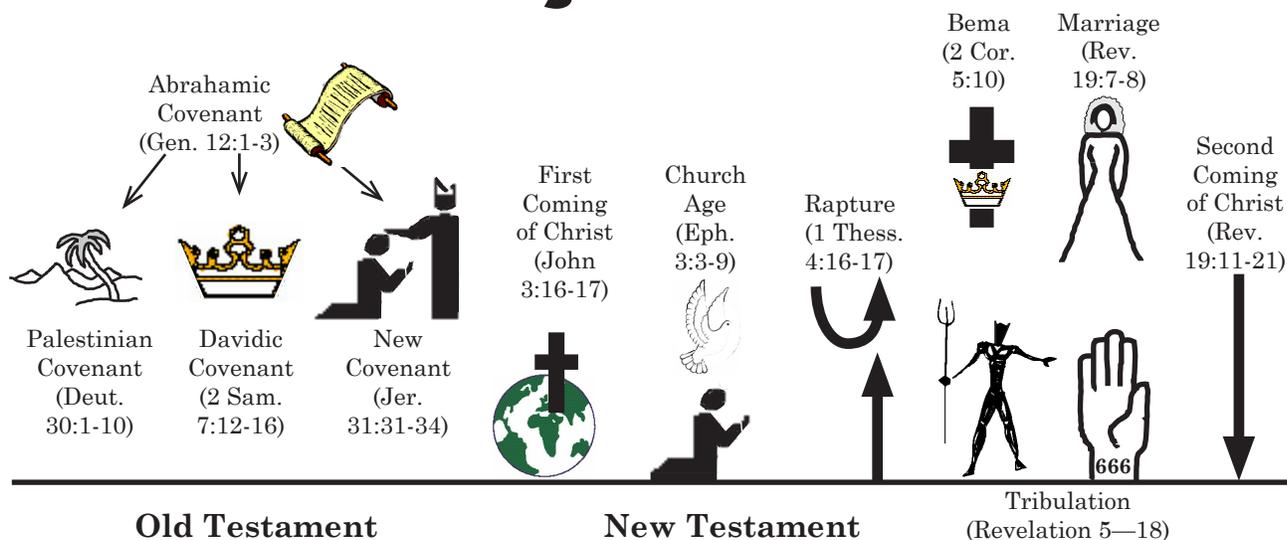
**The Antichrist**—His person and work are presented in Ezekiel 28:1-10; Daniel 7:7-8, 20-26; 8:23-25; 9:26-27; 11:36-45; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10; Revelation 13:1-10; 17:8-14. Here is an overview:

- He will appear in the *latter times* of Israel's history (Dan. 8:23).
- His being revealed is hindered by the Restrainer (2 Thess. 2:6-7).
- He comes from the Roman European Empire, the people who destroyed Jerusalem (Dan. 9:26).
- He is the head of this Roman European Empire (Rev. 13:1), so he is a political leader.
- His influence is world-wide (Rev. 13:8).
- This influence comes from the alliance he makes with other nations (Dan. 8:24; Rev. 17:12).
- He has eliminated 3 rulers in his rise to power (Dan. 7:8, 24).
- His rise to power comes through his peace program (Dan. 8:25) with an attempt to solve the world's economic problems (Rev. 13:16-18).
- He personally is marked by his intelligence and persuasiveness (Dan. 7:8, 20; 8:23).
- He rules over the nations with absolute authority (Dan. 11:36).
- He changes the laws and customs (Dan. 7:25).
- His chief interest is in might and power (Dan. 11:38).
- As the head of the empire, he makes a seven-year covenant with Israel (Dan. 9:27), which he breaks after 3 1/2 years (Dan. 9:27).
- He introduces idolatrous worship where he sets himself up as god (Dan. 11:36-37; 2 Thess. 2:4).
- He gets his authority and power from Satan (Ezek. 28:9-12; Rev. 13:4), is the head of Satan's lawless system (2 Thess. 2:3), and proves his deity by signs done with Satanic power (2 Thess. 2:9-19).
- He becomes the enemy of Israel (Dan. 7:21, 25; 8:24; Rev. 13:7).
- He makes his headquarters in Jerusalem (Dan. 11:45).
- He becomes the enemy of Christ (Dan. 8:25), Christ's program (2 Thess 2:4; Rev. 17:14), and Christ's people (Dan. 7:21, 25; 8:24; Rev. 13:7).
- His rule will end by a direct judgment from God (Dan. 7:22, 26; 9:27; 11:45; Rev. 19:19-20).
- This judgment will take place when he has the armies of the earth gathered together in the valley called Armageddon (Rev. 16:13-16; 19:11-21) and attacks Jerusalem. There are 5 armies: (1) the ten-nation empire under the Antichrist, (2) the northern army of Russia, (3) the kings of the East, the Asiatic people from beyond the Euphrates River, (4) the king of the South, a north African power, and (5) the Lord and His armies from heaven (Dan. 11:40; Ezek. 38-39).
- This judgment will take place at the Second Coming of Christ (Rev. 19:11-21).
- Christ casts the Antichrist directly into the Lake of Fire for eternity (Rev. 19:20).

**The False Prophet**—called the *second beast* in Revelation 13:11-17.

- He is possibly a Jew because he arises out of the earth, or land, that is, Palestine (Rev. 13:11).
- He is influential in religious affairs (Rev. 13:12).
- He is motivated by Satan, just as the Antichrist will be (Rev. 13:11).
- He has the authority and power of the Antichrist (Rev. 13:13).
- He promotes worship of the Antichrist and forces the earth to worship the Antichrist as god (Rev. 13:14).
- His ministry is authenticated by signs and miracles (Rev. 13:13-14).
- He is successful in deceiving the unbelieving world (Rev. 13:14).
- He has authority to control all economic commerce (Rev. 13:16-17).
- He causes the mark 666 to be put on men as an identification with the Antichrist in order to buy and sell (Rev. 13:16-18).
- He is called the false prophet (Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10) and together with the dragon (Satan) and the Antichrist, he makes up an unholy trinity, or the trinity of hell.
- He is judged by Christ at His Second Coming (Rev. 19:11-21) and is cast directly into the Lake of Fire for eternity (Rev. 19:20).

## 7. The Second Coming of Christ



*But 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 the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory (Matthew 24:29-30).*

*And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war. And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself. And 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. And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite 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 (Rev. 19:11-16).*

### The Resurrections at the Time of the Second Coming of Christ

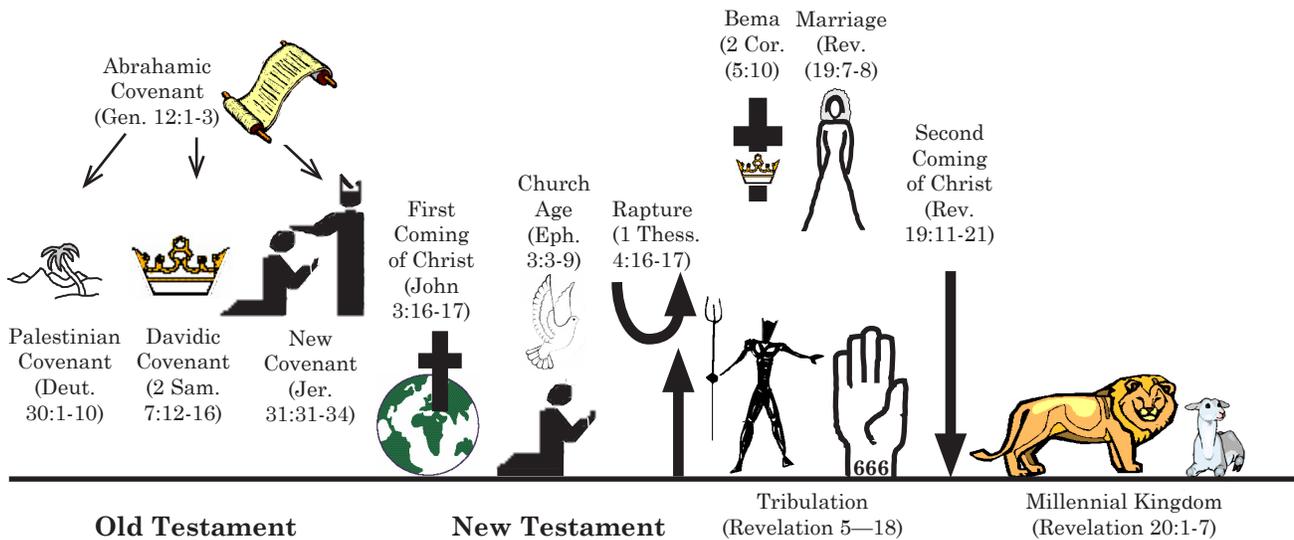
- **Old Testament Saints**—These saints will be resurrected at the Second Coming of Christ. *And as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God (Job 19:25; Dan. 12:1-3; Isa. 26:16-21).*
- **Tribulation Saints**—These saints will be resurrected at the Second Coming of Christ. *And I saw the souls of those who ... had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead ... and they came to life (Rev. 20:4).*

### Judgments

- **Old Testament Saints**—... *and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord ... “They will be Mine,” says the Lord of hosts, “on the day that I prepare My own possession ... so you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked ...” (Mal. 3:16-18; Dan. 12:1).*
- **Tribulation Saints**—*and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4).*
- **Israelites and Gentiles Living at the End of the Tribulation**—The Israelites will pass through a judgment of God. Those who are believers will go on into the blessings of the Millennial Kingdom, *and I shall purge from you the rebels and those who transgress against Me; ... they will not enter the land of Israel (Ezek. 20:35-38).* The Gentiles are also judged at this time as a separation of the sheep from the goats (Matt. 25:31-46).

Notice that all believers are taken at the Rapture, therefore, the Tribulation begins with all unbelievers, though many will quickly accept Christ. At the Second Coming, all unbelievers are taken, therefore, the Millennial Kingdom begins with all believers, though people continue to be born and there will soon be many unbelievers (*number of them is like the sand of the seashore—Rev. 20:8*).

## 8. The Millennial Kingdom



*And I saw the souls of those who ... had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years [Millennium] ... 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 (Rev. 20:3, 4, 6, and 7).*

### The Millennial Kingdom and Israel's Covenants

**The Abrahamic Covenant**—The believing remnant of Israel who lived through the Tribulation will have possession of the land, will multiply, and be blessed by God. *Behold, I will gather them out of all the lands to which I have driven them ...; and I will bring them back to this place and make them dwell in safety. They shall be My people, and I will be their God (Jer. 32:37-38; Isa. 10:21-22; 43:1; 65:8-9; Jer. 30:22; Mic. 7:19-20; Zech. 13:9; Mal. 3:16-18).*

**The Palestinian Covenant**—The Israelites will live in the land of Israel, *and you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers (Ezek. 36:28-29; Is. 11:1-12; 65:9; Ezek. 16:60-63; 39:28; Hos. 1:10–2:1).*

**The Davidic Covenant**—“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, ‘The Lord our righteousness’” (Jer. 23:5-8; 33:20-26; Isa. 11:1-2; 55:3, 11; Ezek. 34:23-25; 37:23-24; Hos. 3:5; 2 Samuel 7:12).

**The New Covenant**—“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. And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall 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” (Jer. 31:31-34; 32:35-39; Ezek. 11:18-20; 16:60-63; 37:26; Rom. 11:26-29).

The Millennial Kingdom will be the complete fulfillment of all that God promised to the nation Israel.

## The Relation of Satan to the Millennium

*And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having 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 threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed* (Rev. 20:1-3). The millennial age is a rule of divine righteousness (Isa. 11:5; 32:1; Jer. 23:6; Dan. 9:24). It is also God's final test of fallen humanity under the most ideal circumstances. So all outward sources of temptation must be removed so that man can show what he is apart from Satanic influence. Therefore, at the Second Coming, Satan will be bound and removed from the earth for the entire 1,000 years.

## The Relation of Christ to the Millennium

Through Jesus Christ, the King, mankind will see all the attributes of God so that Christ might be glorified as God. Each of the names given to Christ during this time describe some aspect of His person and work. Here are just a few of those: *son of Abraham* (Gen. 17:8; Gal. 3:16); *son of David* (Isa. 9:7); *son of man* (John 5:27); *King* (Isa. 32:1; Rev. 19:16); *God the Son* (Isa. 9:6; Heb. 1:8-10); *Redeemer* (Isa. 59:20-21); *Judge* (Isa. 61:2; 62:11); *Rewarder of the Saints* (Isa. 62:11); *Teacher* (Isa. 2:3; Zech. 8:22); *Prophet* (Deut. 18:15, 18); *Lawgiver* (Isa. 33:22); *Shepherd* (Isa. 40:10-11); *the Lord our righteousness* (Jer. 23:6; 33:16); *the Stone* (Isa. 28:16; Zech. 3:9); *the Light* (Isa. 60:1-3).

## The Spiritual Character of the Millennium

- It will be a kingdom of righteousness. *Jehovah reigneth! He shall judge the people righteously* (Psa. 96:10; Isa. 11:4-5; 16:5; 32:1).
- It will be a kingdom of complete obedience to God (Jer. 31:33; Psa. 37:9-10; Psa. 22:27-28).
- It will be a kingdom of holiness (Isa. 4:3-4; Psa. 60:6; Joel 3:17; Ezek. 43:7, 12; Psa. 47:8-9; Zech. 14:20).
- It will be a kingdom of truth (Psa. 45:4; Zech. 8:3, 8; Isa. 65:16; Jer. 33:6).
- It will be a kingdom characterized by the fullness of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-29; Ezek. 36:27; 37:14; 39:29; Isa. 32:15; 44:3).

## Conditions Existing within the Millennium

- *Peace*—With the end of war and all the kingdoms of the world under the reign of Christ, there is national and individual peace (Isa. 2:4; 9:4-7; 11:6-9; 32:17-18; Ezek. 28:26; Hosea 2:18; Mic. 4:2-3).
- *Joy*—(Isa. 9:3-4; 12:3-6; Jer. 30:18-19; 31:13-14; Zeph. 3:14-17; Zech. 8:18-19; 10:6-7).
- *Holiness*—The land will be holy, the city of Jerusalem will be holy, the Temple will be holy, and the people will be holy unto the Lord (Isa. 1:26-27; Ezek. 36:24-31; Joel 3:21; Zeph. 3:11, 13; Zech. 8:3).
- *Glory*—The full glory of God will be seen (Isa. 4:2; 24:23; 35:2; 40:4; 60:1-9).
- *Comfort*—The king will personally minister to every need, so there will be comfort (Isa. 12:1-2; 30:26; 40:1-2; 49:13; Jer. 31:23-25; Zeph. 3:18-20; Zech. 9:11-12; Rev. 21:4).
- *Justice*—There will be perfect justice to every individual (Isa. 9:7; 11:5; 32:16; Jer. 23:5; 31:23, 29-30).
- *Full Knowledge*—*For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord* (Isa. 11:1-2, 9; 41:19-20).
- *Instruction*—This knowledge will come about through instructions from the King (Isa. 2:2-3; 12:3-6; 25:9; 29:17-24; 30:20-21; 32:3-4; 49:10; 52:8; Jer. 3:14-15; 23:1-4; Mic. 4:2).
- *Modifying the Curse*—The original curse placed upon creation (Gen. 3:17-19) will be modified so that there will be abundant productivity on the earth, and animal creation will be changed so it loses its venom and fierceness (Isa. 11:6-9; 35:9; 65:25).
- *Sickness Removed*—The King will be a healer (Isa. 33:24; Jer. 30:17; Ezek. 34:16).
- *Healing of the Deformed*—Isa. 29:17-19; 35:3-6; 61:1-2; Jer. 31:8; Mic. 4:6-7; Zech. 3:9).
- *Protection*—There will be a supernatural preservation of life through the King (Isa. 41:8-14; 62:8-9; Jer. 23:6; 32:27; Ezek. 34:27; Joel 3:16-17; Amos 9:15; Zech. 8:14-15; 9:8; 14:10-11).
- *Freedom from Oppression*—There will be no social, political, or religious oppression (Isa. 14:3-6; 42:6-7; 49:8-9; Zech. 9:11-12).
- *Longevity Will Be Restored*—*No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, ... the*

*one who does not reach the age of one hundred shall be thought accursed* (Isa. 65:20).

- *Reproduction by the Living People*—The living saints who go into the Millennium in their natural bodies will have children throughout the age. The earth's population will soar. They will be born with a sin nature so they will need to be saved (Jer. 30:20; 31:29; Ezek. 47:22; Zech. 10:8).
- *Labor*—The people will not be idle. Agriculture as well as manufacturing will provide employment (Isa. 62:8-9; 65:21-23; Jer. 31:5; Ezek. 48:18-19).
- *Economic Prosperity*—The perfect labor situation will produce economic abundance, so there will be no want (Isa. 4:1; 35:1-2, 7; 30:23-25; 62:8-9; 65:21-23; Jer. 31:5, 12; Ezek. 34:26; Mic. 4:1, 4; Zech. 8:11-12; 9:16-17; Ezek. 36:29-30; Joel 2:21-27; Amos 9:13-14).
- *Increase of Light*—There is an increase of sunlight and moonlight. This increased light is probably a major cause of increased productivity on the earth (Isa. 4:5; 30:26; 60:19-20; Zech. 2:5).
- *Unified Worship*—All the world will unite in the worship of God and God's Messiah (Isa. 45:23; 52:1, 7-10; 66:17-23; Zech. 8:23; 13:2; 14:16; Zeph. 3:9; Mal. 1:11; Rev. 5:9-14).
- *Presence of God*—God's presence will be fully recognized and fellowship with God will be experienced as never before (Ezek. 37:27-28; Zech. 2:2, 10-13; Rev. 21:3).
- *Fullness of the Spirit*—(Isa. 32:13-15; 44:3; 59:19, 21; 61:1; Ezek. 36:26-27; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28-29; Ezek. 11:19-20).
- *Restoration of Animal Sacrifices*—(Ezek. 45:18-25).
- A river flows out of Jerusalem and freshens the Dead Sea (Ezek. 47:1-11).

## **The Duration of the Millennium**

The Millennium will last 1000 years (Rev. 20:1-6).

## **The Government of the Millennium**

- The government will be a theocracy. It will be a monarchy under divine direction, hence infallible.
- The Messiah, Jesus Christ, is the King (Isa. 2:2-4; 9:3-7; 11:1-10; 16:5; 24:21-23; 31:4-32:2; 42:1-7, 13; 49:1-7; Dan. 2:44; 7:15-28; Obad. 17-21; Mic. 4:1-8; 5:2-5; Zeph. 3:9-10; Zech. 9:10-15; 14:16-17).
- The historical David will be appointed regent over Palestine and will rule over that land as prince, ministering under the authority of Jesus Christ, the King (Isa. 55:3-4; Jer. 30:9; 33:15, 17, 20-21; Ezek. 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Hos. 3:5; Amos 9:11).
- Nobles and governors will reign under David (Jer. 30:21; Isa. 32:1; Ezek. 45:8-9; Matt. 19:28).
- Many lesser authorities will rule (Luke 19:12-28; Isa. 40:10; Zech. 3:7; Rev. 20:4, 6).
- There will be judges (Zech. 3:7; Isa. 1:26).
- Any open acts against the authority of the King will be punished with physical death (Psa. 2:9; 72:1-4; Isa. 29:20-21; 65:20; 66:24; Zech. 14:16-21; Jer. 31:29-30).

## **The People in the Millennium**

Saved Israelites and saved Gentiles who are living at the time of Christ's Second Coming will enter the Millennium. All unbelievers will be killed (Isa. 1:19-31; 65:11-16; 66:15-18; Jer. 25:27-33; 30:23-24; Ezek. 11:21; 20:33-44; Mic. 5:9-15; Zech. 13:9; Mal. 3:2-6; 3:18; 4:3; Matt. 13:30-31, 49-50; Dan. 7:18).

## **Jerusalem and Palestine in the Millennium**

Jerusalem will become the center of the millennial earth (Isa. 2:2-4; Jer. 31:6; Mic. 4:1; Zech. 2:10-11). It will be the center of the kingdom rule (Jer. 3:17; 30:16-17). The city will become a glorious city, bringing honor to Jehovah (Isa. 52:1-12; 60:14-21; Joel 3:17; Zech. 2:1-13). The city will be protected by the power of the King (Isa. 14:32; 25:1-4). It will be greatly enlarged over its former area (Jer. 31:38-40; Ezek. 48:30-35; Zech. 14:10). It will also be the center of worship (Jer. 30:16-21; 31:6, 23; Zech. 8:8, 20-23).

Palestine will be the particular inheritance of Israel (Ezek. 36:8, 12). The land will be greatly enlarged (Isa. 26:15; 33:17; Obad. 17-21). For the first time, Israel will possess all the land promised to Abraham (Gen. 15:18-21). Instead of the mountains of today, a great fertile plain will come into existence at the

Second Coming (Zech. 14:4). This will permit the river to flow out from Jerusalem (Ezek. 47:1-12). There will be renewed fertility and productivity in the land (Isa. 29:17; 32:15; 35:1-7; 51:3; 55:13; 62:8-9; Jer. 31:27-28; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13). There will be an abundance of rainfall, a sign of God's blessing (Isa. 29:17; 32:15; 35:1-7; 51:3; 55:13; Jer. 31:27-28; Ezek. 34:27; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13). And Palestine will be redistributed among the twelve tribes of Israel (Ezek. 48:1-29).

## **Worship in the Millennium**

- *The Temple*—From Ezekiel 40:1—46:24 we learn that the Temple is a literal place. There is a lot of details describing the Temple measurements, etc. But there is no mention of an ark, mercy seat, veil, or cherubim above the mercy seat, or tables of stone. The only furniture is the altar of wood, which represents communion with God. The altar is described (43:12-18), the offerings which will be made are described (43:19-27), and the priests' ministry outlined (44:9-31), and the whole worship ritual is described (45:13—46:18). The description ends telling of the river that flows from the Temple south through Jerusalem and then divides to flow into the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, giving life along its banks.
- *The Purpose of the Temple*—It provides a dwelling-place for the Divine Glory (43:7). It uses sacrifices as a memorial to salvation (similar to what Communion is to us today). It is the place of Christ's throne (43:7), and it is from the Temple that the stream flows with life-giving water.

## **Salvation in the Millennium**

Although the Millennium begins with all believers, people who are born will need salvation. They will receive a new heart (Jer. 31:33), the forgiveness of sins (Jer. 31:34), and the fulness of the Spirit (Joel 2:28-29). This is based on the blood of Jesus Christ (Heb. 8:6; 10:12-18; Matt. 26:28) and received by faith (Heb. 11:6). The expressions of this faith will be different from the expressions of today, but the sacrifices are expressions of the faith and not the means of salvation.

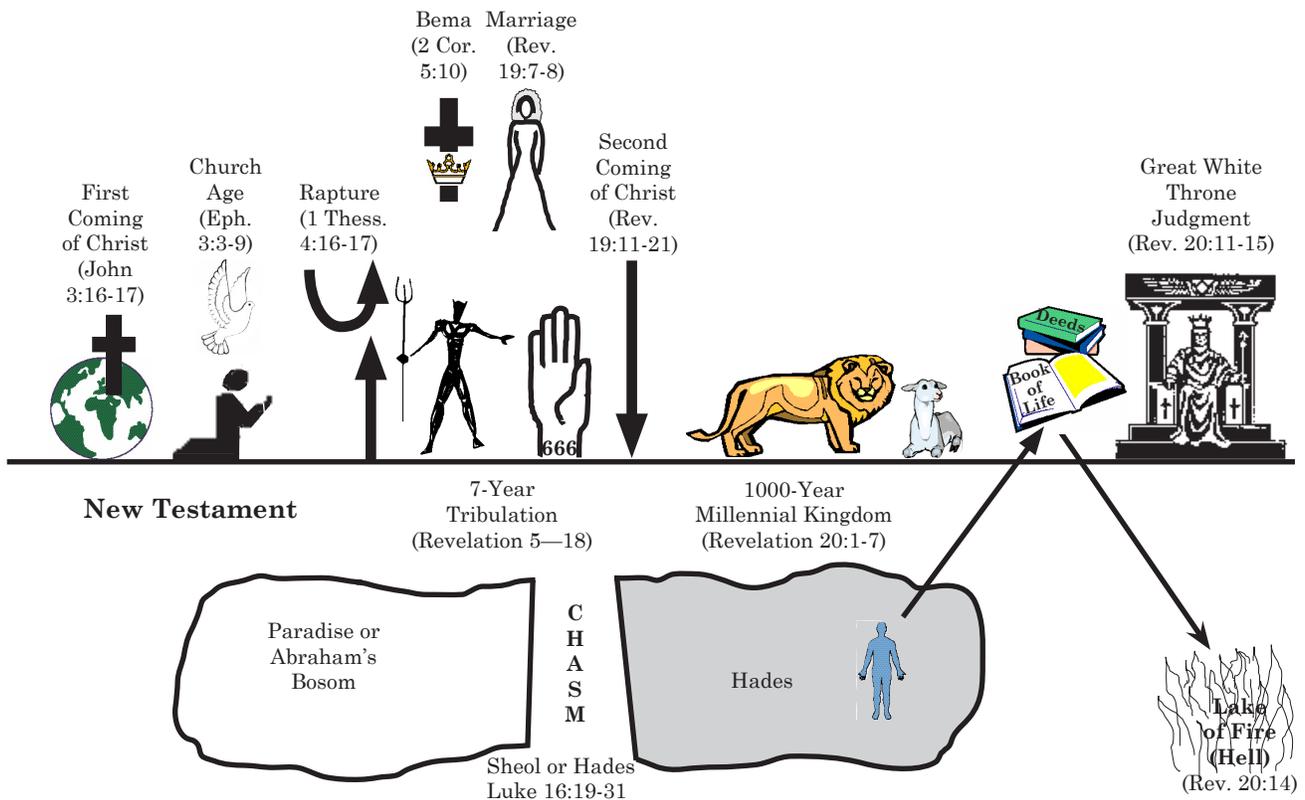
## **The Object of the Thousand Years' Reign**

- *Looked at from God the Father's side:*
  - It will be the public earthly honoring of His Son just where men dishonored Him on this earth.
  - It will be the carrying out of God's promises to His Son, *to give Him the throne of ... David.*
  - It is the final divine trial of sinful man on earth before the earth is destroyed.
  - It will be God's answer (before the *new earth*) of the prayer of His saints: *Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*
- *Looked at from Christ's side:*
  - He receives the kingdom of this world which He has been expecting.
  - He will reign in righteousness.
  - He will share all His kingly honors with His saints.
- *Looked at from the saints' side:*
  - The Millennium brings the three classes of saints (Old Testament, Church Age, and Tribulation) and earthly Israel into a state of blessedness.
  - The physical changes made in the earth reveal some of the loving care God has for His saints.
- *Looked at from the side of the nations of the earth:*
  - It will be a thousand years under the *iron-rod scepter.*
  - But there will be peace at last among the nations, enforced peace, but real peace.
  - All the nations will be made to go up from year to year to worship the King, Jehovah, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.
- *Looked at from the side of "creation":*
  - ... *the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God (Romans 8:20-22).*
  - At the revealing of the sons of God at Christ's coming back to earth, this deliverance will come.

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There are three sequence passages where the chronological order of events are laid out: (1) Daniel 2; 7; and 9:24-27; (2) Matthew 24 and 25; and (3) Revelation 6—22.

# 9. The Great White Throne Judgment



## The Release of Satan and the Satan-Led Revolt (Revelation 20:7-10)

- People born during the Millennium have a sin nature. They need to be saved. Outward conformity to Christ's law will be necessary. But with Satan bound and many temptations removed because of Christ's righteous reign, a test to determine the true heart condition is necessary. Even a righteous reign and all its blessings does not change the heart of man.
- Satan is released after the 1000-year Kingdom. He deceives the nations and gathers the people (the number of whom is as the sand of the sea) and surrounds the saints in Jerusalem.
- But fire comes down from heaven and devours them all, and Satan is thrown into the Lake of Fire.

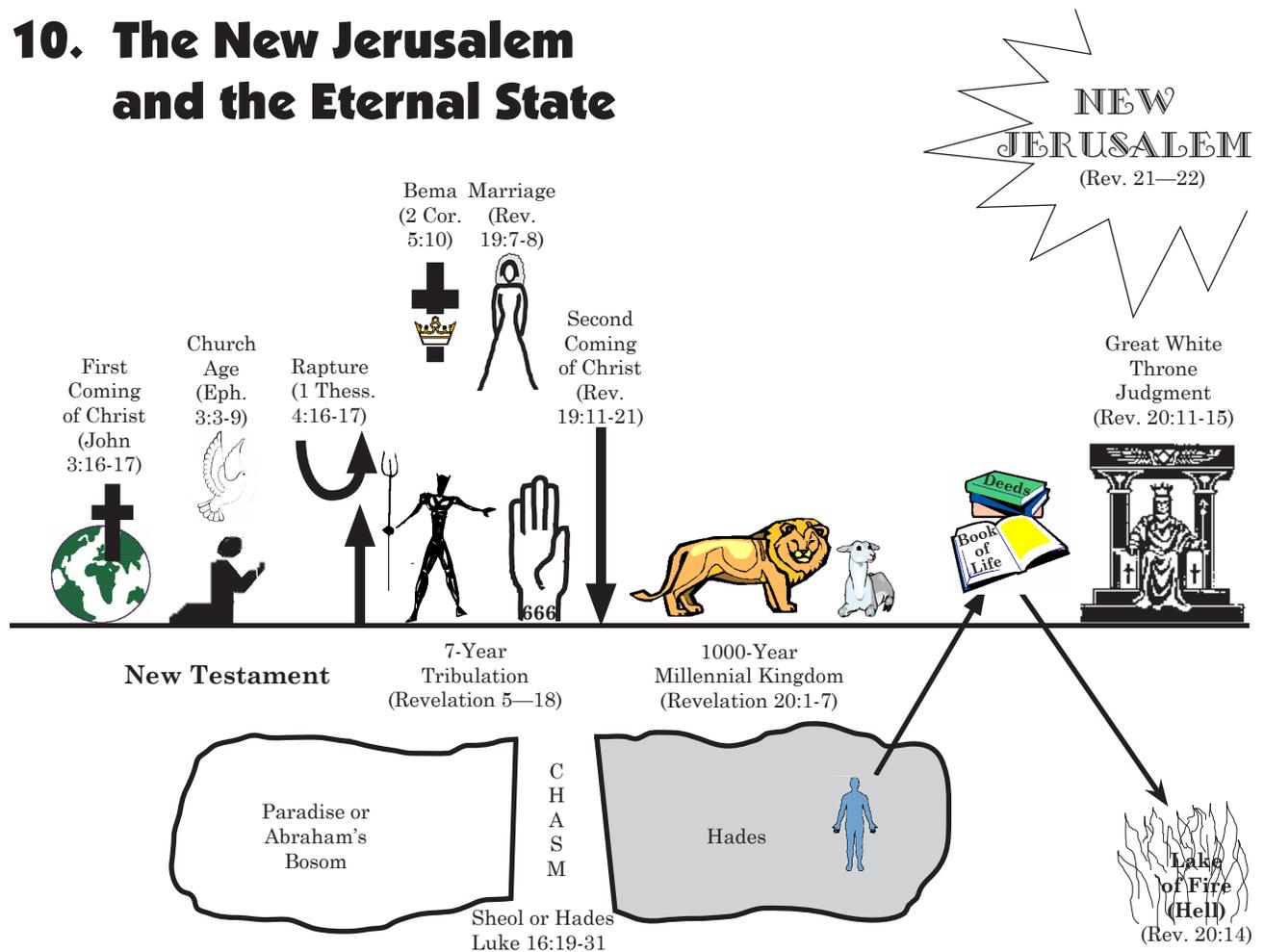
## This Present Earth Destroyed by Fire

*But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men* (2 Pet. 3:7; Matt. 24:35; Heb. 1:10-12; 2 Pet. 3:10-13; Rev. 20:11).

## The Judgment of Sinners (Revelation 20:11-15)

- *And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it* (v. 11). Christ, as the righteous Judge, sits upon the throne (Rev. 19:11).
- Death and Hades give up the dead in them for judgment. The dead, great and small, stand before the throne (v. 12).
- The books are opened: the Book of Life and the books of deeds.
- Then they are judged according to the things written in the books, according to their deeds, good and bad.
- *And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*
- There are varying degrees of punishments for sinners (see Mark 12:40; Luke 12:48; John 19:11).

# 10. The New Jerusalem and the Eternal State



- God will create a new heavens and a new earth (Isa. 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1).
- Christ will dwell among men (Rev. 21:3).
- Christ said, ... *I go to prepare a place for you* (John 14:2). That place is the New Jerusalem.
- The city is described as three-dimensional, with the height, length, and width being approximately 1500 miles, with 12 foundational stones, each a precious stone.
- It is surrounded by a high wall (72 yards = 21 stories), with 12 pearl gates, 3 on each side. And the street of the city will be pure transparent gold (21:21).
- There is no temple because Christ is the temple. There is no need of a sun or moon because the glory of the Lord will be its light (21:22-23).
- There will be a river as clear as crystal flowing from the throne of God in the middle of the street. There will no longer be any curse (22:3) or death or crying or pain (21:4).
- *His bond-servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face ... and they shall reign forever and ever* (22:4-5).

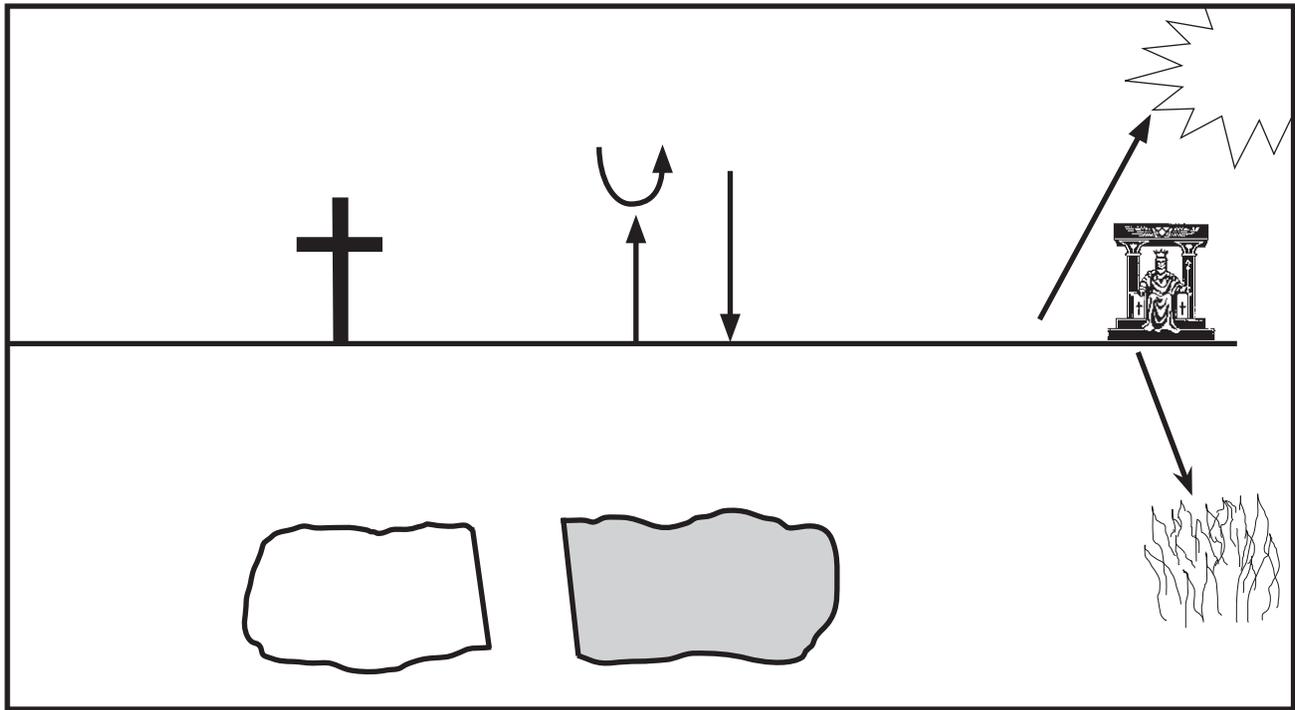
## Conclusion

- John says in Revelation 1:3—*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.*
- The invitation is open, Revelation 22:17—... *let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.*
- John tells us in Revelation 22:18-19 that the revelation of Jesus Christ is complete until He comes. No one is to add to these words or take away from these words. There is no prophecy after the book of Revelation.

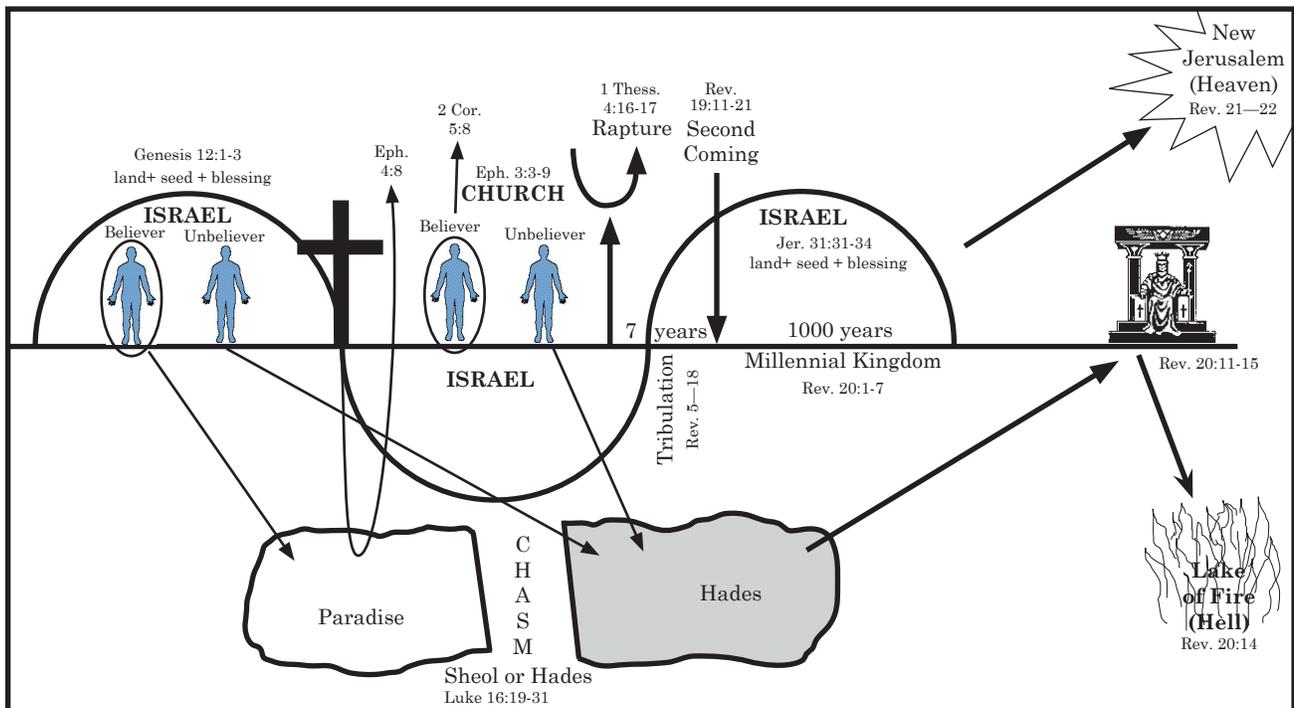
***“Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus (Rev. 22:20).***

# Drawing What We Have Learned

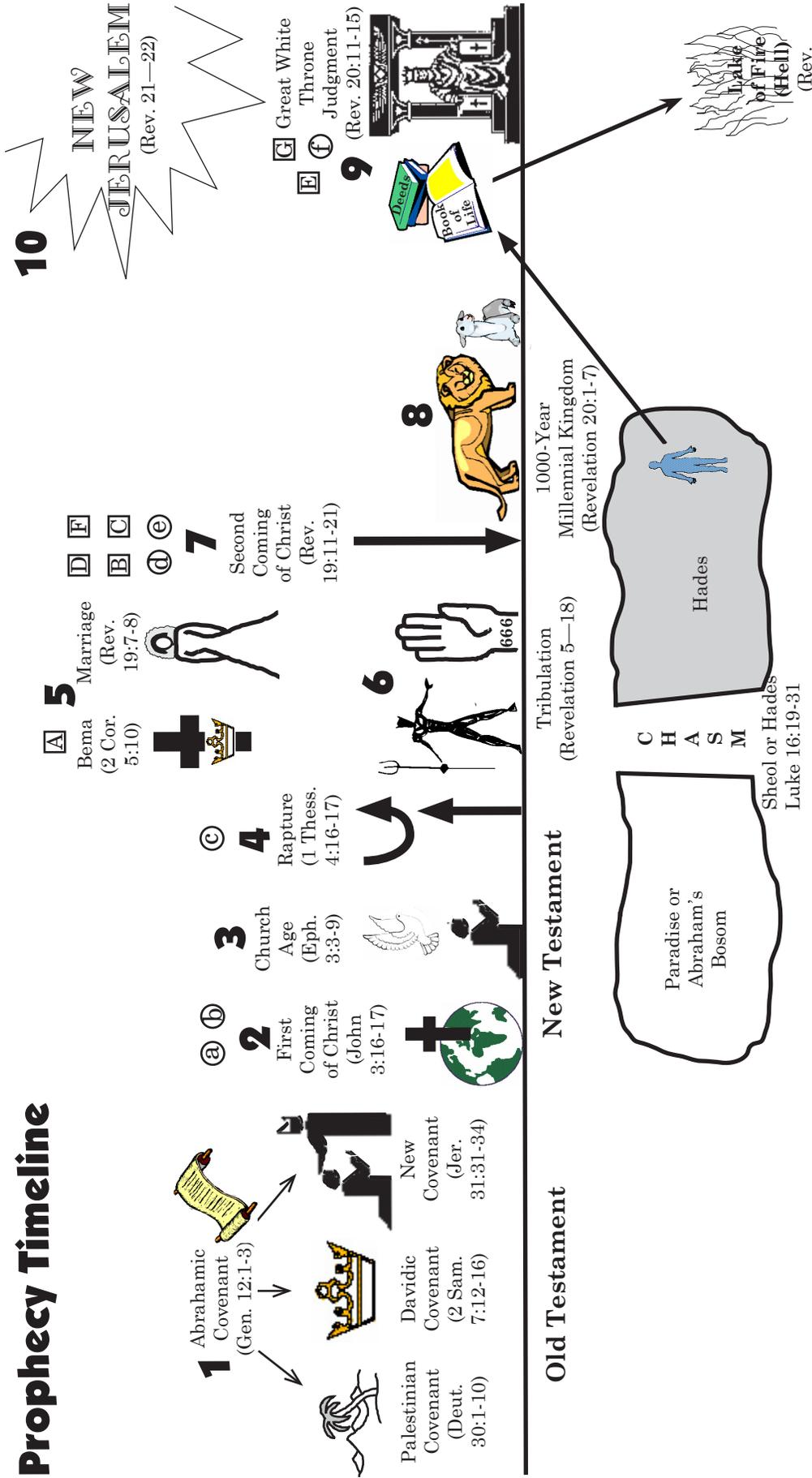
Once again, cover up the drawing at the bottom of this page and add what you've learned on the time drawing.



Now check your chart with the one below.



# Prophecy Timeline



## Resurrections

- Ⓐ—Christ (1 Cor. 15:23)
- Ⓑ—Saints at the Time of Christ (Matt. 27:52-53)
- Ⓒ—New Testament Saints (1 Thess. 4:13-18)
- Ⓓ—Old Testament Saints (Job 19:25-26; Dan. 12:1-3; Isa. 26:16-21)
- Ⓔ—Tribulation Saints (Rev. 20:5-6)
- Ⓕ—Wicked Dead (Rev. 20:11-15)

## Judgments

- Ⓐ—New Testament Saints for Rewards (1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:10)
- Ⓑ—Tribulation Saints (Rev. 20:4)
- Ⓒ—Israel—Those Living at the End of the Tribulation (Ezek. 20:35-38)
- Ⓓ—Living Gentile Nations at the End of the Tribulation (Matt. 25:31-46)
- Ⓔ—Wicked Dead [Great White Throne] (Rev. 20:11-15)
- Ⓕ—Old Testament Israelites (Ezek. 20:37-38)
- Ⓖ—Angels Who Fell (Matt. 25:41; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6)
- Ⓚ—Good Angels Are Also Judged—Time Unknown (1 Cor. 6:3)

# Appendix

## Four Different Views of the Rapture

All four views of the Tribulation and the Rapture are within the premillennial camp.

### The Partial Rapture Position

Not all believers will be taken at the Rapture of the church but only those who are “watching” and “waiting” for that event, who have reached some degree of spiritual attainment that makes them worthy to be included (Luke 21:36; Phil. 3:11; 2 Tim. 4:8; Heb. 9:28).

#### Problems with This Position:

1. The result of salvation is that the sinner is justified, made acceptable to God (propitiation), placed in Christ positionally (reconciliation) and received by God as though he were the Son Himself (redemption). So there is no spiritual attainment beyond salvation that a person could possibly reach in order to be acceptable to God.
2. They must deny the New Testament teaching on the unity of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-13). If the Rapture only includes a portion of believers, it dismembers the body of which Christ is the head; the building of which Christ is the cornerstone; the priesthood of which Christ is the chief priest; and the bride of whom Christ is the bridegroom.
3. Nowhere in the teaching about rewards is the Rapture included as a reward for watching (Rev. 2:10; James 1:12; 1 Thess. 2:19; Phil. 4:1; 1 Cor. 9:25; 1 Pet. 5:4; 2 Tim. 4:8).
4. If this view is correct, the believer’s position before God would depend on his works, not on grace.
5. They deny the distinction between Israel and the church. They use Scriptures applicable for Israel and apply them to the church (Luke 21:36; Matt. 24:41-42).
6. They must place a portion of the believing church in the Tribulation. The church does not need such a purging judgment unless the death of Christ is ineffective.

**Therefore, the Partial Rapture position must be rejected.**

### The Posttribulation Rapture Position

The church will continue on the earth until the Second Coming of Christ when the church will be caught up into the clouds to meet the Lord who has come in the air on His way from heaven to earth for the Second Coming, to return immediately with Him.

#### Problems with This Position:

1. They deny the distinctions between Israel and the church because the Tribulation is a Jewish event designed to prepare Israel for the Millennium.
2. They must deny the Scriptural teaching on the nature and purpose of the Tribulation, a time of wrath, judgment, trial, and a pouring out of judgment on sin. In what sense should the church go through that (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9 with Rev. 6:16-17)?
3. They deny all distinctions between the Rapture and the Second Coming, making them one and the same event.
4. They must deny the doctrine of imminence, which says that the Lord may come at any time, and substitute the teaching that a multitude of signs must be fulfilled before the Lord can come.
5. They deny any future fulfillment to the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27, claiming for it an historical fulfillment.
6. They must apply major passages of Scripture that outline God’s program for Israel (Matt. 13; 24–25; Rev. 4–19) to the church.
7. Since all unbelievers are killed at the Second Coming, if all believers are Raptured, then no one is left alive to populate the Millennial Kingdom.
8. The Posttribulation Rapture position rests essentially on a system of denials of the interpretations held by the Pretribulation Rapturist, rather than on a positive exposition of Scripture.

**Therefore, the Posttribulation Rapture position must be rejected.**

## **The Midtribulation Rapture Position**

The church will endure the events of the first half of the Tribulation (which are not manifestations of divine wrath) but will be Raptured before the last 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation (which contain all the outpouring of the wrath of God).

### **Problems with This Position:**

1. They must either deny or at least weaken the pretribulation interpretation of Scripture.
2. They deny the strict distinctions between Israel and the church.
3. They divide the Tribulation into two separate and unrelated halves so that the church can go through the first half but have no part in the last half. No such separation is made in Scripture.
4. They must deny the doctrine of imminence because all the signs of the first half would apply to the church.
5. They must deny the concept of the church as a mystery because if the church is involved in the Tribulation, then the church is part of God's program with Israel.
6. They must depend, to a certain extent, on the spiritualizing method of interpretation.

**Therefore, the Midtribulation Rapture position must be rejected.**

## **The Pretribulation Rapture Position**

The church, the body of Christ in its entirety, will, by resurrection and translation, be removed from the earth before any part of the Tribulation begins. [This is the position we hold and is covered in the body of this studybook.]

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## **Three Views of the Millennium**

### **Postmillennialism**

This is the view which holds that the present age will end in a period of great spiritual blessing. The whole world will be Christianized, that is, adopt Christian principles, before Christ returns. This time of blessing is the 1000-year Millennium of Revelation 20, and Christ's Second Coming is after (post) this period.

### **Some Aspects of Postmillennialism:**

1. Postmillennialism as a system is the most recent of the views—it began with Daniel Whitby (1638-1725). In a sense, Augustine can be called a postmillennialist because he did believe that Christ would return after the Millennium, which he saw as the last 1000 years of the church. Actually, though, Augustine is more accurately labeled as an amil not a postmil, but we shall consider that under Amillennialism.
2. Augustine believed Revelation 20 was a review of the previous chapters of Revelation. Whitby, however, promoted the idea that Revelation 20 chronologically followed the rest of the book, but it described a time of the church yet future (possibly distant future) where the church would form a Millennium on earth followed by Christ's Second Coming.
3. Postmillennialism teaches that Christ is now on a throne in heaven, and He will never have an earthly throne over an earthly kingdom.
4. This view is optimistic with regard to the future of the earth. Via conversion of sinners to Christ, individuals will change and those personal changes will result in social and political changes that extend eventually to the whole earth. The parables of Matthew 13 refer to the progress of the Gospel over the present age. (For example, a mustard seed becomes a huge tree means first century Christianity spreads over the whole earth.)
5. They believe that the Millennium will begin not with a bang but with a whimper. It starts not with the Second Coming of Christ but slowly by a gradual preaching of the Gospel followed by conversions of individuals and changing society.

6. Postmillennialism nearly died out after World War II. But the spirit of the view has returned in the twenty-first century in the form of kingdom-age theology. Many of these people (like Pat Robertson of the “700 Club”) are not strictly postmils since they don’t talk much about the Millennium, but they have the same view of the future. There are many evangelicals who today believe we should be involved in making the world better and that Christ will return to a better world which is improved due to a gradual influence of the church. That is the essence of the old Postmillennialism.

### **Problems with This Position:**

1. It doesn’t fit the order of events outlined in the Scripture. The outline given in Daniel, Matthew, and Revelation mention no millennial improvement on the earth prior to the Second Coming. Consider, for example, Matthew 24 which describes an earth that gets worse and worse and worse, then suddenly Christ returns.
2. This view forces some sort of spiritualization of certain passages. For example:
  - The fact that the Old Testament prophets picture the Kingdom as a blessing for Israel, not the church, must be overlooked.
  - The fact that the Millennial Kingdom begins with the judgments that kill all unbelievers (Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 19:17-21) must be neglected.
  - The fact that many in the Millennium are those who refuse the mark of the beast (Rev. 20:4), i.e., the Antichrist, must be ignored.
3. Postmillennialism doesn’t fit the trend of history. The world doesn’t appear to be getting better. Islam, not Christianity, is the fastest growing religion. The Mormons and other false cults are growing faster than Christian denominations. Families are disintegrating, marriages are failing, crime and immorality are not declining. Even within Christianity, the trend is away from biblical morals and godly living. The church is increasingly similar to the rest of the world.

## **Amillennialism**

This is the view that holds to no literal Millennial Kingdom on earth. Some feel Revelation 20 refers to the church, others to our place in heaven, but none believe it is a literal earthly Millennial Kingdom of Christ reigning on the earth.

### **Some Aspects of Amillennialism:**

1. Amils generally trace their roots to Augustine (in the third century). It’s hard to overstate the importance of Augustine in the history of theology. He not only crystallized the theology that preceded him, but he laid the foundation for both Roman Catholic and Protestant theology after him. His ideas about Millennialism provided the basis of Roman Catholic eschatology (the study of last things). Augustine believed this present age was the Millennium, that Satan was bound at the beginning of it (during Christ’s lifetime), and it would end with the Second Coming of Christ around the year A.D. 650. He saw this age as a struggle between the city of God (the church) and the city of Satan (the world). His only reason for rejecting a literal view, however, was that some cult groups claimed a literal Millennium meant a future big self-indulging party. Augustine wrote:

*This opinion [of future literal Millennium after the resurrection] might be allowed, if it proposed only spiritual delight unto the saints during this space (and we were once of the same opinion ourselves); but seeing the avouchers hereof affirm that the saints after this resurrection shall do nothing but revel in fleshly banquets, where the cheer shall exceed both modesty and measure, this is gross and fit for none but carnal men to believe. [Augustine, “City of God,” XX, 7]*

2. Modern Amillennialism is of two types. One sees the Millennium as the present-age on earth in the church and is very similar in results to Postmillennialism and its modern brother, the kingdom-age movement. The second sees the Millennium in heaven as the spiritual state of believers. Both amil groups (1) do not believe in a literal 1000-year Millennial Kingdom, (2) see the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises to Israel in the church, and (3) use a spiritualization rather than a literal historical method of interpretation.

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There are covenant premils and dispensationalist amils, but both are rare.

3. The most basic difference between Amillennialism and Premillennialism is their method of interpretation. The amils' spiritualized interpretation is as follows:
  - (a) It comes from the Alexandrian school of theology (third century) which saw prophetic Scripture as allegory, which was not to be taken at face value.
  - (b) It allows for a flexible view of Scripture since the reader can adjust the meaning of what best seems to fit his present age.
  - (c) It gets its best proof from the fact that New Testament authors sometimes used Old Testament passages in a non-literal way.
4. Amillennialism is usually (although not exclusively) connected to covenant theology (the basic view of reformed theology and Roman Catholic doctrine). Covenant theology teaches that the promises to Abraham were/are spiritually fulfilled in the church.

<b>In Israel</b>	<b>In General:</b>	<b>In the Church</b>
The land	becomes	heaven or the earth
The seed	becomes	Christians
The blessing	becomes	the spiritual life
<b>In Particular:</b>		
Tithing	becomes	10% giving
The priesthood	becomes	the clergy
The Temple	becomes	the sanctuary (building)
Circumcision	becomes	baptism
The nation Israel	becomes	the New Testament church

### **Problems with Amillennialism:**

The biggest objection to Amillennialism is its non-literal\* or spiritualized method of interpreting Scripture. "Israel" is not Israel, the "land" is not the land, the "blessing" on the Jews is not a blessing on the Jews.

1. To be non-literal is to have no basis or standard outside ourselves for determining the meaning of a text. The correct meaning of a text must be that of the author, but spiritualization puts the meaning on the reader instead of the writer, thus violating the most basic rule of interpretation.
2. Non-literal interpretation would be utterly destructive to Christianity if it were applied generally to the Bible. The only thing that keeps the amils from being labeled "false teachers" or "heretics" is that they restrict their spiritualization to areas of prophecy. They take the Bible literally when it comes to salvation, sanctification, the character of God, the nature of the Trinity, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ, and so on. Only in the areas of prophecy, when needed to support Amillennialism, do they use spiritualization.
3. It's true that there are some New Testament passages that use Old Testament verses in a non-literal way. But that does not give us a license to do it. For an apostle to write inerrant truth, inspired by God, and using Old Testament texts in a new way different from the original author adds to our understanding of God and gives us new additional revelation. For us to do it as a method of interpretation is quite different. The New Testament authors' intent was not to interpret the Scripture (as ours is) but to give us new revelation from God.

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\*By "literal" we mean "the plain, ordinary, normal, regular way of understanding." It is to understand the text the way the author most obviously meant for it to be understood. That, of course, includes metaphors, figures of speech, if and only if the author meant us to understand it that way.

4. Amillennialism did not arise historically from a study of prophetic Scriptures but rather from a neglect of it. Augustine came to it objecting to certain worldly cults, not by studying Scripture—that is certainly not how he developed his other theological positions. The Roman Catholic church and the Protestant Reformers took it from Augustine because his teachings were already accepted, and there were more socially pressing issues for the church to deal with. A biblical study of prophecy was simply neglected.
5. The only real guiding principle for amils is that Christ will not physically reign on earth. But that's a negative not a positive goal. Consequently, most of their discussions are against Premillennialism rather than making a case for Amillennialism. The reason for that is because very few amils come to the same conclusions about the future. So it's very hard to find a prophecy conference (or even a lesson on it) in most amil groups.
6. In amil denominations, the objective of missions is more apt to be church planting than evangelism and discipleship.\* If there is no imminent Rapture, then “Jesus is coming soon” or “maybe today” become rather hollow slogans. The urgency of the Gospel message is lost in a network of organized religion designed to not only save people but make the world Christian. The focus becomes not so much in heaven as on earth, and not so much what God is doing on earth as what we are doing in the church (or in our Christian organization).

### **Roman Catholic Eschatology**

Roman Catholicism basically holds an amil view of prophecy. It's characteristics are:

1. Generally, Catholics are more literal in their view of Scripture than other modern amils.
2. They hold a literal judgment for sin after death.
3. They hold that Christ's death on the cross is absolutely necessary for forgiveness of sin (although they also hold it is not sufficient—one must also be in the church).
4. They believe the saints will ultimately all be in a place of eternal bliss or heaven (although they also believe in a purgatory which conditions ultimate salvation on human works).
5. They practice a non-literal form of interpretation of the Bible in areas of prophecy.
6. They deny any future earthly kingdom of righteousness where Christ reigns on earth.
7. The promises to Israel get spiritualized into the church.

### **Premillennialism**

Premillennialism is that system of prophecy based on a grammatical, historical, literal interpretation of Scripture. It is presented in the main body of this studybook.

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# **Eschatology**

*By Walter Henrichsen*

In the days of our Lord's life on earth, no effort was made to separate His ministry from the Old Testament hope of Israel. He came proclaiming that He was the fulfillment of their expectations. In the minds of His followers, Israel and the fruit of Jesus' ministry were one and the same. Did He not come exclusively to the Jews (Matthew 15:24)? The followers of Christ were the true people of God. Granted, they weren't numerous, but then the elect in the Old Testament were never but a remnant.

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\*It appears that many dispensational premil groups that formed missionary groups in the 1940s and 1950s are now practically operating like the amils. Most have gone into church planting or church helping. The result is: (1) there is very little emphasis on prophecy today, even in premil groups, and (2) many have joined the amils in changing the world instead of saving sinners.

In Acts, the disciples saw themselves as the true Israel. Gentile converts had to come to Christ via the Law. A mission to the Gentiles was not in the thinking of the early church. The time between Christ's two advents would be short, and the inclusion of the Gentiles, in fulfillment of the Old Testament, would take place when Christ returned to sit on David's throne.

The Jerusalem Council (cf. Acts 15) changed all of this. Paul alone saw that the Mosaic Law was no longer in force, allowing for the inclusion of Gentiles without their having to change cultures. His definitive treatment of this is in Romans 9–11, especially 11:25–28.

No one in these early days of the church believed that two thousand years would lapse between the first and Second Coming of Christ. The New Testament authors consistently agree in anticipating His imminent return. Having expected the Lord's return during his life, Peter closes his second epistle reflecting on the possibility that his death would precede Christ's Second Coming (2 Peter 3:3-4).

John's Revelation lays out the events preceding the Lord's return. Granted, there are a plethora of interpretations on what John saw and recorded, but let's take a broad overview of it. Revelation 6–19 deals with a time of tribulation of seven years' duration prior to Jesus' Second Coming. This is followed by a thousand-year reign of Christ, a discussion of two resurrections (Revelation 20:1-6), followed by the loosening of Satan, Satan's judgment, and the judgment of the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:7-15).

If amillennialism is correct and the return of Christ comes after the Millennium, then the disciples would have anticipated a rather lengthy period of time between the two advents. For example, Augustine, the father of amillennialism, thought that the Millennium was a literal thousand years, beginning at the conversion of Constantine. But let's assume that the thousand-year period shouldn't be understood literally, representing, rather, an indefinite period of time. In this case, the disciples of Jesus would have had no legitimate reason to believe in His imminent return.

If we assume that the Apostles had just cause to believe in Christ's imminent return, then whatever conclusions we come to regarding the interpretation of Revelation, Jesus would have to come (in the minds of the disciples) to gather His saints before the Tribulation and Millennium. This, of course, is the first resurrection mentioned in Revelation 20, and may coincide with 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

All of the Patristics [early church fathers] who commented on eschatology were pre-millennial. It formed the foundation of their hope during perilous days of persecution. They saw, however, the Millennium in Gentile terms, having rejected the Jews' claim as the people of God. From the very beginning, the Patristics saw themselves as the New Israel, which was the perception of the Apostles as well—with this difference: the Apostles saw the true Israel in Jewish, not Gentile, terms, and even Paul, the one who argued for the inclusion of the Gentiles into the church apart from the Law, believed that the Gentiles were incorporated into the Jews, not vice versa (cf. Ephesians 2:11-22, esp. vv. 11-13).

As persecution began to wane, the church saw opportunity to expand its influence in the Roman Empire. You can see a direct correlation between the tapering off of persecution and the ascendancy of amillennialism. By the time of Constantine's conversion to Christianity [in the 300s], not only was there no need for premillennialism, it proved to be an impediment to a church that saw itself in imperial terms.

If premillennialism was ridiculed for its excesses, it at least maintained a consistent hermeneutic [principles of interpretation] in so far as its interpretation of Revelation is concerned. Those who would later be classified as amillennial were even more excessive in the sense that their hermeneutic allowed for all sorts of fanciful interpretations. You can see this clearly as you read men like Jerome, Eusebius, Tyconius, and Augustine.

Greek philosophy such as Gnosticism, influenced heavily by Hinduism, in turn influenced the church. As the church began to shed its acceptance of an eschatology that was material or earthly and rooted in history, while embracing a figurative interpretation of Scripture, it began to drift towards a Hindu worldview, seeing history as cyclical rather than linear. [By way of review, you will remember that Old Testament eschatology teaches a material recreation with the restoration of the nation of Israel. When the church saw the Jews as the enemies of Christ, they interpreted these Old Testament eschatological passages figuratively, applying them to the church, and in the process, severed their ties to a linear view of history.] In large measure, Augustine was responsible for correcting this drift.

From a macro perspective, therefore, we see the following five perspectives:

1. During Jesus' ministry, He made no distinction between the church and Israel; they were one and the same.
2. As the apostles sought to obey the Great Commission after Pentecost, they understood that Gentile converts would be incorporated into the church via the Law, becoming "Christian Jews" in the process.
3. Paul taught that Gentiles could come to Christ without embracing the Law, convincing the other apostles that he was correct at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. Paul also taught that there would be a future restoration of Israel, at which time it would turn to Christ and the Old Testament promises to Israel would be fulfilled.
4. The Patristics taught that Gentiles could come to Christ without the Law, but believed that there was no distinction between the church and Israel; the church had replaced Israel in the affections of God.
5. Augustine taught that the church replaced Israel, but the church was obligated to keep all Law that was not rescinded in the New Testament. The church as the "new Israel" sought to replicate Old Testament Israel in keeping the Law, the priesthood, and establishing a Theocracy.

## Implications

Discussions on eschatology tend to be emotional and polemic. For a long time I wondered why. As I studied the subject, it became apparent that eschatology, in defining a biblical hope, sets the foundation for your worldview. In short, it marks the difference between a temporal and an eternal worldview. You would think the opposite—i.e.,

because amillennialism cut its ties to an Old Testament hope of a material recreation, it would develop an eternal world view. So too, premillennialism, with its belief in a material recreation for the Jews, would embrace a temporal world view.

In reality, however, because amillennialism sees the church from an Old Testament perspective, believing that the church is Israel, it tends to define ministry in Old Testament terms: correcting the ills of society and claiming her institutions for Christ. Because premillennialism sees the church and Israel as separate entities, the material recreation promised in the Old Testament is for the Jews during the Millennium, and the task of the church is the Great Commission.

Amillennialism and postmillennialism are more optimistic than premillennialism. Since they see themselves in Old Testament terms, their vision for the world is Theocratic. (We remind ourselves that within each of the schools of eschatology, there are as many variations as there are adherents. My summary endeavors to capture an overview of each system, understanding that it may not accurately represent the convictions of all concerned. I simply suggest that this is how it was conceived at its conception.) Whether they believe that their efforts will succeed or fail, they understand their mission in temporal terms: anti-abortion, involvement in politics, Colorado Amendment 2, etc., are all expressions of this.

Premillennialism tends to be more pessimistic. The New Testament in general and the Great Commission in particular define the mission of the church. Taking their clue from Jesus who said, "My Kingdom is not of this world," (John 18:36), they see this life as the seedtime for eternity. Life has no purpose other than to prepare people for the life hereafter. We are best prepared by participating with God in what He is doing: reaching people with the Gospel and helping them mature in Christ.

If you have been reading this series on eschatology, you no doubt have concluded that I am premillennial in my understanding of Scripture. You are correct. I, of course, cannot convince you or anyone else that I am right. All I can do is present the evidence, and even here, I have not tried to exegete the biblical passages on eschatology. Rather I have sought to lay out its historical development. But I can suggest what the consequences or implications of your decision in this important matter will be. By the way of review, they are:

It will influence your view of the mission of the church, as already noted above. It will influence your view of the role of the laity. When you see the church in Old Testament terms, there is a tendency to make a laity/clergy distinction not found in the New Testament and hold in suspect an unruly laity not under the control of the institutional church. This is why most churches wish the laity to function under auspices of the institution.

It will influence your view of the place of the Mosaic Law in the Christian life. Amillennialism says that you are obligated to obey the Old Testament Law unless it is repealed in the New Testament. Premillennialism argues that you are not obligated to obey the Old Testament Law unless it is repeated in the New Testament.

It will influence your view of the church. In the Old Testament, God had a dual commitment to both the individual and to the institution of Israel. In the New Testament, He only has a commitment to His elect saints, not to the institution of the church. God has no covenant with the church.

## Conclusion

Finally, let me note that premillennialism has never been popular in the institutional church. It is, by and large, a lay theology, born out of a simple, straightforward hermeneutic that reads the Bible as one reads the newspaper. The laity generally have no vested interest in the institutional church, and therefore have no problem with the implications of a chiliast [Greek for “1000” in Revelation 20:2] eschatology.

Humans are creatures of hope. In the Old Testament, this hope was principally temporal, rooted in the Promised Land. In the New Testament, a biblical hope is primarily eternal, rooted in the life to come (John 6:27; Matthew 6:19-20; 2 Corinthians 4:18). It is hard to live in a temporal environment and maintain an eternal hope. We all want to express our creative energies and make our environment more comfortable and attractive.

A layman can embrace a temporal hope, pouring his talent and energy into his vocation, while objectively concluding that the Bible calls upon the believer to hope in the eternal. Granted, it is inconsistent with and in violation of Jesus’ statement, “You cannot serve two masters ...” (Matthew 6:24). This is a bit more difficult for the clergy, simply because there is lacking that clear distinction between the temporal and eternal in his vocation.

The work of God cannot be created, measured, or controlled; the work of man can. Ministry, therefore, cannot be created, measured, or controlled. It is hard for a man to pour his life into what he can never create, measure and control. Thus he is prone to embrace a world view that argues that God is committed to the temporal, and that his contribution can be created, measured and controlled.

Even those trained in premillennial seminaries, such as Trinity, Dallas, Biola, and Western in Portland, become “closet amillennialists” for this reason. And it is precisely for this reason that the subject of eschatology takes on an emotional, polemic tone.

Consider well what the Bible says, and the pull of culture, as you formulate your eschatology. The implications are eternal.

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Walt Henrichsen, “Eschatology,” Part 24, *The Co-Laborer Letter* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Leadership Foundation, September, 1997), used with permission.