

The Prophetic Puzzle: Part 1

Table of Contents

Introduction

Interpretation of Prophecy

A Literal view of Prophecy

Christ's Return

Rapture

Prophetic Overview

Rewards

Marriage of the Lamb

Tribulation Part 1: Historical Basis

Tribulation Pt. 2: Revelation Account

Antichrist: Key figure prophesied by many scriptures

Millennium: fulfilling a promise to God's people

Heaven or Hell: Only one final destination

Conditions of the End Times

Final Questions

Prophecies Fulfilled?

Interpretation of Prophecy?

Introduction to The Prophetic Puzzle

Every prophecy is like a piece of a puzzle. That's why prophecy is confusing and sometimes misunderstood. Each prophetic piece seems like it's own puzzle. As individual pieces of the big picture, sometimes the pieces are also divided up in pieces (like sub points of an outline). Depending on the extent of the prophecies there are often supporting parts. The Tribulation era, for example, is prophesied as Daniel's 70th Week (The final week is missing from a total of 69 weeks of years. The original prophecy gave a time limit until the end of all things – the end of sin, Messiah's return, the end of or fulfilling of all prophecy...). The 70th week (one final week of years) is then broken down into two, three and one half year periods. Each of these contain other prophecies such as the judgments – seal, trumpet, and bowl - each of which contain seven individual parts, the pieces that make them up – I. e. pieces of the puzzle. This concept could also be illustrated by the use of an outline:

- I. Tribulation
 - a. First half – 3 ½ years
 - b. Second half – 3 ½ years
- II. Christ's Return
 - a. Rapture – Catching up of living saints preceded by a resurrection of saints who have died.
 - b. Return – Glorious Appearing of Christ at the end of the Tribulation.

Scripture contains pieces of each of these aspects of prophecies. The outlines could have been filled with details, which are in themselves pieces of the bigger picture.

The purpose of this writing is to give the readers a sense of how the pieces of the prophetic puzzle fit together. Gaining a bigger prophetic picture gives not only a place to plug in smaller pieces but a means of interpreting Scriptures that seem “out of place” in their context. Examples such as the many “Millennial texts” illustrate the necessity of a larger prophetic understanding. Psalm 2 is one example of a millennial Psalm. With some application to David as the author and

historical king of Israel, the Psalm makes better sense in reference to Christ in His Millennial rule.

“...The kings of the earth take their stand. And the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed: ‘Let us tear their fetters apart, and cast away their cords from us.’ ... But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain.”¹

The full Psalm shows God’s Son ruling as King over all the kings of the earth. This, along with many other similar scriptures shows Millennial fulfillments such as Eden-like restoration of the earth,² a world with prosperity and peace, and knowledge of God everywhere.³

Seeing the larger picture of prophecy from obvious texts gives us a better view whereby the reader can accurately interpret prophetic Scriptures, and understand the times in which we live with greater precision and discernment. As many attempt to connect-the-dots of end-time events to current news, it is increasingly important to have this information to at least identify pieces of the greater puzzle, or pre-cursors of prophetic events. One day the picture will be complete. Until then let us be found doing the Master’s bidding, laboring in His vineyard, harvesting the final souls. And let us be found anticipating, expecting, and loving His appearing. Jesus is coming soon. Perhaps today!

Interpretation of Prophecy

¹ Psalm 2:2-3, 6.

² Zech. 8; Is. 11:4-10.

³ Is. 2:2-4.

Looking into the method of interpreting prophecy...

Roots of deceptive interpretations of prophetic scriptures. (See encycl of Prophecy and research bad roots of interpretation – allegory

Today serious students of prophecy aren't confident taking a position on prophecy. Pan-theology {it will all pan out} may be more common than is admitted. Many godly and theologically sound men hold to the a-millennial perspective. Taking a literal position that Christ will return eventually, they believe that most prophetic Scriptures dealing with the Second Coming are to be taken figuratively, or at best loosely. Holding to an uncompromised view of prophesy that is biblically sound and intellectually honest in evaluating the times is the basis and challenge of this book. Jeremiah spoke of prophets among the exiles who were proclaiming the captivity was only going to last for two years. When Jeremiah wrote his letter he made a special point to correct the false prophets' predictions and state the truth. God's word to the exiles was very specific:

“For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Do not let your prophets who are in your midst and your diviners deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams which they dream. For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them,’ declares the Lord. For thus says the Lord, ‘When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope...’⁴

Jeremiah corrected the error and then prophesied of God's good future that He planned for them. The false prophecies didn't influence true prophecies from happening in God's time. Today some Christian have adopted allegorical methodology⁴ for interpreting prophecy, instead of interpreting all Scriptures by the same standard. The figurative language of many prophetic texts presents a major challenge for the interpreter. One example is found in the first chapter of the Revelation. Jesus is described metaphorically as having “...eyes of a flame of fire, feet of burnished bronze...”. The descriptions though figurative

⁴ Jer. 29:8-11.

describe literal qualities. Christ's words in the vision are literal "I was dead but I am alive forevermore..." while others are figures, "and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword..." John was seeing a vision of Christ, and the words and meanings belonged to Christ. They were figurative descriptions of the glorified Christ. More obvious passages from the Old Testament expand the descriptions of Christ and help our understanding. Prophecy may be more difficult to interpret – stretching for even experienced interpreters – but not impossible. Charles Finneburg at a prophetic conference stated, "When the common sense makes sense, seek no other sense." Interpreting and understanding prophecy can be direct and more obvious than is commonly accepted, but will always have its challenges. Making up nearly a third of the Bible in content, prophecy and may take a lifetime, and beyond, to grasp. Therefore, prophetic interpreters should demonstrate humility, discussing in the spirit of discovery and dialogue.

Origen interpreted Scripture (including prophecy) allegorically. While Augustine rejected Origen's allegory in favor of grammatical/historical interpretation. It seems, however, that he accepted Origen's allegorical views on prophecy. The reformers of the fifteenth century rejected the Catholic Church's allegorical interpretation of Scripture, being greatly impacted by Augustine. Unfortunately, they also accepted Augustine's views on prophecy, which he accepted from Origen. The obvious dilemma: Is allegory a valid interpretive method for prophetic texts? Such is a worthy quest for men of honor to pursue. "It is the glory of God to conceal a matter and the glory of kings to search out a matter."

The angel's words to Daniel present us with many interpretive challenges to search out, "But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words, and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase" (Dan. 12:4). There is something refreshingly familiar about increased travel and knowledge as a reference point to that future time in which prophetic understanding will be opened up. Despite the dangers, we can share our excitement about the adventure. Come risk with me on a quest that will with take brave Hobbits *there and back again*.

Chapter One: A Literal View of Prophecy

INTRO TO A LITERAL VIEW

When I hear people speak on end-time prophecy or some difficult passages I am frustrated when they give God an easy way out, claiming certain texts to be figurative language. Scripture must be interpreted so the meaning is not diluted. When God tells us what He is going to do He will completely fulfill all of what He says? Isaiah's prophecy, for example, illustrates this point: when one part of a Scripture is literally fulfilled, the second will also be just as literal in its fulfillment.

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given...” Is. 9:6a

This is a prophecy of the incarnation- Jesus Christ's birth to the virgin Mary. It happened historically and is the foundation of the Christian church – Christ's first coming. Isaiah's verse continues,

“...and the government shall be upon His shoulders...” Isaiah 9:6b

The second part of the verse refers to Christ's second Coming, when He will rule the earth with truth and grace, (from *Joy to the World* – concerning the Millennial reign of Christ) [See Revelation 20]. How can anyone know that the first part of the verse was historically fulfilled and not believe that the second should also be literal in its fulfillment? When a verse is yet to come to pass, we believe it to be true by faith. Since God has been eternally faithful to His Word we can trust that what He says He will do. In this section we examine Nebuchadnezzar's dream as God reveals the future kingdoms of men, which will end when the final Kingdom of God appears and fills the earth.

Today I want to bring us to the simple discovery that prophecy is literal. Daniel 2 presents Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which demonstrates a pre-history of the Gentiles kingdoms that has been literally fulfilled in our past. History is “His story” – the sovereign working of the will of God.

Nebuchadnezzar had a dream...

I. THE KINGS DREAM (DAN. 2:1-13)

“*I have a dream...*” Nothing was inspiring or motivating about this one.

In 603 B. C. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had a scary dream.

1. He called the wise men together.
2. He gave them a test: First describe my dream; then interpret it.
3. He gave them a warning that if they failed they would be killed and their homes turned into latrines.
4. Pass the test and receive a reward.

Response:

1. "Could you repeat that?"
2. They told him that he was being unreasonable because it was humanly impossible
3. No ruler had ever made such a demand, cried the wise men.

– *"Only the gods could do this," They whined.*

Results: *Rage* – the king ordered all his wise men executed.

Daniel and friends were also on the list (So much for job security).

II. DANIEL'S REQUEST --DAN. 2:14-24

Daniel requested time to seek God. Afterwards he would fulfill the king's demand. Daniel called an emergency prayer meeting.

"Call to Me, and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know." (Jer. 33:3)

Matt. 7 "Ask, seek, and knock."

Daniel remembered how Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream.

Daniel's prayer answered (vv. 19—23)

"Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever,
for wisdom and power belong to Him.

And it is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men, and knowledge to men of understanding. It is He who reveals the

profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him.

To thee, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for Thou has given me wisdom and power; Even now Thou hast made known to me what we requested of Thee. For thou hast made known to us the king's matter."

I. Praise to God for His attributes of wisdom and power

His sovereignty (power)

II. Praise to God that He gives wisdom and power to men

III. Praise to God for answering Daniel's personal request

How many of our problems have been appointed by a sovereign God?

If we would only seek Him for their solution we would then experience his mighty hand of deliverance; as we cooperate with His purposes.

III. DANIEL REVEALS THE KING'S DREAM.

Intro – Dan 2:25-30

1. The king's demand was humanly impossible to fulfill.
2. Only God could
3. The dream was from God.
4. The dream revealed the future and latter days.
5. All credit belonged to God for revealing it to Daniel.

Content of the Dream -- Dan. 2:31-35

--Image of human form of great size

1. Head of gold
2. Breast and arms of silver
3. Belly and two thighs of bronze
4. Lower legs of iron

5. Feet and toes mixture of iron and clay
6. Stone cut out of a mountain without hands (not of human origin)
7. Stone struck the feet of the image and crushed them.

Then it caused all the rest of the image to disintegrate.

8. Stone became a large mountain that filled the whole earth.

IV. DANIEL'S INTERPRETATION OF THE DREAM

Intro: Sovereignty of God --Dan. 2:36-45

1. Head of Gold

“You are the head of gold. And after you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you.”

- Represents both the Babylonian kingdom and its great king.
 - o Oriental thinking regarded kings and kingdoms synonymous.
- **Gold**
 1. Marduk, the chief god of Babylon, was called the god of gold.
 2. Babylon used gold extensively in buildings, images and shrines.

“Herodotus lived in Babylon 90 years after the era of Nebuchadnezzar was astonished at the amount of gold there. Even walls and buildings were overlaid with the gold.” (Showers)

2. Image's Breast and Arms of silver (Vs. 39)

Kingdom of Medo-Persia

“Two distinct people, the Medes and the Persians, were united together in 550 B. C. under the same king to form one great power.”

Silver – signified money

Standard of value and medium of exchange.

Based their power on money – extensive tax system.

INFERIOR TO BABYLON

Not militarily

Not Size

Partnership empire – lacked absolute unity of Babylon.

Conquered Babylon in 539 B. C.

3. Image's Belly and Thighs of Bronze (:39)

Kingdom of Greece – Alexander the Great and his Successors

“One belly subdivided into two thighs was an excellent way for God to portray the Grecian kingdom ahead of time.”

Alexander the Great died and his kingdom was divided among his four leading generals.

Two played an important role in history – Syria/Egypt.

Bronze – Developed by Greeks and used as implements of war.

Greece was a kingdom characterized by bronze

They conquered Persia in 331 B. C.

4. Image's Legs of Iron and Feet and toes of Iron and Clay.

ROMAN EMPIRE “Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces.” (Vv. 40-43)

Conquered Greece in 146 B. C.

Political Division in A. D. 364.

Western Roman Empire with capital in Rome

Eastern Roman Empire with capital in Constantinople.

Iron – excellent designation of Rome

1. Rome used iron in its military weaponry.

2. Iron is stronger than gold, silver and bronze, so Rome would crush and shatter the ancient world, as it did.

“And in that you saw the feet and toes partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle... they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery.”

(Dan. 2:41-43)

“...Daniel’s downward movement on the image represented the passage of time. Thus, when Daniel interpreted the last part of the image – the feet and toes – he was dealing with the final form of Gentile world dominion in time. Since the feet and toes were part of the representation of the fourth or Roman kingdom, they portrayed the Roman Empire in its final stage of existence in contrast with its earlier leg stage.”

Legs of the fourth kingdom consisted of iron,

Feet and toes were a mixture of iron and clay.

Roman Empire in its final stages would be strong militarily.

But there would be a clay-like brittleness – division.

“Different groups of people would combine with one another to form the final stage of the empire, but they would not adhere completely to one another, just as iron and clay do not combine completely with each other.” (sounds like politicians)

This final stage of the Roman Empire is in our future.

1. Consists of a ten nation confederation
 - a. Daniel 7:23-24
 - b. Rev. 17:12-13 “And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings, who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. These have one purpose and they give their power and authority to the beast.”

2. "Political leaders of several European nations have met within recent years to discuss the formation of such a confederation a confederation which will be united for military and economic strength, but will maintain the identities and distinctives of the member nations. Western leaders are thinking in that direction."

Past, fulfilled prophecy prompts us to look confidently to God's sovereign fulfillment of future prophecies.

5. The kingdom of the Stone (vv. 44-45)

This kingdom would be set up by the God of heaven, not by man.

Characteristics:

1. Would never be destroyed
2. Not other kingdom would ever succeed it
3. It would destroy and end all the Gentiles kingdoms
4. It would endure forever.

Marduk, the chief god of the Babylonians, was called "The Great Mountain." They believed that their gods came from the sacred mountain of the earth – the mountain that they called "the Mountain of the Lands." Babylonian temples were intended to be imitations of mountains – the Babylonian mindset. "For this reason God purposely portrayed His future kingdom first as a stone cut out of a mountain and second as a stone that becomes a great mountain"

1. New kingdom would be divine in origin. (not human)
2. The Stone struck the image on its feet, causing the entire image to disintegrate.
 - a. The coming of the Kingdom of God would take place at the final stage of a Revived Roman Empire (since the feet are connected to the legs [the Roman Empire], the latter empire could literally be the Eastern and Western Roman empire in it's end).
 - b. The Kingdom of God would destroy the Revived Roman Empire when it comes [at the return of Christ].

- c. Third, when the Kingdom of God destroys the last stage of the Roman Empire, it would thereby end all Gentile world dominion.

After the Stone had crushed the entire image, the wind blew away every remnant of it. Babylonians believed that wind was divine activity.

They called Marduk “Lord of the Wind”

Therefore divine activity would rid the earth of Gentile world power.

The Stone became a great mountain and filled the whole earth (v. 35).

“The Babylonians pictured the earth as a great mountain. They called the earth “Mountain-house.” In light of this Babylonian concept, God portrayed His Kingdom as a great mountain which filled the earth to make one thing clear – although the fifth kingdom would be set up by the God of heaven, it would be a kingdom on earth just as the four Gentile kingdoms had been. It would rule the earth of its day just as the Gentile kingdoms ruled the known earth of their days.” (DR. RENALD E. SHOWERS)⁵

THE STONE THAT THE BUILDERS REJECTED HAS BECOME THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE. THIS IS THE LORD'S DOING; IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES. THIS IS THE DAY WHICH THE LORD HAS MADE; LET US REJOICE AND BE GLAD IN IT.” (Ps 118:22-24)

This refers to something that happened in the building of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. Stones were quarried far from the Temple site.

Detailed plans by temple architects, transported to the site and assembled without the noise of stone cutting tools. “Early in the construction a stone was sent that did not seem to fit. Since the builders did not know what to do with it, they laid it aside and forgot it. Later when they came to place a large capstone on their now nearly completed structure and sent to the quarry for it, they were told that it was not there, that it had already been sent up. They searched for it, found the stone that had been laid aside earlier, and installed it. It fit

⁵ Showers, Renald E., *The Most High God*, (The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc: Bellmawr, New Jersey, 1994), p. 22.

perfectly. This “*stone the builders rejected*” became the capstone or chief cornerstone.

JESUS APPLIED THIS verse to himself, saying,

“Have you never read in the Scriptures:

‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’”

(Matt. 21:42-44)

PETER QUOTED,

“See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”

(1 Peter 2:6-8)

Jesus is the Stone, the King of the Final Kingdom **{Ps. 2:1-12}**

Lessons on Prophecy:

God is in charge from the beginning to the end. –Sovereignty – History is ‘His story.’

Why is a Literal Fulfillment of all Prophecy important?

To encourage our faith to believe that God will accomplish all that He said He would do.

Decline of Glory -- the Kingdoms of Men move from precious metals to less precious. Ultimately only iron, that represents military strength (ability to crush and destroy), becomes the ultimate value.

The Prophetic Picture views each *Piece of the Puzzle* as vital. God will complete all of prophecy and not leave any pieces out.

IT WILL HAPPEN!

Chapter Two: The Promise of Christ's Return

INTRO TO THE PROMISE OF CHRIST'S RETURN:

Having looked at prophecy as a literal promise that will be literally and completely fulfilled, the reader is ready to look at the glorious promise of the literal and physical return of Jesus Christ to the earth. Jesus was ascending back to the Father having finished the work of salvation by His death and resurrection. Those watching stood in deep silence.

And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them; and they also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven." (ACTS 1:10-11)

As Jesus ascended the promise of his return was given and believed by the early church. They lived with expectancy that Christ would return as the angels had said. The Christians at Thessalonica were praise by Paul for their great testimony. Paul speaks of their reputation,

"For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He

raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.”

(1 Thess. 1:9-10)

What were the qualities of this highly esteemed church?

- Turned to God from idols -Repentant
- Served a living and true God -Fervent
- Looked for Christ’s return -Expectant-watching/waiting

Just as it is normal for believers to repent and serve God

so it is for believers to expect for Christ’s second coming.

Should we expect Christ’s return?

Peter writes, “...fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:13).

“But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13).

Paul wrote to Titus,

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

The writer to the Hebrews says,

“And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him” (Heb. 9:27-28).

Expecting Christ’s 2nd Coming changes us.

It gives us an upward look, a personal radiance, a glow of excitement, as if someone has turned the lights on in our hearts.

ALEXANDER MACLAREN WROTE,

The apostolic church thought more about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ than about death and heaven. The early Christians were

looking, not for a cleft in the ground called a grave but for a cleavage in the sky called Glory.”

PASTOR HORATIUS BONAR lived in the glow of Christ’s coming. As he would conclude his day’s ministry, he would draw the curtains of his window and utter as he looked upward, “Perhaps tonight, Lord!” In the morning, as he awoke and looked out on the dawn of a new day, he would pray, looking up into the sky, “Perhaps today, Lord!”

I’M MORE EXCITED ABOUT THE UPPER-TAKER THAN I AM ABOUT THE UNDERTAKER.

I have found that those who are looking for the Lord’s return have a positive motivation beyond the anticipation of death. Death is a guaranteed end for everyone, except for those who are alive at the time of the Lord’s Second Coming. While death is the final enemy to be defeated, those who anticipate Christ’s return, instead of death’s visitation, have a joy in their hearts, a spring in their step, and a far greater motivation to live holy lives and share the gospel.

DR. REUBEN A. TORREY, second president of the Moody Bible Institute, stated, “The latter truth [the second coming of Christ] transformed my whole idea of life; it broke the power of the world and its ambition over me, and filled my life with the most radiant optimism even under the most discouraging circumstances.”

Believing the Promises

I. The Return of Christ.

1. Promises of Christ’s return

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again,

and receive you to Myself;

that where I am, there you may be also”

(JESUS IN JOHN 14:3).

- Jesus promises to come again and receive us to Himself

“This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”

(ANGELS: ACTS 1:11)

- Jesus will return in the same way as he left

“...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.”

(Matt. 24:30)

- When Jesus returns He will appear with great signs in the sky, with power and great glory.

2. Phases of Christ's Return:

Two distinct aspects or phases of Christ's Return are taught in Scripture:

- 1) A Private gathering, known as “The Rapture.”
- 2) A Public appearance, known as “The Glorious Appearing.”

Tim LaHaye writes,

“Immediately after the rapture will come the “judgment seat of Christ” in the air (before He finishes His second coming with the second phase or glorious appearing). These are not two comings of Christ but are two phases of His one coming. The first phase is for Christians, and second phase is for the world of unbelievers.”⁶

At the Rapture all saints will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. During this first part of the Lords' Return those who have died in the Lord will be resurrected. Then all living saints will be raptured, or caught up together with those previously resurrected. Over the next seven years there will be events on earth and in heaven, until Christ's

⁶ Tim LaHaye, *How to Study Bible Prophecy for Yourself*, (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1990), p. 36.

glorious appearance on the earth. Christ's Return is both private and public.

A simple schedule of events can keep us alert, on-time and well-planned.

PREVIEW: TIME LINE OF EVENTS

Rapture – “Blessed Hope”

Seven-Year Tribulation on earth

Judgment Seat of Christ

Marriage Supper of the Lamb

Return – “Glorious Appearing”

Defeats Antichrist and his evil forces

Resurrection of Tribulation Saints – “1st Resurrection”

Judgment of Nations – gatherings – Matt. 25/Rev. 14

Reign – 1000 year Millennium

Satan bound for 1000 years

Earth lives in peace under Christ's Rule

- Great White Throne Judgment “Second Resurrection”
- New Heaven and Earth – Eternity begins.

A close examination of 1 Thess. 4: 13-17, Rev. 19, and Matt. 24, reveal distinct characteristics of each phase of Christ's Second Coming. At the time of the Rapture, saints are received. At the Glorious Appearing saints - glorified and rewarded - return with Christ.

II. Phases of Christ's Return

◆ **The Rapture of Christ's Saints**

The first phase is known as the rapture, when we meet Jesus alive and in the air when He comes. This is the next prophetic event and can come at any time (so check your schedule and clear anything on it that conflicts).

“Now we request you, brethren with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him...”

(II THESS. 2:1)

“And if I go and prepare a place for you,

I will come again, and receive you to Myself;

that where I am, there you may be also”

(JESUS IN JOHN 14:3).

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout,

... and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

Then we who are alive and remain

shall be CAUGHT UP together with them in the clouds

to meet the Lord in the air,

and thus we shall always be with the Lord.” (1 THESS. 4:17)

Q? Where will Christ meet with His saints? (Resurrected and Raptured)

A: In the air.

(Note: This is a very clear concept in Scripture, so simple it will take a preacher to make it complicated). The next event is Christ’s “Glorious Appearing.” {Have fun noting the stark differences by comparison with the rapture verses.}

◆ **THE GLORIOUS APPEARING OF CHRIST.**

“...every eye will see Him”

“And then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds

with great power and glory” (Mark 13:26).

“...and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory” (Matt. 24:30).

“...so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness
before our God and Father
at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.”

(1 Thess. 3:13)

When Christ returns He will first remove His Saints from the world before he pours out His wrath upon it – The Tribulation.

During that seven-year period He will release judgments upon the earth. In heaven he will be celebrating with His holy ones at the Marriage of the Lamb.

“Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come
and His bride has made herself ready.

And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen,
bright and clean;
for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”

(Rev. 19:7-8)

There is a similar event mentioned in which saints will be given rewards known as the Judgment Seat of Christ.

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

(2 Cor.
5:10)

These verses indicate that rewards have already been given out to the saints who return with Christ. (i. e. “fine linen” – “righteous acts”).

Thus the Judgment Seat of Christ has taken place prior to Christ's Return. It's hard to say how long it would take to judge billions of believers for the deeds done in the body during their lifetimes. The "Great White Throne Judgment" (Rev. 20) follows the 1000-year Millennial Reign of Christ on the earth. It is a final judgment for every person who has ever lived, and ends with everyone whose name does not appear in the Lamb's Book of Life thrown into the Lake of Fire. After evil has been judged the earth is burned, thus purging every molecule of any residue of sin. Then a new heaven and earth is made. "All things become new." (Rev. 22)

On the cross Jesus bore the sins of the world. Anyone who comes to Christ can receive forgiveness and cleansing, righteousness, restoration, life and eternal riches. This is the invitation and purpose of end-time prophecy; to stir our hearts so that we see the folly of poorly planning for eternity. Instead we can respond with faith and secure our eternal destiny, having been warned and heeded the warning.

JESUS SAID,

"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." (Rev. 22:12-13)

JOHN CLOSES THE REVELATION WITH AN INVITATION.

And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come," and let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes to take the water of life without cost. (Rev 22:17)

I close this section with an appeal, a pleading that you not miss Christ. It is vital that you surrender your life to Him as your Lord and King. Nothing on earth is worthy of your life. Only faith in Christ - a present and total submission to Him - will matter on That Day.

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 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)

Then will come the day (as Lucy in Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia says)

'...when everything evil will become untrue.'

Chapter 3 - The Rapture

Intro to The Rapture:

This section is intended to give a more thorough presentation of the Rapture. Some may doubt that there is a Rapture, but a simplistic answer is that 'It's there!' It wasn't made up by a few folks in the 1850's; but unmistakably included in sacred Scripture. It is this writer's conviction that the Rapture precedes the Tribulation for two reasons. During the Tribulation all saints seem to be martyred. (Rev. 13 Mid point) After the Rapture comes the Judgment Seat of Christ and the Marriage of the Lamb. After these events the Saints return with Christ (Rev. 19). Two things are certain: There is a rapture of the saints and it comes before the Tribulation. Jesus wrote to the church at Philadelphia, "Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth." (Rev. 3:10)

The Rapture:

Last time we looked at the church at Thessalonica. They experienced a genuine conversion to Christ, were committed to service and were looking for the return of Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul wrote,

...how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the

dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come. (1 Thess. 1:9 NASB)

The New Living Bible puts it this way,

“...they kept talking about the wonderful welcome you gave us and how you turned away from idols to serve the living and true God. And they speak of how you are looking forward to the coming of God’s Son from heaven – Jesus, whom God raised from the dead. He is the one who has rescued us from the terrors of the coming judgment.”

When Christ returns He first comes for His church, saving her from God’s coming wrath, known as the Great Tribulation.

THE RETURN OF CHRIST IS THE BLESSED HOPE.

Paul wrote,

“...looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our Great God and Savior, Christ Jesus...”

(Titus 2:13).

Peter writes,

“...fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:13).

Let’s look at the details of this teaching:

I. THE RAPTURE: THE RETURN OF CHRIST FOR SAINTS

1 Thess. 4:17 (Context of comfort)

“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** together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

Caught up – Rapture --Gk. harpazo – Latin – Rapturo “to snatch away”

- Used in Acts 8:39 “snatch away Philip”
- II Cor. 12:2-4 Paul was “caught up to the third heaven”
- I Thess. 4:13-18 “caught up together”

When Christ returns He will first resurrect all believers who have died. Then He will gather up all living saints to be with Him.

The rapture is the event of the Second Coming in which the Lord takes His saints from earth to heaven. It is referenced in several texts:

“Now we request you, brethren

with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,

and our gathering together to Him...” II Thess. 2:1

Before Jesus was crucified He spoke of His return to His disciples,

Let not your heart be troubled;

you believe in God, believe also in Me.

In My Father's house are many dwelling places
{mansions};

if it were not so, I would have told you so.

For I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you,

I will come again and receive you to Myself,

that where I am, there you may be also."

(John 14:1-3)

EXAMPLES OF THE RAPTURE

ELIJAH AND ENOCH – OT saints who went to heaven

without going through physical death.

"Enoch walked with God and he was not, for God took him."

- THE RAPTURE CHANGES US INTO ETERNAL BEINGS, ALONG WITH RESURRECTED BELIEVERS , ONLY WITHOUT EXPERIENCING DEATH.

"Behold, I tell you a mystery;

we shall not all sleep,

but we shall all be changed,

in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,

at the last trumpet;

for the trumpet will sound,

**and the dead will be raised imperishable,
and we shall be changed.”**

(1 Cor. 15:51-52)

BENEFITS OF THE RAPTURE

- SEEING CHRIST MAKES US LIKE HIM.

“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.”

(1 John3:2)

Glorified bodies – our mortal bodies shall become glorified the moment we see Christ in His glorified state.

Two Great Benefits will take place when Christ returns:

1. Resurrection

When Christ returns He will bring with Him the spirits of those who have died in Christ. At the right moment he will recall all the bodies and rejoin them to the spirits of these saints. At that time they will become glorified, resurrected saints.

...and the **dead in Christ shall rise first**. Then we who are alive and remain shall be **CAUGHT UP** together with them in the clouds. For the trumpet will sound, and **the dead will be raised imperishable**, and we shall be changed...

“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits after that those who are Christ’s at His coming...” (1 Cor. 15:22-23)

Our resurrection is because of Christ’s resurrection.

Romans 8:18-25

2. Reunion

A tremendous reunion will take place in which believers in Jesus will be re-united with those who have died in Christ, never to be parted again.

Imagine the joy of seeing loved ones once dead, now alive. Those who died in wars, fires, sickness, heart disease, in childbirth, or on beds of pain, now completely healthy, happy and alive. Imagine the elderly restored to their youth, crippled walking or dancing, blind and deaf who can see and hear. Think of the tears of joy replacing those that were once tears of sorrow, even agony. Christ, Himself, will be the center of attention and worship, in a kingdom of love, life and light. No more darkness, emptiness, pain or sorrow.

Then we who are alive and remain shall be **CAUGHT UP**

together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord

A RAPTURE-REUNION IN THE CLOUDS

- With all believers in Jesus who have died before
- Together with Jesus forever
- A beautiful view for the greatest reunion of saints ever.

Prophetic Overview

Prophetic Overview:

- ❖ Literal View of Prophecy
- ❖ Christ's Return
- ❖ Rapture and Rewards
- ❖ Prophetic Time-Line

I. Interpretation: A Literal View of Prophecy

“Hermeneutics are the principles Bible students use to interpret biblical texts. Exegesis, or interpretation, is the implementation of those hermeneutical principles”

Hermeneutics = interpretation

Exegesis applies those rules to explain the meaning of a biblical text.

Evangelicals use grammar and historical context to arrive at its correct interpretation. (See *Protestant Biblical Interpretation: a textbook of Hermeneutics* by Bernard Ramm.)

Grammatical-Historical = literal interpretation

In the Christian church these principles are applied in every area except eschatology. Theology today can be described as ‘confusing,’ especially when it comes to a study of the end-times. Three positions are represented in mainstream evangelicalism: Preterist, Idealist, and futurist.

PRETERIST APPROACH TO REVELATION – most of the book’s prophecies were fulfilled by A. D. 70, leaving a highly figurative and far from literal interpretation of the rest of prophecy.

THE IDEALIST APPROACH TO REVELATION - not as specific events, but as basic principles of how God acts throughout history. They interpret apocalyptic literature differently from other biblical literature.

“Idealists teach that Revelation presents basic principles of God’s activity at every stage of history...”

(LaHaye/Hindson *Encyclopedia of Bible Prophecy*)

THE FUTURIST APPROACH TO REVELATION accepts the book’s self-claim of being a prophecy and interprets it literally.

“Embracing the premillennial return of Christ, it utilizes a normal hermeneutical pattern of interpretation based on the prophetic style, views the book as focusing on the last periods of world history and outlines the various events and their relationships to one another.”

Milton Terry, 19th century author of “*Biblical Hermeneutics*” wrote,

“We must not study them [the Scriptures] in the light of modern systems of divinity, but should aim rather to place ourselves in the position of the sacred writers, and study to obtain the impression their worlds would naturally have made upon the minds of the first readers”

(p. 595).

AXIOM: “**THERE IS ONE INTERPRETATION AND MANY APPLICATIONS.**”

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR’S DREAM FROM DANIEL 2.

Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that Daniel interpreted and applied to the future world empires. Starting with Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, as the head of gold on the statue from his dream, the next kingdoms – Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome were literal kingdoms, accurately predicted.

HOW THEN COULD THE *FEET* OF THE SAME VISION BE INTERPRETED AS FIGURATIVE?

I am confident that a futurist, literalist position is the proper one concerning all biblical prophecy.

God said it and will bring it about according to His great power and sovereignty.

II. The Promise of Christ's Return

The early church expected Christ to return in their lifetime. Instead of their demise they believed, hoped and expected to see Christ's return. They did not fear death or persecution, but anticipated the Second Coming. One example is the believers of Thessalonica, who were described as those who "...turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven..."

(1 Thess. 1:9).

Paul wrote, "...looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our Great God and Savior, Christ Jesus..." (Titus 2:13)

I'M MORE EXCITED ABOUT THE UPPER-TAKER THAN I AM ABOUT THE UNDERTAKER.

Christ promised that He would return. His return would be in two stages or phases accomplishing many things in-between.

1. FIRST, there would be a private gathering in which the Lord Jesus Christ descends from heaven, resurrects all saints who have died, and then 'raptures' the rest of believers. (The Great Snatch)

"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout,

...and the dead in Christ shall RISE first.

Then we who are alive and remain

shall be CAUGHT UP together with them in the clouds

to meet the Lord in the air,

and thus we shall always be with the Lord." (1 Thess. 4:17)

2. SECOND, there is the Glorious Appearing, in which Christ returns with all angels, saints, and glory. Rather than being a private gathering in the sky, this part of Christ's return will be a public and glorious appearing.

"...every eye will see Him"

"And then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of the sky with power and great glory" (Mark 13:26).

"...so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness

before our God and Father

at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints." 1 Thess. 3:13

Revelation 19 gives us a picture of Christ's return with His saints rewarded – His army.

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 the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses." (Rev. 19:8-16)

III. Rapture and Rewards

The third message was a prophetic focus on the removal of the church from the earth {the Rapture} and the Judgment Seat of Christ.

When Christ returns for His church He will immediately resurrect all saints who have died in Christ, and then rapture all living saints. Everyone will receive a glorified body.

John wrote,

"Beloved, now we are children of God,

and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be.

We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him,

because we shall see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2).

After this monumental meeting will come the Judgment Seat of Christ. As Paul wrote,

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10).

This judgment is for rewards.

“Christ...shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him” (Heb. 9:27-28).

Paul referenced this event, “...each man’s work will become evident; for the day (judgment) will show it because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. If any man’s work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward.

If any man’s work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire” (1 Cor. 3:10-15).

When Christ returns (Rev. 19) with His saints, they are “CLOTHED IN FINE LINEN, WHITE AND CLEAN...” Earlier in the chapter the church referred to as ‘THE BRIDE OF THE LAMB,’ is wearing fine linen.

And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

(Vs. 8)

Since rewards are from righteous deeds, we could say that saints will be wearing their rewards or lack of them. After meeting Christ in the air will come the Judgment Seat in which saints will be rewarded for their righteous deeds done while on the earth. When they return with Christ at His Glorious Appearing, saints will have already been rewarded.

IV. Prophecy Time Line

Following Christ’s return for His Saints (Resurrection/Rapture) separate events will take place in heaven and on the earth. Two events will occur in heaven: The Judgment Seat of Christ, followed by the Marriage of the Lamb. On the earth seven years of Tribulation will occur in which God will pour out judgment on evil and unbelieving men,

ruled by antichrist. After the Tribulation Christ will appear and set up His Millennial Kingdom on the earth for 1000 years.

1. Prophetic Events in heaven

Judgment Seat of Christ

Marriage of the Lamb

“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.” And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And he said to me, “write, ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’” And He said to me, “These are true words of God.” (Rev. 19:6-9).

2. PROPHETIC EVENTS ON EARTH

Tribulation

For a seven-year period following the rapture will the Tribulation Era. The Tribulation is a time of judgment and destruction described in the Revelation, chapters 4-19.

Known as the ‘*GREAT AND TERRIBLE DAY OF THE LORD*’ (Mal. 4:5), and the ‘*TIME OF JACOB’S TROUBLE*’ (Jer. 30:4-7; Dan. 12:1; and Matt. 24:21), the Tribulation will mean judgment for earth dwellers and salvation for Israel.

“...a partial hardening has happened to Israel

until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

and thus all Israel will be saved...” (Rom. 11:25-26).

Olivet Discourse:

Matt. 24:4-11 – First half of the Tribulation

Matt. 24:12-18 – Second half known as “The Great Tribulation”

Matt. 24:21-28 – Christ’s return after the Tribulation

“But immediately after the tribulation of those days” (Matt. 24:29)

“... the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky...” (Matt. 24:30)

The Tribulation is the “seventieth week” prophesied by Daniel.

Seventy-weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city... from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem and the coming of Messiah the Prince. Seven weeks and sixty-two weeks...(69)

Sixty-nine weeks – a time gap (church age) – followed by one *bad* week.

“And he {antichrist} will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, (Tribulation), but in the middle of the week (Great Tribulation) he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering and on the wing of abomination will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.” (Dan. 9:24-27)

Once antichrist betrays those he has made a covenant with (peace treaty between Israel and the surrounding nations), he will set himself up to be worshiped as God in the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus made reference to these verses when he prophesied of this time, warning future Israel of the danger that will take place 3 ½ years before His glorious return.

“Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains... for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall.” (Matt. 24:15-22)

AFTER WORDS OF WARNING COME WORDS OF COMFORT: GLORIOUS APPEARING

“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. And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET AND THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.” (Matt. 24:29-31)

CHRIST'S RETURN AND BEYOND:

Gatherings of elect/of wicked -Judgment of the Nations/Binding of Satan/First Resurrection/Millennial Kingdom/Great White Throne Judgment/Eternity: New Heaven and New Earth

CHAPTER 4 REWARDS: THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

What will happen to the Saints after the Rapture? The next event specifically mentioned is the Judgment Seat of Christ. Paul wrote about the coming judgment for believers.

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

(2 Cor. 5:10).

New Living Translation

“For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body”

After Christ comes for His saints He will judge their works for the purpose of handing out rewards. This is known as the Judgment Seat of Christ, or Bema Judgment. Those who have been doing what He said to do will be eagerly awaiting His return. Those who haven't will be less eager and ashamed when He comes – final inspection.

The Olympic Games had been around for over six centuries before this time, a tradition enthusiastically followed by Rome. They had special judges on thrones called Bema Judgments that watched the participants to make sure they followed the rules in the different events of the games. If anyone violated a rule or failed to meet the requirements they were disqualified. They weren't executed or sent to

prison or enslaved, they were simply disqualified and exempt from receiving a reward or trophy. This is the root of the word Paul used.

RECENTLY A SOCCER PLAYER NAMED LUIS SUAREZ FROM URUGUAY WAS BANNED BY FIFA FOR NINE GAMES AND FOUR MONTHS FOR BITING HIS OPPONENT. ACCORDING TO LAST MONTH'S ARTICLE IN TMZ NEWS, THIS IS THE THIRD TIME HE HAS BEEN ACCUSED OF BITING.

This current example of the World Cup Judges illustrates Paul's use of the Judgment Seat of Christ where Christians will be judged for what they did in this life.

The writer to the Hebrews says,

“And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time

for salvation without reference to sin,

to those who eagerly await Him” (Heb. 9:27-28).

The Judgment Seat of Christ will not be about sin, since that was taken care of by Christ on the cross. It will be about works and rewards.

Salvation is not by works, but by faith.

But saving faith is a faith that works.

Christians do not work to be saved; they work because they are saved.

WHEN CHRIST RETURNS HE WILL JUDGE EACH ONE'S WORKS

– NOT TO DETERMINE ETERNAL DESTINY, BUT DEGREES OF REWARDS

PAUL DESCRIBES THIS JUDGMENT:

According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now if any man builds upon the foundation

with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,
each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it,

because it is to be revealed with fire;

and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built upon it remains,

he shall receive a reward.

If any man's work is burned up,

he shall suffer loss;

but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.

(1 Cor. 3:10-15)

The foundation of salvation is Jesus Christ and His work on the cross.

Building upon it is pictured in terms of two kind of materials.

(Three little pigs scenario – straw, sticks and bricks)

The first kind is poor materials -easy to acquire, found on the surface with little effort.

-Fragile and flammable.

The second kind of material is good. It is acquired by digging deep, and mined at great cost and effort. Since it has gone through the fires already, one could say that it is fireproof.

PETER WROTE OF THE INHERITANCE OF THE SAINTS AS

“...imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away,
reserved in heaven for you...” (1 Pet. 1:4).

THEN PETER spoke of the trials that purified their faith:

“...if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

(1 Peter 1:6-7).

Someone may say, “*Any part of heaven is better than anything here.*”

“*What do I care about rewards?*”

Adrian Rogers told the story of a man who didn't trust banks. He kept everything in a drawer of his dresser- safely tucked away. One night he awoke choking and coughing. His bedroom was full of smoke and flames were licking the ceiling of the walls. He was barely able to get out of the room. He didn't have time to grab any of his money, bonds, or stock certificates. He didn't even have time to rescue his wife or children before the entire house was engulfed in flames.

His pajamas were smoking and singed from the terrible heat. You can imagine him saying, “*Well at least I'm saved.*”

If any man's work is burned up,

he shall suffer loss;

but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.

Getting to heaven without our friends and family with us, and without receiving rewards and congratulations from Jesus Himself, means that we will *suffer loss*.

Paul wrote this shortly before he was martyred,

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course,

I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

(2 Timothy 4:7-8)

Last time we focused on two events that follow the rapture of the church: the resurrection of departed saints and our reunion with them.

Today we have looked into the next event that comes after the reunion of Saints: The Rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ

ARE YOU READY?

You are ... if Christ means everything to you and you are productively serving Him as a disciple who makes disciples through His church, and as a soul-winner in the world.

Chapter 5: The Tribulation

Introduction to the Tribulation

Up until this point we have mainly looked at the events that take place in heaven after Christ's return: the rapture of the saints. Other events such as the Judgment Seat of Christ and the Marriage of the Lamb clearly take place in heaven. The Tribulation Era is a time when judgments are poured out on the earth as a last-effort to affect the hard hearts of men who are on the earth. It is also God's great outreach to Israel. It is the time Paul spoke of in which the blind eyes of his fellow Jews will be opened.

"For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved..." (Romans 11:25-26) It seems clear that a great part of the book of Revelation concerning the nation of Israel. This chapter shows that the Tribulation is the subject of much Biblical prophecy.

TIME-LINE CHART:

CHURCH AGE

– RAPTURE
– **TRIBULATION**

– RETURN

- KINGDOM

THE CHURCH AGE is a part of “the times of the Gentiles” (Dan. 2) which began six centuries before Christ and will continue until His Second Coming. The Church Age is the time period from Christ’s ascension until the Rapture, when the church will be taken to heaven. After that marks the beginning of a seven-year Tribulation on the earth.

The Tribulation will end with the Return of Christ, or *Revelation* of Christ in all His glory. At this time Christ will Reign over His earthly kingdom. His Millennial rule (1000 years)^(Rev. 20:1-6) will culminate with a final rebellion followed by the “2nd resurrection,” in which all mankind will stand before the Great White Throne Judgment.^(Rev. 20:11-13) After this final judgment “death and Hades will be thrown into the Lake of Fire along with anyone whose name was not found written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.”^(Rev. 20:14-15) Then God will make all things new: Eternity begins with a new heaven and earth.^{Rev.21:1}

Today we want to look at the Tribulation. The Tribulation period will consist of the last seven years of the times of the Gentiles, in which a final world ruler known as ‘the antichrist’ will be allowed to take control of the world. During this time the inhabitants of earth will experience the wrath of God through a series of judgments: Seal, Trumpet, and Bowl Judgments.^{Rev 6-19} This will be the greatest period of suffering the world has ever known. The Tribulation is a time when God’s wrath breaks loose within human history and moves to repay a Christ-rejecting world.

“During this period, the antichrist will emerge, persecution of new believers will ensue, and the great battle of Armageddon and the second coming of Christ will transpire.” (LaHaye/Hindson)

Long ago Biblical writers prophesied of this time,

“When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days, you will return to the Lord your God and listen to His voice.” Deut. 4:27-31

“The tribulation will be a period of divine judgment preceding Israel’s redemption and the establishment of God’s kingdom on earth. God’s covenant with Israel included this provision.”

(Lahaye)

OT References to the Tribulation:

- The great and terrible day of the Lord (Mal. 4:5)
- Distress (Deut. 4:30)
- The time or day of trouble (Dan. 12:1; Zeph. 1:15)
- Birth pangs (Is. 21:3; 26:17-18; 66:7; Jer. 4:31; Micah 4:10)
- The day of vengeance (Is. 34:8; 35:4; 61:2; 63:4)
- The day of the Lord’s wrath (Zeph. 1:18)

The Tribulation is a time of trouble for Israel:

“time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:4-7; Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21)

Since the church is gone from this period, the time will have come for one third of Israel to be saved.

PAUL WRITES TO THE ROMAN CHURCH,

“For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved...”

(Romans 11:25-26).

JESUS SPEAKS OF THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL AND HIS SECOND COMING.

Matt. 24:1-14

In reading several extensive passages (Matthew 24, Luke 21, and Mark 13) of the Olivet Discourse we understand that Jesus' teaching was in relation to the disciples' comments on the temple in Jerusalem:

“And as He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, ‘TEACHER, BEHOLD WHAT WONDERFUL STONES AND WHAT WONDERFUL BUILDINGS’” (Mark 13:1)

Jesus, then, predicted the destruction of the temple.

Later on His disciples asked him,

“Tell us, when will these things be,
and what will be the sign of Your coming,
and the end of the age.”

The current view of the Messiah was that of a conquering King, who would destroy the Romans, rebuild Jerusalem, and make Israel the center of the world. Then He would rule the world with an iron scepter.

In the Olivet Discourse Jesus spoke of Israel's future:

- The coming destruction, followed by His appearing
- And the judgment of the nations that was to follow ^(Matt. 25).

Afterwards Jesus warned His disciples about His coming crucifixion.

“And it came about that when Jesus had finished all these words, He said to His disciples, ‘You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be delivered up for crucifixion.’” (Matt. 26:1-2).

How could Messiah take over the world and be crucified too?

After that Judas decided to betray Jesus.

Until then, even Judas was committed enough to stay with them, believing with cautious optimism that Jesus was the Messiah.

The mindset of the times: Messiah was a Ruler and Conqueror.

THE DISCIPLES’ QUESTION ANSWERED IN MATT. 24

“Tell us when will these things be
and what will be the sign of Your coming,
and of the end of the age?” (Matt. 24:3)

JESUS SPOKE OF THE COMING EVENTS WITHIN THE TRIBULATION ERA:

❖ Matt. 24:4-11 – Rev. 6-11 (the first half of the tribulation)

THE SEAL JUDGMENTS –

1. Antichrist (Rev. 6:2)
2. War (Vs. 3-4)
3. Famine (Vs. 5-6)
4. War (Vs. 7-8)

5. Martyrs (Vs. 9-11)
6. Terror (Vs. 12-17)

“...{they} hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, ‘FALL ON US AND HIDE US FROM THE PRESENCE OF HIM WHO SITS ON THE THRONE, AND FROM THE WRATH OF THE LAMB; FOR THE GREAT DAY OF THEIR WRATH HAS COME; AND WHO IS ABLE TO STAND?’” (Rev. 6:16-17).

- ❖ Matt. 24:12-18 – Rev. 12-18 - The Great Tribulation (second half of the tribulation)
- ❖ Matt. 24:21-28 – Rev. 19 (Christ’s Second Coming)

The teaching of amillennialists is that with the destruction of Jerusalem the majority of prophecy was fulfilled in the first century. They conclude, therefore, that there will be no future Tribulation. Since it has been fulfilled historically they reject the prophetic significance of a severe tribulation immediately preceding the return of Jesus.

“...not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down.... Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)... for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall, and unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short.” (Matt. 24:2, 15, 21-22).

In 165 BC Antiochus Epiphanes, desecrated the Temple’s holy place by erecting within it an altar to Zeus, and sacrificing a pig on its altar.

In AD 70 the Romans led by Titus destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the Temple, as Jesus predicted. Josephus recorded that about a million Jews were killed at this time by the Romans.

These were but partial fulfillments – pre-fulfillments of the ultimate fulfillment in the last times.

Zechariah prophesied that “during the end times that two-thirds of the Jewish people will die during a period of unparalleled calamity.”

DAVID REAGAN WRITES,

“Matthew 24 is not history. The terrible events of A.D. 70 were a classic pre-fulfillment in type of the ultimate fulfillment that will occur immediately before the Lord returns. Matthew 24 is prophecy yet to be fulfilled. It is going to be fulfilled soon, for Israel has been regathered, the nation has been reestablished, and the nations of the world are coming together against the Jewish state. The wrath of God is about to fall. We are on the threshold of the Great Tribulation.”⁷

Matt. 24:29 says, “But immediately after the tribulation of those days ...³⁰the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky...”

-WE SEE THAT THE TRIBULATION OCCURS JUST PRIOR TO THE LORD’S RETURN.

DANIEL 9:24-29 --KEY INSIGHTS INTO THE END TIMES. (SEE CHART)

1. Seventy-weeks until all is fulfilled --Timing of the End

“Seventy-sevens” (seventy times seven or 490 weeks of years)

Seventy-weeks have been decreed for your people

and your holy city,

to finish the transgression,

to make an end of sin,

⁷ David Reagan, *The Master Plan*, (Eugene: Harvest Publishers, 1993), Pp. 183-184.

to make atonement for iniquity,
to bring in everlasting righteousness,
to seal up vision and prophecy,
and to anoint the most holy place. ^{Daniel 9:24.}

EVENTS LISTED BY DANIEL:

1. Finish the transgression “rebel”
2. Make an end of sin – actual sins of daily life
3. Make atonement for iniquity

Jesus atoned for sin when he died on the cross
Applied to Israel when the nation accepts Jesus
as its Messiah and Savior

4. Bring in everlasting righteousness

“bring in righteousness of ages” – righteous rule of Messiah

5. Seal up vision and prophecy – fulfilled “to make an end”

6. To anoint the most holy place – lit. “to anoint a holy of holies”

Ezek 43:12 refers to the Millennial Temple

2. Time-table from Time of Nehemiah

(445 B. C. see Neh. 1; 2 -- Artaxerxes)

²⁴Seventy-weeks have been decreed for your people
and your holy city...

²⁵From the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem
and the coming of Messiah the Prince (Jesus)

Seven weeks and sixty-two weeks

Built again, with plaza and moat,

Even in times of distress.

²⁶After sixty-two weeks

Messiah will be cut off and have nothing,

People of the prince who is to come

Will destroy the city and the sanctuary.

End will come with a flood;

To the end: war – desolations are determined.

Dan. 9:25-26

SIXTY-NINE WEEKS – A TIME GAP ‘THE CHURCH AGE’ – FOLLOWED BY ONE BAD WEEK.

3. Establishment of the Tribulation (final week)

²⁷And **he** will make a firm covenant with the many for one week,
but in the middle of the week

he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering;

and on the wing of abomination
will come **one who makes desolate**,
even until a complete destruction,
one that is decreed,
is poured out on **the one who makes desolate**.

Dan. 9:27.

- Antichrist makes a peace agreement.
 - This starts the 7-year Tribulation.
- In the middle [3 ½ years] antichrist breaks the peace treaty.

Israel is beguiled into thinking they will have peace.

Isa. 28:18 calls it “*AN AGREEMENT WITH HELL.*”

THE GREAT TRIBULATION THEN COMMENCES: MATT. 24:15-28

1. The Devil Rules the World through antichrist:

I Thess. 5:1-11

II Thess. 2:1-12

Rev. 13

2. The Wrath of God is poured out exponentially.

3. Christ Returns with all His glory! (Game over!)

“This Tribulation era of destruction and persecution will follow the rapture of the church. However, the fact we will not enter the Tribulation does not alleviate us of our daily responsibilities, evangelism, discipleship, or holy living. Tribulation is certain, but so is triumph. In the meantime, we are called to evangelize the lost and edify the saints.”

THOMAS ICE AND RANDALL PRICE

Chapter Seven – Tribulation Part Two: Judgment Day/Redemption Day

Biblical Overview:

The Tribulation is judgment for those who reject Christ; and is redemption for Israel and saints.

A picture is worth a thousand words - John writes down what he sees.

“...I saw something like a...”

SUMMARY OF THE TRIBULATION JUDGMENTS:

Seal Judgments: As Jesus takes the scroll and begins to break the seals,
each seal becomes a judgment that takes place on the earth.

Rev. 6 First four seal judgments are the “Four horsemen of the apocalypse”
1) Antichrist; 2) War; 3) Famine 4) Death;

Remaining Seal Judgments: 5) Martyrs; & 6) Terror

The seventh Seal Judgment becomes a new set of “Trumpet Judgments.”

Trumpet Judgments Rev. 8.

(Exponentially greater than the seal Judgments before)

Silence in heaven for one half an hour – Answers to Prayer--Rev. 8:1-6

- 1) Hail and fire, mixed with blood – 1/3 of earth burned up
- 2) Great burning mountain thrown into the sea – 1/3 of sea became blood
- 3) Falling star “Wormwood” – poisoned 1/3 of waters of the earth
- 4) 1/3 of Sun, moon and stars darkened “Woe, woe, woe...” (Rev. 8:13)
- 5) Bottomless pit opened – stinging locusts emerged – five months of torment like the sting of a scorpion. (Rev. 9:1-11)
- 6) Army from the East – 1/3 of mankind killed by plagues (:13-21)
- 7) Seventh Trumpet: Christ’s reign foreseen (Rev. 11:15-

Bowl Judgments “Bowls of wrath poured out into the earth” Rev. 16

1) Loathsome and malignant sores upon those with the mark of the
beast.

- 2) Sea becomes blood and every living thing in the sea died
- 3) Rivers and springs of water become blood
- 4) Sun scorches men with fierce heat and fire
- 5) Kingdom of the beast becomes darkened

6) River Euphrates dried up while the kings of the East are demonized to make war at the final battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16:13-16).

7) A great earthquake, huge hailstones (300Lbs ea) fell on the earth

Parallel to the Plagues of Egypt

Redemption

Deception is the beginning of the Tribulation for the Jew.

Peace and Safety (1 Thess. 5)

Two witnesses

140,000 Sealed

God's Protection

Enter into the Millennial Reign