

# The Revelation of Jesus Christ

## A Study of the Book

### An Introduction to the Book of Revelation

Sir Winston Churchill once described the former Soviet Union as “a riddle wrapped up in a mystery inside an enigma.” It’s pretty safe to say that most people, including Christians, view the book of Revelation the same way. Here is a book of the Bible that is full of incredible symbolism and imagery, and many struggle to make sense of it.

There some who ignore or avoid this book altogether; John Calvin, referred to by some as the greatest commentator of the Reformation, never attempted to write a commentary on Revelation, though he did so with others. Some Christians never read it, some pastors never preach from it, and there are many – who call themselves Christian – who even fear it.

On the other end of the spectrum are those who use Revelation to support, even justify their own views or teachings of the “end of days”, some which is bizarre, a good bit of it has been sensationalized, and most of which is downright unbiblical.

Is this book important to the believer? Is it something that we should study? Can we make some sense out of it? The answer to all these questions is an absolute, “Yes”.

#### A. Reasons to study Revelation

1. It provides joy in the midst of trials and affliction (2 Cor. 4:17).
2. It encourages us to live holy, obedient lives for Christ (1 John 3:3). Jesus related personal holiness to the Second Coming in Matt. 16:24 & 27.

*“And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” (1 John 3:3)...*  
*“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.’”... “For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.” (Matt. 16:24 & 27)*

3. Like all of Scripture, it is profitable to the believer (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
4. It gives facts about life after death (2 Cor. 5:8).  
*“We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”*

5. It gives truth about the end of history.

6. It gives proof of the integrity and reliability of Scripture (Rom. 15:4). Prophecies predicted and precisely fulfilled are evidence of the divine nature of the Scriptures. At least one-fourth of the Bible concerns prophecy. More than 300 prophecies were literally fulfilled at Christ's first coming. We can also anticipate the exact and complete fulfillment of yet unfulfilled prophecies. *"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."* (Rom. 15:4)
7. It causes us to worship the God is sovereign, in complete control, and is accomplishing His will in history (HIS STORY, Heb. 1:1-3) *"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."*

#### B. Importance of understanding Revelation

1. First and foremost, Revelation is "The Revelation of Jesus Christ". It describes Him using many titles, such as, "the Alpha and Omega", "King of kings and Lord of lords", "the first and the last", and more, all of which serve to help us to better know and understand our Savior and Lord. Revelation also helps to affirm His full deity.
2. At least one-fourth of the Bible concerns prophecy. Of the 260 chapters in the New Testament there are 300 references to Christ's Second Coming (a.k.a. Eschatology). Jesus spent considerable time talking about prophecy. Revelation contains more details about the end times than any other book of the Bible. It is imperative that a serious student of the Bible not only study prophetic events, but also Revelation.
3. Revelation's purpose is to *reveal* truth, not confuse or obscure it. God would not have included so much in His Word concerning future events if the information could not be understood.

#### C. Title, Author, and Date

1. Title: Unlike most books in the Bible, this book contains its own title: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." "Revelation" comes from the Greek work *apokalupsis*, which means "an uncovering," "an unveiling", or "a disclosure". This word is used throughout the NT to describe speaking or revealing spiritual truth (e.g. Rom. 16:25; Gal. 1:12; Eph. 1:17; 3:3); it is also used to speak of Christ's incarnation at His first (Luke 2:32), and second coming (2 Thess. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:7). Paul wrote: *"Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the **revelation** of the mystery kept secret since*

*the world began.” (Rom. 16:25) And, “For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the **revelation** of Jesus Christ.” (Gal. 1:12)*

*“A light to bring **revelation** to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.” (Luke 2:32) ... “That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the **revelation** of Jesus Christ.” (1 Pet. 1:7)*

In each case the word *apokalupsis* – where we get our English word “Apocalypse”, which has become almost synonymous with end time or future events – appears, it is describing something or someone that was previously a mystery or obscured but is now made clear or visible [at least to those who have the Holy Spirit]. The Book of Revelation *reveals* or unveils truth about Jesus Christ and helps make clear aspects of prophetic truth that were only hinted at, obscured, or not fully developed in the Old and other New Testament Scriptures. Unfortunately, this clarity has often been obscured when interpretive methods are used that deny its plain meaning (interpretive methods that are typically inconsistent with how the rest of the Bible is interpreted).

2. Author: The book itself claims to be written by John, the son of Zebedee, the Apostle of Christ, and author of the Gospel that bears his name, as well as three letters (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8). The early church fathers unanimously attested to the authorship of John (at least until the third century); these included such second century witnesses as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian.
3. Date: John wrote the Revelation while exiled by the Roman Government on the small, barren penal island of Patmos, which is located in the Aegean Sea southwest of Ephesus. The weight of evidence indicates that it was written in the last decade of the first century, ca. A.D. 94-96, near the end of Emperor Domitian’s reign (A.D. 81-96).

D. Why was Revelation written?

When John wrote the Revelation he was an old man, and the last remaining Apostle. All of the other Apostles had been martyred for their faith, and he was suffering the persecution of being banished to the island of Patmos because of his faithful preaching of the Gospel of Christ (1:9). While on Patmos, John received a message from Christ regarding seven actual churches then in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) as well as a series of visions that laid out the future history of mankind and the world.

Revelation was written:

1. To unite and complete the prophetic truth of the Bible.

2. To encourage people of his day that were undergoing severe Roman persecution.
3. To motivate believers toward godly and wise living; to live out the truth of the Gospel of Christ.

E. Basic Outline of Revelation

It is most interesting that the basic structure of the book is revealed with verse 1:19; and is often referred to as a “divine outline”. Revelation can be broken down as follows:

- I. The Things Which You Have Seen - The Person of Christ. (1:1-20)
- II. The Things Which Are – The Possessions of Christ. (2:1-3:22)
  - A. The Church at Ephesus (2:1-7)
  - B. The Church at Smyrna (2:8-11)
  - C. The Church at Pergamos (2:12-17)
  - D. The Church at Thyatira (2:18-29)
  - E. The Church at Sardis (3:1-6)
  - F. The Church at Philadelphia (3:7-13)
  - G. The Church at Laodicea (3:14-22)
- III. The Things Which Will Take Place After This (4:1-22:21)
  - A. The Heavenly Scene (4:1-5:14)
  - B. The Great Tribulation (6:1-18:24)
    - a. Seven Seals (6:1-8:1)
    - b. Seven Trumpets (8:2-11:19)
    - c. Important Persons (12:1-14:20)
    - d. Seven Bowls (15:1-16:21)
    - e. Two Babylons (17:1-18:24)
  - C. The Return Of The King (19:1-21)
  - D. The Millennium (20:1-10)
  - E. The Great White Throne Judgment (20:11-15)
  - F. The Eternal State (21:1-22:5)
- IV. Conclusion (22:6-21)

F. How Should Revelation Be Interpreted?

With its striking imagery, strange sounding language and mysterious symbols, Revelation is perhaps the most challenging book of the Bible to interpret. Because of a profusion of seemingly conflicting and even strange teaching on this book, it might help to examine the four principle interpretive approaches that are employed.

1. The *preterist* approach.

This is a relatively recent approach to Eschatology and Revelation. The term “preterist” is Latin for “past.” Thus, preterists believe that Bible prophecy was fulfilled in the past, and view the Book of Revelation as already fulfilled. More specifically, preterism views Revelation as a historical record of events in the first-century Roman Empire. While some believe that Jesus will return, others – known as extreme preterists or “consistent preterists” – hold that all Bible prophecy was fulfilled in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem. They view this event as the Second Coming of Christ. I.e. Jesus came back and we missed it!

This approach ignores the book's own claims to be prophecy (1:3; 22:7; 10; 18-19). It must be noted that not all of the events predicted and described in Revelation (or numerous other books for that matter) came to pass in the first-century. The very notion that Jesus came back and we somehow missed it is among the most obvious and ludicrous.

2. The *historical* (or *historicist*) approach.

This approach sees the content of Revelation as factual, but sees most of it as already fulfilled in the sweep of church history from the Apostolic era until the present age. Some see Revelation as a symbolic presentation of church history, with interpreters often resorting to allegorizing the text in order to find it in the various historical events they believe it represents (e.g. the fall of the Roman Empire, the birth and rise of Islam, the rise of the Roman Catholic Church, and even the French Revolution). Given its subjective nature, one can easily see why there are a number of various and often conflicting interpretations of the events of Revelation using this approach.

Like the Preterist approach, the historicist ignores Revelation's own claims to be prophetic. It also robs the book of all meaning to the first-century believers to whom it was written.

3. The *allegorical* or *idealist* approach.

This approach denies the literal reality of Revelation, and sees it as containing messages (even myths) of spiritual challenge and encouragement through figurative and symbolic language. It sees in Revelation the timeless struggle between good and evil that is played out in every age. With this approach Revelation is neither a historical record nor a book of prophecy. This approach, if taken at face-value and to its logical extreme, would divorce Revelation from any actual historical events.

\* The Problem With These Approaches.

- a. The interpreter must allegorize or spiritualize most everything in Revelation, making interpretation extremely subjective. The interpreter then becomes his/her own final authority and there is no way to check the validity of their interpretation.
- b. These approaches do not harmonize the great unfulfilled prophecies of the Old Testament.
- c. These approaches do not deal faithfully with the stated purpose of Revelation as stated in verses 1:1 & 19. Revelation is a prophetic book, not a historical one.

4. The *futurist* approach.

This view takes Revelation 4-22 as yet future, still to be fulfilled. The futurist approach is best for several reasons:

- a. It alone systematizes with itself the other prophetic passages of the Bible. It unifies the Scriptures into a single eschatological program.
- b. It alone accomplishes the purpose of the book as stated in verses 1:1 & 19, which state that Revelation is prophetic.

“The correct interpretation of any book of the Bible depends chiefly upon a proper understanding of its main theme. The central theme of the Apocalypse is declared by the title which is given to it in the first line of its text... If the book was intended to be read to a listening congregation, as the initial beatitude states (1:3), the opening verses must have contained some directive for thinking to make it intelligible. The audience would have to know the theme in order to follow it as the various details of action are presented in quick succession. Although there may be other approaches to the book of Revelation, this one is the most direct and is the most logical.” (Merrill C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation*)

- c. It alone interprets Revelation literally, just as the rest of the Bible is interpreted. Only this approach allows the book to be interpreted following the same literal, grammatical-historical hermeneutical method by which non-prophetic portions of (i.e. the rest of...) Scripture are interpreted.

“In contrast to the other approaches to the book of Revelation, the futuristic position allows a more literal interpretation of the specific prophecies of the book. Though recognizing the frequent symbolism in various prophecies, the events foreshadowed by these symbols and their interpretation are regarded as being fulfilled in a normal [or literal] way. Hence, the various judgments of God are actually poured out on the earth as contained in the seals, trumpets, and vials.” (John Walvoord, *The Revelation*)

G. Principles Of Interpretation Applied To Revelation.

A. The First Interpretive Principle – Revelation must be approached literally.

The book was given as a “revelation” or “unveiling” of truth, thus it can be understood. (1:1-3; 22:10)

“The concept of literal interpretation always raises questions since it seems to preclude anything symbolic, and the book obviously contains symbols. Perhaps saying ‘normal’ or ‘plain’ interpretation would be better than ‘literal’, since futurists do recognize the presence of symbols in the book. The difference between the literalist and the spiritualizer is simply that the former see the symbols as conveying a plain meaning.” (Charles C. Ryrie, *The Revelation*)

B. The Second Interpretive Principle – The Old Testament is a significant key to interpreting Revelation.

There are about 350 direct quotes or allusions from the OT in Revelation. This is about 15 OT references per chapter. OT concepts such as “the book of life” and “the wine of God’s wrath” are found in Revelation. OT names such as Jezebel, Balaam, and Babylon also appear. There are also OT titles such as “first and last” and “the root of David”. There are also numerous OT symbols such as the candlestick and sacrificial lamb.

C. The Third Interpretive Principle – Revelation is essentially in chronological order. The visions are not given haphazardly. There is a progressive pattern to the book as 1:19 states. Note: This is not normally how Jewish writers would write. E.g. Matthew is not consistently in chronological order.

### **Definition of Terms**

Jesus said, “*And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.*” (Matt. 24:14)

In this lesson, we’re going to continue examining some terms commonly associated with the Book of Revelation and the end of time revealed in this book. Some of these terms are actually found in the book itself, while some have been used to describe the events seen in it. This is not an all inclusive list; we will be looking at and defining other terms as we come to them in this study, but this will give us a good start.

1. **Eschatology** – This word comes from two Greek words: *eschatos*, meaning “last”, and *logos*, meaning an “ordered statement” or “reason”. It is a term describing “a division of systematic theology dealing with the doctrine of last things such as death, resurrection, the second coming of Christ, the end of the age, divine judgment, and the future state. It properly included all that was prophetic of future events when recorded in Scripture.” (*Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, Merrill C. Tenney)
2. **The Rapture of the Church** – This is the taking away or catching up from the world of church age saints by Jesus Christ from earth to Heaven. The word “rapture” does not appear in Scripture, but is used to describe this event which appears in such passages as 1 Cor. 15:51-52; and 1 Thess. 4:13-18. It comes from the Latin word *rapio*, which means to “seize or snatch away; the actual removal from one place to another.” The Greek word *harpazo*, from which we get the word “rapture” is specifically found in 1 Thess. 4:17, and is typically translated as “caught up”. This word is also used of Phillip in Acts 8:39; of Paul in 2 Cor. 12:2-4; of Christ in Rev. 12:5; and of souls being saved in Jude 23. The word conveys the idea of force being suddenly exercised. There are two Old Testament illustrations or foreshadows of this event in Gen. 5:21-24 in the account of Enoch who was taken by God and did not see death; and in 2 Kings 2:1-14 in the account of Elijah being taken up into Heaven in the presence of Elisha. Note: This term is typically used to describe two specific events that appear to take place simultaneously; the “catching up” of believers who are alive, as well as the resurrection from dead of those who are in Christ (1 Thess. 4:13-17).
3. **The Marriage (Supper) of the Lamb** – This is the term used in Rev. 19:7 & 9 to refer to a specific occasion, occurring sometime between the rapture and the revelation (or Second Coming) of Christ, when the church is eternally united to Christ as His bride.

“The figure of betrothal appears in Scripture to represent the spiritual reality of Christ and His church. For example, before we were born physically, we were betrothed by the Father to the Son. *‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ: According as He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love’* (Eph. 1:3,4). When we look at this teaching, we see that the individual who has accepted Christ as Savior is part of what we refer to as the Bride of Christ. In the Oriental wedding the bride had little place. The bridegroom was in the place of prominence. They gathered, therefore, to honor him, not her. And the reason they honor Him is because, *‘the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready’* (Rev. 19:7). John was speaking of an event that will take place at the Second Advent – the return of Christ to the earth. During the age in which we live, the Spirit has been calling out a bride; we have been betrothed to Him.” (J. Dwight Pentecost, *Countdown to Armageddon*, pg. 110)

4. **The Judgment Seat of Christ** – This is the place where Christ rewards believers immediately after the Rapture event. It is not seat of punishment, but of reward. The word “judgment” comes from the Greek word *bema*, which typically referred to

the platform of reward for the ancient Olympic athletes in Grecian and Roman games. (2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 19:7-8)

“The issue at the Judgment Seat of Christ is not whether we are believers or not, or whether we will enter Heaven or not. The fact is, whoever appears before the Judgment Seat of Christ is already in Heaven. Forgiveness has been accomplished forever through redemption, and reconciliation with a holy God is assured. The punishment that everyone deserves has already been borne by Jesus when He shed His blood and died on the cross. He was made to be sin with our sin so we could be made righteous with His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). Therefore whatever is evaluated at the Judgment Seat of Christ is not a question of sin and its relationship to eternal punishment. The purpose is to determine the worthiness or worthlessness of the believer’s works. It is in its truest sense a reward seat.” (Mark L. Bailey, *Countdown to Armageddon*, pg. 92)

5. **The Tribulation** – This is a period of seven years beginning shortly after the rapture when unprecedented wrath and judgment is poured out on the world at large for its present rejection of Jesus Christ as well as its sinfulness of past ages. It is particularly described in Revelation 6-19. In Matt. 24:21-22 Jesus states that there has never been such a horrible time in all of history.

(Also c.f. Jer. 25:30-32; Zech. 12:3; 2 Thess. 1:6-10, 2:12). At this time the restored nation of Israel is put through great suffering to bring her to a receptive heart. This causes her to turn towards Christ as her Messiah-Deliverer (c.f. Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:15-20; Rom. 11:25; Rev. 7:4-14). The last three-and-a-half years are often referred to as the **Great Tribulation**.

The Tribulation period was prophesied in the Old Testament. It is referred to as “the seventieth week of Daniel” (Dan. 9:24-27), and will be completed at the end of this age – the first 69 were completed with the first advent of Christ. It is also referred to as “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7).

6. **The Times of the Gentiles** – Jesus said, “*And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.*” (Luke 21:24b). This term expresses the period of time when Gentiles are the dominant world powers, while Israel is subject to them. Regarding this, Norval Geldenhuys wrote, “It refers rather to the whole period during which the Gentile world-powers are in command, until the time comes for the ‘saints of the Most High’ to possess the kingdom (c.f. Daniel 7:27).” (*Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, pg. 536)

John F. Walvoord wrote, “Through the prophetic dream that He gave to King Nebuchadnezzar, God revealed that ‘the times of the Gentiles,’ which began in the eighth to the sixth centuries B.C. would continue until the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to the earth. This means that the Gentiles would be the dominant world powers and the people of Israel would be subject to those powers for an extended period of time. That period has continued now for more than two and one-half millennia and will continue yet for some time into the future. In spite of the fact that a nation-state of Israel was reestablished in its ancient homeland in 1948, approximately two-thirds of all the Jewish people alive at the end of the twentieth century are still scattered among the Gentile nations of the world and, therefore, are subject to the authority of those nations. In addition, in spite of its independent status, the state of Israel is often pressured to submit to the desires and criticisms of the Gentile world powers.

Not until the Second Coming of Christ will Gentile domination of the world be ended. Then, during His rule of the earth in the future kingdom of God, the nation of Israel will be the spiritual and political center of the world (Isa. 2:2-4; 61:6; Micah 4:1-3; Zech. 8:22-23; 14:16-19)." (*Countdown to Armageddon*, pgs. 49-50)

7. **The Revelation of Christ** – A term commonly used to designate the return of Christ to the earth at the conclusion of the Tribulation (Rev. 19:11ff). This is also known as the **Second Coming** of Christ. Christ returns to earth with His saints of the church, raptured seven years before, to bring deliverance for Israel. Israel has been oppressed during the tribulation years by the Antichrist.
8. **The Battle of Armageddon** – This is the name taken from Rev. 16:16 that designates the great battle for Israel that brings the Tribulation period to a close. Antichrist triumphs over the Jews and seizes Israel's homeland for himself. The battle will begin at Megiddo, north of Jerusalem, but it will end at Jerusalem.

“John describes Armageddon as ‘the battle of that great day of God Almighty’ (Rev. 16:14). Instead of translating *polemos* as ‘battle,’ some translations use the word ‘war’. ‘Battle’ focuses on a single engagement while ‘war’ includes several battles, a campaign. But, the final military battle will be mainly between West (under Antichrist) and East (under the kings of the East) and will engulf the entire Holy Land. It will involve other nations that have not been destroyed (e.g. nearby African ones?) because the three demons will incite the kings to war (verse 14). Satan knows the Bible, so he knows that Christ's Second Coming is near and that He will return to earth, at the same place that He ascended. So Satan, the prince of this world, will make one last and unsuccessful attempt to thwart God's plan to glorify His Son and establish Him as rightful ruler of this world.” (Charles C. Ryrie, *Countdown to Armageddon*, pg. 196)
9. **The Judgment of the Nations (or Gentiles)** – This takes place immediately after Christ's Second Coming and prior to the start of Christ's Millennial Kingdom. This judgment pertains to those who survive the Tribulation and Second Coming of Christ. The result of this judgment is to determine those who will enter into and participate in the Millennial Kingdom, and those who will face God's eternal judgment. The basis of this judgment will be personal righteousness as believers in Christ. The evidence will be their treatment of other believers, including Jews, i.e. Christ's “brethren” during the Tribulation. (C.f. Rev. 20:4-6; Matt. 25:31-46) Also note: Daniel 12:11-12 appears to suggest a period of 75 days between the time of Christ's Second Coming and the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom where the judgment of the living takes place.
10. **The Millennium** – This is a period of 1000 years, which commences soon after the return of Christ and the judgment of the Gentiles. During this time Christ will visibly rule this world in righteousness and peace. The resurrected saints in glorified bodies will act as His assistants. Only true believers in Christ who are survivors of the Tribulation will enter into the Millennium (a.k.a. The Kingdom Age). (C.f. Rev. 20:1-10)

Here is Dr. John Phillips' view of the Millennium as he blends dozens of OT prophecies; “Revelation 20 is the step between Earth, as we know it, and Heaven for Eternity. It

declares that the golden age will arrive. The armies of the nations have been disbanded, and the great military academies have fallen into ruin and decay. The machinery of war has all been smelted down and converted to the implements of peace. Jerusalem has become the world's capital. The throne of David is there, and the twelve apostles are there judging the twelve tribes of Israel, for Israel rules the World. The millennial Temple has been built to crown Moriah's brow [i.e. Mount Moriah, or The Temple Mount], and the nations of the Earth come there to worship the living God. Prosperity is evident from pole to pole. Poverty is unknown. Every man has all that his heart can desire. There are no prisons, no hospitals, no mental institutions, no barracks, no saloons, no houses of ill repute, no gambling dens, and no homes for the aged and infirm. Such things belong to a past and lesser age. The bloom of youth is on everyone's cheek, for a man is a stripling at a hundred years of age. Cemeteries are crumbling relics of the past, and tears are rare. The wolf and the lamb, the calf and the lion, the cow and the bear, the child and the scorpion, all are at peace. Jesus has come, and the millennium is here. The golden age, so frequently heralded by the prophets of Israel's past, has dawned at last, and the Earth is filled with the knowledge of God. Jesus is Lord, and He rules the nations with a rod of iron. His reign is righteous, and the nations obey. The principles of the Sermon on the Mount are the laws of the Kingdom, and men obey them because infractions are not allowed. Sin is visited with swift and certain judgment. The era last for a thousand years." (*Exploring Revelation*, Dr. John Phillips, pg. 251)

11. **The Final Rebellion** – At the close of the Millennium, Satan will be released from the “bottomless pit” where he has been held for a thousand years. When he arrives on the scene there will be many who will receive, even worship him, and will follow him in a final revolt against Christ, where they will be crushed and Satan will be cast forever into Hell.

Of this event J. Dwight Pentecost writes: “It [the final rebellion] is necessary in order to provide a final test of fallen humanity. Man will be placed under the most ideal circumstances. With all outward source of temptation removed, in that Satan is bound, and every want supplied, so that there is nothing to covet, it will be demonstrated through those who are born in the millennium with a fallen, sinful nature that man is corrupt and worthy of judgment. In spite of the visible presence of the King and all the blessings that come from Him, by rebellion at the termination of the Millennium (Rev. 20:7-9), men will prove that the heart is corrupt.” (*Things to Come*, J. Dwight Pentecost, pg. 475)

12. **The Great White Throne Judgment** – This event follows the Millennium and the final rebellion. It is the occasion when the unsaved, unrighteous dead of all the ages will be judged for their sin, and will receive their sentence of eternal punishment in “the lake of fire”, or the final Hell. The unrighteous dead will be resurrected and given new bodies fit for eternal judgment. (C.f. Rev. 20:11-15)
13. **Postmillennialism** – “That view of last things which holds that the kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through the preaching of the Gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of individuals, that the world is eventually to be Christianized, and that the return of Christ is to occur at the close of a long [but indeterminate] period of righteousness and peace commonly called the ‘Millennium.’ ...the second coming of Christ will be followed immediately by the general resurrection, the general judgment, and the introduction of heaven and hell in their fullness.” (*The Millennium*, Loraine Boettner, pg. 14)
14. **Amillennialism** – This approach to eschatology denies the existence of a literal millennium and views the millennial promises as being fulfilled in a spiritual

kingdom. Those that hold this view generally see a second coming of Christ at the end of the world where there will be a general resurrection and judgment of all people. There is also the view that there are parallel realms of good and evil, God's kingdom and Satan's. Among conservative adherents to this view there are two basic schools of thought regarding the Millennium: (1) The Scriptures that relate to the Kingdom Age are fulfilled in this present age by the Church and Christ's rule over it here on earth; and (2) That the Millennial passages are fulfilled by God's rule over His saints in Heaven now.

Note: Both the postmillennialist and the amillennialist approaches to eschatology agree that there will be no literal future earthly Kingdom where Christ will reign for a 1000 years. Origen (ca. 185-254), Augustine (354-430), Luther, and Calvin were all amillennialists. To reiterate what was said earlier, all biblical conservatives use a literal, normal, or plain approach to interpreting Scripture, but not all do with eschatology. Question: Why is that?

15. **Premillennialism** – This view takes a literal approach to interpreting eschatological passages along with the rest of Scripture. It holds to the reality of a literal, earthly millennium that will see the establishment of Christ's kingdom for an actual one-thousand years. It also believes that the rapture of the church and the second coming of Christ precede the beginning of the Millennium Kingdom. This view understands that there will be separate occasions when resurrections and judgments will take place. Following the Millennium eternity begins with "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1)

Dispensational premillennialists maintain there is a distinction between the Church and Israel. It is clear that the Church has not literally or "plainly" fulfilled the yet unfulfilled promises that God made to Israel (e.g. Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants); therefore there must be a time when they will be fulfilled, and that time is seen to fit the Millennial Kingdom. Note: Historically the premillennialist view was predominate, if not exclusive, in the early centuries of the Church; and it was not until Origen, and later in more depth with Augustine that the amillennialist view came about. Postmillennialism followed much later, likely around the 1100's with Jochaim of Fiore as one of its earliest proponents.

Note: Within the premillennialist approach to eschatology there are those who hold differing views as to the timing of the Rapture of the Church.

16. The **Pre-Tribulational Rapture** view holds that the rapture of the Church will not only occur prior to the Millennium, but also before the onset of the Tribulation, or prior to Revelation 4:1. This approach to interpreting eschatology looks for the imminent, but unknowable and unannounced return of Christ where believers who are in Christ (i.e. from the time of Pentecost – Acts 2 until the present) – both alive and dead – will be raptured from this world instantaneously when Christ appears "in the air" for His own. This would be a secret appearing of the Lord for the saved in Christ only. This view examines John 14:1-3; 1 Cor. 15:51-52, and 1 Thess. 4:13-

18, which form the biblical basis for the Rapture of the Church, along with Rev. 3:10, where no judgment or wrath is in evidence, and compares it with the biblical passages of Christ coming again in judgment at the end of the Tribulation at His Second Coming (c.f. Matt. 13:34-50; 24:29-44; Rev. 19:11-21). Note: This view is most consistent with a literal approach to interpreting Scripture.

17. The **Mid-Tribulational Rapture** view also agrees that rapture of the Church will occur before the millennium, but they hold that it will take place at the midpoint of the Tribulation (i.e. after 3 ½ years), or right before the time of the “Great Tribulation”. This view sees that unusual Satanic activity will already be happening, and that the rapture of the Church will release Satan from God’s restraints, thus ushering in the Great Tribulation. The Church then would not experience the last half of the Tribulation when the suffering and judgment would be at its most severe. There is a version of this view called, “Pre-wrath Rapture” in which the saints in Christ will be taken up within the final two years and before the final and worst judgments or “wrath” begins.
18. The **Post-Tribulational Rapture** view also believes in the rapture of the Church before the Millennial Kingdom, but holds it will occur after the Tribulation. The Church will then be on earth during the entire seven year tribulational period. This view sees the Rapture and Second Coming as facets of a single event. This view is typically based on Matt. 24:29, but this passage refers to God’s dealings with Israel (c.f. 24:15) and speaks of gathering together those saved during the Tribulation. Note: If all the believers of all ages are raptured when He returns, who goes into the Millennium? Why would God rapture all the saints in Christ only to send them right back?
19. There is also a “**Partial-Rapture**” view, which teaches that spiritual Christians will be taken up before the Great Tribulation, but carnal Christians must go through it; and the “**No-Rapture**” view which teaches there will be no Rapture at all (Note: this is the position of amillennialists and postmillennialists).

### **The Sequence of the End of Days**

Scripture tells us that no one knows the exact timing of Christ’s return. Jesus Himself said, *“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.”* (Matt. 24:36) While there are “signs” that will warn us that the time is near (and we will look at those later, in another lesson), the purpose of this lesson is to show the sequence of events of the last days as revealed in the Bible.

1. **The End of the Church Age.** When Israel rejected Jesus Christ as her Messiah at His first Advent or coming, God turned to the Gentiles, and more specifically to the Church, which He created and is head of (c.f. Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:20-23; Col. 1:18),

for the carrying out of His work on earth (Matt. 16:18-20; 23:37-39; Luke 21:24; Rom. 9 & 11). In Revelation, John mentions the Church in chapters 1-3, but after that there is no mention of the Church per se until Christ returns. While the “Times of the Gentiles” actually extends to the Second Coming, the Scriptures indicate that the true Church will be taken away prior to His judgment and wrath upon sinful mankind (e.g. note 1 Thess. 1:10).

While there are numerous prophecies that will be fulfilled, converging in increasingly rapid succession (as in “birth pangs”) to serve as a sign that Christ is soon to return, there are two significant events that will mark the end of the church age:

(1) Increasing Apostasy. While defection and apostasy (the abandonment or defection from true faith in God and His Word) will characterize the entire period of “The Church Age” (2 Tim. 3:1), a massive and rapid increase of it will be a herald of the end of it. As we draw nearer to the Tribulation Period of God’s judgment and wrath, apostasy will become increasingly widespread, paving the way for the climactic apostasy in the “religious” reign of the “man of sin”, “the Antichrist” (2 Thess. 2:3).

The Doctrinal characteristics of this apostasy will include among other things, (a) a denial of the Trinity (1 John 2:22-23); (b) a denial of the incarnation of Christ (1 John 2:22; 4:3; 2 John 7); and (c) a denial of the doctrine of the Return of Christ (2 Pet. 3:3-4). Another characteristic will be found in a massive decline in morals. Paul lists eighteen characteristics of such apostasy in 2 Tim. 3:1-5.

(2) Preparation for the World-wide Ecumenical Church. During the first part of the Tribulation period, organized, ecumenical (unified) religion will have its heyday. This, however, will be an apostate religious system, described in Revelation 17 under the label, “Mystery, Babylon”. Though it will present itself as the true religion, it will have nothing to do with the God of Heaven. This world-wide ecumenical church will in fact persecute the true converts to Christ during the Tribulation.

It appears likely that the beginnings of this religious system will be started prior to the Tribulation period. The foundation for it will be likely include organizational moves towards uniting all who claim to be “Christian” (e.g. World Council of Churches), as well as a concerted encouragement to accept and be tolerant of, even going so far as to promote doctrines to which diverse groups and religions can give support (e.g. moves in recent years between the Vatican and Islamic leaders to find “common ground”).

2. **The Rapture of the Church.** This is actually the first occurrence in the sequence of last-day events. At the conclusion of the Church Age (i.e. when the last believer comes to faith in this age or dispensation), the Church will be “caught up”, raptured, into the presence of the Lord. Let’s examine the elements of the Rapture found in 1 Thess. 4:13-18:

- A. The return of Christ (4:16-17). Christ Himself will return for His own (John 14:1-3), meeting His bride, the Church “in the air” (4:17). There will be a shout of command (“shout” from the Greek means “call” or “summons”, a “loud command”). Whether this is spoken by the Lord or an archangel is not clear, though we do see the archangel adding his voice. The “trumpet of God” will then sound for believers in Christ. It should be noted that the trumpet blast also serves as a warning to those who through rejection of Christ have missed the rapture.
- B. The resurrection of the dead in Christ (4:16). The very first to respond are those who are “dead in Christ”. They will be raised perhaps only a very, very brief moment before those who are alive in Christ. Both the dead and living in Christ will experience changes “*in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye*” (1 Cor. 15:52), instantly receiving glorified bodies, and being reunited with their spirits (or soul). These glorified bodies will be like the resurrected body of Jesus (1 John 3:2); and will not be limited to the natural laws as we know them (Luke 24:31; John 20:19, 26; Acts 1:9).

Who are the “dead in Christ”? They include believers from the time of Pentecost (Acts 2) until the rapture of the Church. This is an aspect of what is called the “first resurrection” (Rev. 20:5-6). Though there were believers before then, they were not placed “in Christ”. Their resurrection, as well as the saints who died during the Tribulation will occur later.

- C. The rapture of living believers (4:17). Technically speaking only living believers are “caught-up” or raptured, while the “dead in Christ” are resurrected. The term “rapture”, however, is often used to describe all that happens during this time because it is so instantaneous. The rapture of living believers means that they will be caught-up or translated, instantly receiving glorified bodies, and coming into the presence of the Lord without having to physically die.
  - D. The reunion with Jesus Christ and loved ones (4:17). Scripture teaches that we will be reunited with believing loved ones who have gone on before us. Most importantly, and best of all, we will be reunited with our Creator, Savior, and Lord, Jesus Christ! We are not as those who have no hope!
3. **The Judgment Seat of Christ.** After meeting our Savior in the air, we will then stand before His judgment seat (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10). The purpose of this judgment is not to determine salvation or mete out punishment (the believer will never be judged for his sin; that was paid for at the Cross); it is for reward. The basis for this judgment is the works of the believer, and the quality of what has been done in our lives will be tested. Eternal rewards will be distributed on the basis of the quality of works (c.f. 1 Cor. 3:12-15).
  4. **The Marriage of the Lamb.** The Church, the “bride of Christ” will be eternally united with Jesus in an event that is pictured by our earthly marriages. (C.f. Rev. 19:7-8; Eph. 5:31-33)

## 5. **The Tribulation.**

Jesus said, *“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.”* (Matt. 24:21-22) Also c.f. Dan. 12:1.

The seven-year period known as the Tribulation, the “time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7), or the “seventieth week of Daniel” (Dan. 9:24-27) will commence shortly after the rapture of the church. The Scriptures do not say how much time will elapse from the time of the rapture, but it will most likely be a fairly short period of time. The Tribulation will actually commence, according to Daniel 9:27, with the signing of a covenant or treaty between “the prince” (a.k.a. “the Beast” or Antichrist), and Israel. This treaty is to guarantee safety and protection for Israel, enabling them to rebuild the Temple, which will likely happen during the first half of the Tribulation period. *“Then he [the prince that shall come (v. 26)] shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.”* (Dan. 9:27a)

The Tribulation is in view in Revelation 6-19. During this period of time a series of horrific and catastrophic judgments will be unleashed upon the earth. These judgments are symbolized by broken seals, blown trumpets, and vials or bowls of God’s wrath (see attached chart). Biblical scholars and interpreters have debated the relationship of these series of judgments, but using a literal or “normal” approach to interpreting Revelation, these three series of judgments are best viewed as being distinct from one another, forming a chronological structure for the seven-year Tribulation period. In other words, each judgment follows the previous one, increasing in severity, and at least in regards to the bowl judgments, occurring more rapidly.

A. Seven broken seals (Rev. 6:1-8:1). It is most likely that these judgments take place during the first half of the Tribulation. During this time 144,000 Jews will be called and saved by God, and will be sealed to become His evangelists to the world. (Also c.f. Matt. 24:6-11)

- \* Mid-point of the Tribulation. Some significant events will take place at this point:
- 1) Antichrist will break his covenant with Israel, bringing to a halt worship in the Temple, and sets up the “abomination of desolation”, setting himself up in the Temple to be worshipped (Dan. 9:27b, Matt. 24:15)
  - 2) Antichrist will devastate Jerusalem, forcing many Jews to flee for their lives (Rev. 11:2; Matt. 24:16ff). God will preserve them during this time (Rev. 12:13-16), while those who do not heed God will suffer (Rev. 12:14-17).
  - 3) Having set up a world-wide counterfeit religious system that will flourish during the first half of the Tribulation, Antichrist, along with the False Prophet, will stop and destroy it, requiring worship be directed only to him (Rev. 13).

- 4) It is possible that at the mid-point Satan and his angels will be forever barred from Heaven (Rev. 12:7-9), and will intensify their efforts to destroy the Jews.
  - 5) While there is considerable debate regarding the timing of the great battle of Gog and Magog prophesied by Ezekiel (Eze. 38 & 39), many believe it will occur just prior to or right after the rapture of the church, while some believe it will occur near the mid-point of the Tribulation. The timing of this event is uncertain, but it was included here, because by this point in the tribulation time-line, this climactic battle will have occurred. In this great battle, the forces of Russia, Iran, and several other nations come against Israel to destroy her. At this time Israel will stand quite alone against her enemies, but God will miraculously deliver her.
- B. Seven trumpets (Rev. 8:2-11:19). These judgments take place during the second half of the Tribulation, and are particularly directed at those who have persecuted believers (c.f. 6:9-11; 8:2-5).
- C. Seven vials or bowls of the wrath of God (Rev. 15:1-21). The special target of these intense and severe judgments appears to be Antichrist and his followers. No matter the severity of the judgments, they refuse to repent. The seven angels who have the seven bowl judgments apparently deliver these judgments in quick succession during the final months of the Tribulation.

The three sets of seven judgments will bring devastation upon the earth and man unmatched in all of history (Matt. 24:21-22). Jesus referred to the Tribulation judgments as “birth-pangs” (Matt. 24:8), suggesting that as the Tribulation period progresses the judgments will become both more severe and more rapid in succession. God is the source, and they are meant as retribution upon the unbelieving world for its continued rejection of God, His Christ, and His will throughout the ages.

The Jews will likely be spared in large part from these judgments (Isa. 26:20-21), but they will suffer severe oppression and persecution at the hands of Antichrist and his followers during the period of the Great Tribulation, or the last three-and-a-half years. Antichrist, a.k.a. “the beast”, will make a covenant with Israel at the beginning of the seven year Tribulation (Dan. 9:27), promising peace, rest, and security. At the mid-point of the Tribulation the Beast will break his covenant with Israel, he will order the cessation of all Temple sacrifice and offerings, will defile the Temple with the “abomination of desolation” (Dan. 12:11; Matt. 24:15), and will demand that everyone on earth worship him as God.

Antichrist will focus his own wrath upon Israel, and will conquer their land including Jerusalem (Zech. 14:1-2). He will then set up his throne and headquarters in Jerusalem (Dan. 11:45), presenting himself as Messiah. As many have done before, he will seek to exterminate the Jewish people, and will in fact succeed in murdering two-thirds of those who are Jews (Zech. 13:8-9). Apparently God will allow this terrible persecution and suffering in order to prepare their hearts to

receive Jesus Christ as their Messiah-King when He comes to deliver them from the Beast (Zech. 12:10; 13:8-9; 14:3-4; Rev. 19:11-21).

It appears that while multitudes of Gentiles will come to faith in Christ during the Tribulation, most will be martyred (c.f. Rev. 6:9-11; 7:9, 13-15; 17:6; Matt. 24:9-14). While Israel appears to be protected in the first half of the Tribulation, it is likely multitudes of Jews who come to faith will die as well.

## 5. **The Battle of Armageddon**

Though the word “Armageddon” conjures up different images in people’s minds, it is in fact a real event that the Bible prophecies will take place just prior to the Second Coming of Christ (c.f. Zech. 14:1-2; Rev. 14:17-20; 16:12-16). Armageddon will not be a battle between certain nations, nor is it some metaphoric description of the ageless battle between good and evil. This will be the campaign in which Antichrist will conquer Israel in a massive series of battles with the kings of the East just before Jesus comes back. It is an aspect of God’s judgment upon unrepentant mankind.

## 6. **The Revelation of Christ (a.k.a. The Second Coming)**

After Antichrist (the “Beast”) has conquered Israel, the true Messiah will come back to deliver Israel. In Joel 3:12, the prophet indicates that Antichrist’s army will be located in the “Valley of Jehoshaphat”. This has been identified by numerous scholars as the Kidron Valley on the east side of Jerusalem, dividing the Mt. of Olives from the city. In full view of this army, Jesus Messiah with His saints of the Church, will come in a display of His divine glory, and will split the Mt. of Olives, the very same Mount from which He ascended back into Heaven (Acts 1). His first act will be to cast the Beast and False Prophet into the “lake of fire”, and will then slay all of Antichrist’s vast army. (C.f. Zech. 14:2-5; Matt. 24:27-30; 2 Thess. 1:7-8; Rev. 19:11-21) The Jews will be first-hand witnesses of this destruction and they will acknowledge Jesus as their Christ, Deliverer, and King.

## 7. **The Judgment of the Nations (or Gentiles)**

This event takes place here on earth, shortly after Christ’s Return. (C.f. Matt. 24:31; 25:31-46). The basis for this judgment will be the treatment each person has given the Jews (as well as other believers in Christ). The outward attitude toward the Jew will be an evidence of the inward attitude towards Christ. Only those who have a genuine faith in Christ would dare to befriend a Jew during the Tribulation.

The “goats” will be assigned to “everlasting punishment”, i.e. Hell; while those judged to be “sheep”, who are truly “in Christ”, will be given the privilege of entering the Millennial Kingdom. The principle purpose of this judgment is to determine who enters in the Millennial Kingdom.

## 8. **The Binding of Satan**

At the end of the Tribulation an angel will capture and bind Satan, and he will be consigned to “the bottomless pit” where he will be completely restricted from exercising his influence upon mankind during the Millennial Kingdom. It is most likely that his minion will be restricted as well. Satan’s work and influence will be completely halted, and Christ will claim supreme authority, serving as righteous King over all the earth. (C.f. Rev. 20:1-3).

## 9. **The Resurrection of Old Testament and Tribulation Saints**

At the Rapture, only those who are “in Christ”, the “bride of Christ”, both dead and living, are taken up to be with the Lord. What happens to Old Testament saints, or those who are saved during the Tribulation? At or shortly after the Revelation of Christ they will be resurrected. This event is still called “the first resurrection” (Rev. 20:4-6) because it concerns saints, not unbelievers. It is not “first” chronologically, but by priority, because they are “saved”.

Note: For another perspective on this concept, Christ was the “firstborn from the dead” (Col. 1:18), not chronologically, but by priority. What’s also important, is to understand that if you put the OT saints in the Rapture, you mess up your ecclesiology, putting the Church in the OT, thus coming up with amillennialism. 1 Thess 4:13-18 specifically references “those who sleep in Jesus” (v. 14); and “the dead in Christ” (v. 16).

Daniel, an O.T. saint, is told that he will be resurrected at the end of the Tribulation (Dan. 12:2, 13). Daniel will rise from the dead to receive his assigned lot at the end of the days discussed, namely the period of the “seventieth week”, the days of the Tribulation. *“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.” ... “But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.”* (Dan. 12:2 & 13)

Both O.T. and Tribulation saints will receive glorified bodies, and will join the church saints to assist Christ in His millennial reign.

The second resurrection, which corresponds to “the second death” of Rev. 20:6 & 14, involves unbelievers, and will not occur until the end of the Millennium.

## 10. **The Millennium**

During this one-thousand year period, Christ will reign as sovereign King over all the earth, sitting on “the throne of David” in the city of Jerusalem. *“Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed.”* (Ps. 85:10) At this time the boundaries of national Israel will be established in accordance with the Abrahamic Covenantal promise (Gen. 15:18). During this time the promises contained in the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants will be fulfilled, and the whole world will be brought to knowledge of God. Under Christ’s reign will be three groups of people who will be His subjects:

- 1) The first group will comprise the glorified saints of the Church who returned with Christ at His Revelation, as well as the O.T. and Tribulation saints who have just been raised from the dead. These people, who will reign with Christ, will do so in glorified bodies, and thus will not have the normal physical restrictions of earth. (C.f. John 20:19, 26; Acts 1:9; Col. 3:4; Phil. 3:21; also c.f. 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6)
- 2) The second group will be the nation of Israel, comprised of Jews who accepted Christ as their Messiah and King during the Tribulation period, most likely as a result of the preaching of the 144,000, the two witnesses, and possibly through the witness of Christ's deliverance of Israel prior to Second Coming. Regathered in their land, they will be exalted, blessed, and favored throughout the Millennium.
- 3) The third group will be gentiles who come to faith in Christ during, and have survived the Tribulation. Note: Unlike the Jews, it appears most who come to faith during the Tribulation period will be martyred.

The last two groups are people who enter the Millennial Kingdom in a normal physical body. They have not died, thus they do not yet have glorified bodies. They will marry, have families, hold jobs, and some may die. Some biblical scholars believe this will be an age in which due to the ideal conditions of a changed earth during the Millennium, most will live very, very long lives, perhaps even the entire 1000 years (c.f. Isa. 65:20). At first there will be few people, but as time goes on, and due to long life spans, it is likely that the population on earth will increase rapidly. As children are born, they will need to make personal decisions to make Christ their Savior and Lord; and most will do so... but not all.

## 11. **The Final Rebellion**

Tragically, in spite of the personal presence of Christ on earth as reigning Lord and King, in spite of the total absence of Satan's and any evil influence, in spite of the most ideal conditions conceivable, there will be a considerable number of people who will reject Christ and will join a released Satan in a final Rebellion (c.f. Rev. 20:7-10). This final revolt against Christ will be crushed, and then Satan will be forever condemned to eternal Hell (i.e. "the Lake of fire and brimstone", v. 10).

Why is Satan loosed after one-thousand years? In his book, *Jews, Gentiles & the Church*, David L. Larsen explains, "The successive periods of God's dealing with humankind all but put certain hypotheses and theories to a test. Human conscience or government cannot fully answer our problems; the law cannot provide salvation and the hardened human heart often resists the gospel of the grace of God. But lurking down in human hearts and expressed in many a treatise on the human condition is the notion that were only human beings economically self-sufficient, if only we were spared the graft, crookedness and prejudiceness of public officials, if only we did not have to face the insecurity of hostile threat and war, we would do well."

The simple truth is that the final revolt at the end of the millennium will show that in spite of enjoying what might be described as a perfect environment, free of worry, want, and evil influences, and perhaps even illness and death itself as we know it today, in spite of being in the very presence of Jesus and under His direct, righteous and benevolent rule, man will still prove once and for all the depravity of the human heart. Just as God makes clear in His Word, this event seals for all time and eternity that without redemption in Christ through God's wondrous grace, there is no answer for sin... none.

## 12. **The Great White Throne Judgment**

(C.f. Rev. 20:11-15) Following Satan's final defeat, there will be a "second resurrection" which is the resurrection of all the unrighteous dead of all ages. All the unsaved, both resurrected and perhaps alive (some might have survived the final rebellion), will stand before the Lord Jesus at the Great White Throne to face final judgment. Jesus referred to this as the "resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:29). The location of this throne appears to be somewhere between earth - which along with the universe is being "uncreated" - and Heaven.

The purpose of this event is to once and forever judge the evil works of the unrighteous (i.e. those who reject Christ as Savior and Lord), apparently both human and angelic, and pronounce a sentence of eternal death. All the unrighteous are given new bodies fit for eternal condemnation, and are cast into the "lake of fire", which is the "second death", or final Hell, where there will be eternal separation from God and all that implies. (Also c.f. Matt 10:15; 11:22-24; 12:36-37, 41-42; John 12:48; Acts 17:31; 24:25; Rom. 2: 5, 16; Heb. 9:27; 2 Pet. 2:9; 3:7; Jude 6.)

## 13. **A New Heaven and a New Earth.**

(C.f. Rev. 20:11; 21:1ff) At some point following the final rebellion led by Satan, John sees the earth and the physical universe as we know it destroyed; literally going out of existence. Peter described it this way, *"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."* (2 Pet. 3:10-13)

Following this "un-creation" of the universe, John then sees "a new heaven and a new earth", whereby God re-creates a new, uncontaminated earth and universe that will last forever. What will this look like? We don't know, but v.21:1 indicates it will be very different from what we know today. (Also c.f. Ps. 102:25-26; Isa. 65:17; 66:22; Luke 21:33; Heb. 1:10-12).

John then sees *“the holy city, New Jerusalem”*, which has been called “the capital city of Heaven”. That it “descends” indicates that it already existed. It now descends into the new heavens and the new earth from its former abode. By this point, all of those who are righteous in Christ, i.e. the Church, O.T. saints, and saints of the Tribulation and Millennium, are incorporated into the ultimate or final “bride of Christ”. It is in the New Jerusalem that all the saints of Christ will live eternally with Christ in the Father’s house, which was promised even before the Church began (c.f. John 14:1-3). (Also c.f. 3:12; 1 Cor. 15:28; Heb. 11:10; 12:22-24; 13:14.) Thus is the consummation of all things in Christ.

### **The False or Unholy Trinity**

- A. Satan** – a.k.a. *“the dragon”* or the “devil”. While Satan is referenced in The Revelation in the context of the seven churches in Chapters 2 and 3, he appears as *“the dragon”* in Rev. 12 where Scripture gives us a glimpse of the spiritual war of the ages. Rev. 12:9 gives us a four-fold description of the dragon that makes clear his identity:
1. *“The serpent of old”* – identifies him as the serpent that tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1ff; 2 Cor. 11:3; also c.f. Rev. 20:2)
  2. The dragon is also *“called the devil”* – from the Greek “diabolos”, which means “slanderer”, “defamer”, or “false accuser”. (C.f. Matt. 4:1; John 8:44; James 4:7; Jude 9)
  3. The text clearly identifies him as *“Satan”*, which comes from a Hebrew word that means “adversary”. (C.f. Job 1 & 2; Matt. 4; 2 Cor. 11:14; Rev. 20:7).
  4. He is described as one *“who deceives the whole world”* – this describes the activity of the dragon who from the fall of man (Gen. 3) through the present has sought to turn people away from God by deceit. (C.f. John 8:44; 1 Tim. 4:1)

Satan’s deception will dominate the world during the Tribulation. It is he who energizes the Beast and the False Prophet to deceive “those who dwell on the earth” (Rev. 13:14). As he was cast out of Heaven along with the fallen angels at his first rebellion (c.f. 12:4); they will be permanently barred from Heaven at some point during the Tribulation (c.f. 12:9). Knowing their time is short, their arrival on earth will add to the horror of that time.

At the end of the Tribulation, with the Revelation of Christ, the dragon will be cast into the abyss for a thousand years *“so that he [will] not deceive the nations any longer”* (20:3). At the end of the Millennium, God will release Satan for a short time allowing him *“to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle”* against God and His saints at Jerusalem (20:8). In the end, however, *“the Devil, who betrayed them, was thrown into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur, joining the beast and the false prophet. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”* (20:10; also c.f. Matt. 25:41). They will be joined by the fallen angels, or demons, and following the White Throne Judgment of Rev. 20:11-15, by all of unredeemed humanity.

**B. The Beast** - Also referred to in Scripture as “The Antichrist”, he is an individual who will be like Satan incarnate, and will seek to control the world and oppose Christ during the Tribulation period. He will be a Satan-indwelt man like King of Babylon in Isa. 14 and the King of Tyre in Ezek. 28. The Apostle John warned of “antichrists” who would be anyone who would oppose God’s will and plan, yet he also warned of an ultimate Antichrist who would be the embodiment of satanic rebellion (c.f. 1 John 2:18). He will be energized and controlled by Satan (Rev. 13:1-4), and will be the head of his lawless system (2 Thess. 2:3-4).

The word “*antichrist*” means either “opposed to Christ” or “substitute Christ”. This means there is a possibility that not only will this individual oppose and lead the world to oppose God’s program, but he might also present himself as the long-awaited “Messiah” for Israel, and even the world.

While there have been many who were “antichrists”, and those that some thought were the Antichrist, *The Antichrist - or - The Beast* of Revelation is associated with the “latter days” or time of Israel’s history (c.f. Dan. 8:23; 9:26-27). While we do not know for certain the precise timing, Scripture indicates that he will not appear until the “Day of the Lord” has begun (c.f. 2 Thess. 2:2-3). While most likely on the world scene prior to the Tribulation (and thus the Rapture of the Church), his work and appearance will be hindered by the “*restrainer*” (c.f. 2 Thess. 2:6-7).

Geographically and politically The Antichrist will rise to power out of a revived Roman Empire. Where will he come from? While this does not necessarily mean he will be Roman or Italian, it means he will most likely come from the Mediterranean basin, or perhaps from Europe which was the most significant part of the former empire. It could also mean he might come from a nation that was derived from Europe, which could refer to the entire Western Hemisphere. Daniel speaks of him as the ruler of the people who destroyed Jerusalem in Dan. 9:26.

He is a political leader and will be head of the world’s last form of human government.

- a. Rev. 13:1-2. Antichrist’s likeness to Satan is evident in John’s description of him in v. 1, which is strikingly similar to the description of the dragon in 12:3. Some see the imagery of ten horns and seven heads as speaking of nations which will become allied under the headship of Antichrist. On this passage John MacArthur writes: “The description of Antichrist emphasizes the importance of the ten **horns** by mentioning them first and associating the **diadems** with them instead of the heads.

“**Horns** in Scripture symbolize strength and power, both for attack and defense (c.f. 1 Sam. 2:1, 10; 2 Sam. 22:3; Job 16:15; Pss. 18:2; 75:4-5; 89:17, 24; 92:10; 112:9; Jer 48:25; Mic. 4:13). In this passage, they represent the great power of the kings who will rule under Antichrist’s absolute authority. **Ten** fits the imagery of the fourth beast in Daniel 7:7, 24, and is a symbolic number of representing all of the world’s political and military might. Antichrist will rise from among these ten (Dan. 7:16-24) and will not rule merely ten nations, but the entire world (c.f. Dan. 7:23). Unlike the seven **heads**, which represent successive world empires [Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia,

Greece, Rome, and a revived Roman Empire or Antichrist's final world kingdom.], all of the rulers symbolized by the **ten horns** will rule at the same time (c.f. Rev. 17:12)... The **ten diadems** (royal crowns) indicate the horns' regal authority and victorious power." (John MacArthur, *New Testament Commentary, Revelation 12-22*, pgs. 42-43)

Daniel described this final coalition of nations headed by Antichrist in Dan. 2:41-44.

- b. Rev. 13:7-8. The Beast's influence and rule is world-wide.
- c. Rev. 17:12-13. The kings of these nations willingly submit to the authority and rule of the Beast.

Antichrist's rise to power comes through a peace program (c.f. Dan. 8:25). This most likely will be centered upon or at least include a peace treaty or covenant with Israel (c.f. Dan. 9:27), but will extend to the world. He will likely be received as a savior, perhaps even as "messiah" by many in Israel.

Thomas Davis writes, "The Antichrist will strive for unity with a one-world religion, one-world economic system, and one-world government. In an effort to bring the whole world under satanic domination, the Antichrist will manipulate men through religion, economics, and government. The goal will be "peace at any price": "For they shall say, Peace and Safety..." (1 Thess. 5:3). It is fascinating to note the desperation of twentieth-century man as far back as the 1950's: in October 1957, Paul Henri Spaak, Secretary General of NATO, said in Paris: 'We do not need another committee; we have too many already - what we want is a man of sufficient stature to hold the allegiance of all people, and to lift us out of the economic morass into which we are sinking. Send us such a man, and be he god or devil, we will receive him'<sup>2</sup>.<sup>1</sup> (1: Thomas N. Davis, "The Abominable Antichrist", *Countdown to Armageddon*, pg. 189. <sup>2</sup>: From David Larsen, *Jews, Gentiles & the Church*)

Antichrist will be charismatic, shrewd, crafty, deceitful, persuasive, intelligent and manipulative (c.f. Dan. 8:23-25, and Ezek. 28:1-10). His rule will be one of absolute authority, and he will do as he pleases (c.f. Dan. 11:36). He will have no regard for customs or traditions, and will even change laws to suit his purposes; he will also have no fear of God (c.f. Dan. 7:25; 11:37). Instead he will accumulate military and economic power (c.f. Dan. 11:38-39).

At the mid-point of the tribulation Antichrist will violate his covenant with Israel. He will then require the world to worship him as God (c.f. Dan. 11:36-37; Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 13:5-8). His claim to both power and deity will be validated in the world's eyes by his ability to perform signs, wonders, and miracles (c.f. 2 Thess. 2:9-10). The world will believe him and worship him as God and ruler because of their hardened hearts (c.f. 2 Thess. 2:10-12; Rom. 1:18-32).

With the breaking of the covenant, Antichrist will expose his true character as an adversary of Israel (c.f. Dan. 7:21; 8:24; Rev. 13:7). Throughout the Tribulation period Antichrist will persecute those who come to faith during this time, killing many if not most. He will be limited by God, however, particularly as it pertains to his persecution of Israel. While he

will be able to kill many, God Himself will deliver His faithful remnant, giving special protection to the Jewish faithful (c.f. Rev. 12:1-6, 13-17).

There will be some who will rebel against Antichrist's rule. Scripture speaks of an alliance between the king of the South and the king of the North, who will then come against him to test or challenge his authority (c.f. Dan. 11:40-42). Conflict with these nations and perhaps rumors of other uprisings will move Antichrist to seize control of Jerusalem, making it his headquarters (Dan. 11:42-45).

Antichrist is aided in his rise to power through a false religious system (the "harlot"). This false church will seek to control Antichrist, but it is he who will overthrow them so that he might reign and receive sole worship as God (c.f. Rev. 17:3-18).

Antichrist meets his doom when Christ returns at the end of the Tribulation, and will be "cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone" (Rev. 19:20), which is also known as the second death, or final Hell. (C.f. Dan. 7:21-22, 26; 8:25; 11:45; 2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 19:11-21)

**C. The False Prophet** – Appearing in Rev. 13:11-18, the "beast coming out of the earth" is called "the false prophet" in Rev. 16:3; 19:20; and 20:10. He is the third person of the unholy trinity. He serves to promote Antichrist's power and rule, and convinces the world to worship him as God. Using signs and wonders himself, he like the Beast will be energized by Satan, speaking "like a dragon" (13:11).

While Antichrist will be primarily a political and military leader (at least until he demands to be worshipped as God), the false prophet will be a religious leader. He will unite politics and religion in a worldwide religion that will ultimately worship Antichrist (c.f. 17:1-17).

In the reference of "two horns like a lamb" we see his deceitful humility and gentleness, as well as his relative weakness as compared to the Beast.

Along with Antichrist, he will meet his doom at the return of Christ at the end of the Tribulation, and will be "cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone" (c.f. Rev. 19:19-20).

## **"Signs" and Scriptures Regarding the Second Coming of Christ**

*"Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near." (Rev. 1:3)*

Solomon stated that there is nothing new under the sun (Eccl. 1:9). Man has always sought to understand or see into the future. Today people use Ouija boards, gaze into crystal balls, read tea leaves and palms, and consult with psychics in an attempt to know their future.

Yet, it is God and God alone who speaks in His Word, the Bible, who can give us a certain glimpse into the future; for only our creator and the God of the universe can truly know and declare the future. The prophet Isaiah wrote, *“Who has declared this from ancient time? Who has told it from that time? Have not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me, a just God and a Savior; there is none besides Me.”* (Isa. 45:21)

God’s speaking about the future, as recorded in Scripture, is what is referred to as *prophecy*, which means both to “foretell” (predict the future) and to “forth-tell” (proclaim truth). Though God used human authors to write His authoritative Word, prophecy is not the product of man’s imagination or initiative; the Bible makes very clear that God is the author of all prophecy. The Apostle Peter wrote, *“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”* (2 Peter 1:20-21)

When it comes to the study of biblical prophecy one must be convinced that, (1) All Scripture is truth, and that it is inspired, God-breathed; that it truly is the very Word of God (John 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). (2) The entirety of the Bible must be interpreted literally. Elliott Johnson put it this way, “In the literal tradition there is a maxim: ‘The biblical text says what it means and means what it says, uniting what the text says (focusing on the verbal statement) to what the text means (focusing on the interpretation in communication).’ Accordingly, there is no division of textual statements and construed meanings. The maxim is a warning against interpreting biblical statements equivocally [i.e. having double meaning] in the sense of a single text sponsoring multiple, unrelated meanings.”<sup>1</sup> ... “Literal interpretation formulates a system that takes what the Bible claims to be true of itself as a necessary framework for interpretation.”<sup>2</sup> (Elliott Johnson, <sup>1</sup> *Essays in Honor of j. Dwight Pentecost, Apocalyptic Genre in Literal Interpretation*, p. 167; <sup>2</sup> *When the Trumpet Sounds, Literal Interpretation: A Plea for Consensus*, p. 212)

In studying the biblical prophecies that speak to the Second Coming of Christ, it should be noted that Jesus, Himself said that no one knows the day or the hour of His return (c.f. Matt. 24:36), but He did say that there would be signs that would indicate that the end is near. In Matthew 24, in what has come to be known as the Olivet Discourse, Jesus taught on the end of days, sharing some of most important prophetic scriptures contained within the Bible. In the context of the signs surrounding His Second Coming are these words, *“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”* (Matt. 24:32-35)

While it is foolish to speculate on dates of when the Rapture will occur, or when Christ will return, God has much to say about this glorious event. In Dr. John Barnett’s *Living Hope for the End of Days*, he referenced J. Barton Payne’s *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, “The Bible has a total of 31,103 verses, 8,352 of which are prophetic; they speak of events yet to come. All biblical predictions about the future can be grouped into 737 different predictions. Of the 8,352 verses, 6,312 (or 522 different predictions) have already happened *exactly* as God’s Word said they would. About 2,040 verses, with 215 specific predictions from God about the end of the world, are in the process of being fulfilled.”

Dr. Barnett went on to say, "These prophecies can be further divided into eighteen chronological categories (by the timing of the events). There are only five categories of the eighteen left to be fulfilled. Here are the categories: Church prophecies, Second Coming prophecies, Millennial prophecies, Final Judgment prophecies, and New Jerusalem prophecies." (Dr. John Barnett, *Living Hope for the End of Days*, pg. 23)

While the church and Second Coming prophecies are those which are most immediate, the Scriptures indicate that the majority of these signs will not suddenly appear or be seen in their fullness, but will be seen as a trend or emerging reality that amplifies and strengthens, much like the birth pangs of a woman giving birth (Matt. 24:8 – The word "sorrows" actually means "birth pangs" or labor pains in the Greek). In other words, we would see glimpses of their coming to pass concurrently, and increasing in intensity and realization the closer it gets to the Tribulation when they will be full-blown.

The principle signs or prophecies given by Jesus Christ, the Apostles, and the writers of the Bible are remarkably specific (even though we may not fully understand their meaning; e.g. "666"). It is interesting that the very specificity or detail of these prophecies led some who did not understand their meaning to settle on non-literal or plain interpretive theologies of the end times such as Amillennialism and Postmillennialism. What is exciting for God's children and the student of the Bible, however, is that for the first time in man's history since the resurrection and ascension of Christ, we – meaning this generation and only our generation – are seeing every one of the signs and prophecies concerning the soon return of Jesus Christ beginning to happen or unfold. As each day passes, each of these prophecies becomes clearer, pointing to the very likelihood that the time of our rapture will not be measured in centuries or decades, but by mere years, even months.

Like the early saints of the church, who looked for the imminent return of Christ, are you ready? Are you faithfully serving the Lord, walking in the light with Him, reaching out to lost loved ones, friends and neighbors? Are you longing to see the face of your Savior and for your Heavenly home, or are you content to be among "*those who dwell on the earth*" (Rev. 3:10; 6:10; 11:10; 13:14; 14:6; 17:8)?

### **Signs and Prophecies of the Second Coming of Christ**

1. **The Return of the Jews to Israel** - As long as 2,400 years ago God foretold that one day, towards the end of days, the Jews would return to their homeland, and once again there will be a nation of Israel. (Isa. 11:10-12; Ezek. 37:21-22; 38:8; Jer. 31:7-10). In 1948 the world witnessed, against all odds, the miraculous rebirth and survival of the nation of Israel. Since then more than five million Jews have come "home", and more are arriving every day.
2. **The Jews will return in unbelief** – (Ezek. 36:24-26) The Jews are returning to their land, but not yet in belief of the Jesus Messiah. Interestingly, the majority of Israelites today are secular Jews as opposed to those who practice the Jewish religion(s).
3. **The Israelites will build a security wall** – Of this sign, Dr. John Barnett writes: "God told Ezekiel, 150 years after 'Israel' had been captured, its cities destroyed, and

the population exiled to Assyria by Sargon, that Israel would build walls of security – even though there had been no national ‘Israel’ for 150 years! For 2,250 years after the Assyrian conquest, there was no sovereign nation called Israel until 1948. Israel was an occupied land, captured and recaptured by various conquerors for twenty-five centuries. Listen to what Ezekiel was told to say: There would be a people gathered from across the world to Israel (38:12); they would be called Israel (38:18); they would dwell in a land where the walls have been taken down (38:11). Amazing!

“Until 2002, this has always been spoken of as an allusion to defensive preparations. However, for several years now, in an effort to slow the flow of suicide bombers, Israel has been building the most notorious wall in the world. And that wall *will* be totally completed, because Ezekiel saw it taken down when Israel accepts the European Peace Treaty through the Antichrist’s rule during the Tribulation, and thus trusts in a false peace (Dan. 9:27)!” (ibid, pg. 27)

4. **The Hebrew language will be spoken again in Israel** – (Jer. 31:23; Zeph. 3:9) Following the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, the use of Hebrew waned except among the priesthood. At the time of Christ, the prevalent languages in Israel were Aramaic and Greek. When Israel became a nation once again, she reinstated her national language.
5. **The Rebuilding of Ancient Babylon** – The books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Revelation show that the ancient city of Babylon, which was destroyed by the Medes many centuries ago, will be rebuilt and become one of the greatest symbols, if not cities on earth during the “last days”, and will be destroyed again at or just prior to Christ’s Second Coming. Babylon figures prominently in The Revelation (c.f. 14:8; 16:19; 18:2). For centuries skeptics abounded who said this could never happen; after all, the ancient city, which is located in modern day Iraq, was completely destroyed. Following up on the work begun by Saddam Hussein, however, the ancient city Babylon is being rebuilt right now (July 2009), in part with U.S. taxpayer monies, with Iraqi leaders hoping it will become a great center of tourism.
6. **World-wide evangelism** – (Matt. 24:14; Rom. 11:25-26) Jesus stated that before the end of days the Gospel would be preached to all nations. Today, with thousands of missionaries in the U.S. and abroad, with the advent of satellites, TV, radio, internet, DVD’s and Video, and more, the Gospel is being proclaimed in even the most remote of regions. Through such agencies as the Wycliff Bible Translators, the Bible has been translated into over 2,300 languages and dialects, covering more than 90 per cent of the world’s population. Even in the most hostile of nations, there are reports of people coming to faith in Christ.
7. **Global telecommunications, satellites, and television** – (Rev. 11:9-10) In this account of God’s two witnesses, we are told the entire world will be able to immediately see and hear of their demise. How could this be? In the Apostle John’s day, the fastest mode of travel and thus the dissemination of information was by

horse-back or sailing/rowing vessel. From the late twentieth century, however, with the advent of television, global satellites, and the internet, the world can be instantly connected to news that is happening. (Note: In the recent Iranian unrest, while the world's news media has been barred, up to the minute accounts and even pictures and videos are making it abroad by the use of cell phones, Twitter, and more.)

8. **Global travel** – (Dan. 12:4) In Daniel's day, people traveled by foot, wagon, horse-back, or by sailing/rowing vessels. What Daniel wrote about apparently was overwhelming to him, "*many shall run to and fro*". Today transportation is the life-blood of the modern world, with multitudes around the world traveling by automobiles, trains, planes and more. As opposed to few who would venture much beyond their communities before the Industrial Age, much of the world now thinks little of traveling vast distances for business or pleasure.
  
9. **Global tracking technology and commerce** – (Rev. 13:16-18) In the last days there will be technology capable of tracking the world's population and commerce. There are G.P.S. satellites that tell us where we are, and there is technology that tells others where we are, and many times, what we're doing. Computers can track our electronic footprint, whether it is where we are surfing on the net, to where and on what we are spending our money on. With computer and electronic commerce, including credit cards, check/debit cards, wire transfers, e-trading, and more, one could almost exist in America and Europe without carrying actual currency. The number 666 is believed by many to be a financial identification/monetary system employed by Antichrist during the Tribulation period. For centuries it was believed, that if this were literal, it would have to be a tattoo. Interestingly, today, on every commercially produced product in the industrialized world there is a small label that contains a series of parallel lines, called a bar-code. These bar-codes are scanned by computers and are used to track inventory, purchasing, returns and more. Each bar-code utilizes three slightly longer braced symbols – usually one at the beginning to tell the computer where to start, one in the middle to separate the string of numbers, and one at the end to tell the computer where to stop. As the bar-code became an accepted technology for commerce the industry standard for the Universal Product Coding System initially became 6-6-6 (Is it still?). What's more, today the news abounds with reports of new micro-chip technology being used for tracking anything from products produced to pets. A number of reports have been appearing regarding implantable microchips that can be used for security purposes, commerce, and even in operating your home. In January 7, 2002, in the on-line edition of EE TIMES, The Industry Source for Engineers & Technical Managers Worldwide, an article appeared titled, "Injectable chip opens door to 'human bar code'". Applied Digital Solutions of Palm Beach, FL, introduced a passive RFID (radio-frequency identification chip), called the "VeriChip", and "said that the chip could be injected through a syringe and used as a sort of 'human bar code' in security applications." In an April 14, 2004 article, WorldNetDaily said the first firm to use the VeriChip was the Baja Beach Club, an upscale night club in Barcelona, Spain. "Paying for drinks with wave of the hand, Club-goers in Spain get implanted

chips for ID, payment purposes” ... “By simply passing by our reader, the Baja Beach Club will know who you are and what your credit balance is... From the moment of their implantation they will also have free entry and access to the VIP area...” The article went on to note that MasterCard was looking into the possibility of using the VeriChip for “electronic payment media”. So just what does “666” of Rev. 13:16-18 mean? We don’t really know; but the reality of these verses happening literally – e.g. unless one has the “mark of the beast”, they can neither buy nor sell - is something that is conceptually possible today. Also note: Of possible significance are the increasing popularity and our younger generation’s acceptance and enthusiasm of body tattoos and piercings.

10. **Move towards a one-world economy, monetary system, and standardization of weights and measures** – (Rev. 13:8-18) It is argued that we live in a world economy. The current economic crisis that has affected the U.S. has affected the entire world. The problem has been so severe that a number of nations, especially European and Russia, have been strongly touting the necessity to move towards a common world currency. Already most of Western Europe has a common currency, the Euro. This proposal would encompass the rest of the world. While the U.S. has hung on stubbornly to the old English system of weights and measures, we also utilize the metric system used throughout the world. One can seldom buy a product without there being a reference to its metric measure.
11. **Significant increase in global knowledge** – (Dan. 12:4) We live in what has been called “The Information Age”. Since the invention of electronic computers in the mid-twentieth century, man has had access to information and knowledge that is unparalleled in all of history. Not only have books and topics of books become more common during the twentieth century than they have ever been before, but to that we can add personal computers and electronic devices that give us instant access to Google, ASK.com, and other internet based search engines that provide an almost limitless access to information on an almost limitless amount of subjects. We can turn on our TV’s, power-up our computers (desk-top and portable), or even go to our “smart-phones” to access the latest news of what is going on around the world. And that just scratches the surface of what’s available to make us “smarter” or more informed. Not only do we have schools, colleges, universities, and more throughout the world, but we can also receive our schooling, be it grade school – through – graduate school, from the comfort of our own homes via internet schooling. It has been said by some sources that the world’s knowledge doubles approximately every eighteen months-to-two years now. While the measure of this claim might be questioned, the fact remains that the world’s capacity for information and its transmission is increasing dramatically with each passing year. For the past decade or so, new generations of computers are coming on line every eighteen months or less and each one has at least doubled in processing speed and computing power. Recently a new chip innovation, or microprocessor, called the “Cell” was introduced that does everything the present computer does, multiplied by sixty times!
12. **Global increase in devastating weather and natural disasters** – (Luke 21:25-26) While chaotic weather and natural disasters have always existed, there appears to

be an alarming trend that it is getting more frequent and intense. A number of news outlets like USA Today, Drudge Report, and more, have written stories that speak of weather increasingly getting worse. Titles and names such as “tsunami”, Hugo, Katrina, Rita have become very familiar to us. From droughts, wild-fires; to hurricanes, mud-slides, and flooding, it seems each week we hear of a new natural disaster. While the assertion that global warming is the cause of all of this is a subject for debate, Scripture tells us that Jesus foresaw a time when global weather would increase in frequency and severity to such a state that the whole world would be troubled, fearful, and even die because of it. In Romans 8:21-22, Paul tells us that all of creation is under the curse of sin, and will suffer an increase of intensity and frequency, like the birth pangs of labor (also note Matt. 24:8).

13. **Global awareness of earthquakes** – (Matt. 24:7) *“There will be... earthquakes in various places.”* There have been claims by some end-times-teachers that earthquakes have been increasing in frequency and intensity. An internet search regarding this (see “increase in global knowledge” above), including some very reputable Geological and scientific websites, have not seen this born out. Revelation, however, makes clear that earthquakes figure prominently in God’s judgments during the Tribulation period, literally reshaping the earth. But does Scripture, including the Matthew passage, state that there will be an “increase” in earthquakes? Not necessarily. What we do have today is an almost instant, real-time, awareness of earthquakes that take place anywhere throughout the world. Until the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, news of an earthquake would take days if not months or years to be spread around and even then the news might be minimal.
14. **An Increase in cults and false Christianity** – (Matt. 24:5 & 11; 2 Pet. 2:1) While there have been numerous cults and groups of false Christians down through the centuries, in the last days, there will be a marked increase in their numbers. Today we have major religious movements such as Mormonism (a.k.a. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints), Jehovah’s Witnesses (a.k.a. Watchtower Society), Christian Science, and more that claim to be Christian, but are anything but biblically orthodox. Add to that some major religions that claim to be “Christian” but significantly add to and take away from the Scriptures, adding to them traditions and dictates from “the church” which take precedence over God’s written Word, and you’re also dealing with false Christianity. Then there is the “Word of Faith” movement that claims Christianity, but runs fast and loose with the Scriptures, packaging a name-it-and-claim it formula to faith and the riches of Heaven. To that we could also add the plethora of so-called Christian denominations and churches that claim Christ, but have departed significantly from the Scriptures, and now proclaim a false Christ. All in all there has never been a time such as now with so many groups making claims of being “Christian”, but are in fact anything but orthodox in their Biblical Doctrine and belief.
15. **An Increase in false Christ’s and false prophets** – (Matt. 24:5, 11, 23-24) From Rev. Moon in Korea, to the New Age Movement, and the leaders of many of the cults, never have so many called themselves “the Messiah”, the “Savior”, or “the Christ”.

16. **An Increase in deceptive signs and wonders (miracles)** – (Matt. 24:24; 2 Thess. 2:9) Miracles, signs and wonders figure prominently in the Bible. Miracles served the purpose of revealing the nature and character of God, teaching His people about Him; they even served the purpose of validating His Apostles and the message of the New Testament as it was being written. Miracles and wonders and the moving of God's Holy Spirit still takes place today; but there is also the promotion of a lot so-called miracles, signs and wonders that are counterfeit. How so? Any so-called miracle, sign, or wonder that spotlights or lifts up the person and not Jesus Christ; any that contradict, add to, or take away from God's Word – the Bible; and any that focus on self are false, counterfeit, unbiblical. And they will mark the end of days. Today there are seemingly "miracle crusades" every week, courses in miracles, faith healers, and even apparitions of Mary and "Christ" that appear in windows, walls, nature, and even on a grilled cheese sandwich (which by the way was auctioned on e-bay). And millions fall for them.
17. **Wars and rumors of wars.** – (Matt. 24:6-7; Mark 13:7-8) From the time of Cain and Able conflict has been a part of man's history, but at the end of days, there will be a significant number of armed conflicts across the globe. According to "Project Ploughshares", there are about 40 armed conflicts in the world today. Darfur and Sudan, Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, much of the African continent, some of the South American continent (e.g. Columbia), and more, we read much about conflicts throughout our world. Today we are concerned about North Korea, her threats, her missiles, and her striving for nuclear weapons. We're also concerned about Iran, her belligerence and threats, her missiles, her push for nuclear weapons, and her support of world terrorism. Then there is Hamas and Hezbollah and other terrorist organizations that threaten Israel. There is Al Qaeda and their threat of world terrorism. There are also the drug cartels and the violence that surrounds them.
18. **Weapons of mass destruction** – (Matt. 24:21-22; Zech. 14:12) When Jesus spoke these words, the most powerful weapons known to man were the sword, spear, chariot, and perhaps the catapult (or something like it). Scripture tells us, however, that at the end of days man will have the capability to destroy human (and other) life on a massive scale; in fact, as the Matthew text alludes to, man will have the capability to destroy all life. Man has committed gross atrocities against man throughout human history, but never has he had the capability to destroy life on a massive scale or threaten complete annihilation... that is until 1945 when two atomic bombs were dropped on Japan, destroying the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Since then atomic and hydrogen bombs have become both more powerful and numerous, with at least the U.S. and Russia having enough of these weapons to destroy the earth several times over. Add to that neurological, biological and chemical weapons, and man now has the capability to destroy all life on earth by a variety of means. Of note: The Neutron bomb, which theoretically is banned as a weapon (is it really???), literally dissolves (or melts) its victims – as Zechariah predicted some 2,500 years ago, but leaves other objects, such as buildings and infrastructure, largely intact.

19. **Global famines** – (Matt. 24:7) While famines have marked the course of most of man's history, with all of man's technological improvements and his abilities to produce food products (agricultural and processed) in quantities previously unheard of, there is seldom a week that goes by that we are not made aware of some food crisis or famine throughout the world. North Korea can launch missiles and develop nuclear weapons, but her people are starving. In places like Somalia, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Sudan, and more, drought and conflict have killed hundreds of thousands, even millions through starvation. What's more, it only seems to be getting worse.
20. **Global pestilences (deadly diseases)** – (Matt. 24:7) There has never been an era in man's history where medical and scientific knowledge and technology has been as prolific and available as is now. In spite of this, however, we are seeing the emergence and even the increase of HIV/AIDS, Ebola, Dengue, West Nile, SARS, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, large outbreaks of E. Coli contamination, and much, much more, some of which we have not even heard of yet. In the past few years we have heard much fear and concern in the media, our government, and even the world at large about Avian Flu, and lately there has been a huge media focus and concern over the Swine Flu. Some Diseases previously thought to have been eradicated are even making somewhat of a comeback, including Tuberculosis and Polio. Factoring in the global nature of our world and the ease and increase in world travel, a disease that begins in one country can literally be spread across the globe in just a matter of days or weeks. Just a few decades ago some scientists were saying that with the advances they were seeing and foreseeing in medicine, they believed that they could eradicate deadly diseases.
21. **An increase in sin and wickedness** – (Matt. 24:12; 2 Tim. 3:1-5) Sin and wickedness has always marked humanity, and yet in the last days immorality will increase. Just in America it is harder and harder to watch TV, listen to the radio, or surf the web without encountering something offensive. Language, images, lifestyles, and more that are commonplace today were relatively unheard of in our society at large just 25 to 50 years ago. One cannot read Paul's warning in 2 Tim. 3:1-5 and not see the state of our nation. Frighteningly enough, most of the western world has preceded us in our downward spiral. E.g. On July 16, 2009 the news (Patriot News) reported that the 76<sup>th</sup> General Convention of the Episcopal Church, which claims to be Christian, declared that lesbians and gays are eligible to be ordained ministers, despite Anglican opposition, not to mention what God says about it in His Word, the Bible. And they are just one of several denominations that make claims to being Christian that are wrestling with this issue. Add to that abortion-on-demand, the increasingly rapid breakdown of the family, states moving towards legalizing assisted suicide, and we are a nation on a very slippery slope.
22. **The Euphrates River will dry up** – (Rev. 16:12) Just prior to the Battle of Armageddon and Christ's Return, the sixth vial or bowl of God's judgment upon the earth involves an angel of God drying up this great river, possibly easing the

movement of armies gathering for the climactic battle. On July 16, 2009, Joel Rosenberg's Weblog posted this interesting story:

**EUPHRATES RIVER DRYING UP: New York Times notes connection to Book of Revelation and the End Times.** The front page of Tuesday morning's *New York Times* had a stunning headline: "Iraq Suffers as the Euphrates River Dwindles." The drying up of this historic river in the land of ancient Babylon is so stunning, that even the *Times* had to note that Bible prophecy says this will happen in the "last days" of history, in the lead up to the apocalyptic battle of Armageddon described in the Book of Revelation. Excerpts from the *Times* story: "Throughout the marshes, the reed gatherers, standing on land they once floated over, cry out to visitors in a passing boat. 'Maaku mai!' they shout, holding up their rusty sickles. 'There is no water!' The Euphrates is drying up. Strangled by the water policies of Iraq's neighbors, Turkey and Syria; a two-year drought; and years of misuse by Iraq and its farmers, the river is significantly smaller than it was just a few years ago. Some officials worry that it could soon be half of what it is now. The shrinking of the Euphrates, a river so crucial to the birth of civilization that the [Book of Revelation prophesied](#) its drying up as a sign of the end times, has decimated farms along its banks, has left fishermen impoverished and has depleted riverside towns as farmers flee to the cities looking for work." Please note that I did not add in the link above to the "Bible Gateway" website for Revelation 16:12. The *Times'* online edition includes that link themselves. Apparently the newspaper of record now believes that the future of Iraq in light of Bible prophecy is part of "all the news that's fit to print." To be clear, we will not see the complete fulfillment of Revelation 16 until during the seven-year period of judgment and bloodshed that the Bible calls the "Tribulation." Indeed, it is possible that we will see the drought end and the Lord bless Iraq with abundant water in the coming years that will make the prophecy cited seem all that more dramatic in its proper time. Only time will tell. But it's certainly another curious development.

23. **When Christ returns there will be a third Temple built in Jerusalem** – (Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:1-4; Rev. 11:1-2) Jesus, Daniel, and the Apostle's Paul and John all saw a future Temple of God standing in Jerusalem during the last days, particularly during the Tribulation period and at Christ's Second Coming. It has been reported that in Israel, the preparations to rebuild the Temple are nearly complete. One can actually view many of these preparations on the Temple Institutes website ([www.templeinstitute.org](http://www.templeinstitute.org)). Stories and news accounts abound surrounding the faithful Jews efforts to rebuild their Temple. Of note, in 2004, it was reported that after nearly 2000 years of absence the Jewish Sanhedrin had been reformed.
24. **Temple sacrifices will be reinstated in Israel** – (Dan. 9:27; 12:11) Daniel foresaw the Antichrist stopping the daily Temple sacrifices. In order for this to happen, Temple sacrifices, which have been absent for nearly 2000 years, must have been reinstated in a rebuilt Temple. Not only has the Temple Institute been recreating all of the Temple furniture and vessels, but they are also seeking the return of Temple artifacts (see: [www.templemountfaithful.org/News/20040209.htm](http://www.templemountfaithful.org/News/20040209.htm) - The Temple Mount Faithful Movement sent a letter to the pope demanding the immediate return to Israel of the Temple menorah, vessels and treasure.). What's more, there are also several hundred Jewish men in training for the Levitical priesthood, and there have been a lot of efforts to

find a pure red heifer whose ashes are needed to sanctify the Temple (c.f. Numbers 19:1-10). Has a Kosher red heifer been found? Several possible candidates were initially considered Kosher, but were later disqualified, as the heifer must reach the age of three years before it can be sacrificed, and it must be without blemish. Some articles appear to indicate one may have been found, but there does not appear to be a consensus of confirmation.

25. **Men will be lovers of themselves** - (2 Tim. 3:1-2). The generations of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, like no other, are enamored with self-love (self-centeredness). Self-love, self-esteem, self-reliance, self-gratification, are encouraged by the media, schools, psychologists, etc. In contrast, Jesus taught self-denial. Even many churches today preach a "feel good about yourself" message.
26. **Mankind will become increasingly materialistic and lovers of pleasure** - (2 Tim. 3:1-5). No generation in history has had so many means to entertain and arouse the senses. From the entertainment, travel, vacation industries, and more, history has never witnessed such a focus or demand for the pursuit of pleasure.
27. **Jesus warned that Christians would be hated for His names sake** - (Luke 21:17; Rev. 6:9-11; 20:4). While persecutions of Christians has existed since the first century, at no point in history has there been such a concerted assault on Biblical Christianity. In just the United States and western nations, from the banning of the Bible, prayer, the Ten Commandments, nativity scenes, Christmas songs, and more from public life; to laws (in places like Europe and Canada), and attempts at laws (in the U.S.) that restrict speech, behavior, witnessing (also referred to as proselytizing), and in many cases preaching and conscience; we are witnessing this trend. Furthermore, consider that more Christians were martyred during the past century than during all of history, and there are no signs that it is letting up, but only getting worse.
28. **World-wide anti-Semitism** - (Deut. 28:37; Jer. 29:18; 44:8). History tells us that the Jews have been persecuted as no other people group (c.f. Esther). Hitler tried to exterminate them (He succeeded in killing six-and-one-half-million), and the Antichrist will attempt the same during the Tribulation. Today, anti-Semitism is a global epidemic. For example, Prior to the Madrid Conference in 1991, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir commissioned an analysis of U.N. voting towards Israel. The results are not surprising. From 1967 to 1988 the security [council] passed 88 resolutions directly against Israel, zero resolutions criticized or opposed the actions or perceived interests of an Arab state or body, including the PLO. During that span, Israel was "condemned" 49 times, Arab countries not once. In the General Assembly, 429 anti-Israel resolutions were passed in that span. Israel was "condemned" 321 times. Arab nations? Not once. (*The United Nation's War Against Israel*, by [David Harsanyi](#), Capitalism Magazine, May 27, 2002) From another article on the internet: From its first meetings in 1946, at least one Arab state sat on the UN Security Council in most years, while Israel has been kept ineligible for membership by manipulation of the regional groups. The Security Council has repeatedly adopted one-sided resolutions charging Israel with sole responsibility for human rights violations, violence and deportations. On the other hand, Palestinian

and other Arab violations and involvement with such incidents are rarely criticized, or even noted by the Council. In an analysis of the Security Council's record up to 1989, of 175 total resolutions passed by the Council, 97 were directed against Israel, as contrasted with 4 against all Arab states combined. The Council expressed its 'concern,' 'grave concern,' 'regret,' 'deep regrets,' 'shock' etc. about Israeli actions 31 times. Regarding Arab actions, the Council never expressed negative sentiments. Only the veto power of the US prevented these numbers from being even more one-sided against Israel. (*Palestine Facts; Frequently Asked Questions – UN Anti-Israel Bias*, [www.palestinefacts.org](http://www.palestinefacts.org)) These are just some of numerous articles regarding the Anti-Semitic bias of the UN.

29. **Movement towards a one-world religion** - (Rev. 13:8, 12; 17). Today, as never before, we are witnessing various and often very different religions joining hands in the name of peace and tolerance. Note the efforts of the World Council of Churches and other ecumenical groups; and even recent efforts in finding “common ground” between Christianity and Islam.
30. **“Some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons”** - (1 Tim. 4:1). This generation has witnessed the explosion of apparitions and other heavenly visitors that are embraced even by some professing Christians even though their messages contradict the Word of God. In the past few decades there has been tremendous numbers of ET/alien reports (e.g. Roswell and Area 51, not to mention the many reports on cable channels like Discover, Learning, and History). Studies indicate that these entities behave more like demons than space travelers. They transcend the laws of physics, invoke fear, and deliver decidedly anti-Christian messages (as opposed to something neutral). Sorceries, which refers channeling (aka necromancy), witchcraft, magic, occult practices, psychics, etc., have also gained in popularity though all are forbidden by God (Deut. 18:10-12; also c.f. Rev. 9:21; 18:23; 21:8; Isa. 47:9-15; Mic. 5:10-15).
31. **In the last days there will be a great battle where Gog, Magog, and Persia attack Israel** - (Ezek. 37-39). This significant prophecy, which is treated very well by Joel Rosenberg in his books, *Epicenter* (and the update - *Epicenter 2.0*), and - his latest - *Inside the Revolution*, speaks of an alliance between what is now modern-day Russia (*Gog and Magog*), former Soviet Republics (Muslim nations), Iran (*Persia*), and even Turkey (*Meshech*), as well as some other nations, who together will launch an attack on Israel - who stands alone. The attack, however, will be overwhelmingly and supernaturally defeated by God Himself. What is fascinating about this prophecy is that for centuries it seemed so unlikely, so far-fetched. Today, however, Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons (and may be near having them) and is developing and testing advanced long-range missile technology. Her president has directly threatened Israel with annihilation (a threat Israel at least is taking very seriously), and has formed a strong alliance with Russia, who is also supplying them with advanced weaponry, technology, and more. Turkey, a member of NATO, recently signed a treaty with Russia. The United States, once Israel's staunchest ally is cooling and backing off under our current president; leaving Israel to stand increasingly alone in a world very hostile towards her. The pieces of this prophetic puzzle are rapidly moving into place with each passing day, and the very possibility

of these nations launching an attack against Israel appears very real and even increasingly likely.

While there are additional prophecies mentioned by J. Barton Payne and others that concern the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, these listed are, I believe, the major or more significant ones. Arguably, from time-to-time in man's history, some of the prophecies may have appeared to be in place; but never in all of history since the resurrection and ascension of Christ have all of these prophecies come to pass or begun to unfold concurrently. In my study of the various prophecies relating to the Church Age and the Second Coming, I have not encountered one prophecy that has either not been fulfilled already or is in the process of unfolding and being fulfilled (i.e. we are seeing them as a trend or emerging reality that amplifies and strengthens, much like the birth pangs). As stated above, as each day passes, each of these prophecies becomes ever more clearer, pointing to the very likelihood that the time of our rapture will not be measured in centuries or decades, but by mere years, even months. Are you ready to meet Jesus?

The final book of the Bible closes with these words, and we would do well to take them to heart:

*And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.* (Rev. 22:17-21)

### **Principle Resources Used in this Study**

- *Basic Theology*, Charles C. Ryrie, Victor Books, 1986.
- *Living Hope for the End of Days*, John S. Barnett, Discover the Book Ministries, 2007.
- *Countdown to Armageddon*, Charles Ryrie, et al, Harvest House Publishers, 1999.
- *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, J. Barton Payne, Baker Books, 1973.
- *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Revelation 1-11 & 12-22*, John MacArthur, Moody Publishers, 1999.
- *Epicenter*, Joel C. Rosenberg, Tyndale House Publishers, 2006.
- Miscellaneous Books, Class Notes, and Internet Articles.



