

Outline Study Notes
on
Eschatology
with particular focus on
The Blessed Hope of the Saints



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About the Author

Dr. Redekopp is a retiree from a career-long engagement in engineering education and research. He earned a baccalaureate degree in mechanical engineering from Montana State University and post-graduate degrees (M.S. and Ph.D.) from UCLA in aerospace engineering sciences. During his professional career he has been a principle investigator on multiple research projects, served as chair of engineering departments, taught more than 25 different undergraduate and graduate courses in aerospace engineering, mechanical engineering and mathematics, directed or co-directed more than a dozen research students to successfully earned Ph.D. degrees, supervised a number of post-doctoral associates, authored or co-authored over 100 peer-reviewed research publications, chaired professional scientific societies, served as associate editor of an international scientific journal, and was a consultant on scientific projects in the corporate sector. He has received awards in recognition for excellence in teaching, research impact, student mentorship, and university service.

However, and much more apropos to authorship of the present manuscript, he has been active in teaching adult Bible classes in his home church for more than four decades. He has served his church congregation as chairman of the elders for an extended number of years, as well as serving in the role of interim pastor on several occasions. Albeit without any formal Bible school or seminary education, he has consistently composed lesson outlines and lecture materials through persistent self-study covering Biblical texts, diverse theological writings, multiple commentaries, plus a variety of other study materials related to Biblical exposition, church history, etc. He has developed extensive lecture notes pertaining to Biblical chronology (“A Continuous Chronology from Creation to The Cross”), the doctrine of God, Biblical and scientific creationism, the doctrine of salvation (“God’s Great Work of Amazing Grace”), multiple character studies, and, as evident in the present document, eschatology. He and his wife Judy have three married children and seven grandchildren.

Author's Preface

This booklet contains a somewhat condensed compilation of selected material developed for lecture series covering a broader range of eschatological themes in adult Bible classes over an extended period of years. The scope is deliberately limited, addressing with particular focus those topics that relate to the “blessed hope of the saints” – issues nominally referred to by such terms as “the rapture of the church”, “the millennial age”, plus topics pertaining to judgment and rewards as well as death and the abode of the dead.

The compiled notes are intended to address, with a measured investment into detailed exposition, Biblical foundations or underpinnings that form immovable anchors constraining interpretive conclusions derived from respective texts. The author is guided in his approach to the present subject matter, as generally characteristic of the broader scope of his Biblical studies, by the following convictions:

- The Scriptures are so breathed-out by the Spirit of God, and so organized by superintending providence of its human authors, that they possess a perfect correlative coherence and form a unitary and wholly trustworthy revelation of God’s purpose and working in His eternal plan for creation.
- The Scriptures are authoritative in both content and purpose, and completely sufficient for the creature made in God’s image to discern the Creator’s redemptive plan for creation, even continuing through and beyond the consummation of this age.

The relevance of these principles in the case of the present manuscript is that the revelatory statements of the ‘breathed out’ Word of God are wholly and singly sufficient to provide undergirding support for all offered commentary. To that end, deliberate effort has been invested in demonstrating both coherence with and consistency across definitively related texts pertaining to any offered conclusion or proffered interpretation. As such, there are weaknesses and strengths associated with the adopted approach. An acknowledged weakness is the fact that no references to other scholarly sources or citation of related published works are included. The intention is to root all commentary and interpretive conclusions exclusively on Biblical texts. It is the author’s expectation that this approach will also endow the work with a measure of strength. When a reader encounters a section where preference for a contrarian view may arise, composition of an opposing view will necessarily be constrained to engage the referenced texts of Scripture alone.

These outline notes are intended generally for use in adult Bible classes where a reasonably broad audience exists, preferably with the preponderance having some introductory exposure to eschatological issues, arguments, and extant writings. However, with that said, and particularly so in regard to those sections in the manuscript where determinative undergirding of the pre-tribulational and pre-millennial understandings of the breadth of eschatological texts is offered, some audiences may find the content a bit challenging and technical. Such portions are expected to be more helpful for those who are, as the present author, actively engaged in teaching the subject material and are desirous of substantive commentary providing additional definitive exposition of pertinent texts where debated interpretive views persist. In the author’s experience these notes have been welcomed in teaching contexts involving both somewhat novice and somewhat more experienced Bible students, albeit requiring appropriately slanted emphases depending on the experience level of the audience. Perhaps such opinion is slightly prejudiced, yet the author believes that the material should prove helpful for teaching in varied contexts, and will more likely find a ready welcome by students especially desirous of accessing more analytical grounding for the pre-tribulational, pre-millennial doctrinal position that is set forth here. The author has experienced uniformly strong receptivity in several class settings of teaching based on the outlines and comments appearing in Part I and Part IV.

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An Outline Study of Eschatology

with particular focus on

The Blessed Hope of the Saints

General Introduction

1. Foundational Principles

A study of eschatology requires, in a particular way:

- ◆ The careful analysis of key words
- ◆ The careful exposition of individual texts
- ◆ The careful integration of all relevant texts.
- ◆ A commitment to the authority of Scripture
 - A devoted respect for its divine authorship and for its proven trustworthiness
- ◆ A commitment to the integrity of Scripture
 - A devoted respect for its unity plus its coherence and consistency as a whole
- ◆ A commitment to the perspicuity of Scripture
 - A devoted respect for its nature – a divinely-sourced text written for our understanding.

2. Essential Eschatological Distinctions

An understanding of relevant terms and related terminology is most important to systematizing revelatory information and to achieving conceptual clarity of Biblically delineated conclusions.

Important distinctions requiring carefully differentiated identity include:

1. The distinction between “*The day of the LORD*” and “*The day of Christ*”
2. The distinction between different “*comings*” of Christ
3. The distinction between “*Israel*” and “*The Church*”
4. The distinction between different “*resurrections*”
5. The distinction between different “*judgments*” and “*wraths*”.

Comment

Respect for and enforcement of these distinctions is vital to the formation of a chronology and a kingdom-purpose concept of key, Scripturally-delineated, eschatological events.

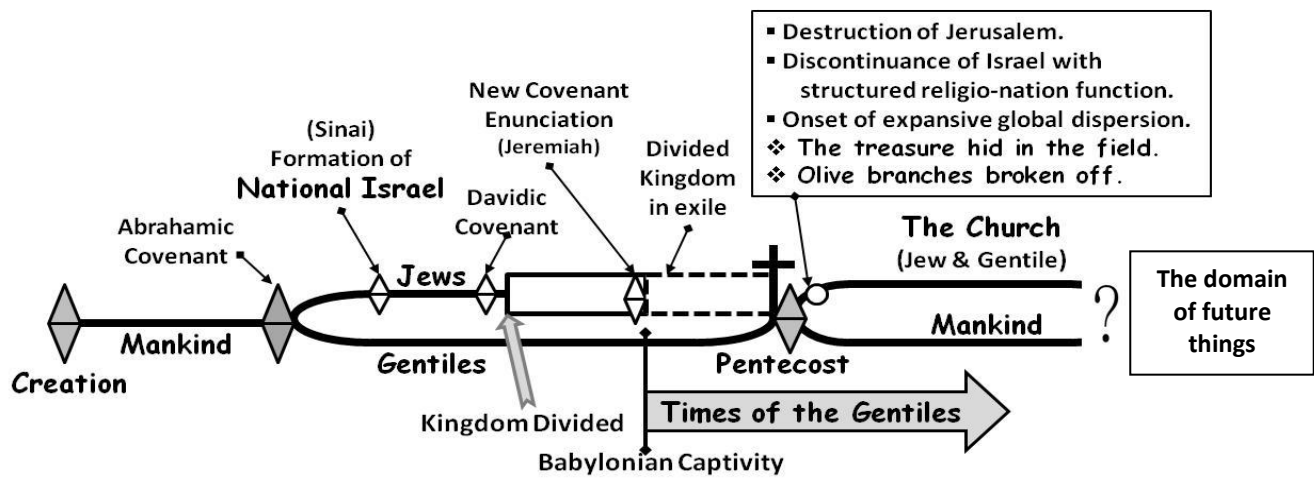
3. Important Covenantal Anchors

- ◆ The Abrahamic Covenant: (*Gen. 12:1-3*).
 - Covenant promise of personal blessing
 - Covenant of a “seed/offspring” legacy
 - Covenant promise of a “great nation” legacy
 - Covenant promise of an “all nations” legacy.
- “Yahweh our Elohim has remembered His covenant forever, ... the covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac. Then He confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, saying, ‘To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion of your inheritance,’ ” *Ps. 105:8-11*
- ◆ The Davidic Covenant: (*II Sam. 7:11-12*).
 - Covenant promise of a particular “descendant-rule” – a “greater son” to occupy the throne in Jerusalem
 - Covenant promise of a perpetual “kingdom-dominion” – a coming “head of nations” era for Israel
 - Covenant promise that “David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of David.” (*Jer. 33:17*)
- “I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to David My servant, I will establish your seed forever, and build up your throne to all generations.” *Ps. 89:3-4*
- ◆ The New Covenant: (*Jer. 31 & 33*).
 - Promise of a re-gathering of scattered exiles of the divided kingdom, and of their formation into a renewed and prosperous one-nation existence
 - Promise of a comprehensive fulfillment of terms enunciated in the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants
 - Promise of an eternally effectual propitiation for sin and a decisive atonement of all iniquity
 - Promise of a Messianic kingdom rule involving only regenerated subjects
 - Promise of a comprehensive Messianic reign in justice and righteousness from Jerusalem.

4. An Eschatologically Helpful Overview of History

An understanding of various eschatological terms and relevant prophecies is greatly facilitated by a 'wide-angle' view of the history of the world, extending from creation onward to the present age. A rudimentary view of the broad scope of history is provided by the following diagram which, in particular, depicts the important elements of the origin of the age-long distinction between Jew and Gentile, the decline of national Israel and the onset of the times of the Gentiles, and the origin of the Church and its distinctive place relative to mankind in general. The sketch below also sets in historical sequence the important covenants that have pivotal historical and eschatological relevance.

The reader should note that several of the descriptive terms appearing in the diagram will be given clarifying detail only later in various sections of Part 1, which follows beginning on page 4.



Some Explanatory Points:

- The division between Jew and Gentile had its root in the Abrahamic Covenant. More precisely, it began with a pre-national substance flowing from the genealogical line of Abraham through His son Isaac and on through his grandson Jacob. The formative progenitors of national Israel were the 12 family-tribes arising from Jacob's 12 sons. Jacob's name was later changed by Yahweh to Israel.
- The formation of Israel as a nation-people occurred while the 12 family-tribes of Jacob were gathered at Sinai following their exodus from slavery in Egypt. It was at Sinai that they received foundation for law and civil-religious order which was to be administered for this nation-people under the theocratic rule of Yahweh.
- The Babylonian Captivity launched a noteworthy eschatological division of history called the Times of the Gentiles. This most epochal turning point began with the southern division of the Divided Kingdom, Judah, being defeated by Nebuchadnezzar and the people taken as captives to Babylon. Thus, both divisions of national Israel were then in exile, scattered among Gentile powers. The continuance of the divisions of exiled Israel is thus represented with dashed lines in the diagram.
- The Church had its origin on that first Pentecost following the resurrection and ascension of Christ, and the subsequent period in history known as the Church Age was launched. The period of history beginning with creation and extending until the beginning of the Church Age is referred to simply as the "Older Testament era" (the OT era).
- The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD by Roman legions is an especially important date, and is noted by the symbol ○ on the branch titled "The Church" in the above diagram.
- The objective of this study is to set forth pivotal Biblical statements that provide enlightening insights related to the ? appearing at the very right of the diagram. That is, the aim in these notes is to unfold with clarifying detail and chronological perspective key elements pertaining to the issue noted in text box, "The domain of future things", at the right end of the time line.

5. Definition of Terms

Brief statements defining several important eschatological terms relevant to the discussion which follows are offered to clarify certain concepts, mark particular events, or identify divisions of time referred to with varying titles, each having ordained kingdom purposes in God's plan for the ages.

The Tribulation:

The Tribulation refers to a seven year period delineated in the prophetic revelation of the "70 weeks (of years)" given to the OT prophet Daniel (see *Dan. 9:24-27*), a period with particular reference to a future time of unprecedented distress for Israel. This seven year period is often referred to as the "70th week of Daniel", forming Daniel's concluding and yet unfulfilled "week of years" specified as having particular historical significance for national Israel.

The Millennium:

The Millennium is a 1000 year period identified with numerical specificity and brief accompanying detail in the 20th chapter of the Book of The Revelation. This time had an earlier and more general reference in writings of the OT prophets when they made reference to a future age of Messianic rule on David's throne in Jerusalem, and of unprecedented glory for national Israel. The Millennial Age is alternatively referred to as the Kingdom Age.

There are three contrasting interpretive frameworks regarding the fulfillment of prophetic references to this eschatological period.

- ◆ **Pre-Millennialism:**

This school of eschatology teaches that Christ as Messiah-King will return bodily and establish His Kingdom rule before the beginning of the Millennial Age, which will have a duration of 1000 years.

- ◆ **Post-Millennialism:**

This school of eschatology teaches that the Church and the Kingdom Ages eventually merge and are coincident when Christ returns bodily as Messiah-King, ushering in at that time the eternal age of the new heavens and the new earth.

- ◆ **Amillennialism:**

The school of eschatology that views the 1000 year period of *Rev. 20* as symbolic of the Church Age, and identifies the Church as the present-age continuation of Israel. In this view there will be only one "second coming of Christ", namely that coming of Christ which will usher in the eternal age of the new heavens and the new earth.

The Rapture: (alternately, the Translation or Departure of the Church)

The Rapture refers to a future intervention by Christ when, in a momentary instant, previously departed saints will be resurrected and joined with living saints who will be simultaneously translated. Both groups will depart together from earth to meet Christ in the atmospheric heavens and be transported in glorified bodies to His prepared heavenly dwelling.

There are two contrasting understandings pertaining to the chronological relation between the Rapture and the Tribulation.

- ◆ **Pre-Tribulationalism:**

The interpretation that Christ will return prior to the beginning of the Tribulation Period to gather both departed and living Church Age saints to Himself. This return of Christ is distinct in effect and in time from the coming of Christ to establish His kingdom reign.

- ◆ **Post-Tribulationalism:**

The interpretation that Christ will not return until the close of the Tribulation Period, at which time He will gather all of His saints of all ages to Himself and proceed to launch His Millennial reign.

Part I. Essential Eschatological Distinctions

1. Distinguishing Between “The Day of the LORD” and “The Day of Christ”

1a. The Day of the LORD

The term “*day of the LORD* (Yahweh)” is a decidedly OT term which formed the anticipated hope of OT saints for centuries. The term appears widely in the prophetic writings, and examination of its usage reveals that it can be characterized as:

- ◆ A time of fulfillment of covenant promises
- ◆ A time of arrival of Messiah followed by an age of glory for national Israel
- ◆ A time of judgment and expression of divine wrath
- ◆ A time of alarming desolation and catastrophic upheaval on the earth
- ◆ A time involving widespread oppression of peoples and intense turmoil among peoples
- ◆ A time when dramatic departures will occur in meteorological and astronomical function from their natural patterns and seeming stable forms.

Several usages of this term are printed below to provide foundational underpinning for the general characteristics listed above, particularly the latter four points.

“Wail, for *the day of the LORD* is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty.”
“Behold *the day of the LORD* is coming, cruel, with fury and burning anger, to make the land a desolation; and He will exterminate its sinners from it.”
“Therefore I shall make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken from its place at the fury of Yahweh Sabaoth in the day of His burning anger.”
Isa. 13:6, 9, 13

“Alas, you who are longing for *the day of the LORD*, for what purpose will *the day of the LORD* be to you? It will be darkness and not light; as when a man flees from a lion, and a bear meets him, or goes home, leans his hand against the wall, and a snake bites him. Will not *the day of the LORD* be darkness instead of light, even gloom with no brightness in it?”
Amos 5:18-20

“Alas for the day! For *the day of the LORD* is near, and it will come as destruction from the Almighty.”
“Blow a trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm on My holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for *the day of the LORD* is coming; surely it is near, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, so there is a great and mighty people; there has never been anything like it, nor will there be again after it to the years of many generations.”
“And the LORD utters His voice before His army; surely His camp is very great, for strong is He who carries out His word.
The day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome, and who can endure it.”
Joel 1:15; 2:1-2, 11

Tracing the descriptive statements accompanying these appearances, plus a number of others, of “*the day of the LORD*” reveals that the term almost always has reference to national Israel in some clear and direct way. Occasional uses of the term communicate a more “whole world” application, but even in such cases there usually exist some inference to national Israel experiencing a restoration of national function and renewed prosperity under terms of covenant fulfillment. Yet, with respect to Israel and their national function during this “day”, it will be a time of unprecedented difficulty and distress, and a time involving deep tension in their relation to surrounding neighbor nations. Two prophetic statements providing insight to this most troubling time for national Israel during “*the day of the LORD*” are listed here.

“Alas! for the day is great, there is none like it; and it is the time of Jacob’s distress (trouble), but he will be saved from it.”
Jer. 30:7

“And I shall make [Israel] pass under the rod, and I shall bring you into the bond of the covenant; and I shall purge from you the rebels, and those who transgress against Me;” *Ezek. 20:37-38a*

Broader consideration of descriptive texts dealing with *the day of the LORD* reveals that this term encompasses that whole period wherein God will bring to consummation the age-long battle between good and evil. Thus, during this “day” evil will be eradicated from the earth, and all that exalts itself against the authority and righteous rule of God will be separated and consigned under eternal judgment. Furthermore, ultimate and total triumph of good over evil will be brought to a grand climax by means of the sudden appearance of the risen, glorified Christ; that is, by a particular visible and stunningly grand coming of Christ. At this coming He will imprison Satan and the entire host of Satan’s emissaries, and He will usher in His kingdom rule as Messiah-King through a decisive working in catastrophic separation and judgment. This climactic separation and judgment will lead directly to the inauguration of the kingdom age wherein all mortal inhabitants of the earth will, initially, consist of elect worshippers of the Lord Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords (see “The Judgment of Separation” in Section 5).

Revelatory descriptions pertaining to this term “*the day of the LORD*” are not restricted to the OT. Several NT texts exist having direct reference to this “day” as well. Two of these appear in the Thessalonian epistles and communicate a close contextual connection with important eschatological issues discussed in these notes.

“For you yourselves know full well that *the day of the LORD* will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, ‘Peace and safety!’ then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.” *I Thess. 5:2-3*

“Let no one in any way deceive you, for [*the day of the LORD*] will not come unless [the departure] comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God,

Further illuminating references to “*the day of the LORD*” are found, for example, in *Ezek. 30:1-3* and in *Zeph. 1:7-18*, as well as in the prophecy of Jeremiah where the following summary of covenant fulfillments pertaining to this “day” can be assembled.

New Covenant Terms in Jeremiah’s Prophecy (Terms to be accomplished during “*The Day of the LORD*”)

- 31:1: The divided kingdom will be unified.
- 31:8, 10, 16: A new exodus is assured.
- 31:31-34: A new covenant will be instituted with the re-gathered, unified nation.
- 31:38,40: Jerusalem will be rebuilt ... a rebuilding with enduring permanence
- 33:4,7: There will be a re-gathering of dispersed exiles from the divided kingdom.
There will be the rebuilding of a unified nation.
- 33:14: There will be an assured realization of promises pertaining to the unified nation.
- 33:15: The true “seed” of the Davidic covenant will implement the prophetically declared Messianic rule.
(*Gen. 3:15; 17:7; II Sam. 7:14; Ps. 72:1-19; Isa. 11:1-5*)
- 33:16-17: Terms of the Davidic covenant will be comprehensively fulfilled.

Note: Not only is there a specific promise to national Israel specified within the New Covenant as stipulated in Jeremiah’s prophecy, but also an element with application and value that will reach to all peoples and nations.
(*Matt. 26:28; Heb. 8; 10:14-17; Acts 17:24-31*)

Implication: The full scope of statements concerning “*the day of the LORD*” seem to require Israel to exist as a full-fledged nation-entity wherein its centerpiece of government is located in Jerusalem. Furthermore, a straightforward reading of texts relevant to “*the day of the LORD*” seem to preclude any interpretation in which the term applies to Israel as a ‘spiritualized people-entity’ rather than as a true ‘physical nation-entity’ existing among a host of Gentile nations.

1b. The Day of Christ

The phrase “*the day of Christ*” is an expressly New Testament term, even one encountered exclusively in the Pauline epistles. This is an important fact to note because the Apostle Paul was the agent used most prominently by the Holy Spirit to unfold God’s kingdom purpose and plan in the His formation of the Church – a purpose and plan hidden which remained hidden in the secret counsels of God until the NT era. To this end, the Spirit employed a particular word, “*mystery*”, in His ‘breathing out’ heretofore hidden specifics regarding God’s kingdom redemptive program in the Church. The usage and underlying meaning of this term is, in this author’s opinion, pivotal to a proper distinguishing between the “*day of the LORD*” and the “*day of Christ*”, and therewith the formation of a truly Biblical eschatology. These distinctions are elaborated in sections of these notes that immediately follow, and these distinctions will have foundational relevance to the unfolding of a chronological order of eschatological events.

We begin this subsection by quoting the Pauline texts where the term “*the day of Christ*” appears.

“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until *the day of Christ Jesus.*” *Phil. 1:6*

“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until *the day of Christ*;, having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” *Phil. 1:9-11*

“Do all things without grumbling or disputing; that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in *the day of Christ* I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.” *Phil. 2:14-16*

We comment at this juncture that the term “*the day of Christ*” should be viewed as having particular and special reference to the Church (Church-age saints) whereas, and by comparison, the term “*the day of the LORD*” has particular and special application to national Israel. Further, distinguishing between these two people-groups, Israel and the Church, as well as the distinction between different comings of Christ, depend crucially on the unfolding of revelatory truth appearing in NT Scriptures concerning the inherent meaning behind their usage of the word “*mystery*”.

1c. Summary Contrasts Between the Two “Days”

- The *day of the LORD* encompasses all peoples dwelling on earth extending from its beginning point until the final judgment and inauguration of the eternal age of the new heavens and the new earth.
- The *day of Christ* pertains exclusively to members of the universal church – to all persons who are regenerated, reconciled sinners of the Church Age.
- The *day of the LORD* has special application to national Israel, and the fulfillment of covenantal terms specified particularly in the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants.
- The *day of Christ* has exclusive application to saints of the Church Age, consisting of both Jew and Gentile as one body, who will be resurrected and translated to a heavenly dwelling when Christ returns for His saints.
- ♦ The *day of the LORD* will appear with the initiation of a sequence of events and judgments whereby national Israel will be recovered and restored to a position of national prominence per the Davidic covenant, and which will culminate in an administrative governance of international scope under Israel’s Messiah-King.
- ♦ The *day of Christ* will involve the completed formation of the whole body of Christ into a united company of glorified saints fitted for ruling service under the Head of the Church, which will occur during His coming Millennial Kingdom reign as Messiah-King.

2. Distinguishing Between Different Comings of Christ

2a. The Coming of Christ *for* His Saints

The New Testament texts of Scripture declare with clarity and with definitive certainty that the Lord Jesus Christ will return some day to gather both departed and living saints unto Himself, so that they may all be with Him where He is in His heavenly glory. That is, there is a day coming when Christ will return *for* His saints.

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”

John 14:1-3

“Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory, which Thou has given Me;”

John 17:24

In these texts our Lord speaks expressly of a future coming, and of His gathering of both resurrected and translated saints unto Himself. The fact of such a future gathering is amplified in related texts by the Apostle Paul in his epistles to the Corinthian and Thessalonian saints.

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.” *1 Cor. 15:50-53*

“For this I say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.” *1 Thess. 4:15-17*

The above two texts appear to be principally, and seemingly exclusively, addressed to Church Age saints, and describe a coming of Christ with a resultant gathering of redeemed and regenerated saints to Himself. This gathering is revealed as occurring in an astounding “resurrective-translative” event without any associated intervening judgment. This is quite significant in light of the previous discussion concerning the distinction between “*the day of the LORD*” and “*the day of Christ*”. In this regard, the word “*mystery*” in *1 Cor. 15:51* is a most important term requiring definition and understanding.

Def’n: Mystery

- A truth concerning God’s purpose & plan that was not previously revealed; that is, a truth that has been hidden since creation, and is only now being disclosed after the end of the OT era;
- A truth concerning God’s will & purpose that is not knowable through human analysis and reasoning – accessible only through the gracious work of divine revelation and enlightenment.

The heretofore unrevealed truth unveiled first in the texts quoted above is the fact of a future “translative” event that comprises an integral part of God’s plan for gathering His saints unto Himself. The fact of a resurrection at the end of the age was known from the earliest days of human existence. However, what remained hidden was the truth that God purposed a future moment when saints living on earth would be suddenly translated and glorified, being joined in rapturous glory with a specific class of departed saints who were to be resurrected in one simultaneous moment.

Clearly, these texts speak blessedly of a coming moment when Christ will return *for* His saints – for the gathering of His saints unto Himself in His prepared place. Both the Corinthian and the Thessalonian texts quoted above seem to be describing the same event and, when taken together, provide a most

blessed word of hope for all Church-age saints. However, in this momentous moment when these two classes of saints receive glorified bodies, they are immediately joined in a heavenly dwelling in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in His ascended glory, not in a dwelling on the earth.

Yet, and by contrast, the OT Scriptures have spoken consistently of a glorious kingdom age with resurrected, glorified saints reigning with Messiah on earth. As such, the “*mystery*” revelation in these Pauline texts indicates that there must be a subsequent coming of Christ *with* His saints that follows after some intervening interval His prior coming *for* His saints.

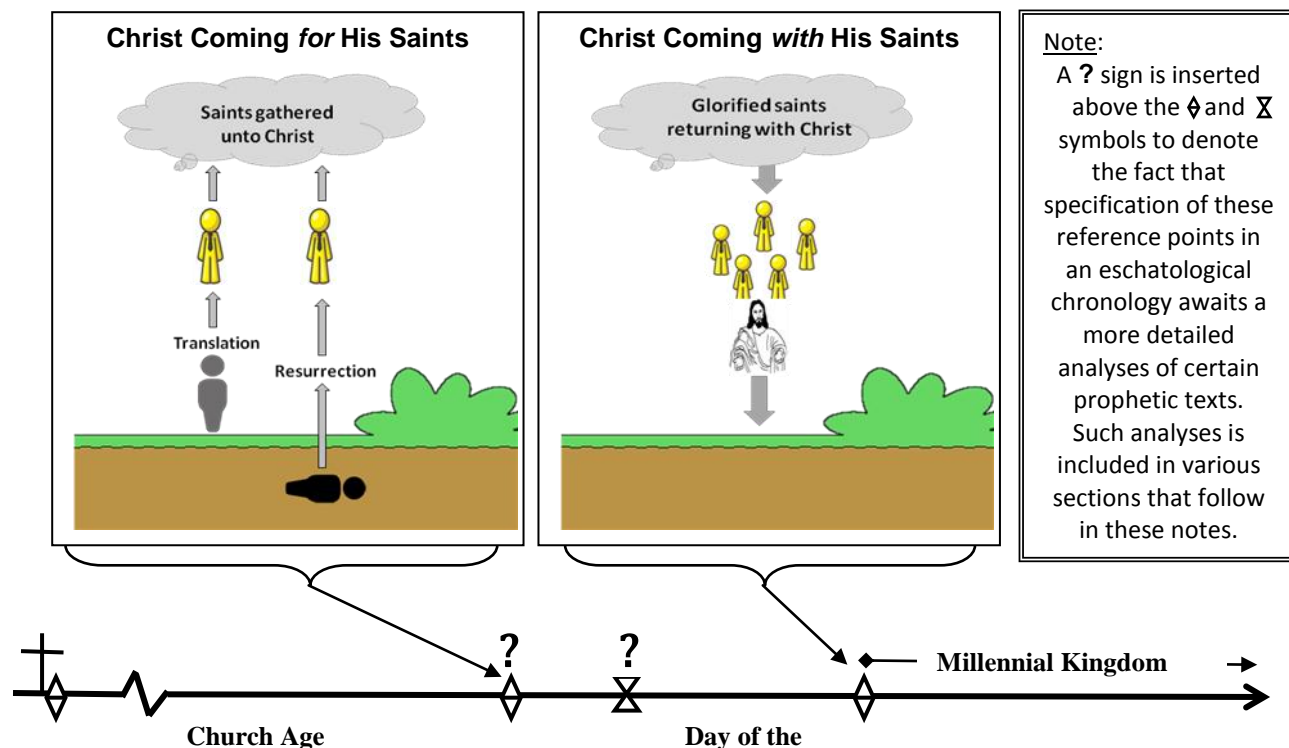
2b. The Coming of Christ *with* His Saints

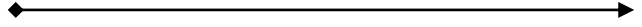
The fact that there is a future day when Christ will return with glorified resurrected saints for the purpose of establishing His kingdom on earth, was known throughout most, if not the entirety, of the OT era. However, what was not known was whether the return of Messiah would occur in one single “coming” or in a sequence of “comings”. Since, and as noted above, the Scriptures speak with convincing clarity that there will indeed be a momentous moment when Christ will return to gather both living and departed saints unto Himself through a ‘resurrective-translative’ event, and bring that combined company of glorified saints to a prepared heavenly dwelling, there must follow at some later momentous moment a return of Christ *with* His saints. Such an event involving the return of Christ with glorified Church-age saints seems to be the very point that is in view in the following texts.

“so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus *with* all His saints.”
1 Thess. 3:13

“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. ... And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He wages war.”
Rev. 19:6c-8, 11

Since the return of Christ described in the quotations from *Rev. 19* is associated with His descending to earth just prior to establishment of His kingdom rule, it is quite apparent that the return of Christ *with* His saints must be seen as occurring immediately before the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom Age.





2c. Addendum #1. Further Considerations and Contrasts Regarding the “Comings” of Christ

Selected Scriptures are set forth below that clearly specify a coming of Christ which is in sharp distinction to that of His descent from heaven for the purpose of encountering resurrected and translated saints who will “meet the Lord in the air” (*1 Thess. 4:17*). In fact, the coming in view decisively specifies a physical return of Christ which is widely visible to people on earth, occurring at a unique location, and having particular ramifications for the city of Jerusalem and its surrounding landscape.

“And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them; and they also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.’ Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath’s day journey away.” *Acts 1:9-12*

“Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen.” *Rev. 1:7*

“Behold, a day is coming for the LORD ...”

“And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.”

“And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one.”

“And people will live in [Jerusalem], and there will be no more curse, for Jerusalem will dwell in security.” *Zech 14:1, 4, 9, 11*

Related texts which elaborate on certain actions and events connected with Christ’s coming with His saints are included in order to contrast further the difference relative to His coming for His saints.

“And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming.” *II Thess. 2:8*

“And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.” *Rev. 19:15*

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

Comparisons and Contrasts:

Christ coming for His saints

He returns and encounters resurrected and translated saints in the atmospheric heavens.

His return occurs suddenly, invisibly and without precursor signs.

He transports encountered, glorified saints in the atmosphere to a heavenly dwelling.

He is glorified in His saints who magnify the glory of His saving purpose and grace.

Christ coming with His saints

He returns and encounters living mortals on the Mt. of Olives.

His return is preceded by discernible signs and occurs with a visible descent onto earth.

He engages living mortals in warfare and judgment preparatory to His earthly reign.

He is glorified in the expression of His righteous judgment in just vengeance and wrath.

2d. Addendum #2. The Mount of Olives: The Departure and The Return of “The Glory”

The important distinction between Christ’s coming *for* His saints and His coming *with* His saints receives special accent when the account of the departure of the Shekinah glory from the Temple, as described in *Ezek. 9-11*, is set alongside the texts quoted on the previous page (*Acts. 1:9-12; Zech. 14:1, 4,9*). The statements in these latter texts concerning our Lord’s return to the Mt. of Olives strike a special correspondence with the glory of the LORD being lifted by the cherubim, and then carried from the eastern gate of the Temple over the city and subsequently descending on a mountain east of Jerusalem.

(Note: In reference to the mountain on the east of Jerusalem (*Ezek. 11:23*), the text of *Zech. 14:4* specifies the location of the Mt. of Olives as situated east of the city.)

Excerpts from *Ezek. 9-11* describing the transport by the cherubim, those angelic creatures appointed as ‘chariot-transporters’ of the glory of Yahweh, are quoted here for immediate reference.

<p>9:1 “Then He cried out in my hearing with a loud voice saying, ‘Draw near, O executioners of the city, each with his destroying weapons in his hand.’ ...</p> <p>9:3a Then the glory of the God of Israel went up from the cherub on which it had been, to the threshold of the temple. ...</p> <p>10:1 Then I looked, and behold, in the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim something like a sapphire stone, in appearance resembling a throne appeared above them. ...</p> <p>10:4-5 Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub to the threshold of the temple, and the temple was filled with the cloud, and the court was filled with the brightness of the glory of the LORD.</p> <p>Moreover, the sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard as far as the outer court, like the voice of El Shaddai when He speaks.”</p> <p>[Excerpted text from <i>Ezekiel 9 & 10</i>]</p>	<p>10:18-19 Then the glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim. When the cherubim departed, they lifted their wings and rose up from the earth in my sight with the wheels beside them; and they stood still at the entrance of the east gate of the LORD’s house. And the glory of the God of Israel hovered over them.” ...</p> <p>11:22-23 “Then the cherubim lifted up their wings with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel hovered over them. And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city, and stood over the mountain which is east of the city.”</p> <p>[Excerpted text from <i>Ezekiel 10 & 11</i>]</p>
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Ezekiel was granted, under divinely orchestrated circumstances, the privilege of monitoring the departure and transport of the glory of the LORD from the Temple immediately prior to its destruction, and just before Jerusalem was to be devastated by Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian army. It was, in fact, the very occasion of this ‘glory-presence’ of Yahweh departing from the Temple mount and Jerusalem that marked the beginning of the ‘times of the Gentiles’ (see *Lk. 21:24* and the sketch on p. 2). Now the Scriptures seem to specify, quite definitively, that the ‘times of the Gentiles’ will be brought to a decisive close at that particular point in time when the Son of Man descends from heaven and appears standing on that same Mt. of Olives from which that glory departed. This return, which will be in visible physical presence and in visible manifestation of power and great glory, will usher in the next distinguished period in God’s plan for the ages; namely, the Millennial Kingdom era.

Now, with respect to the present focus on distinctive elements in an eschatological outline, several aspects associated with the descent of the Son of Man onto the Mt. of Olives can be noted.

- ◆ He will be accompanied with all translated and resurrected saints of the Church Age;
- ◆ He will decisively confront, disarm and destroy Antichrist and his assembled army (see *II Thess. 2:8-10; Rev. 19:11-21*);
- ◆ He will implement a Judgment of Separation between the righteous and unrighteous of all living mortals on the face of the earth (see page 22 here in Part I);
- ◆ He will raise all OT and Tribulation Period saints to be joined with glorified saints of all the previous ages from creation onward (see page 19 here in Part I);

- ◆ He will initiate His righteous rule with the 'rod of iron' over all nations, ruling from David's throne in Jerusalem in fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant.

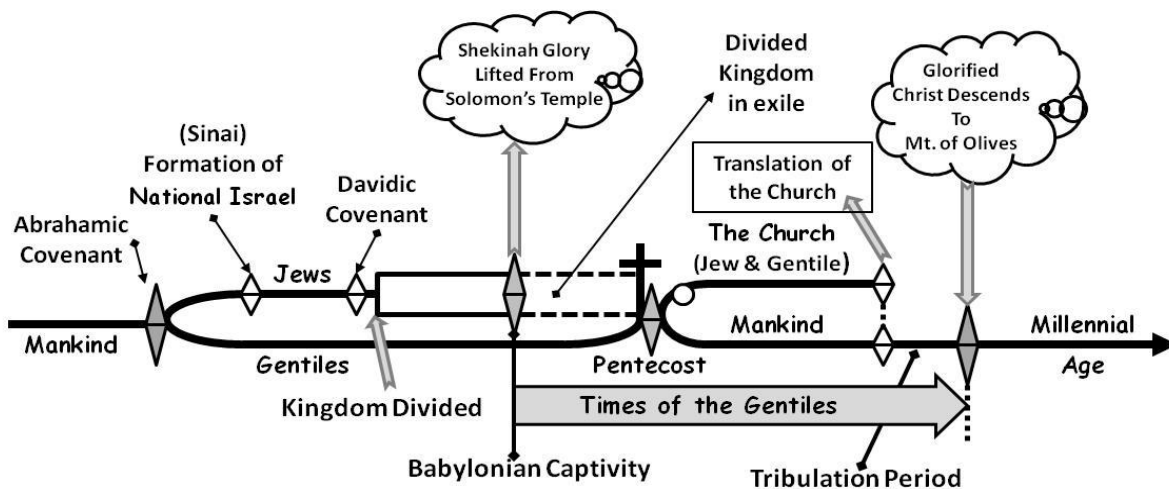
Question.

Why did the manifest glory of the LORD that lifted from Solomon's Temple come to stand on the Mt. of Olives before departing from the earth?

A Reasoned Consideration.

When the Lord Jesus Christ arrived in Jerusalem as the Passover Lamb on that momentous occasion of His crucifixion, He first visited the reconstructed, refurbished temple and found the religious leadership wholly corrupted and due for just judgment (*Matt. 21:12-13, 33-46*). And when that leadership proceeded to crucify the Lord of glory, in deliberate suppression and opposition to the demonstrable and verifiable evidence (truth) concerning His Messiahship, the temple and city were again destined for destruction (*Lk. 19:41-44*). Yet, the unconditional covenants to Abraham and David stand, and a time for their comprehensive fulfillment must follow at some future time. In this regard, Jesus Himself predicted that "all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled" (*Lk. 24:44*), and angelic witness specified at His ascension that the covenant fulfillment will involve a day of His return to the Mt. of Olives—the very place from which He ascended to His place of glorification (*Acts 1:9-12*). Now, this future day of descent to the Mt. of Olives has explicit and undeniable correspondence with the words of the prophet Zechariah (*Zech. 14*), as indeed it must. Further, this return of the Christ to the Mt. of Olives is one in which He will be accompanied with His saints, and on that great day the glorious 'Kingdom-nation age' on earth will come to fruition. This age will be ushered in with living mortals as citizens, both Jews and Gentiles, and with the risen, glorified Son of Man reigning as King of kings and ruling as Lord of lords. (Note: This latter eschatological aspect is addressed further in Part III [see pp. 45-57].)

The referenced texts from *Ezekiel*, *Zechariah* and *Acts* form, in combination, an important 'cross-textual correspondence' concerning the second coming of Christ. Not only do they provide a key insight pertaining to aspects of Christ's coming with His saints, but they also form a constraining guide to understanding the onset of the future kingdom (millennial) age.



Footnote: The Apostle John observed in a vision the ark present in the opened temple of God in heaven (*Rev. 11:19*), even the "ark of His covenant (testimony [KJV])". It is conjectural, but the departing of the glory from Solomon's Temple may have included its subsequent lifting from the Mt. of Olives and, as an associated action by the cherubim, its transport to heaven.

Nebuchadnezzar is said to have confiscated all the articles in the temple, both "great and small", and sent them on transport to Babylon before burning the temple (*II Chron. 36:18-19*). However, the ark was evidently already absent, preventing him from taking possession and carrying it also to Babylon.

3. Distinguishing Between Israel and The Church

The distinction between national Israel and the Church is essential to a proper unfolding of God's kingdom plan, yet this distinction seems not widely noted nor particularly appreciated and enforced in prophetic writings. For this reason, the presentation here is deemed pivotal to the formation of a Biblically consistent eschatology, and is therefore argued with considerable supporting detail.

3a. The "**Mystery**" of the Church in Revelation

The apostles & prophets of the apostolic era were the first agents of revelation privileged to be granted insight into God's eternal purpose and plan in formation of the Church; namely, His formation of a bride for His beloved Son through electing grace directed toward both Jews and Gentiles alike. This purpose, although implicit to the Abrahamic Covenant, was not unveiled in definitive terms at any time during the OT era. At most there were only suggestive types and vague shadows. For this reason the NT Scriptures speak of this unrevealed purpose of God as a "**mystery**". The key texts exposing the underlying essence of this "**mystery**" are set forth in the following notes to help clarify the relation between the Church era and the era of Israel's national restoration and its associated Messianic Administration.

Introductory Comment:

The apostle Paul, more than any other of the NT apostles and prophets, was directed by the Spirit to provide insight into this **mystery** of the Church era, and to communicate specifics as to God's purpose and plan regarding this peculiar entity called the Church. We consider here several of these "**mystery**" texts appearing in the Pauline Epistles.

"by revelation there was made known to me the **mystery** ... which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles & prophets in the Spirit; to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel," Eph. 3:3-6

Here is a clear and precise definition of the essence of this **mystery**, namely the revelation of God's purpose to join both Jews and Gentiles in a unified body where all national identities are subsumed into one body, and where all members of the body have equal rights and privileges in all kingdom experiences and participations. Both Jews and Gentiles will not only be subjects of the King in His kingdom, but with equal privilege will reign with the risen, glorified Messiah-King in His kingdom.

- Jew and Gentile are fellow heirs of covenant promises
- Jew and Gentile are fellow members of the same body
- Jew and Gentile are fellow partakers of the promise of the gospel.

This is nothing short of a new creation – a wholly new organism – even one that stands distinct from any previous understanding of God's purpose and plan in creation, and of the full scope and glory that is implicit to that great and gracious 'Immanuel principle': "you shall be My people, and I will be your God".

"Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, that is, the **mystery** which has been *hidden from the past ages and generations*, but has now been manifested in His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this **mystery** among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."
Col. 1:24-27

The first reference in the NT that speaks to the **mystery** of the formation of the Church comes from the very teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The concept of the Church is introduced in a series of parables our Lord spoke, and which are recorded by divine inspiration in Matt. 13 under the noted title "**Mysteries of the Kingdom**".

"And the disciples came and said to [Jesus], 'Why do you speak to them in parables?' And He answered and said to them, 'To you it has been granted to know the **mysteries of the kingdom** of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.' " Matt:13:10-11.

"All these things Jesus spoke to the multitudes in parables, ... so that what was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, saying, 'I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter **things hidden since the foundation of the world.**' " Matt. 13:34-35.

Our Lord purposed to unveil heretofore unknown truth in *Matt. 13* concerning what is now referred to as "The Church Age". The first reference in the NT that speaks to a distinction between Israel and the Church appears in two parables among the sequence of seven. The fifth and sixth read as follows:

"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field."

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it." vs. 44-46.

Comment #2:

The **mystery** of the "*pearl of great value*".

Reference to a "*pearl*" is unique in Scripture. Since no prior reference to this jewel exists to guide our interpretation of its implied meaning, we must search for our Lord's intended meaning entirely from what is known (discoverable) about pearls – their formation, etc.

The reference to "one pearl" is specific – implying that a singular jewel of exquisite beauty and extravagant price is in view.

The pearl is a jewel that:

- ◆ develops entirely hidden from physical view;
- ◆ develops from an injury, irritant, etc. to the host organism;
- ◆ has a glory unknown until it is unveiled;
- ◆ possesses an intrinsic unity – it cannot be cut or machined by craftsmen to enhance

Conclusion:

The kingdom parables communicated by our Lord in *Matt. 13* contain secrets heretofore unrevealed.

These parables point to distinct changes to be sovereignly implemented in God's redemptive program for creation following our Lord's resurrection and ascension.

Specifically, they speak to a redirection of God's working through national Israel to the formation of a new (and more hidden) entity – a "*pearl*".

This redirection of His primary redemptive emphasis is revealed quite explicitly in the words of Jesus spoken shortly following these parables:

"Upon [the substantive and true essence of this confession] **I will build My church**". *Matt. 16:18*

Comment #1a:

The **mystery** of the "*treasure hidden in the field*".

Christ's use of the word "*treasure*" in the first of the "**mystery**" parable quoted to the left is a direct reference to Israel. This conclusion is derived from the words of Yahweh in Exodus & Deuteronomy where redeemed, national Israel is referred to in the words "*My special treasure*".

"You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession (*My special treasure*) among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine." *Ex. 19:4-5*

See also *Deut. 4:20; 7:6; 14:2; 26:18*.

Further texts emphasizing this special relationship of elective choice by Yahweh include:

"For Yahweh has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for *His special treasure*." *Ps. 135:4*

" 'And they will be mine,' says Yahweh Sabaoth, 'on the day that I prepare *My special treasure*, and I will have compassion on them as a man has

Comment #1b:

The **mystery** being unveiled in the parable of the hidden treasure (*Matt. 13:44*) is that Christ, the promised Branch, came and found Israel among the host of Gentile nations (nations in the field).

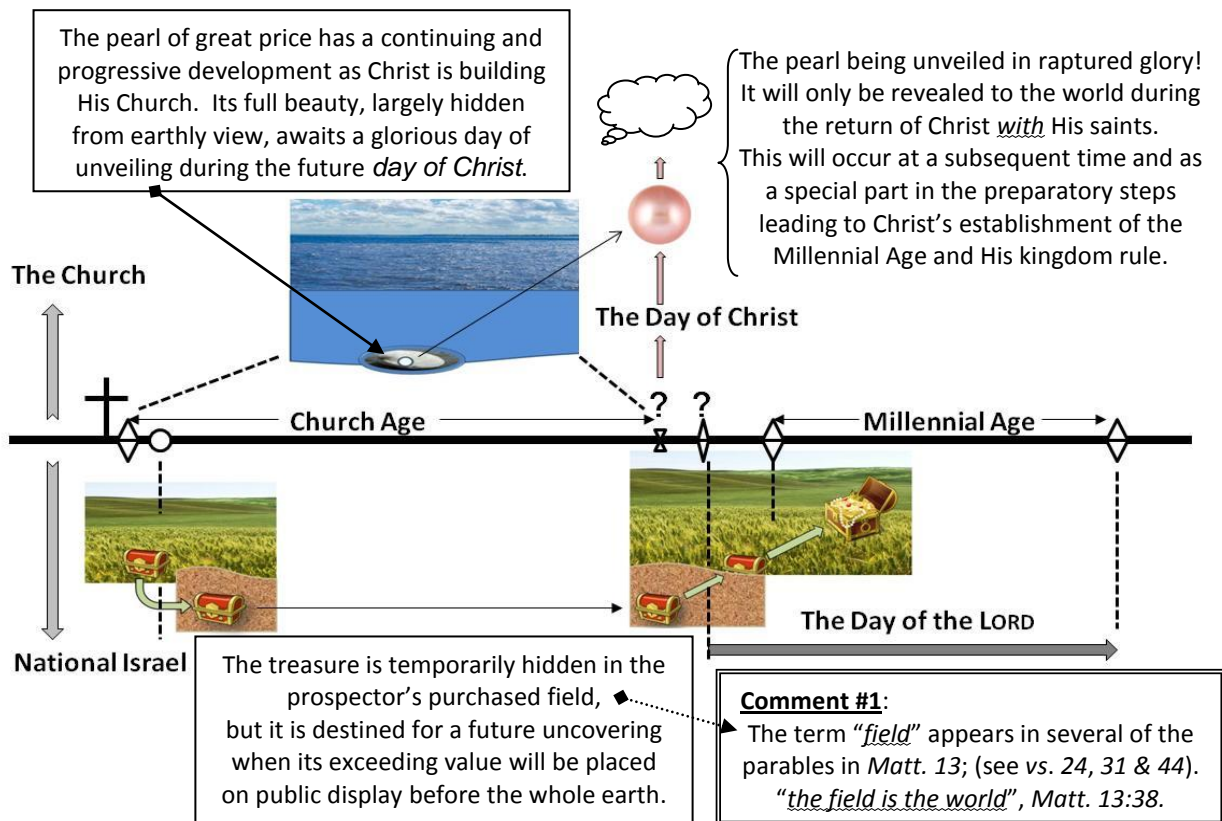
However, because of their unbelief and covenant disloyalty, and especially because of their hostile rejection of the arrival of the promised Branch, they will be "hidden" (buried) among the nations. But the (implied) intention of the prospector is quite clearly that He will come one day and uncover this purposely hidden treasure

in the purchased field.

Thus it will be with Israel for an unspecified "kingdom era" period, and only thereafter will the terms of the New Covenant that apply to national Israel find their fulfillment in the full glory elaborated by the prophets.

" 'Behold, the days are coming,' declares Yahweh, 'when I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called

The revelation in these two “*mysteries of the kingdom of heaven*” seem to require an important and sharp distinction between Israel and the Church. To better clarify the pivotal revelatory communication they convey, their essential eschatological content is depicted in the following schematic with attendant commentary.



Comment #2:

The timing for the extraction of the pearl from its hidden development is unspecified in the above diagram. A determination of the occasion of this discovery of the full glory of the pearl (this jewel of inestimable value) in the chronological unfolding of future events requires careful textual analysis of, particularly, *II Thess. 2:1-12*. Such analysis is contained in Part 2 of these notes.

Note #1:

The uncovering of the treasure hidden in the field (i.e., redeemed but unregenerate national Israel that is presently exiled and dispersed in the field of Gentile nations) is to be accomplished over a prophetically-fixed period of time and through a sovereignly-determined process of ‘redemption through judgment’. This period will cover the initial 7-year span of the *day of the LORD* (also known as the “70th week of Daniel” or, alternatively, the “Tribulation Period”). As particularly noted in *I Thess. 5:2-3*, the dawning of this “day” of uncovering will be sudden and unexpected, albeit some precursor signs of its arrival will be discernible by those willing to pursue an “understanding of the times”. (cf., *Matt. 24:1-27*)

Note #2:

The uncovered treasure will not come into the full stature of its prophetic glory in a single instant, but rather only progressively as the following pivotal events unfold in ordered succession.

- ◆ The return of Christ with His saints
- ◆ The administration of the judgment of separation
- ◆ The inaugural undertaking of Messiah’s kingdom rule from David’s throne in Jerusalem; and
- ◆ The comprehensive millennial fulfillment of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants.

Note 3:

The distinction between national Israel and the Church seems to be required not only by a coherent correspondence between separate revelatory texts dealing with the span of the Church Age, but also appears to have continuing relevance throughout the full scope of God’s eschatological program (see next page).

3b. Further Revelatory Bases for Distinguishing Between Israel and the Church

“Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks
or to the church of God.” *1 Cor. 10:32*

The Apostle Paul draws, in this decidedly NT
reference, a distinction between three identified
people-groups at this Church Age stage in
God’s redemptive program.

- ◆ the Jews – unregenerate members of
Abraham’s family through Jacob;
- ◆ the Greeks – unregenerate Gentiles;
- ◆ the Church of God – both Jewish & Gentile
saints who form this ‘mystery’ of fellow
citizenship (*Eph. 3:4-6*)

These distinctions appear to persist even into
the ordained order of the Eternal Kingdom.

The New Jerusalem

“ ‘Come here, I will show you the bride,
the wife of the Lamb.’ ... and [he] showed me the
holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven
from God, having the glory of God. ...

It had a great and high wall with 12 gates, ... and
names written on them, which are those of the
12 tribes of the sons of Israel. ...

And the wall of the city had 12 foundation stones,
and on them were the names of the 12 apostles
of the Lamb.” *Rev. 21:9-14*

“And the 12 gates were 12 pearls; each of the
gates a single pearl.” *Rev. 21:21.*

Comment:

The Scriptures quoted above seem to uphold a clear distinction between Israel and the Church.
The foundation of the city walls ‘memorialize’ the apostles, the foundation of the Church (*Eph. 2:20*).

Furthermore, the city is distinctly referred to as “the bride, the Lamb’s wife”, a reference which
connects with unmistakable specificity to the Church (*Eph. 5:25-27,32*) and to its ‘mystery’ place in
God’s kingdom redemption purpose (*Eph. 3:1-7*). By contrast, the gates to the city are named after
the 12 sons of Jacob (12 tribes of Israel), yet, each gate is a pearl. [cf., *Matt. 13:45-46*]

There is a sense (a seeming implication) that elect Israel will have open access to the city, but
permanent residence within the city is reserved particularly for the Lamb’s bride – the Church.

Israel

Initial Revelatory Definition:

- The Abrahamic covenant, plus its
subsequent amplifications in covenantal
reinforcements to Isaac and Jacob.

Formative Event:

- Yahweh’s encountering the 12 family-
tribes of Jacob at Sinai following the
redemptive exodus from Egypt.

Revelatory “Mystery”:

- The treasure found in the field and
hidden again in the field. (*Matt. 13:44*)

Covenantal Sign:

- Circumcision, and receipt of the oracles
of God.

Eschatological Plan:

- Re-gathered as mortal citizens of an
earthly nation (the treasure uncovered)
- Restored national administration under
Messianic kingship
- Dwelling under full covenantal fulfillment
in new heavens and new earth.

The Church

Initial Revelatory Definition:

- The declarative pronouncement of Christ
(*Matt. 16:18*) plus enunciated “kingdom of
heaven mysteries” (*Matt. 13*).

Formative Event:

- The promised advent of the Holy Spirit on
the day of Pentecost following the
ascension of Christ.

Revelatory “Mystery”:

- The discovery and extravagant purchase of
a pearl of great price. (*Matt. 13:45-46*)

Covenantal Sign:

- Circumcision of the heart by the Spirit,
indwelling of the Spirit, and water baptism.

Eschatological Plan:

- Resurrected and translated to a heavenly
dwelling (the pearl fully formed)
- Reigning on earth with Christ as His bride
and as His assigned regents
- Dwelling in the New Jerusalem in the age
of the new heavens and new earth.

3c. A Green Olive Tree vs. A Wild Olive Tree (*Rom. 11*) Broken Off Branches vs. Grafted In Branches.

"What right has My beloved in My house when she has done many vile deeds. ... Yahweh called your name, 'A green olive tree, beautiful in fruit and form'; with the noise of a great tumult He has kindled fire on it, and its branches are worthless. Yahweh Sabaoth, who planted you, has pronounced evil against you because of the evil of the house of Israel and the house of Judah which they have done to provoke Me by offering up sacrifices to Baal." *Jer. 11:15-17* (see also *Ps. 52:8; Hosea 14:4-7*)

"if the root be holy, the branches are too. But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches;" (*vs. 16b-18a*)

- ◆ Israel is spoken as a "green olive tree".
- ◆ Israel is spoken as "broken off natural branches", but the stump remains in place.
- ◆ The Church is spoken of as "grafted in branches" taken from a "wild olive tree".
- ◆ The Church is portrayed as deriving life from the original stump and "rich root".
- ◆ The wild olive branches will one day give way to a re-grafting of the natural branches back into the stump and with restored glory.
- ◆ The green olive tree will flourish again under Messianic glory ... and all Israel will be saved.

The wild olive branches will one day be removed, and a re-grafting of the original natural branches follows.



The departure of the

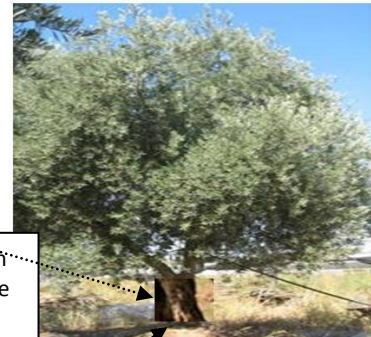


"Branches were broken off ... they were broken off for their unbelief, ... if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you." (*vs. 19-21*)



"For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree," (*vs. 24*)

"how much more shall those who are the natural branches be grafted into their own tree." (*vs. 24*)



"For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, ... that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved." (*vs. 25-26*)

Comment

The rich and holy root (stump) of the tree is emblematic of the full scope of God's redemptive working to accomplish His purposes. It has narrower reference in *Rom. 11* to His choice of a 'favored people/nation' having a central role for the in-gathering of His elect in every age. The Abrahamic Covenant is key to this end. From a larger perspective, the "rich root" may be understood as the 'age long life source' of God's covenantal redemptive working in the bringing of many sons to glory when His kingdom is consummated.

Note: The 'line of privilege' in God's redemptive working began with His elective choice of Abraham, and it advanced from there to His working in the formation of national Israel. Here, in *Rom. 11*, the Apostle Paul is led by the Spirit to use the prophetic metaphor of a green, cultivated olive tree, first mentioned in Jeremiah's prophecy, to describe God's "mystery program" for the age. It is revealed that a re-directing of His redemptive working away from national Israel will occur, and a new "privileged entity" that taps into this same rich and holy root will be created. This new center of operational redemptive privilege is to emanate from a "grafted in" wild olive tree – a distinct reference to the Church derived principally from Gentile peoples.

However, this is not a permanent replacement of the original "instrument of privilege". The Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants all require a future reinstatement of Israel in resplendent glory under Messianic rule.

The "mystery" redirection of primary redemptive operation through the Church will continue only until the "fullness of the Gentiles has come in", and then national Israel will be grafted back into the original stump – at which time the statement "thus all Israel will be saved" will be fulfilled in resplendent glory.

4. Distinguishing Between Different Resurrections

The fact that a resurrection awaits all members of Adam's race who have passed through death was implied in those earliest words that were spoken by God in specific relation to man prior to the creation of Adam and Eve: "Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness." As God holds an eternal existence, so also must any creature "in His image" possess an immortal soul-spirit and be endowed with a creaturely existence that is eternal in essence. Perhaps the clearest testimony from an early patriarch regarding man's immortality and the hope of a physical resurrection was that uttered by Job.

"And as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God; whom I myself shall behold, and whom my eyes shall see and not another." *Job 19:25-27*

Further clear testimony to the fact of resurrection exists in the prophets.

"As for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with beholding Thy likeness when I awake." *Ps. 17:15*

"I will ransom them from the power of Sheol; I will redeem them from death. O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, where is your sting." *Hosea 13:14*

"Your dead will live; [My] corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust awake and shout for joy, for your dew is as the dew of the dawn, and the earth will give birth to the departed saints." *Isa. 26:19*

"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting abhorrence." *Dan. 12:2*

In the quote above taken from the revelatory writing of Daniel we are informed that there is to be, in truth, two resurrections of differing sorts, one pertaining to righteous dead and another to unrighteous dead. The fact that there are distinct resurrections relating to these two divinely distinguished classes of individuals receives definitive confirmation in several NT Scriptures.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live. For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment." *John 5:25-29*

"having a hope in God, ... that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked." *Acts: 24:15*

"But when you give a reception, invite the poor, ... for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." *Luke 14:13-14*

Note: Although resurrections for separate classes of persons are delineated, no chronological information detailing a possible separation in time for the different resurrections is provided in these texts.

Even as the foregoing texts clearly speak of a physical resurrection from the dead, so also they speak of some sharp distinctions in God's determined program for the consummation of the age.

Person Distinctions

- Righteous ("who did the good deeds")
- Unrighteous ("who did the evil deeds")

Resurrection Distinctions

- Resurrection of life
- Resurrection of judgment

With the fact of resurrection established, along with important related distinctions, the question remains as to whether these resurrections are separated in the chronology of end-time events. Further, it is not specified whether there might be differently phased occurrences of resurrection for either of the two divisions of persons. For example, when will Daniel's hope be realized? And, might there be several separated resurrections of the righteous (i.e., separated phases of the "resurrection of life")?

The relative timing of these different resurrections, both the resurrection of life (alt., of righteous dead) and the resurrection of judgment (alt., of unrighteous dead), is somewhat clarified in the following words of infallible revelation.

“And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and the word of God, ... and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is **the first resurrection**. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in **the first resurrection**; over these **the second death** has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.” *Rev. 20:4-6*

Accompanying the foregoing words of revelation, and appearing slightly later in the same chapter and context, we read of those who are resurrected and have an inescapable participation in that particular judgment ending in “**the second death**”.

“And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is **the second death**, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” *Rev. 20:14-15*

These quoted texts from *Rev. 20* clearly indicate that:

- ♦ a chronological separation will occur between the resurrection of two classes of peoples; namely, the martyrs of the Tribulation Period and “the rest of the dead” – the latter being a reference specific to the dead of all the ages beginning with creation ... all who are excluded from “the first resurrection”.
- ♦ a chronological separation must be present between at least one phase of a “resurrection of life” and the “resurrection of judgment”, terms used by our Lord set forth in His words recorded in *John 5:29*.
- ♦ a particular resurrection will occur that is focused on an ultimate judgment leading to “the second death”; that is, ending with a judgment and consignment to the “lake of fire” (alt., eternal hell).

To arrive at a chronology of the different resurrections we should note the following points.

- ♦ The resurrection of the righteous martyrs of the Tribulation Period is described in *Rev. 20:4-6* as occurring just prior to the Millennial Age.
- ♦ As previously noted in commentary regarding the distinction between *the day of the LORD* and *the day of Christ*, a “resurrective-translative” event must necessarily precede Christ’s return *with* His saints to inaugurate His Millennial Kingdom – the event which is noted in *Rev. 20:4* as being essentially coincident with the very occasion of the resurrection of those martyred saints.

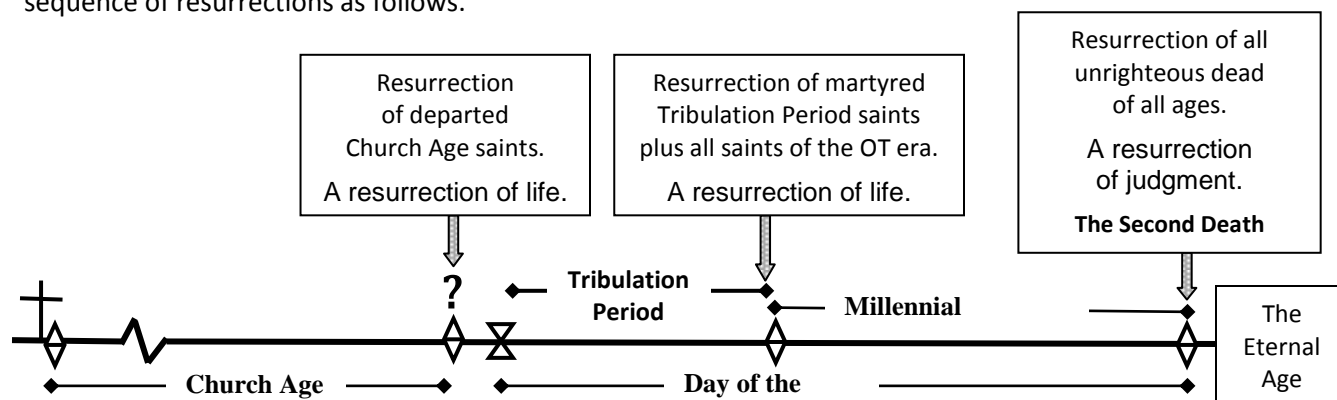
It is quite evident, therefore, that different phases of the “resurrection of life” (alt., the resurrection of the righteous) must be part of God’s kingdom plan. And, the resurrections of the righteous are chronologically separated from the resurrection of the unrighteous.

Summary Comment:

There are several, chronologically-separated resurrections included in the term “**the first resurrection**”. That is, the Scriptures delineate several distinct phases to the full scope of “**the first resurrection**”. Further, and from a strict chronological perspective, all participants in “**the first resurrection**” will be raised from the dead before any resurrection of unrighteous dead, whose soul-spirits will continue to reside in Sheol-Hades (the abode of soul-spirits of unrighteous dead) until their appointed resurrection at the close of the Millennial Age.

All those participants in “**the resurrection of judgment**” (alt., the “second resurrection” – “second” referring to a distinct classification of persons to be raised which is in contrast to all participants in “**the first resurrection**”) are not resurrected until just prior to the Great White Throne judgment. The Great White Throne judgment is scheduled as the very concluding event at end of the age, whereupon all unrighteous persons will stand with resurrected bodies to be judged, and will be sentenced to their eternal destiny in hell → a state of eternal existence referred to as “**the second death**”.

Based on the foregoing considerations, and supported by arguments lifted quite straightforwardly from inerrant and infallible words of holy Scripture, we can illustrate schematically the divinely-revealed sequence of resurrections as follows.



4a. Supplementary Notes

It is important to emphasize that resurrection is a term that only has meaning, and is only a true hope of saints and an absolute future reality, because the Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. He is, as the Apostle Paul makes clear, the *"first fruits of those who are asleep (who have died)"*; our Lord's resurrection is the first and causal resurrection of any and all resurrections leading to life in an eternal physical body.

"But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.

For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection from the dead. ... But each in his own order:

Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

The last enemy that will be abolished is death."

I Cor. 15:20-26

Commentary: I Cor. 15:20-26.

vs. 22. *"... in Christ all shall be made alive"*

Every person born into Adam's race will, at some future moment, be raised to an immortal existence – to an existence which will be wholly beyond the reach of any future event leading to either physical death or annihilation.

vs. 23. *"each in his own order (in his own proper rank)"*

The word "order" implies a temporal, sequential order. Every person will be raised in a determined order by class.

vs. 23. *"those who are Christ's"*

A particular "class" of individuals is distinguished here. This "class" consists of those who by new birth are "in Christ" and who participate in the "resurrection of life".

vs. 23. *"at His coming"*

Here a very particular temporal occasion is specified.

Ques. Which coming is in view? Does the reference apply to His coming *for* His saints, or does it apply to His coming *with* His saints?

In truth, there will be a resurrection of the righteous at both of His comings, at His coming *for* His saints and His coming *with* His saints.

vs. 23. *"then comes the end"*

The word "then" implies a time separated from "His coming" when all those who are Christ's will be resurrected. That is, at a time subsequent to His coming *with* resurrected saints.

"But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you." *Rom. 8:11*

"Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power." *I Cor. 6:14*

"Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." *Titus 2:13*

5. Distinguishing Between Different Judgments

As resurrection is a universal certainty for everyone who passes through death, so also judgment is a universal destiny for every person born into Adam's race. Everyone will one day stand in judgment before the sovereign Creator of all things, no exceptions.

"God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." *Acts 17:30b-31*

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

Although the general issue of judgment is amply set forth in many sections of Scripture, when texts that speak in specific terms on the subject are studied in a comparative manner they reveal the existence of three distinct judgment seats (bars). These are:

- ◆ The Judgment Seat of Christ
- ◆ The Judgment of Separation (alt., The Judgment of the Sheep and the Goats)
- ◆ The Judgment of the Great White Throne.

We can note that another judgment might be added to this triad; namely, the judgment of the Tribulation Period (the 70th week of Daniel). However, that period of divinely administered judgment pertains to peoples alive on earth, and can properly be included within the scope of the broader term "The Day of the LORD". In fact, the Tribulation Period is a time of working in judgment that is preparatory to the Judgment of Separation. As such, it stands in distinctive contrast with a bar or seat of judgment. For this reason it will not be given special consideration in this section except to note the following two texts from Isaiah's prophecy touching on this period.

"Come my people, enter into your rooms, and close your doors behind you; hide for a little while, until indignation passes over. For behold, the LORD is about to come out from His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity;" *Isa. 26:20-21*

"For the LORD'S indignation is against all the nations, and His wrath against all their armies; He has utterly destroyed them, He has given them over to slaughter." *Isa. 34:2*

5a. The Judgment Seat of Christ

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

"But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, 'As I live, says the LORD, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.' So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God." *Rom. 14:10-12*

The Subjects at the Judgment Seat of Christ

The identity of the community of persons in view by use of the pronoun "we" in the verse quoted in the text box to the left is readily discerned from the immediate context of *II Cor. 5:10*.

The same pronoun "we" is used repeatedly in the preceding verses, and each statement makes specific reference to saints in the church at Corinth.

"we walk by faith, not by sight" vs. 7.

"we are of good courage, ... [we] prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord." vs. 8.

"we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be acceptable to Him" vs. 9.

We observe from these texts that the judgment seat of Christ has in view a time when all church age saints will be gathered at a special judgment bar. It is critical to note that these texts make no reference

to any determination of eternal destiny. Rather, they seem to pertain exclusively to a judgment of earthly life and work of saints for the purpose of a just distribution of reward.

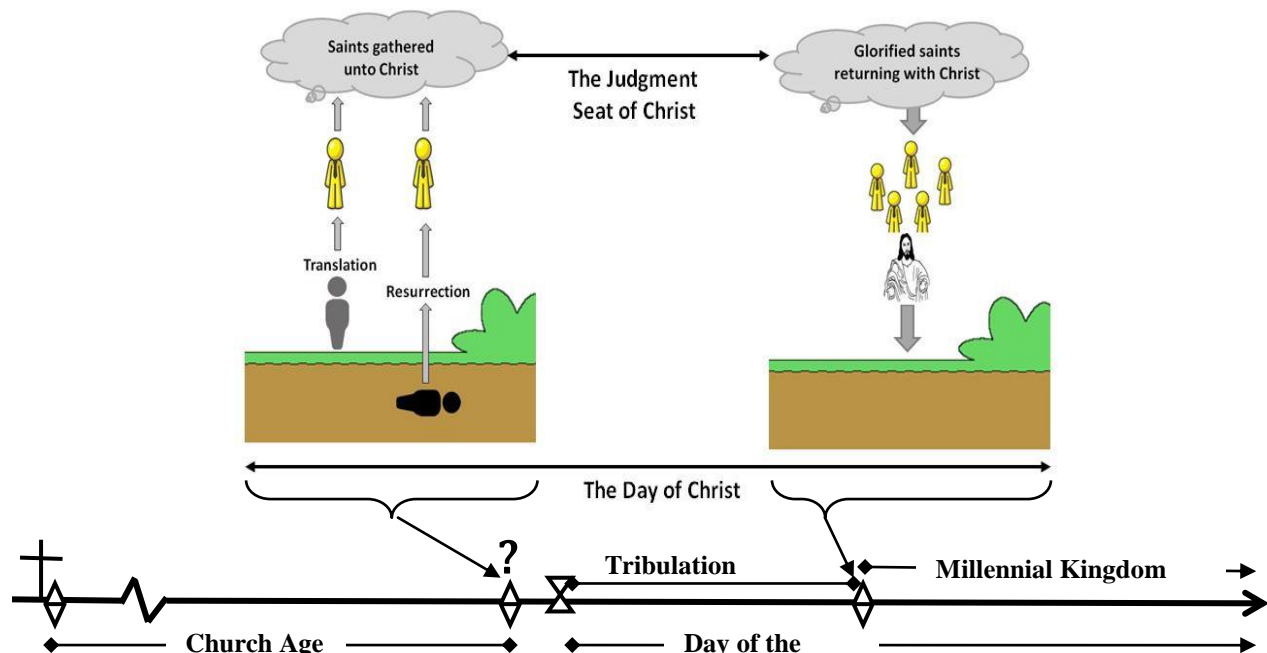
The Judgment Seat of Christ and The Issue of Rewards

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

“For if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. If any man’s work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.” *1 Cor. 3:10-15*

The topic of rewards opens a broader aspect of the basis and effects of this judgment, and will not be engaged here. However, and to the narrower point of these notes, it is most important to observe that the judgmental action at this bar will not occur until after church age saints are gathered in immortal bodies unto Christ – a gathering resulting in the completed Church joined with her head and Savior. As such, a resurrection and a translation (departure/rapture) must occur before this judgment will be convened. That is, this judgment will not occur until after Christ’s coming *for* His saints. Furthermore, it will occur before Christ’s return *with* His saints since this judgment bar has relevance to the assignment of positions of service under Christ during His millennial reign on earth. As such, it is a judgment that properly belongs to that period referred to as “*the day of Christ*”, and involves only Church Age saints who are gathered in glorified bodies in a heavenly place, not on earth.

With this background in view, it can be noted that Christ’s coming *for* His saints and the gathering of saints unto Himself carries a preparatory significance for, and a purpose relating to, Christ’s returning as King to reign in glory on earth (*II Thess. 1:10-12*). From this understanding we can also see that there will be a chronological overlap between the *day of Christ* and the *day of the LORD*. Although these two “*days*” are ‘played out’ in distinctly different spheres of God’s creation, yet the primary focus and eschatological relevance of these two “*days*” pertains to the return of Christ in power and great glory for the necessary fulfillment of covenant promises and the establishment of His millennial reign.



5a. The Judgment of Separation

The principal texts pertaining to this judgment come from the following revelatory words of Christ.

"But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His throne. And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' ... Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; ... And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'" *Matt. 25:31-46*

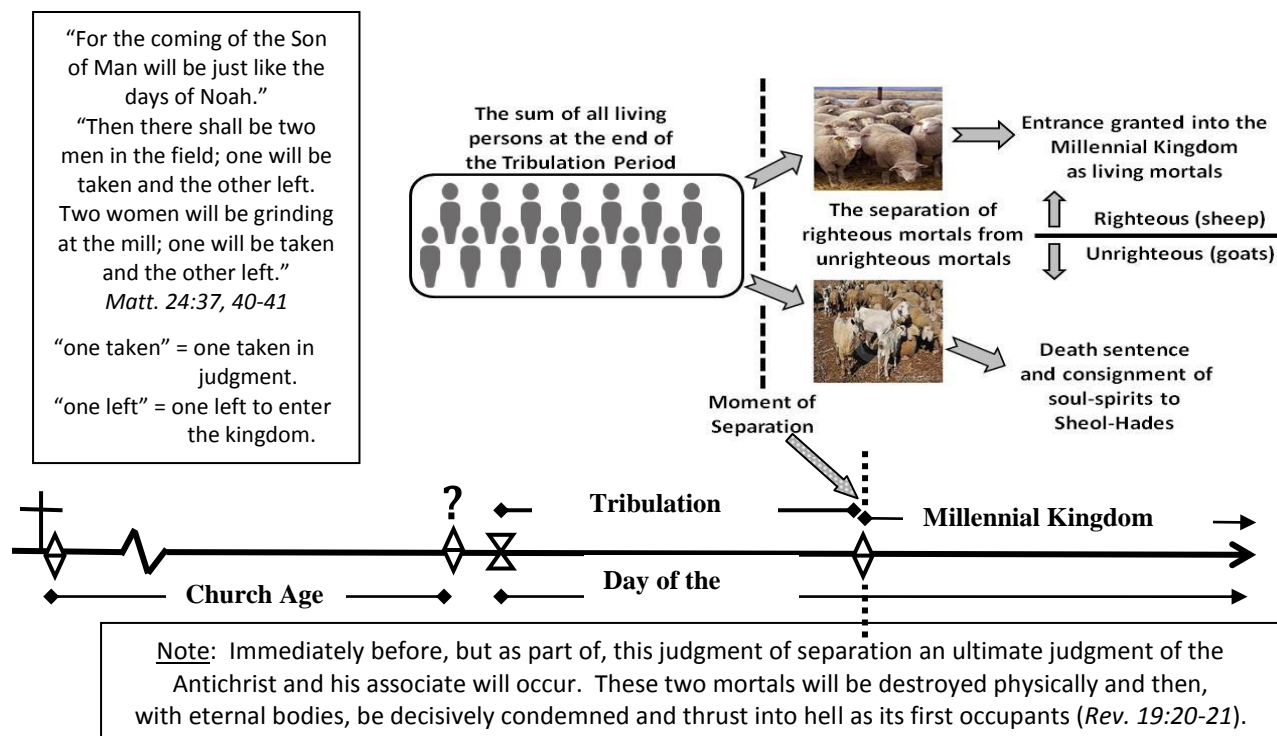
"The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."
"So it will be at the end of the age; the angels shall come forth, and take out the wicked from among the righteous, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
Matt: 13:41-43; 49-50

The judgment of separation in view in these texts is to be accomplished for the explicit purpose of discerning who, among all living mortals on the face of the earth at the close of the Tribulation Period, will be extended the privilege of entering the Millennial Kingdom Age. This conclusion is clearly evident in the very particular words:

"Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom" (*Matt. 25:34*).

Note: The kingdom invitation in this statement is not made in reference to entrance into the eternal age of the new heavens and the new earth, which chronologically follows the Millennial Age.

The separation described in both texts printed above does, however, have eternal implications, yet only and specifically in the following sense. After the righteous are separated and granted 'kingdom entrance', all remaining living mortals (i.e., all unrighteous mortals at the close of the Tribulation Period) will be immediately judged with a sentence of death. Then, upon death, the soul-spirits of all those "now departed" unrighteous persons will be consigned to Sheol-Hades, there to await a future resurrection and an appointment of ultimate judgment at the Great White Throne (see next section).



5a. The Judgment of the Great White Throne

The principal and indispensable text unveiling specifics pertaining to this judgment is quoted below for our primary reference.

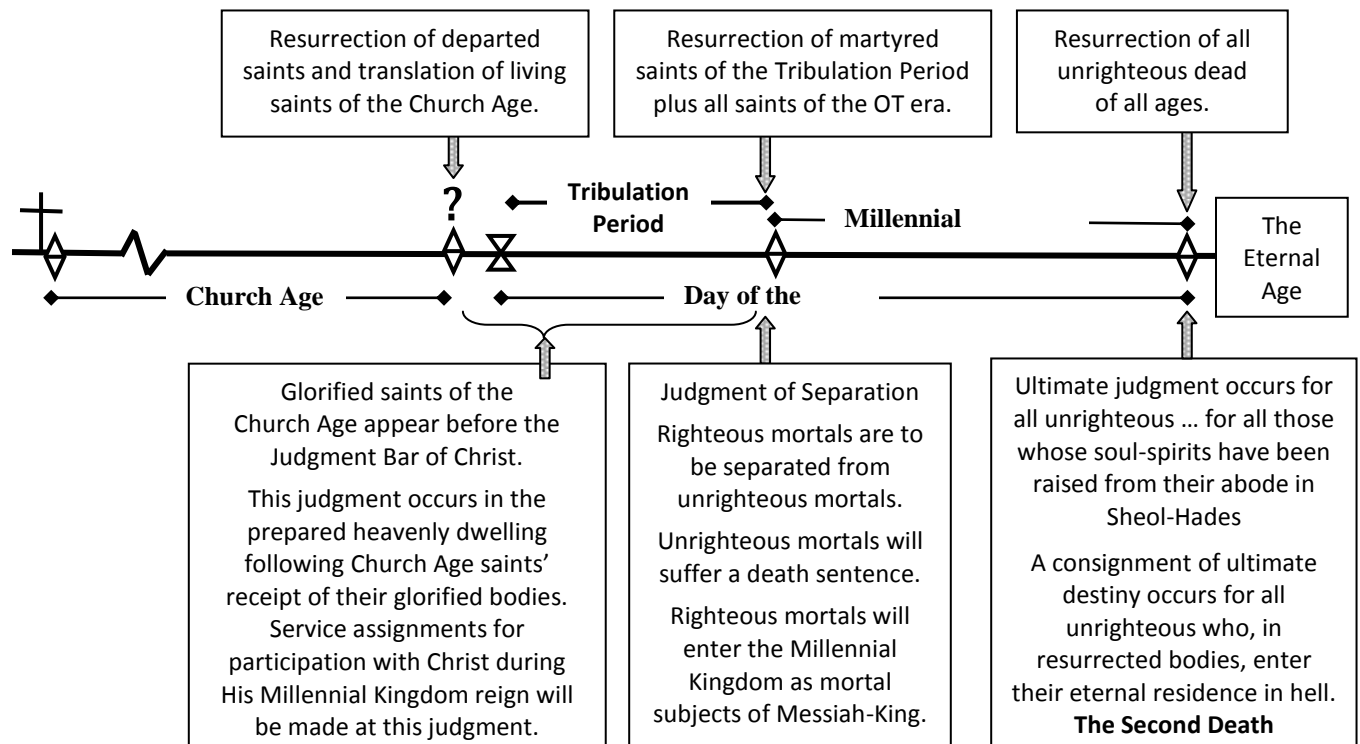
“And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead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

Ques. When, in the chronological flow of eschatological events, will this particular judgment occur?

Ans. The context of the whole of *Rev. 20* pertains to the Millennial Kingdom age – that future 1000-year period of reign of Christ on the earth. The chapter sets forth noteworthy particulars of this age, and closes with essential details of a final judgment set as the concluding event of this present age.

Ques. Who are the peoples destined to appear before this judgment bar?

Ans. All unrighteous dead of all the ages are present, extending from the earliest generations following creation until the close of the Millennial Age. This encompasses individuals ranging from Cain, Nimrod, Ahab, etc. on through to the very conclusion of the Millennial Age – albeit with the limited exception of two individuals. The two exceptions from this judgment are “the beast” (Antichrist) and his associate, “the false prophet”. These two will have been already judged and consigned to eternal residence in the lake of fire (eternal hell) – a judgment that was administered to them at the close of the 7-year Tribulation Period; that is, just prior to the inauguration of the Millennial Age (see *Rev. 19:20-21*).



Part II. A Definitive Case for a Pre-Tribulational Rapture

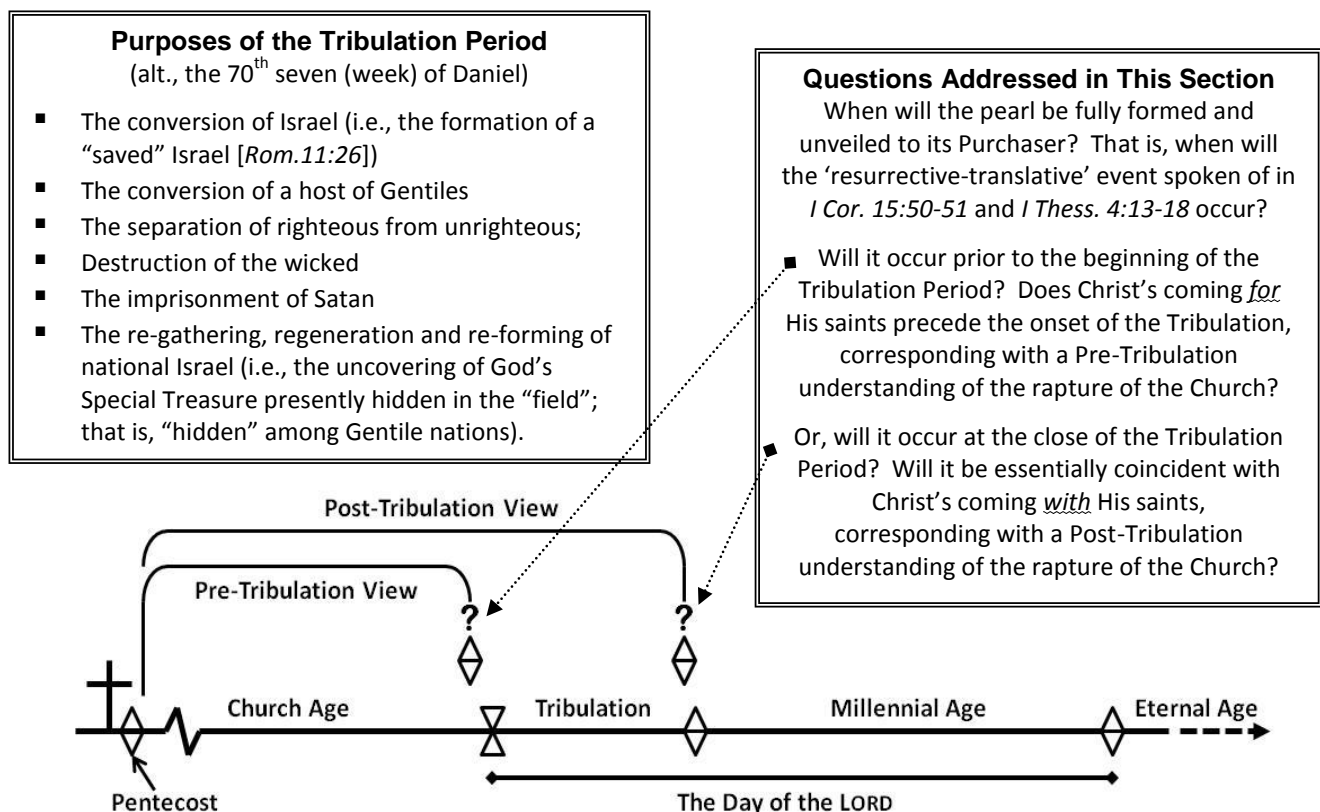
1. Introduction

1a. Arguing for a Pre-Tribulational Rapture

The case for a pre-tribulation rapture of the Church is frequently argued from implications drawn from correlated texts alone. In such cases, the doctrine is not drawn conclusively from constraining word definitions or from particular textual statements that provide independent and decisive undergirding of the proposition. That is, arguments are employed that are more interpretive in contrast with declarative; more plausible rather than definitive; mostly implicit as opposed to explicit; and generally supportive but not unequivocal.

By contrast, the analysis presented in this section is directed principally toward forging a declarative, definitive, explicit, and foundational undergirding of the pre-tribulational position regarding the rapture of the Church. That is, arguments are advanced that provide convincing bases for holding that the 'resurrective-translative' gathering of Church Age saints unto Christ, the head of the Church, will occur before the unfolding of the Tribulation Period. The word "definitive" is used in the title of this section to indicate that a tightly-argued conclusion is attempted, even one that cannot be overcome unless a presumptive definition of key words is accepted plus certain expository license with respect to maintaining a tight consistency and coherency across related texts is allowed.

The topic in view in this section is set forth in illustrative form below in order to give the reader a clear perspective of issues, terms, and questions we attempt to resolve. In particular, the goal is to give a Biblical basis for replacing the ? marks appearing in the schematic below with convincing answers. The distinctions discussed in Part I of these notes will be referenced at certain points in the pursuit of this goal, but without engaging in further explanatory detail.



1b. An Overview of Eschatological Revelation in the Thessalonian Epistles

The two Thessalonian epistles contain three paragraphs with significant eschatological content. These three paragraphs are reviewed briefly here in the order of their Scriptural arrangement.

- ◆ *I Thess. 4:13-18*. This text speaks of that future ‘resurrective-translative’ event corresponding to the coming of Christ *for* His saints ... speaking of “our gathering together to Him” in His prepared heavenly place.

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.” *I Thess. 4:16-17*

- ◆ *I Thess. 5:1-11*. This text speaks specifically of the future arrival of that period referred to as “*the day of the LORD*”. Examination of this text reveals the use of two sets of contrastive pronouns, “you/us” and “they/them”. These contrasts are clearly employed in connection with this “day of the LORD” and its relation to Christ’s coming *for* His saints as addressed in the foregoing paragraph. These contrasting sets of pronouns address two classes of people who are distinguished in these two connected paragraphs. The paragraph also includes the contrast of “day/night”, plus a special statement of promise for the “you/us” class of persons.

“For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,” *I Thess. 5:9*

- ◆ *II Thess. 2:1-12*. This Thessalonian text makes a direct reference to both of the above noted texts from the first epistle. Note the following revealing statements from this paragraph:
 - “with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him,” (vs. 1)
 - “to the effect that the day of the LORD has come,” (vs. 2)
 - “Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?” (vs. 5).

This third text moves beyond the eschatological teaching in the first epistle, providing both clarifying and expanded revelation. Specific information pertaining to the temporal sequence of future events, particularly the timing of the rapture of the Church, seems to be anticipated.

It seems clear from this brief overview that these three texts combine to form a connected theme in revelation. However, in regard to the latter Thessalonian reference, various commentaries expounding on *II Thess. 2:1-12* present interpretive bases for both the pre-tribulational and the post-tribulational positions. Such expository confusion leading to disparate conclusions, especially when considered from the perspective of the infallibility and perspicuity of Scripture, suggests that a point of mistaken understanding must exist by at least one of the schools expounding on the text.

“Now we request you, brethren, ... that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure (lit., mind) or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, ... Let no one in any way deceive you,” *II Thess. 2:1-3a*

Now it is this author’s conviction that a careful examination of *II Thess. 2:1-12* shows that a quite definitive, not simply an interpretive or implicit, answer is set forth in this text to the mental confusion that was shaking the confidence of the Thessalonian saints with respect to the coming of Christ. The confusion plaguing these saints pertained, in a direct way, to the very subject of this section – the sequential placement of the coming of Christ *for* His saints relative to the onset of the Tribulation Period. As this text forms the core Scriptural reference providing definitive terms regarding this subject, the presentation that follows involves a reasonably expansive argument based on linguistic reasoning, even one accented with considerable redundancy in detail and pressed with quite deliberate force.

1c. A Background Issue Concerning the Text of II Thess. 2:3

[Geneva]

"Let no man deceive you by any means:
for *that day will not come*, except
there come a departing first,
and that that man of sin be disclosed,
even the son of perdition."

[KJV]

"Let no man deceive you by any means
for *that day shall not come*, except
there come a falling away first,
and that man of sin be revealed,
the son of perdition."

[NASB]

"Let no one in any way deceive you,
for *it will not come* unless
the apostasy comes first,
and the man of lawlessness is revealed,
the son of destruction."

Translators' use of Italics: An Historical Note

The preface to the 1599 English edition of the Geneva Bible contains a helpful note regarding the use of italicized words and phrases in their translation. The following explanatory note appears in this edition of the Geneva Bible.

"Every word, as well as exact sentence structure, of the source edition is retained. We carefully have preserved the use of italics, by which the original translators indicated that they had supplied words not found in the original manuscripts."

They authors go on to state:
"Similarly, we did not attempt to make the text readable from a modern standpoint—only to offer contemporary readers what the Geneva Bible said."

The authors of the preface also comment that the same translation device and principles were employed by translators of the KJ Bible as well.

Comment on Translated Versions of II Thess. 2:3

The reader will observe that each of the translations of vs.3 printed to the left contain a phrase that appears in italics.
(Note: The italicized phrase is underlined here for enhanced accent.)

The use of italics was employed in translations of respective versions because the italicized phrase or word does not appear in the source manuscript. As such, it serves solely as a means of enhancing 'reader clarity'. However, as in vs. 3 to the left, the subject was unspecified in the original and, therefore, any inserted phrase (word) is open to interpretive preference.

This is quite important for readers of different translations to understand, and especially so in regard to many modern translations. Why? Because the italicized phrase (word) may use terms asserting an interpretive prejudice that may or may not be decisively supported by individual words in the context.

Furthermore, many modern translations do not use italics, thus failing to indicate the insertion of a preferred interpretive choice for what the original text left unspecified.

Now, with respect to the translators' insertion of the word "*day*" in the Geneva and KJV versions, the choice of preferred antecedent clause forming the implied subject is the "*day of the LORD*" appearing in vs. 2.

In the case of the NASB, the word "*it*" is inserted instead, leaving wider ambiguity as to the identity of the antecedent clause that might form the implied subject of vs. 3.

In the NASB the choice of implied subject might be either:

- ◆ The occasion of "*the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him*" (vs. 1); or
- ◆ The occasion of "*the day of the LORD*" (vs. 2).

To arrive at a compelling choice for the proper antecedent clause one needs to engage an examination of the broader context plus a careful linguistic analysis of individual words that specify the key pointers directing a consistent interpretation.

Discriminating questions to ask in the present case include:

- What is the evident motivating purpose for the writing of the paragraph in vs. 1-12, and which of the antecedent clauses best fits with this motivating concern?
- Is the choice of the implied subject clause a distinction of significant interpretive consequence?
- Which option of antecedent clauses fits best the sense of a *prima facie* (first view) reading of the opening statements in the paragraph, and the seeming expectation of the reader?
- Which of the antecedent clauses best addresses the matter of providing time-specific information that will dispel confusion prevailing among the recipients of the epistle?
- Which of the options among antecedent clauses fits best in light of specific terms (words) indicating the main communicative point of the full sentence?

2. Expository Comments Regarding II Thess. 2:1-5: The Apostasia

Themes and Issues in the Text

In *II Thess. 2:1-12* the Apostle Paul is addressing a misunderstanding that had arisen in the Thessalonian church concerning two connected issues:

- ◆ “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”;
- ◆ “our gathering together to Him”.

The issue that stimulated the Apostle to write this paragraph of sacred Scripture is:

- ◆ Confusion concerning the timing of the saints being “gathered unto Christ”;
- ◆ Confusion concerning the timing of the beginning of “the day of the LORD”.

“that you may not be quickly shaken from your mind, or disturbed [by spurious information]”. vs. 2.

The Thessalonian saints were disturbed by a report that they were, at that moment in time, already living in *the day of the LORD*.

The intended purpose of the text was to provide a clear delineation of the nature and sequence of future events to the end that the Thessalonian saints would gain:

- clarity of understanding
- stability of composure, and
- comfort of soul.

As such, *II Thess. 2:1-12* provides revelatory specifics pertaining to the chronological flow of the following events:

- ◆ The return (coming) of Christ
- ◆ The gathering of the saints unto Christ
- ◆ The onset of the day of the Lord, and
- ◆ The appearance of the “man of lawlessness” (alt., the antichrist).

Questions:

- Which “coming” of our Lord is in view?
- When, in the sequence of future events, are Church Age saints to be gathered to be with Christ?
- What is the relative order between the gathering of saints unto Christ and the beginning of *the day of the LORD*?
- What prerequisite conditions must precede the appearance of the antichrist, the “son of destruction”?

Note: The term in *II Thess. 2* with primary chronological force related to the subject, and also carrying interpretive difficulty, is the word “apostasy”.

Textual Comment #1:

The opening words of vs. 1 are, “Now ... with regard to ...”. An alternate reading of vs. 1, preferred by some scholars, is: “Now we request you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him”.

Considering the use of the word “by” in vs. 1, together with vs. 5, it seems clear that the subject of principal concern in this paragraph is one on which the recipients of the epistle had been previously informed. To this point, the reader should expect time-specific information about the two issues the Apostle has purposed to address:

- ◆ “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”;
- ◆ “our gathering together to Him”.

The Apostle’s clarification of the time-specific unfolding of these two issues appears in vs. 3.

“Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy (Gr., “apostasia”) comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed,”

Clarifying Point: An “apostasia” must occur before the “it” in vs. 3. Based on the immediate context, “the apostasia” must precede, in temporal order, the arrival of both *the day of the LORD* and the revealing of the man of lawlessness (alt., antichrist).

Etymology of the Pivotal Linguistic Term:

“apostasy” → { “apo” = away
“stasis” = standing } → “a standing away”

Implication:

The literal sense of the word “apostasia” is that of a “departing”, or of a “falling away”, or of a “forsaking”. The word speaks of a pivotal action of “departing from” a common, familiar, or standard position – whether the position in view is physical, doctrinal, philosophical, etc. The specific “sense of action” implied in the use of this word in any text must always be discerned from its context.

Context Considerations:

IF the translation and associated sense in vs. 3 is “apostasia” = “a falling away from the faith” (alt., “a rebellion” against Biblical authority and truth), THEN where does one find any textual connection to the purpose expressed vs. 1: “our gathering together to Him”?

In sharp contrast, IF the choice of action is that of “apostasia” = “a standing away” (alt., “a departing”), THEN there is an immediate and direct relation to the principal point that stimulated the Apostle’s writing: namely, “our gathering together to Him”.

Conclusion #1: Accepting the sense of the term “apostasy” in vs. 3 as “a departing” best fits the context raised in vs. 1.

Variant Choices of “apostasia” in Translations:

Since the sense implied in use of the word “apostasia” forms the key interpretive element in *II Thess. 2:1-12*, it is informative to observe the rendering of this term in various translations of the NT Scriptures.

Understanding of the word “apostasia” has pivotal significance to arriving at a clear and definite insight into the sequential ordering of the eschatological events noted in the text: that of “*our gathering together to Christ*” and “*the day of the LORD*”.

For this reason various alternate translations are included here for comparative analysis, and also to provide undergirding support for the preferred choice for understanding the intended sense of the term.

Textual Comment #2:

The text of *II Thess. 2:3* speaks specifically of one particular “apostasia” – the original wording in vs. 3 has a definite article in association with the word.

The literal rendering is: “the apostasia”, so that “the apostasy” = “the departing”.

The Apostle makes reference to a particular and singular “apostasia”, not to multiple “apostasias”.

Now history clearly shows that there have been multiple episodes of profound doctrinal apostasy down through the centuries of the church era.

Hence, tying the word “apostasia” in this text to an episode of doctrinal departure seems too imprecise, even improper, since any time-specific reference (which goes to the central point of the paragraph) is left quite nebulous, and indeterminate at best.

The text of vs. 3 uses the word “except” or “unless”, which is a word of absolute exclusion.

The negation in view by use of this word “unless” hinges on the time-specific word “first”.

That is, “*unless the apostasia comes first*” imposes a strict and precise temporal requirement with respect to the onset of “*the day of the LORD*”. Can it be that a temporally indeterminate condition (an “apostasia” – an episode of doctrinal vandalism) forms the time-specific prerequisite condition that serves as the singular forerunner condition for the onset of “*the day of the LORD*”?

By contrast, the occurrence of such a unique event as the departing of the Church (alt., “*our gathering together to Him*”)

would give definitive clarity along with a settled conviction that would dispel any existing confusion within the Thessalonian church, as well as providing a most welcome word of comfort when considered alongside the previous teaching in *I Thess. 4:13-18*.

Alternate Translations of *II Thess. 2:3*

[Geneva]

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day will not come*, except there come a departing first, and that that man of sin be disclosed, even the son of perdition.”

[KJV]

“Let no man deceive you by any means for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.”

[NKJV]

“Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition.”

[NASB]

“Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.”

[NIV]

“Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for *that day will not come* until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.”

[ESV]

“Let no one deceive you in any way. For *that day will not come*, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.”

[Coverdale (similar to Tyndale’s translation)]

“Let no man deceive you by any means, for the Lord cometh not, except the departing come first, and that that man of sin be opened, even the son of perdition.”

Comment:
The NASB uses a direct transliteration of the Greek “apostasia”.

The Geneva and Coverdale translations alone give translatable priority to the actual etymology of the root essence of “apostasia” → “to stand away”, or “to depart”.

All other translations employ terms that are consistent with recent lexicons, but at variance with the etymology of the word in the original manuscripts.

Comment on Alternate Translations Listed Above:

From an historical perspective, one can observe that the translation of *II Thess. 2:3* used in the KJV may have had a determinative influence on subsequent English translations. There is a sharp difference between the KJV interpretive choice for “apostasia” relative to that chosen for the Geneva and Coverdale translations of the same term. Now, it is not so difficult to understand how the KJV influenced subsequent translations (NKJV, NASB, NIV and ESV). However, noting that the Geneva and Coverdale translations preceded the appearance of the KJV, one naturally wonders why these earlier versions were not influential to the KJV translators.

Textual Comment #3:

"Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?" II Thess. 2:5

The above text clearly implies that the Apostle Paul had already given the saints at Thessalonica some specific instruction to the point of *"our gathering together to Him"*, and the fact of its occurrence prior to the onset of *the day of the LORD*.

Examination of the first epistle reveals that these topics were indeed addressed; namely, in the following two back-to-back texts: *I Thess. 4:13-18* and *I Thess. 5:1-11*.

In contradistinction, nowhere throughout the first epistle do we find any instruction regarding a wholesale falling away from the faith, or of a rebellion against the truth of the gospel that is coupled with, or creates a climate ripe for, the appearance of a 'satanically-infused' tyrant.

In fact, IF we also accept *I Thess. 5:9* as having specific reference to a "salvation" from "tribulation wrath" (i.e., referring to a wrath associated with *the day of the LORD* and the operation of *the man lawlessness*), THEN there is indeed an immediate and tight connection of *II Thess. 2:1-5* with the topics/instructions already provided in the first epistle.

Conclusion #2: Use of the translation

"apostasia" = "a departure"
{i.e., a being 'taken away' for the purpose of being gathered unto Christ, per the stated theme of the paragraph (vs. 1)} renders both the texts and the context of *II Thess. 2:1-11* and *I Thess. 5:1-11* to be relationally connected, mutually consistent, and revelatorily amplifying.

On the other hand, IF *"apostasia"* = "a global faith departure", THEN we are left only with speculations about the specifics of Paul's reference to an earlier communication detailing the timing of the two connected events – the departure of the saints to be *with* Christ (alt., the beginning of *the day of Christ*) and the beginning of *the day of the LORD*.

Further Note on Alternate Translations

Several translations of the Greek NT Scriptures were prepared in the 16th century (1500s). Numbered among these are translations by Theodore Beza (French disciple of John Calvin), by both Thomas Cranmer and William Tyndale (leading figures of the English Reformation – both martyred), and one by Myles Coverdale who carried forward Tyndale's translation after his martyrdom.

Each of these chose to represent the phrase *"the apostasia"* as *"the departure"* or *"the departing"*. Furthermore, a more recent translation of the NT by the Greek scholar, Kenneth S. Wuest, long-time professor and president of Moody Bible Institute (circa 1940-1960), uses the same sense for *"apostasia"*, and not a *"falling away"*.

[Wuest's Translation (his 'word-for-word' translation)]

"Do not begin to allow anyone to lead you astray in any way, because that day shall not come except the aforementioned departure [of the Church to heaven] comes first and the man of lawlessness is disclosed [in his true identity], the son of perdition,"

Comment re "falling away from the faith"

The interpretation of *II Thess. 2:3* advanced here in no way diminishes the common understanding that a falling away from the faith will be a defining characteristic of the latter days of the Church Age. Such understanding derives from teaching that is definitively set forth in several other Biblical texts. For example:

"However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith (lit., 'the faith') on the earth?" Luke 18:8

"But the Spirit explicitly says that in the later times some will fall away ["depart" (KJV)] from the faith ..." I Tim. 4:1

Note: This latter text uses a different Greek word to describe the 'falling away'; namely,

"aphistemi" → to remove; to desert; to cause to revolt; or to withdraw or absent oneself.

It is also important to note the following distinction between the texts of *I Tim. 4:1* and that *II Thess. 2:3*.

- The object of the verb *"aphistemi"* in the text of *I Tim. 4:1* is clearly *"the faith"*.
- By contrast, in *II Thess. 2:3* a different word is used, *"apostasia"*, and this word appears in association with a quite different object: *"our gathering together to Him"*.

There is no grammatical warrant for inserting *"the faith"* as the object in *II Thess. 2:3* when the text seems quite clearly to prescribe a distinctly different object.

This author argues, on the bases outlined above, that it is presumptive to impose the interpretive sense of *"falling away from the faith"* (alt., "rebellion") as the originally intended object of *apostasia* in *II Thess. 2:3*.

The Use of “apostasia” in a Correlative Text:

There is only one other use of the word “apostasia” in the NT, and it appears in *Acts 21:21*.

“you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake [“apostasia”] Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs” *Acts 21:21*

The translation of “apostasia” as “forsake” here is quite consistent with the idea of “departure” – even a “standing away from”. However, it would seem quite incompatible to speak of the call of the Gospel to adherents of Judaism as a progressive declining away from Judaism to Christianity – a “falling away”.

There is a decided sense of a ‘group departure’ being communicated in *Acts 21:21* by use of the term

apostasia – even the sense of a decisive ‘group departure’ from an established doctrinal position and its associated pastoral/priestly practice. It does not seem appropriate that the new “teaching” of Paul and his fellow ministers of “the Way” referred to in *Acts 21:21* should be described as causing a ‘falling or drifting away’ of Jewish converts.

Similarly, the use of **apostasia** in *II Thess. 2:3* should be seen as speaking of a “departure / departing”, or “a standing away”, of a particular group of saints, not of a “falling away” or a “drifting away” from a position of doctrinal fidelity.

Concluding Comment re “apostasia”:

IF we adopt the perspective advanced here that the proper linguistic choice of meaning for “apostasia” in *II Thess. 2:3* is

“apostasia” = “a standing away/departure”, and IF we note that the object of the departing action is Church Age saints, THEN we discover that a ‘prima facie’ reading of *II Thess. 2:1-5* provides a definitive textual undergirding of the doctrinal tenet relating to a pre-tribulation departure (rapture) of the church.

The etymology of the word “apostasia”, which forms the defining and constraining basis for this conclusion, follows with rigor and fidelity the grammatical-linguistic hermeneutic essential to faithful Biblical scholarship.

Note: The term “rapture” does not appear in any NT text. The term derives from the words “be caught up” in *I Thess. 4:17*, which is translated as “*rapere*” in the Latin.

From a linguistic perspective, a “departing” or “departure” is indeed an appropriate term describing the action implied in the common phrase, “the rapture of the Church”.

From the perspective of saints on earth, the sense of rapture denotes a departure – a departing from the earth.

From the perspective of heaven, the translation of saints from earth to glory is “a being caught up” – that is, an action consistent with the sense of a “rapture”.

An Interim Perspective on *II Thess. 2:1-12*

The whole of the revelatory paragraph *II Thess. 2:1-12* contains three principal identification challenges, each of which requires careful delineation of translated phrases to arrive at a definitive understanding of eschatological events surrounding the onset of the day of the LORD. These challenge terms are:

1. The intended sense of the term “apostasia” appearing in original manuscripts, a term which has been assigned various meanings in different translations of vs. 3.
 - The identification of this term has received extensive analysis in the foregoing pages.
2. The identity of the personage introduced by the phrase, “the man of lawlessness, the son of perdition” in vs. 3, and who is referred to multiple times in successive verses in the paragraph.
 - The identification of this personage is given modest comment at the end of the next section.
3. The identity of that entity referred to as the “restrainer/withholder” in vs. 6-7.
 - The identification of this entity is the primary objective in the very next section.

3. Expository Comments Regarding II Thess. 2:6-8: The Restrainer

The text of *II Thess. 2:1-12* has several terms that have eschatological significance related to the subject of the paragraph, the “coming of Christ and our gathering together to Him”. The term for consideration in this section appears in vs. 6-7 and requires examination and clarification of a nature similar to that given in the previous section regarding the term “*apostasía*” from vs. 3. The term of concern here is the identity of the entity, force, or person that “restrains” (alt., “withholds”, per the Geneva and KJ versions) which appears in the following texts.

vs. 6 “And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed.”

vs. 7 “For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way.” (NASB)

vs. 6 “And you know what withholdeth (what hindereth and stayeth), that he might be revealed in his time.”

vs. 7 “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he which now withholdeth, *shall let* till he be taken out of the way.” (Geneva)

Some pertinent comments pertaining to revelatory points in the two verses quoted above are offered.

- a) The personage referred to by pronouns “him” (implied in the Geneva text) and “he” is the same individual identified in vs. 3 as “the man of lawlessness, the son of perdition” (NASB). This descriptive phrase speaks of that personage most often referred to as Antichrist.
- b) The opening words “And you know” in vs. 6 suggest that the Apostle had previously informed the Thessalonican saints about certain specifics pertaining to the arrival of the Antichrist. As such, the recipients of this epistle were not only (somewhat) informed concerning the *day of Christ*, the “coming of Christ, and our gathering together to Him” (vs. 1), but also of specifics about the initial unfolding of the *day of the LORD*; that is, aspects relating particularly to the arrival and unfolding of the Tribulation Period. Of course, as noted already in the introductory section of this Part II, they certainly had in hand the text of *I Thess. 4:13-18* pertaining to the *day of Christ* and *I Thess. 5:1-11* with specific reference to the *day of the LORD*.
- c) The word “revealed” occurs three times in *II Thess. 2:1-12*, and each use has reference to the personage usually referred to as Antichrist (vs. 3, 6, 8). The word “revealed” communicates the strong sense of an underlying sovereign control of the times and epochs along with a decidedly purposeful design in the unveiling of Antichrist in his appointed time.
- d) Expanding our view to the breadth of the whole paragraph we can properly conclude that the beginning of the Tribulation Period will be essentially coincident with the public unveiling of Antichrist. Further, the personage of Antichrist will be a submissive operative of Satan, and he will be the responsible human initiator of the reign of distress, terror and horror that will engulf the world during this future period in God’s plan for the age.
- e) The “restrainer” is identified by the pronoun “what” in vs. 6 and by the pronoun “he” in vs. 7. The use of “what” in vs. 6 seems to attribute a neuter or a ‘quality identity’ to this “restrainer/withholder”, whereas use of the masculine pronoun “he” in vs. 7 is strongly suggestive of a ‘person identity’. That is, the words used in the text present the “restrainer” as an entity describable as both a “something” and a “someone”, as both a principle of restraint of evil plus an operative ‘person-force’ capable of wielding a restraining influence.
- f) The phrase in vs. 7, “he who now restrains” in the NASB or “he which now withholdeth” in the Geneva, is translated as “he who now letteth” in the KJV. Observe in this regard that the Geneva uses the word “let” in its italicized (inserted) phrase. Now, to the point of these words, “let” and “letteth” derive from an older English word which means “to make late” or “to delay”.

- g) The seeming clear sense of vs. 1-7 is that the arrival of Antichrist and the unveiling of his being to the world in his time cannot occur “unless the **apostasias** [departure/rapture] comes first” (vs. 3), and not “until he (the restrainer/withholder) is taken out of the way” (vs. 7). As such, it seems that the “**apostasias**” and the removal of the “restrainer/withholder” are likely related terms, even terms that might be considered as referring to but “one and the self-same” event.

3a. Exploring the Identity of the Restrainer/Withholder

The full text of *II Thess. 2:1-12* introduces two distinct ‘person entities’. There is no disagreement that the first, the “man of lawlessness”, refers to the Antichrist. However, the identity of the “restrainer” is more problematic, and has received a number of proposed identities.

Two questions of pivotal interpretive relevance to the principal topic stated in vs. 1, namely the timing of the departure/rapture of the Church, are:

- What is the identity of the “something-someone”, or “person-principle”, referred to as the “restrainer/withholder”?
- What is implied in the phrase “until [the restrainer/withholder] is taken out of the way”?

Preliminary Answers:

- ◆ The restrainer/withholder in view is an entity that has governing force in cultural, political, and religious spheres, even a capacity for exerting suppressive, withholding power over the uprising of both a personage of unsurpassed evil machination and an associated climate of evil of unprecedented scale in the world.
- ◆ The restrainer/withholder is a “something-someone” of such nature that “it/he” can be “taken out of the way”, and one wherein “its/his” function is subject to removal via an action that is only possible through a decisive, divine intervention in world affairs.

Relevant Considerations:

- ◆ All restraint of evil is accomplished through means of divine design; all preventative measures opposing the proliferation of evil in this world have their root in the out-working of God’s sovereign orchestration of means that He has ordained.
- ◆ With regard to means and agencies actively restraining evil in the world today, we note that:
 - Some restraint occurs through a direct ‘presence intervention’ of the Holy Spirit.
 - There is a restraint of the Spirit that is direct and irresistible;
 - There is a restraint of the Spirit that is indirect and resistible.
 - Some restraint is ministered by the Spirit through divinely instituted agencies and agents.
 - There is a restraint of the Spirit mediated through governments and its agencies;
 - There is a restraint of the Spirit mediated through the corporate body of the Church;
 - There is a restraint of the Spirit mediated through Spirit-indwelt, individual members of the Church.
 - Some restraint is accomplished by angelic commission and consequent angelic ministration.
 - Some restraint is accomplished through the existence of divinely articulated oracles (Law, commands, statutes, etc.).
 - Some restraint is realized through divinely created faculties (e.g., conscience, mind, reason).
 - Some restraint flows directly from the throne of God through the intercessory prayer of our installed, sympathetic, and effectual High Priest.
- ◆ Since the Triune Godhead is omnipresent, and has specific redemptive purposes for the Tribulation Period, it seems clear that God is NOT revealing that there will be a total withdrawal of His Spirit’s operative presence or a complete cessation of angelic ministration.

- ◆ Since conscience, law, and the Word of God will quite surely persist without modification in content or function during the Tribulation Period, it seems certain that these restraining agents are not the ‘actors in view’ in reference to the phrase “until he is taken out of the way”.
- ◆ Since the restraint of evil in any sense, but especially in an ultimate and global sense, is a divine work, God may sovereignly choose to diminish the restraint of evil by purposing to withdraw an ordained ‘instrument-entity’ through which He is presently asserting an effectual influence for righteousness and truth, and one which He had previously ordained for the holding back of that proliferation of evil which springs from the designs of Satan and the depravity of fallen man.

Selected Biblical Statements Pertaining to God’s Restraining Work:

<p>“Then the LORD said, ‘My Spirit shall not strive (contend) with man forever,’ ” <i>Gen. 6:3a</i></p>	<p>“I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.” “Sanctify them in the truth, Thy word is truth.” <i>John. 17:15, 17</i></p>
<p>“Then Satan answered the LORD and said, ‘ Does Job fear God for nothing? Hast Thou not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side?’ ” <i>Job 1:9-10a</i></p>	<p>“Who can discern <i>his</i> errors? Acquit me of hidden <i>faults</i>. Also keep back Thy servant from presumptuous sins; let them not rule over me; then I shall be blameless, and I shall be acquitted of great transgression.” <i>Ps. 19:12-13</i></p>
<p>“Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.” “... for it is a minister of God to you for good.” “... it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil. Wherefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience sake.” <i>Rom. 13:1-5</i></p>	<p>“And [Paul and Silas] passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia;” <i>Acts. 16:6</i></p>

3b. The Identity of the “Restrainer/Withholder”: A Reasoned Answer

Among God’s ordained agencies for the restraint of evil, the most likely candidate having a global impact for righteousness, and yet subject to being “taken out of the way”, is the Church. The Church was formed in time as a new entity at that first Pentecost following the ascension of our resurrected Lord to glory, at which time the promised immersion of believers in Christ into the sphere of the Spirit became a real and vital experience of all regenerated sinners. Thereafter, and continuing during the on-going extent of the Church Age, all members of the body of Christ are temple dwellings of the Spirit; that is, each saint is an instrument of the Spirit for the seasoning of the culture, for advancing the kingdom of God, and for the restraint of evil in the world.

- ◆ The Church is identified as the “pillar and support of the truth” (*1 Tim. 3:15*) – that God-ordained agency that stands in opposition to falsehood, lawlessness, Satanic enslavement, etc.
- ◆ The Church has been commissioned to make disciples, individual dwellings of the Spirit who are Spirit-empowered to put on the full armor of God, to battle for righteousness and truth, and to stand firmly and vigilantly against the schemes of the evil one – even schemes whose determined end is that any and all restraints against indulgence in and proliferation of evil are demolished, whether in law, cultural standards, personal convictions, civil structures, etc..
- ◆ The Church is charged with proclaiming God’s good news of redeeming grace and regenerating power, that Gospel which is the power of God for enlightening depraved minds and for invading and dispelling the darkness of a culture intent on suppressing the truth in unrighteousness – all of which contributes to the lifting of restraint against evil (cf., *Rom. 1:18-32*).

Prior to Pentecost the Holy Spirit was omnipresently active in the world, even as evident for example in His energizing work in creation, His contending against lawlessness and evil before the Flood, and in the case of God's protective shield for Job. However, the Spirit did not exert His 'full-person presence' with saints in an indwelling sense, particularly in an 'indwelling communicative sense' during the OT era. Rather, the Spirit was present as an invisible companion – manifesting Himself in a 'drawing near' sense.

- He was contending, convicting, guiding, enlightening, and striving with individuals.
- He was calling and leading prophets and priests to instruct people.
- He was guiding prophets and priests to prepare oracles (written accounts) of revelation.
- He was asserting restraint or assistance through angelic intervention.
- He was providentially working in raising up and casting down governmental leaders, nations, national alliances, etc.

Whatever the full scope of the Spirit's *modus operandi* in the OT era entailed in all of His direct and indirect operative designs, Pentecost nevertheless marked a distinctively new operative modality of the Spirit—that of an operative presence dwelling within the soul of every saint—continually exerting thereby a very manifest witness in the soul plus an inclining force in the internal struggle between desires of the flesh and the desires of the Spirit.

As such, if and when the Church might be removed, the world would be left without any Spirit-indwelt mortals to season the culture with righteous influence, and the mystery of lawlessness would experience a release to indulge and promote a far freer course with respect to evil. Why? Because the Spirit's operative design for restraining evil in the present age would be absent.

- ♦ There would be a releasing both of an increased dominance of unregenerate men in all spheres of life-function and a diminution of the restraint of evil through the Spirit's ordained, primary agency for promoting righteousness in the culture.
- ♦ There would be present a ubiquitous and incessant tendency for lawlessness.
- ♦ There would be an exercised hatred of God's law, and a disrespect of God's ordained structures for civil order in society – the restraint of violence, theft, murder, etc. being absent.

3c. Summary Comment

IF the identity of the "restrainer/withholder" of vs. 6-7, which is destined to be "taken out of the way", is indeed the Church, THEN the "apostasia" in vs. 3 referring to a "departing" must also have reference to the Church. Alternatively, IF the "apostasia" in vs. 3 speaks of the departure of the Church before the onset of the day of the LORD, THEN the "taking out of the way" of the "restrainer/withholder" must also have reference to the Church. That is, these two 'departing actions' must have reference to and implication for the self-same object or entity.

Question. Why insist on this conclusion? Why must these two 'departure' actions be joined as one?

Answer. Because the very 'purpose-theme' of the entire paragraph must be unitary – it must have as its central focus the single, over-arching purpose in the Apostle's stated end in the writing of the paragraph; namely, to clarify a troubling confusion and despair that had arisen in the Thessalonian Church. Now, the seat of this confusion pertained particularly to the issue of the "coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" and the Thessalonian saints' being "gathered together to Christ". Furthermore, both the natural and reasoned sense of the reader is that the recipients of the epistle would have had a decided expectation of receiving specific detail fulfilling the Apostle's explicitly stated purpose for writing this paragraph. Hence, and with the pastoral purpose of the Apostle motivating the paragraph in view, it seems essential that the text should contain specific, clarifying detail that addresses the central issue in the church squarely, and to do so with direct and readily discernible answers.

The Apostle's answer, with obvious intention being to calm the composure and to dispel the confusion plaguing these Thessalonian saints, is as follows:

- The “apostasia” must occur prior to the coming of the *day of the LORD* and the revelation of the “man of lawlessness, the son of perdition”.
- The “restrainer/withholder” must be “taken out of the way” as a priority ‘departure action’ before the “man of lawlessness” will be revealed.

Both ‘departure actions’ are noted as having coincident priority to the manifestation of Antichrist, this enigmatic personage who is mentioned as having pivotal relevance to events associated with the *day of the LORD*. In fact, it is this author’s opinion that these two ‘departure phrases’ are essentially equivalent statements of one and the self-same event. Namely, both refer to the removal of the Church in that blessed ‘resurrective-translative’ event most frequently called the “rapture of the Church”.

Textual Comment: Arguing for the Unity of “the Apostasia” and “the Removal of the Restrainer”

[NASB II Thess. 2:6-8]

“And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. And then that lawless one will be revealed ...”

Question: IF “apostasia” is “a falling away” from the faith, THEN is not the identity of the “who” or the “what” in relation to the restrainer left without any hint at a definitive resolution?

And, IF “apostasia” is “a falling away” from the faith, THEN where is a connection in this passage to the principal issue being addressed: the timing of “*our gathering together to Him*”?

Recall: The timing of “*the coming of Christ*” and “*our gathering together to Him*” is the explicitly stated topic for which the reader expects to find clarification by the instruction in this text.

Response: IF “the apostasia” is to be taken to mean “the departure”, with specific reference to the departure of the church, and IF the restrainer being “*taken out of the way*” refers to the church being removed from the world scene, THEN both by contrast and by comparison the theme of “*our gathering together to Him*” is connected directly to two distinct references in the paragraph, and the Apostle Paul (the Holy Spirit) is found to be speaking specifically, clearly and decisively to the stated subject matter being addressed in the paragraph.

That is, vs. 6-8 repeat and amplify the condition of exclusion set down by the word “*unless*” in vs. 3 ... and the whole paragraph is seen to speak with clarifying specifics to the issue being addressed:

“with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him.” (vs. 1)

IF, on the other hand, the word “apostasia” refers to an unprecedented global departing from “*the faith once for all delivered to the saints*” (Jude 3),

THEN the identity of the “restrainer/hinderer” is clouded and left open to rampant speculation.

It seems most reasonable and most probable that the Apostle would neither refer to God nor to the Holy Spirit, as a “what”: [*“you know what restrains him”*].

Furthermore, the church would be largely non-existent with a global departing from the faith – at least as to any exertion of an effective restraining force against evil as salt and light and as the pillar and support of the truth.

IF “apostasia” does indeed have reference to a global departing from, or a rebellion against, the truth of the gospel, THEN would not this ‘falling away’ (alt. ‘rebellion’) have already initiated a climate of lawlessness conducive for the “*man of sin*” to be revealed?

Why then would it be necessary that the church

(a common identity of the “restrainer” or “hinderer”)

be “*taken out of the way*” in order that the unveiling of the identity and operation of the “*man of lawlessness*” might occur?

Recall again the exclusionary force of the word “*unless*” and the temporal signifier “*comes first*” in vs. 3.

4. Summary Perspectives re II Thess. 2:1-5 and II Thess. 2:6-8

II Thess. 2:1-12

vs. 1 "Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him,

vs. 2 that you may not be quickly shaken from your mind [your mental composure] or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

vs. 3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

vs. 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as God.

vs. 5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?"

vs. 6 "And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed.

vs. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.

vs. 8 And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring an end by the appearance of His coming;

vs. 9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,

vs. 10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

vs. 11 And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false,

vs. 12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness."

Textual Analysis: Clarified Time Specifics

The text of *II Thess. 2:1-12* printed to the left contains two phrases with time-specific information which are of pivotal concern toward understanding the essence of the Apostle Paul's response to the confusion plaguing the Thessalonian saints with respect to the coming of Christ for His saints.

"unless the apostasia comes first";

"until he is taken out of the way".

Important comparative connections to note:

- The words "unless" and "until" set down conditions of strict necessity;
- The word "first" sets an absolute condition of temporal priority;
- The phrase "taken out of the way" has a seemingly intended correspondence with the term "apostasia" = "departing/departure".

For the sake of further clarity of the above time-specific phrases, consider the following 'reduced to essential' version of the text of vs. 3-8.

vs. 3 "for [the day of the LORD] will not come unless the apostasia comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, ...

vs. 6 "so that in his time he may be revealed." ...

vs. 7 "only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way."

vs. 8 "And then that lawless one will be revealed ..."

Reading the 'reduced text' as printed above seems to lend (decisive!?) support for the thesis presented in these notes – namely, seeing

"the departure" sense of "the **apostasia**" and the "[*taking*] out of the way" in reference to the restrainer/withholder as parallel terms – terms intended to be referring jointly to one and the self-same event → even the event commonly referred to as "the rapture of the Church".

4a. Conclusion

The two foregoing sections, Section 2 and Section 3 of this Part II, can be seen to present two time-specific statements which this author believes are unitary in their specification of the temporal priority of the coming of Christ for His saints → the rapture of the Church.

- ◆ "the apostasia" (vs. 3) = "the departing"; alt., the Church being taken out of the way;
- ◆ "he is taken out of the way" (vs. 7) = "he departs"; alt., the Church departs from the earth.

The rapture of the Church is the initial and priority event in the eschatological time-line, opening the way for the onset of the *day of the LORD* and the beginning of the Tribulation Period.

Alternatively, *II Thess. 2:1-8* provides quite direct teaching that the *day of Christ* must precede the beginning of the *day of the LORD* and its accompanying unveiling of the Antichrist to the world.

5. An Argument Based on Rev. 3:10: Exclusion from Tribulation Wrath

The Scriptures reveal clearly and blessedly the truth that all regenerated saints of the Church Age will be exempt from the future judgmental wrath of God because of sin. Consider the texts printed below.

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.” *Rom. 5:8-9*

“For they themselves report ... how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from the heavens, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.”
I Thess. 1:9-10

“For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we are awake or sleep, we may live together with Him.” *I Thess. 5:9-10*

“Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole inhabited earth, to test those who dwell on the earth.” *Rev. 3:10*

With these true and trustworthy statements concerning God’s wrath in view, several questions aimed at a clarified understanding of their implied promise for the people of God are posed.

- ◆ What particular divine wrath is in view in each of these promises, and what class of individuals are the intended recipients of the expression of each referenced wrath?
- ◆ Do these texts refer only to the promise of exclusion of righteous persons from the ultimate and expansive wrath-judgment that will be inflicted on all unrighteous persons gathered in their resurrected bodies before the Great White Throne of God?
- ◆ Does the wrath noted in these texts refer only to an expression of judgment that will be experienced by individuals while living on earth in mortal bodies and, if so, will it pertain to mankind in general or only to a restricted class of people?
- ◆ Further to the point of the latter question, do these promises speak of the exclusion of a class of individuals from that wrath particular to *the day of the LORD*? That is, does the wrath reference in these texts correspond with that “time of distress such has never occurred since there was a nation until that time” (*Dan. 12:1*). That is, and central to the objective of this section, does it specifically include that judgmental and refining wrath of the Tribulation Period?

The distinction or specification as to what wrath is implied in each of the quoted promises is important to clarify, if possible. However, discovery of true answers to the posed questions requires a careful and critical examination of the text and context of each promise, and to do so with due consideration of the distinctions discussed in Part 1. If these distinctions are not properly respected, both confusing and contradictory conclusions can arise.

The ‘wrath exclusion’ promises in *Rom. 5:8-9*, *I Thess. 1:9-10*, and *I Thess. 5:9-10* quoted above are nonspecific with respect to the particular wrath judgment in view in each text, and to which divisions of mankind are the intended recipients of each wrath. No particular word or phrase in either of these texts seems to require, by context and by word etymology, an absolutely conclusive understanding that the wrath in view includes, or pertains to, Tribulation wrath. Definitive terms constraining a conclusion as to which particular wrath is in view are lacking. As such, the “exclusion promise” in each text is largely left as an interpretive matter. (Note: An appendix to this section addresses the “wrath word” used in these texts.)

By contrast, three specific and clarifying “wrath context” phrases are found in the text of *Rev. 3:10*.

- ◆ “I will also keep you from the hour of testing”;
- ◆ “that hour which is about to come upon the whole inhabited earth”;
- ◆ “to test those who dwell on the earth”.

Furthermore, it is clear that these statements contain particular words that seem to have critical and substantive eschatological reference. In that regard, *Rev. 3:10* forms a potential watershed text for differentiating the “pre- vs. post-” preferences for the timing of the rapture of the Church. To press the point that this text seems to speak directly to the tribulation question, consider the following notes intended to accent specific “identity words” in the text.

- The context of *Rev. 3:10* is a letter dictated by the risen, glorified Christ to a particular local community of saints, to the church family at Philadelphia in the first century of the Church Age. Now, in this context, the pronoun “you” in the first phrase is clearly a reference to the saints belonging to the local church assembly to whom the paragraph (letter) is addressed. It seems legitimate in this light, and because of the context being a world-wide time of testing, to extend the definition of persons referred to by the pronoun “you” to encompass the whole family of Church Age saints, not just a local family of saints in their particular historical context.
- The term “hour” has clear reference to a very specific and seemingly limited period of time, even one that must have been readily understood by recipients of the letter. The use of “hour” in the sentence is in connection with a time that is “about to come on the whole world”, even one having as its purpose to “test those who dwell on the earth”. Such phrases seem to comport well with the limited span of the 70th week of Daniel (i.e., 7 years), and with its intensely distressful experience for all peoples living on the earth during the “hour” in view.
- The text makes reference to “an hour of testing” which is global in reach. Thus, it seems clear that a wrath is being referenced which is destined to encompass all persons living on the face of the earth during the temporal extent of the particular “hour” in view.

With these textual pointers in mind, a pivotal phrase requiring careful definition in framing answers to the earlier posed questions concerning which particular “hour of testing” is intended can be readily identified. The phrase with discriminating force relative to the recipients of this ‘testing wrath’ is:

“keep ... from” (“I also will keep you from”).

It is crucial to note in this regard that the object of the phrase “keep ... from” is clearly “you” – the “you” clarified in the first bullet point above; namely, Church Age saints.

Comment: Interpretive Approach

The intended understanding of the phrase “keep ... from” has been the object of considerable debate between advocates of both the pretribulational and the posttribulational positions. The perspective taken here on this debate is to approach the text as follows:

- ◆ Seek what the text would have meant to the saints in the church at Philadelphia in their context in the first century of the Church. In other words, engage a *prima facie* reading of the text, reading it as the recipients would have when it was first penned by the Apostle John. That is, hold fast to the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture.
- ◆ Engage a linguistic analysis of key terms, and correlate perceived meanings with related usage in other NT texts. That is, hold fast to the verbal inspiration of the text.
- ◆ Insist on correspondence with, and lack of contradiction against, other texts that speak to the same point of this text. That is, insist on the plenary inspiration of the canon of Scripture before arriving at a final conclusion.

As in our discerning the sense of the term “apostasia” appearing in *II Thess. 2:3* and discussed in the previous section (Section 2, Part II), so also a very significant term is encountered here whose discerned meaning has led to disparate understandings of the text’s eschatological force. It is claimed that the sense or inference concerning the preposition “from” following the verb “keep” can be translated, in the Greek, as either:

- ◆ “keep from” (i.e., kept out of; precluded from being within, or protected from entering);
- ◆ “keep through” (i.e., kept during; kept while being in and among; protected while within).

Clearly the first sense is decidedly supportive of the pre-tribulational position, while the second sense fits better the post-tribulational position. So, being faced with linguistic alternatives pertaining to an interpretive point, we are led to ask the following critical question:

- Does the original language of *Rev. 3:10* speak with determinative force of an exclusion from wrath that is to be realized by saints being 'taken out of and away from' the global sphere of testing? Or, alternatively, will the promise of the text be accomplished by 'a preservation or a protection while living within' the global sphere testing?

The conclusive answer to the question, if discernible through linguistic analysis, will distinguish whether *Rev. 3:10* is definitive in support of the doctrine of pre-tribulationalism or that of post-tribulationalism.

To discern the preferred (correct?!) sense of the term "keep ... from" we must engage a study of these words as communicated in the original manuscripts, and confirm our choice of the communicated sense through a comparative analysis of its usage elsewhere in the NT Scriptures.

- ◆ A definite article precedes "hour of testing" in the text; that is, the text reads "the hour of testing". Reference is to a singular and particular period of heretofore unknown oppression and distress of global reach. Now, the Scriptures define only one such period → the 70th week of Daniel (alt. the Tribulation Period).
- ◆ The verb "keep" cannot be separated from the associated preposition "from". It is the preposition "from" that gives the precise sense of action implied by the verb "keep". Hence, the pivotal term needing careful linguistic examination is the preposition "from" = "ek" (Gr.), or more precisely, the whole of the prepositional phrase "keep from".
- ◆ The phrase "keep from" is "tēreō ek" (Gr.). Now the word "ek" often carries a somewhat parallel sense as "apo", the term noted in earlier discussion regarding the meaning of "apostasia" in *II Thess. 2:3*; namely, "apo" = "away".

To help discern the intended sense in John's use of the term "tēreō ek" in *Rev. 3:10*, we can note that the same term is used only one other place in the NT, in vs. 15 of the Apostle John's account of our Lord's high priestly prayer in *John 17*. In this connection, the wider context of *John 17:15* is quoted below to emphasize a point with respect to contrasting prepositions; namely "ek" and "en" – the former being generally translated "from", "of", "out", or "out of", and the latter being generally translated "in", "within", or "by way of".

John 17:12-15

- vs. 12 "While I was with them in ["en"] the world, I kept them in ["en"] Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.
- vs. 13 But now I come to You, and these things I speak in ["en"] the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in ["en"] themselves.
- vs. 14 I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of ["ek"] the world, just as I am not of ["ek"] the world.
- vs. 15 I do not pray that You should take them out of ["ek"] the world, but that You should keep them from ["ek"] the evil one."

"keep ... from" = "tēreō ek"

A Textual Consistency Comparison

- vs. 15 I do not pray that You should take them out of ["ek"] the world, but that You should keep them from ["ek"] the evil one." *John 17:15*

"keep ... from" = "tēreō ek"

Question: Is the preferred use of "tēreō ek" in vs. 15 "kept outside of", or should it rather be "kept while being in and among"?

Clarifying Answer: Consider the text of *I John 5:19*. "We know that we are from/of ["ek"] God, and the whole world lies in ["en"] the power of the evil one."

Our Lord specifically noted in His high priestly prayer (see vs. 14) that His elect are not of ["ek"] the world, and the text of *I John 5:19* clearly states that the world is "in ["en"] the evil one".

The textual comparison detailed above shows that “the whole world lies in [“*en*”] the evil one” (*I John 5:19*) while our Lord noted in His prayer that His elect are “not of [“*ek*”] the world” (*John 17:14*). Thus, arguing from the consistency of Scripture, the petition appearing in vs. 15 of our Lord’s request of the Father to the end that He “should keep [His elect] from [“*ek*”] the evil one” must mean to “keep His elect outside and apart from” the evil one. That is, the key phrase appearing in *John 17:15* should properly be taken as meaning:

“keep ... from” = “*tēreō ek*” → “to be kept out of”.

Note: See an enlarged schematic of this textual comparison in the appendix to this section.

5a. Conclusion

With this supportive clarification of the sense of “*tēreō ek*” as it appears in *John 17:15*, it seems both reasonable and proper that use of the very same phrase “*tēreō ek*” in *Rev. 3:10* should be assigned the very same meaning. In regard to this argument, employing a comparison of two separate texts where the same prepositional phrase appears, it is useful to note that both texts are extracted from extended quotes spoken by our Lord.

Supportive Quote Regarding Usage in Greek Grammar

“Greek grammars point out the well-recognized fact that by NT times the classical distinctions between “*apo*” and “*ek*” were disappearing and that the two words frequently overlapped in meaning. The two words are used somewhat interchangeably. A study of textual variants shows some fluctuation between “*ek*” and “*apo*”, indicating that the scribes regarded them as interchangeable. ... In the book of Revelation John uses “*ek*” 135 times and “*apo*” only 34 times.

It is clear that John prefers “*ek*” whenever it may be used, and does not prefer “*apo*”.

This preference is, in fact, a characteristic of John’s writings. Since “*apo*” and “*ek*” are similar in meaning by NT times, since both can mean “separation from”, since both imply “not in”, it is clear that John would prefer “*ek*”, as in *Rev. 3:10*, rather than “*apo*” if he regarded the rapture as pretribulational.” (T.R. Edgar)

The same author goes on to state:

“The verb [keep] does not occur with the preposition “*apo*” in the NT; however, it does occur with “*ek*” in at least one passage other than *Rev. 3:10*. This occurrence is also in John’s writings (*John 17:15*). There is no textual dispute over the preposition in *John 17:15*.

This means that there is evidence for John’s use of the expression “*tēreō ek*” but none for “*tēreō apo*”.”

In further support of our conclusion that the ‘to be preferred’ understanding of the use of the phrase “*tēreō ek*”, as it appears in the original manuscript of *Rev. 3:10*, is:

“keep ... from” = kept out of; precluded from being within, or protected from entering; consider the following comparison of the Geneva and NASB translations of the same text.

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

“Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, therefore I will deliver thee from the hour of temptation, which will come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” *Rev. 3:10* (Geneva)

The reader will observe that the Geneva specifically translates “*tēreō ek*” as “deliver thee from”, communicating a clear sense of a deliverance “out of and away from”. That is, the Geneva translation here is in full consistency with the understanding of its argued proper usage in *John 17:15*. Further, it is useful to note that the Geneva translation of *Rev. 3:10* has a parallel sense of correspondence with the Geneva translation of *II Thess. 2:3*, providing thereby a consistent and definitive support for the fact that the “departure (alt., rapture) of the Church” must precede the onset of the *day of the LORD* and the revelation of “the man of lawlessness, the son of perdition” (alt., the onset of the Tribulation Period).

- ❖ Argued Conclusion: Stated specifically with reference to the present text of concern, *Rev. 3:10*, the rapture must precede that “hour of testing” which “will come upon all the world”.
That is, the rapture of the Church must precede the onset of the Tribulation Period and the appearance of Antichrist. .

5b. Reinforcing the Conclusion: Discriminating Questions

It is without dispute that the intended meaning of the ‘breathed-out’ text of *Rev. 3:10* cannot sustain both of the following meanings for the phrase “*tēreō ek*”:

- ◆ “keep from” (i.e., kept out of; precluded from being within, or protected from entering);
- ◆ “keep through” (i.e., kept during; kept while being in and among; protected while within).

Using both linguistic analysis and textual comparison we arrive at the conclusion that the definition in the first point is the most probable intended meaning. This conclusion can be reinforced by a few logical constructs, composed here in terms of questions with reference to other revelatory aspects of the nature of the Tribulation Period – that “hour of testing” which is destined to “come upon the whole inhabited earth”.

- Since it is stated by our Lord that no one will survive the coming “hour of testing” unless “those days be cut short” (*Matt. 24:22*), is it reasonable that Church Age saints will be exempted and protected in and through the midst of such devastating oppression of all earth-dwellers throughout this period?
- Since to be “kept from” the particular “hour of trial” which will be global in reach implies a protection from the full scope of “testing trials”, not just a select few, is it reasonable that Church Age saints will, while living as mortals on the earth, escape all the oppression of the seal, trumpet and vial judgments detailed in the book of Revelation?
- Since the text of *Rev. 7:13-17* reveals that multitudes of saints will become martyrs during the Tribulation Period, and if *Rev. 3:10* is a promise of being “protected while within” and not one of being “kept out of” the coming global “hour of testing”, does this not empty the promise of *Rev. 3:10* of any true exclusionary force, or at minimum show that the reach of the promise must, at best, be very limited for many?
- Since the trials associated with the Tribulation Period will be of such an intensely destructive force and involve such an extensive reach that only one-third of the earth’s population will survive (*Rev. 9:15, 18*), is it reasonable that Church Age saints will be “kept from” such devastating horror while functioning as mortals on earth during this period in the midst of such global devastation?
- Since the Antichrist (the beast; the man of lawlessness) will demand worship of all peoples, pursuing for destruction all who disobey his order, is it reasonable that Church Age saints will experience a protective exemption and emerge unscathed from such global, anti-Christian oppression when they are the primary focus of much of Antichrist’s ruthless rage?
- Since the Tribulation Period closes with Messiah-King returning to engage Antichrist and his prophet in judgment, and effecting a wholesale separation of all the righteous from the unrighteous, with the righteous to be granted entrance into the Millennial Kingdom in their mortal bodies, who are the glorified saints who accompany Christ in this coming (in His victorious descent to the Mt. of Olives)?

Stated Alternately: If Church Age saints live through this period and are protected from destruction in their mortal bodies, who are the glorified saints joined with Christ in this return in power and great glory?

Inescapable Fact: Any resurrection and translation of saints, required for saints to appear in glorified bodies, has to precede their accompanying Christ in this coming.

Appendix

Textual Comment: Wrath Distinctions

With respect to the quoted texts printed at the beginning of this section, and their relevance or lack of relevance to the “pre- vs. post-” tribulation issue, it is important to give attention to the words used to describe the wrath-related concept in each text.

- The term translated “wrath” in *Rom. 5:9*, *I Thess. 1:9-10*, and *I Thess. 5:9* is “orge” (Gr.), the meaning of which is: a justifiable abhorrence; a violent passion; an excitement of the mind toward punishment.
- The term translated “testing/temptation” in *Rev. 3:10* is “perasmos” (Gr.), the meaning of which is: to put to proof. The term “test/try” is “peirazo” (Gr.), the meaning of which is: to test in order to approve or disapprove; to discover worthiness or unworthiness.

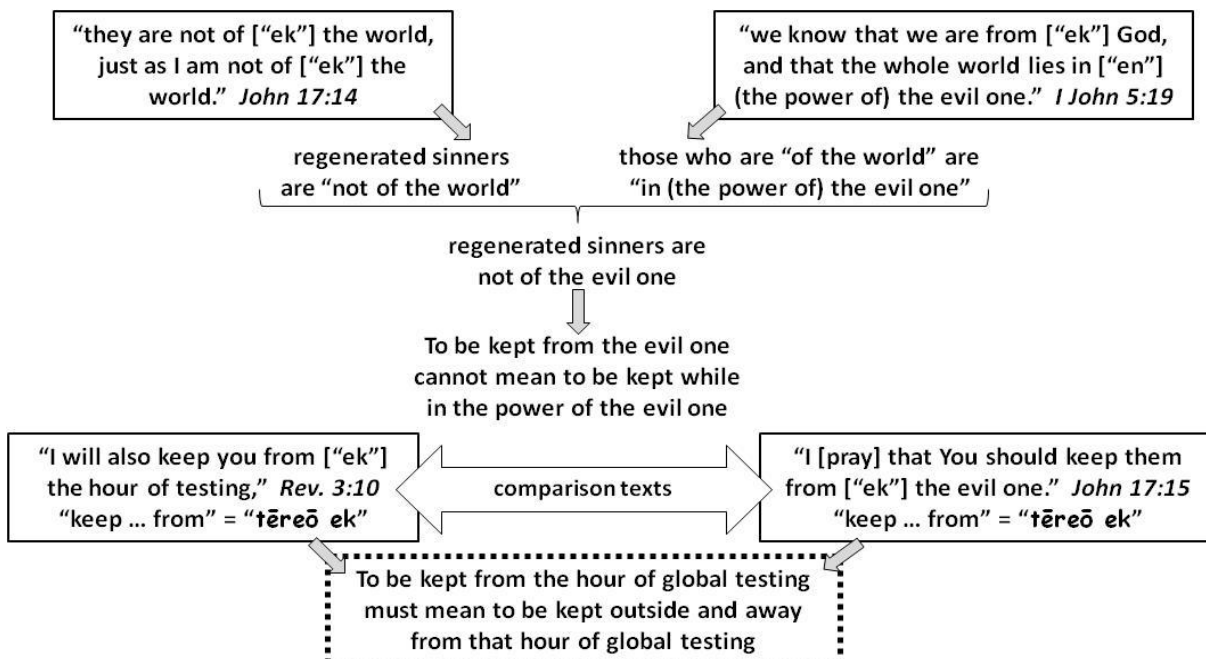
The distinction between the term “orge” used in the first set of 3 texts, and that used in the latter text, is significant. The term “orge” seems to have priority reference to divine wrath, most likely referring to the judgment of condemnation and of sentencing to eternal damnation in the lake of fire. The closely related terms “perasmos” and “peirazo” communicate a sense that is quite distinct from the wrath sentence that will be exacted at the Great White Throne judgment.

Further to the contrastive point, the phrases “the wrath of God” and “the wrath to come” should properly be differentiated from that “hour of testing/temptation” destined to engulf all “who dwell on the earth”.

- The former terms are not differentiated with respect to the recipients destined to experience the expression of retributive wrath.
- The latter term is specifically and only applicable to mortals living on earth during the “hour” of the coming “testing/temptation”.

In addition, the purpose for the “wrath” judgment is as punishment for lack of that required righteousness that avails before the Holy Creator, while the “testing/temptation” in *Rev. 3:10* is to prove a worthiness or unworthiness a—most likely a test/trial for approval/disapproval for entrance into the coming Kingdom Age and living under the rule of Messiah-King.

Schematic of Textual Comparison Between *John 17:15* and *Rev. 3:10*



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Part III. A Definitive Case for Pre-Millennialism

1. Terms and Perspectives

The word “millennium” is a time-specific term denoting a period of 1000 years. The term derives from the Latin:

- “mille” = thousand; “annus” = year (annual) → “millennium” = 1000 years

Its appearance in eschatological writings has its root in the single Biblical text *Rev. 20:1-7* where a period of 1000 years is distinguished six times. Although *Rev. 20:1-7* is the only Scriptural reference to a period of this temporal span, its use in eschatology extends more broadly to embrace the concept of a future era of restored national preeminence of Israel as developed in multiple OT prophetic writings. This era is alternatively referred to as the “Kingdom Age”. Descriptions of this age include details that find repeated textual support across many OT writings, such as longevity of life spans, prosperity of nations, and a distinctly modified harmony in creation.

Over the extended scope of the Church Age, disparate understandings of, and varied interpretive schemes for, the nature, span, and scope of the “millennium” have been proposed. In Christendom today three disparate views of the prophetically articulated details pertaining to this age have become firmly rooted. These views are known by the rubrics Amillennialism, Postmillennialism, and Premillennialism. These named views are depicted in contrastive schematics in the appendix at the end of this section. Reference to this appendix is recommended for readers seeking some discriminating background helpful in dissecting aspects of the arguments and commentary that follows in the body of this section.

As the title of this section indicates, the focus here is centered on setting forth selected Biblical texts, supplemented with brief commentary, that this author believes supply definitive undergirding bases that support the doctrinal position of premillennialism.

- “pre” = before → “pre-millennial” = before the 1000 years

Quite specifically, the doctrine of Premillennialism has as its distinctive undergirding tenet a commitment to the grammatico-historical-literal interpretive approach to Scripture. The essential particulars of premillennialism include:

- The Lord Jesus Christ will return visibly and bodily to earth a second time;
- He will return before the beginning of a future and literal 1000 year period;
- Upon His bodily return to earth He will establish that glorious Kingdom Age referred to with frequent prominence in OT Scriptures.

Of course, and in reference to the latter point, the concept and requirement of a future Kingdom Age finds specifics and reinforcements not only in the OT Scriptures, but in the NT as well (e.g., the reference to *Rev. 20:1-7* noted above). Furthermore, readers of Part I and Part II of this study will have observed that the premillennial view was adopted as the preferred doctrine in all illustrations of the postulated flow of end-time events depicted there – illustrations composed with substantial undergirding from various NT texts.

Commentary in Part I and Part II of these notes has already provided basics in support of the view of premillennialism. Two examples are recalled here to accent the inter-relation of Parts I, II and III.

- ♦ First, the distinction between Israel and the Church discussed in Part I on pages 13-17, if deemed as having valid undergirding support in Scripture, legislates decisively for a future age when the redemptive program of God will be directed through, and be centered in a significant way around, national Israel under Messianic leadership. That is, a future era with Israel at the center of geo-political and religious life will be established on earth, and during this era the principal agency for proclamation of the Gospel and furtherance of God’s redemptive working will be redirected through Israel because of the earlier translation of the church.

- ◆ Second, if the offered arguments for a pre-tribulational rapture of the church presented in Part II are indeed sound, then the presumed Tribulation Period must have literal fulfillment, and the period of testing that is coming on the whole world must necessarily end by giving way to a return of Christ to earth. This return of Christ will, as predicted by the prophet Daniel, initiate a global discontinuity relative to both the present age and the Tribulation Period. That is, a “regeneration” discontinuity must occur involving the inauguration of an ensuing age during which the full scope of prophetic revelations concerning a restored national Israel will be established with citizens consisting of mortal descendants from all twelve tribes.

2. Definitive Arguments for Pre-Millennialism

A sequence of arguments are advanced here which are termed “definitive” because, in the opinion of the author, their construction is based on a consistent hermeneutic and they can be characterized as possessing a comprehensive cross-textual correspondence with all relevant Scriptures. As such, proposed counter-arguments to off-set and overcome the advocated premillennial view will necessarily manifest either an inconsistent hermeneutic internal to some text, or they will fail to uphold cross-textual consistency between one or more related prophetic texts.

Argument #1. Our Lord spoke decisively of a coming age when national Israel would be re-established and He would personally rule on earth.

The following statement by our Lord to His disciples is, in this author’s opinion, a clear example of a NT text which lends decisive support for a future literal Kingdom era during which Christ will hold a literal kingship on earth. It seems to speak definitively of a future era during which Israel will be restored to a place of national prominence with the Son of Man as supreme ruling authority. That is, the text appears to legislate in favor of the premillennial position *vis-à-vis* the amillennial and postmillennial views.

“And Jesus said to them, ‘Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on the throne of His glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’ ” *Matt. 19:28*

A ‘first impression’ reading of this text suggests a coming time of “regeneration” when:

- the Son of Man will rule from a physical throne on earth;
- Israel will have a restored national existence encompassing all of the original twelve tribes;
- an age will be inaugurated in which there will either be a new genesis of created order, or a new genesis of geo-political order, or both.

Now, in regard to the use of the term “regeneration”, the text seems to be speaking of a created order quite separate from the eternal state of the new heavens and the new earth, and possessing distinctive differences relative to the present church age. Presuming this inference is valid, this text must have reference to an intermediate age wherein a “new genesis” occurs relative to the present age, but one whose character is yet separated from aspects peculiar to the eternal age. Three specifics in the text can be identified that stand in strong support of this understanding.

1. Jesus’ regency, His sitting on a throne and holding a rulership with the apostles as sub-regents, requires His physical return to earth. That is, the so-called “second coming” of Christ must precede, or have close association with, this time of “regeneration”.
2. The role of the apostles, the hearers to whom this statement from the lips of Jesus were addressed, requires their prior resurrection in order to assume a rulership role over a regenerated national Israel. That is, implicit to the indicated “regeneration” event there must be a resurrection of, in particular, righteous dead.
3. The issue of “judging”, that of making distinctions and asserting authority, seems to speak of a time with mortals living on earth, and certainly living in Israel. That is, mortals must be living on earth at the moment of inauguration of this “regeneration”, and at least some subset of the population of the generation of mortals at this time must be invited to enter this kingdom age.

The conclusion outlined under this argument has multiple consistencies with a number of other OT texts analyzed from the literal-grammatical-historical hermeneutic common to much of conservative Biblical scholarship.

Arguments Pertaining to Unfulfilled Aspects of the Covenants

Argument #2. The Abrahamic Covenant: A required future ‘Kingdom-era’ fulfillment for Israel.

<p style="text-align: center;">The Abrahamic Covenant</p> <p>“On that day Yahweh made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates:’ ”</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Gen. 15:18</i></p> <p>“I will establish My covenant between Me and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your seed after you. I will give to you and to your seed after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Gen. 17:7-8</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Comment re Unfulfilled Terms of the Abrahamic Covenant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ “from the river of Egypt as far as the great river Euphrates” <p>The full extent of this territory has never been solidified under Israel’s governmental dominion, even during the splendid glory and reach of Solomon’s reign.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ “for an everlasting possession” <p>National Israel has never retained territorial possession of even Canaan. Territorial possession of the greater extent of Canaan was solidified under David’s military campaigns, but was later relinquished to Gentile powers starting with the captivity of the northern kingdom (Israel) under Assyria, followed by the captivity of the southern kingdom (Judah) under Babylon. Continuing onward from the beginning of the Babylonian captivity until the present, Israel has never existed as a nation-entity with ability or right to claim possession of the territory encompassed by the boundaries specified in the Abrahamic covenant.</p>
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Argument #3. The Davidic Covenant: A required future ‘national-entity’ fulfillment for Israel.

<p style="text-align: center;">The Davidic Covenant</p> <p>“Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.” <i>II Sam. 7:16</i></p> <p>“My covenant I will not violate (lit., profane), nor will I alter the utterance of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David. His descendants (lit., seed) shall endure forever, and His throne as the sun before Me. It shall be established forever like the moon, and the witness of the sky is faithful.” <i>Ps. 89:34-37</i></p>	<p>“ ‘Behold days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,’ ... ‘I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God and they shall be My people.’ ”</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Jer. 31:31-33</i></p> <p>“Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day, and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, ... The LORD of hosts is His name: ‘If this fixed order departs from before Me,’ declares the LORD, ‘then the offspring of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me all these days.’ ”</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Jer. 31:35-37</i></p> <p>“Thus says the LORD, ‘If you can break My covenant for the day, and My covenant for the night, so that day and night will not be at their appointed time, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levitical priests, My ministers.’ ”</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Jer. 33:20-21</i></p>
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Comment: As an integral part of its terms, the Davidic covenant has an essential and unbreakable connection with the new covenant. Furthermore, the literal realization of the new covenant promise that David “shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel” (*Jer. 33:21*; NKJV) is undergirded with age-enduring terms of the Noahic-creation covenant. That is, the unfailing stability and enduring regularity of the astronomic order established at creation is set as a daily witness to the effect that detailed elements of the Davidic covenant will be fulfilled with exacting fidelity. In particular, a prophesied physical reign of Messiah-King on

earth during a glorious kingdom era is emphasized in the strongest terms, even terms that are underwritten with a covenantal sustaining of the current functional order of the sun, moon and stars (the 24 hour day-night cycle; the lunar cycle; the order of the stars, including observed planetary motions around the sun). Thus, it seems quite evident that these prophetic words do not, and cannot, have reference to the eternal state of a “wholly renewed” heavens and earth.

Further Perspective: The Abrahamic covenant makes reference to a territory defined by the present geographic and morphological state of the Euro-Asian (mid-eastern) region, while the Davidic covenant rests quite specifically on the continuance of the current astronomic order. Hence, the era of fulfillment of the specific terms of both covenants seems destined to occur during a continuance of the present created order, albeit likely with some “regeneration”, and ought not to be seen as finding their descriptive fulfillment singularly in the eternal age of the new heavens and the new earth.

Arguments Pertaining to a Restored National Israel under Messianic Rulership

Argument #4. The Scriptures speak decisively of a restoration and reunification of national Israel.

“Behold, I am bringing them from the north country, and I will gather them from the remote parts of the earth, ... a great assembly, they shall return here.” *Jer. 31:8*
(see also, 32:37-39)

“And I will restore the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel, and I will rebuild them as they were at first.” *Jer. 33:7*

“ ‘Behold, days are coming,’ declares Yahweh, ‘when I will fulfill the good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety.’ ” *Jer. 33:14-16*

“For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land. ... Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; ... And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, ... And you will live in the land that I gave to your fathers, so you will be My people, and I will be your God.”
Ezek. 36:24-28

“And say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations, and they will no longer be divided into two kingdoms.” ’ ”
Ezek. 37:21-22

Comment: The quoted statements regarding the new covenant speak repeatedly of a restored and reunified national Israel. Both divisions of the divided kingdom are destined to be brought under the singular headship of the “righteous Branch of David” – an unmistakable reference to Israel’s Messiah. Note that there is a repeated emphasis in these texts on the reunification of both houses of the divided kingdom:

- “the captivity of Israel”; “the house of Israel”; [northern 10 tribes of divided the kingdom].
- “the captivity of Judah”; “the house of Judah”; [southern 2 tribes of divided the kingdom].

The prophetic word is clear and precise: the “righteous Branch of David” will appear on earth and administer a stringently just and righteous reign, but not restricted singularly to a re-gathered and re-united national Israel. Rather, His reign will have a truly global reach encompassing all nations on the face of the planet (“He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth”).

Cross-Textual Correspondence Note: The prophecies quoted above of a renewed era for national Israel under Messianic rule has a tight correspondence with *Argument #1* above, and also with *Arguments #5, #6 and #7* that appear subsequently. In particular, compare the following specific textual statements:

- “the Son of Man will sit on the throne of His glory” (*Matt. 19:28*), [see *Argument #1*];

- “I will cause a righteous Branch of David” to “execute justice and righteousness on earth” (*Jer. 33:15; also Jer. 23:5*);
- “I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations” and will “bring them into their own land” and “one king will be king for all of them” (*Ezek. 37:21-22*);
- “Jerusalem will dwell in safety” (*Jer. 23:6; 33:16*).

A definitive correspondence seems to exist between these statements, and therewith between *Argument #1* and *Argument #4*. Furthermore, the global reign of the righteous Branch of David comports with, and has seeming undeniable correspondence with terms emphasized under *Argument #5* and *Argument #6* to follow. (See especially the quoted texts from *Zech. 14* under *Argument #5* and from *Isa. 2* and *Isa. 11* under *Argument #6*).

Argument #5. The Scriptures require a future occasion when the “times of the Gentiles” will expire and a restored preeminence of Israel under Messianic rule is established.

“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that her desolation is at hand. ... and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”
Luke 21:20, 24

“I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given, dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.” *Dan. 7:13-14*

“Then the word of the LORD of hosts came saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “I am exceeding jealous for Zion, yes, with great wrath I am jealous for her.”’
Thus says the LORD, ‘I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. ...
Old men and old woman will again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each man with his staff in his hand because of age. And the streets will be filled with boys and girls playing in its streets. ...
Behold, I am going to save My people from the land of the rising and the setting of the sun; and I will bring them back, and they will live in the midst of Jerusalem, and they will be My people and I will be their God in truth and righteousness.’”
Zech. 8:1-8 (see also vs. 11-15)

¹ “Behold, a day is coming for the LORD ...”
⁴ “And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.”
⁹ “And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one.”
¹¹ “And men shall dwell in [Jerusalem], and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.”
Zech 14:1, 4, 9, (vs. 11, KJV)

Comment: As noted earlier in the illustration appearing in Part I, page 2, the era of history noted as “the times of the Gentiles” had its beginning with Israel’s loss of any continuing national sovereignty at the conquest of Jerusalem during the 3rd invasion of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar (*II Kings 25:8-26*). At this juncture a decisive departure of the glory of Yahweh from Solomon’s Temple occurred, followed almost immediately by the utter devastation of the Temple and city. (See *Ezek. 10-11*, esp. *11:22-25*, for a description of the departure of Yahweh’s glory).

That Jerusalem has been under Gentile sovereignty ever since, with differing oppressive dominions asserted by differing national powers, is an unassailable fact of history. However, and from a viewpoint of covenant terms, this state of Gentile domination will only continue, according to the definitive words of the Lord Jesus Christ “until” – “until” a particular future covenantal fulfillment is realized (as clearly stated in *Lk. 21:24* above). As such, there is an appointed date set for the destined expiration of this period of history. The use of the word “until” by Christ points to a future inauguration of a wholly new ruling authority and an accompanying new geo-political order. And, per the above quotes from the prophecy of

Zechariah, supported with equal specificity in other OT texts, the subsequent ruling authority will be one with its governmental center located in Jerusalem and holding an extended reach over the full-scope of world-wide Gentile powers. The era of this new geo-political order will be distinguished by the fact that prophetic terms fueling Jewish aspirations of covenantal fulfillment for millennia will, at last, come to glorious fruition.

Cross-Textual Correspondence Note: In terms of *Argument #4* above, the wholesale change in geo-political order associated with our Lord's use of the word "until" looks forward to the arrival of the righteous Branch of David, even the coming to earth of the Son of Man as seen by Daniel in his vision noted in the textual quote above, and also emphasized by our Lord per the Scripture quoted in *Argument #1*. At this time, Messiah's earthly kingdom rule centered in Jerusalem will be established with re-gathered, reunified Israel as its 'nation-entity' base. This change in global order awaits that future day when heaven is opened and the One called Faithful and True descends and appears with bodily presence on the Mt. of Olives (*Zech. 14:3-4; Acts 1:9-12*; see Part I, page 10 for textual quote plus discussion in Section 2d, pages 11-12). Then, in righteous judgment and awesome authority, He proceeds to tread "the winepress of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty" (*Rev. 19:11-15*) in preparation for the Judgment of Separation (see Part I, page 23) and the inauguration of His earthly dominion; that is, the onset of the Millennial era.

Summary Comment: The "times of the Gentiles" will have a sudden, catastrophic conclusion when the righteous Branch of David returns in glorious bodily presence to inaugurate His Millennial rule on earth. Further, and to the point peculiar to Premillennialism, that glory of the risen Christ will not be seen only among glorified saints in the eternal state following the consummation of the present age. Rather, and in truth, it will also be seen and embraced by mortals in a precursor form during and under Messiah's physical, ruling presence on the earth, a reality that will, with peculiar politico-religio glory centered in Jerusalem, continue unabated throughout the whole extent of the prophesied Kingdom Age.

Argument #6. The Scriptures speak decisively of a glorious kingdom age for Israel.

<p>"Now it will come about that in the last days, the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways, and that we may walk in His paths.' For the law will go forth from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war." <i>Isa. 2:2-4</i></p> <p>(See also <i>Micah 4:1-4</i> and <i>Zech. 8:20-23</i>)</p>	<p>"Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding ... Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, and faithfulness the belt about His waist. And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, ... Also the cow and the bear will graze; ... They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the seas. And He will lift up a standard for the nations, and will assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. ... And there will be a highway from Assyria for the remnant of His people who will be left, just as there was for Israel in the day that they came up out of the land of Egypt." <i>Isa. 11:1-16</i></p>
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Issues to be confronted with respect to the above texts.

- What is to be inferred by the phrase "in the last days" in *Isa. 2:2*? Might not this phrase have a direct correspondence with the full scope of "the day of the LORD", and not necessarily have exclusive reference to that future state associated with the eternal age of the new heavens and the new earth?

- Are not these texts describing literal conditions on a literal earth, albeit an earth renovated to some degree relative to conditions consistent with the present natural and societal order?
- Does not the characterization of a rule in which “the law will go forth from Zion”, and one characterized by “righteousness” being the belt of the ruler-King who springs “from the stem of Jesse”, describe an earthly rule over mortals living under the kingship of the Son of Man on the throne of His glory in Jerusalem (see *Argument #1*)?
- Do not the required states of geography, political affairs, and functional order of the natural world described in these texts possess a distinctly different qualitative order relative to that future state noted in texts that pertain quite unambiguously to the eternal age associated with the time of the “new heavens and the new earth”?
- Do these texts not speak of a time when Israel (Jerusalem) will be a pre-eminent nation among nations, yet death will not have been wholly expunged from creation? And do they not speak of the birth of mortals, along with a state of family and economic life that is broadly similar to that characteristic of the present age?
- Do these texts not speak of a theocratic governmental structure, with global authority of Messiah asserted through His administrative office of Judge over Israel from David’s throne in Jerusalem during an age when mortals are still living on earth?

Comment: The descriptive statements of an era of national pre-eminence of Israel, and of a renovated creative order as described in the texts above, speak of an era heretofore unknown either in Israel’s history or in earth history. Hence, an era wherein national Israel enjoys a glorious kingdom age coinciding with a ‘whole–earth’ renovation of the existing created order must await a future time of fulfillment (recall reference in *Argument#1* to “the regeneration”).

In reinforcement of the foregoing considerations under this argument, note the somewhat parallel statements appearing in the following texts.

“For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land. ... Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness; and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you. I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, that you may not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations.” *Ezek. 36:24-30*
(see also *Ezek. 34:25-31*)

“I will also rejoice in Jerusalem, and be glad in My people; and there will no longer be heard in her the voice of weeping and the sound of crying. No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his days; for the youth will die at the age of 100 and the one who does not reach the age of 100 shall be thought accursed. And they shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall not plant, and another eat; ... They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they are the offspring of those blessed by the LORD, and their descendants with them. ...” *Isa. 65:19-25*

Textual Comment: As already noted, the set of two quoted texts on the previous page speak, quite apparently, to a global state of world order distinct from the limited and somewhat sparse Biblical descriptions of the eternal state of the new heavens and the new earth. However, and in point of fact, the quotation immediately above from *Isa. 65:19–25* has an antecedent statement that seems clearly to have distinctive reference to the eternal state. As such, some writers are inclined to attribute the whole of the paragraph *Isa. 65:19-25* as having reference to the eternal state to be inaugurated at the consummation of the age. To this point, and to address fairly the ‘millennial doctrine sense’ of these foregoing texts, two explicit statements from Isaiah’s writing having direct reference to the eternal state are reproduced here. These texts are excerpted from the broader prophecy by Isaiah: first a quote immediately preceding *Isa. 65:19–25* and, second, one following shortly thereafter.

“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.” *Isa. 65:17*

“ ‘For just as the new heavens and the new earth which I make will endure before Me,’ declares Yahweh, ‘so your offspring and your name will endure.’ ” *Isa. 66:22*

Interpretive Comment: It seems fair and legitimate to state that the two latter statements concerning the eternal state, in their immediate and larger context, arise in conjunction with described conditions that seem to be distinctly differentiated from the eternal order. Of course, the more extensive prophetic writings quoted on both of the two preceding pages in support of *Argument #6* also describe states of created order distinct from any conditions pertaining to earth history to date. To the point, a text communicating both a nearer and a later fulfillment in a single context is neither peculiar to nor uncommon in the writings of the OT prophets. Theologians refer to this prophetic device as “conflation”, and this author believes that the expanded text of *Isa. 65:17–25* is precisely such an example. The belief that this is the case in the present context is undergirded by ample and clear reinforcement derived from evident consistency between and coherence across all the quoted texts printed under this argument.

Parenthetical Note: Although the context of the quoted texts from Isaiah is that of a future, glorious Kingdom era, yet a “farther” prophetic reference to the Eternal Kingdom appears. This ‘blurring’ of the two ages may indicate that some corresponding precursor changes in the earth and cosmos, plus nature and life-spans, will likely occur at the onset of the prophesied Messianic administration. As such, it would serve as introductory to the later ‘whole-creation renovation’ inaugurating the Eternal Kingdom in its consummate perfection and glory.

In further support of the advocated interpretive view, it is helpful to note several revelatory texts that speak with specificity to the state of the new heavens and new earth being referred to in *Isa. 65:17* and *Isa. 66:22*. Consider to this end the following textual quotes and the appended comments.

The New Creation

“But according to His promise we are looking
for new heavens and a new earth,
in which righteousness dwells.

II Pet. 3:13

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for
the first heaven & the first earth passed
away, and there is no longer any sea.” ...

“And He who sits on the throne said,
‘Behold, I am making all things new.’
And He said, ‘Write, for these words are
faithful and true.’ ...

He who overcomes shall inherit these things,
and I will be his God and He will be My son.”

Rev. 21:1,5,7

Comment: Important Word Study

There are two Greek words that are translated “new”.

- ◆ “*neos*” → new in regard to time; recent;
young (younger);
- ◆ “*kainos*” → new in regard to quality or form;
fresh; renewed.

The word “new” appearing in the texts of both
II Pet. 3:13 and *Rev. 21:1-7* is “*kainos*”.

The new heavens and the new earth in view in these
texts are “new” by a transformative “Creator action”,
but not necessarily by an *ex nihilo* action.

They will be made new by a renovative and “re-
creative” working, resulting in a wholesale qualitative
change, but not a ‘whole-creation’ newness that is
foreign to human experience in the present age.

The created state of the new heavens and new earth are characterized by a ‘whole-creation’ state of righteousness. This state of created order can only be realized after the last enemy of death has been destroyed, and all creatures born into Adam’s race have been raised from the dead, and the curse imposed because of Adam’s sin has been totally, radically and eternally expunged from creation. Such a state of created order is what is referred to as the age of the “new heavens and the new earth”. That state of creation will be “wholly new”, an expression referring in particular to its qualitative state. Its quality will be one that is comprehensively “very good” – even a “very good” that even permeates every aspect and every elemental component of God’s created handiwork, just as the state of creation was so assessed by the Creator Himself at the close of the 6th day of Creation week.

Cross-Textual Correspondence Note: Foregoing *Arguments #1, #4* and *#5*, plus *Argument #7* to follow, describe terms of a future fulfillment that seem to be associated with a geo-political order quite distinct from that which appears in those brief revelatory glimpses associated with

the eternal state of the new heavens and the new earth. Thus, a plain reading of these prophetic texts speaking of a future kingdom era seem to point to, yea require, a fulfillment during an age characterized by a created order not wholly distinct from the present, but yet having characteristics quite distinct from the prophesied eternal order.

"But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of the judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed [dissolved (KJV)] with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. ... looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be [dissolved] by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat."
II Pet. 3:7, 10-12

The New Creation – Further Comment

There will be a 'renovative purging' of, not a whole-sale annihilation of, the present created order in the formation of the promised created order characterizing the eternal state of the new heavens and the new earth.

- ◆ "elements" → "*stoicheion*" (Gr) [fundamental constituents]
- ◆ "dissolved" = unbound; released

The text to the left speaks of a 'dissolution' reaction that will purge the existing, cursed creation from every effect of the curse, expunging all causes of aging, decay, disintegration, disorder, etc. All degradative causes will be wholly, thoroughly and eternally vanquished from the renovated heavens and earth, and all creation will henceforth be sustained forever by the Creator in a state of absolute perfection and enduring stability through His omni-present, omni-sufficient, and omni-active energizing and sustaining power.

The renewed creation will be an eternally-perfected state designed for the unending habitation of regenerated, justified and glorified creatures made in God's very image – even creatures conformed fully to the image of His beloved Son to the everlasting glory of the Triune Godhead.

Issue to be confronted relative to the elaborated terms presented here under *Argument #6*:

- Do not the first two pairs Scripture quoted under this argument (see pages 50 and 51) describe a state of created order that represents an age that must be positioned intermediate between the present order of creation and the ultimate order of the new heavens and the new earth?

Argument #7. The Scriptures speak decisively of a future age of unprecedented global tranquility and prosperity centered around a restored Israel under Messianic leadership.

"Then the word of the LORD of hosts came saying,
 'Thus says the LORD of hosts,
 "I am exceeding jealous for Zion, yes, with great wrath I am jealous for her." '
 Thus says the LORD, 'I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. ...
 Old men and old woman will again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each man with his staff in his hand because of age. And the streets will be filled with boys and girls playing in its streets. ...
 Behold, I am going to save My people from the land of the rising and the setting of the sun;
 and I will bring them back, and they will live in the midst of Jerusalem, and they will be My people and I will be their God in truth and righteousness.' "
Zech. 8:1-8 (see also vs. 11-15)

"In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David, and wall up its breaches; I will also raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old."

" 'Behold, days are coming', declares the LORD, 'When the plowman will overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; when the mountains will drip sweet wine, and all the hills will be dissolved. Also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel, and they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them, they will also plant vineyards and drink their wine, and make gardens and eat their fruit.

And I will also plant them on their land, and they will not again be rooted out from their land which I have given them,' says the LORD your God."

Amos 9:11, 13-15

Important textual points to note:

- The quote in each text box speaks of a time of prosperity for a restored and renewed Israel.
- The quote in the first text box speaks explicitly of a physical return of Messiah to Jerusalem.

- The quote in the second text box speaks of a fulfillment of the Davidic covenant involving both national and economic terms not decidedly distinct from the present, or from a somewhat (partially) renovated, physical order.
- The quote in each text box speaks of a time with mortals dwelling in Jerusalem.

Comment: An age such as described in the texts quoted under this argument has no historical precedent, and must therefore await a future fulfillment. Furthermore, the described state of creation seems unambiguously to involve mortals, yet with some effects of the curse still operational. Specifically, a continuing degradation associated with physical aging, and a consequent experiential reality of approaching death, is described. That is, the curse is seen as still having operational force; it has not been totally and decisively expunged per the promise of a total dissolution of its presence after the institution of that wholly new order characterizing the eternal state.

Cross-Textual-Correspondence Note: The quoted texts and attendant comments under *Argument #6* clearly hold a descriptive correspondence with the text and comments included here under *Argument #7*. These two arguments have been deliberately differentiated in these notes in order to accent the coherence and correspondence across the broader prophetic writings of Isaiah, Micah, Amos, Ezekiel and Zechariah, particularly as relating to a future age for Israel – an age that will only find fulfillment under Messianic presence and a revised, albeit intermediate, created order between the present era and the consummate, eternal state.

Taken together, the texts presented under these two arguments speak distinctly to an age when a notable relaxation of the curse in the biological, zoological, climatic, and astronomic spheres will occur. Further, the occasion of such an altered state of the universe is presented as coinciding with the restoration of national Israel under Messianic presence and theocratic governmental reign. The state of creation pertinent to texts quoted under both of these arguments, where a partial diminution of the scope and depth of impact of the curse will exist, is unarguably distinct both from the present age and from the promise of the eternal age.

Argument #8. The Scriptures speak decisively of a literal span of 1000 years when both Satanic and demonic influence will be vanquished from the full scope of physical and spiritual dimensions in the natural world.

“And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for **1000 years**, and threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer, until the **1000 years** were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.”

“And when the **1000 years** are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, ... And the devil who deceived [the nations] was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, ...”

Rev. 20:1-3, 7-10

Comment re 1000 years

The text of *Rev. 20:1-7* is the only Scripture specifying the span of the coming Kingdom Age – **1000 years**.

The described 1000 year span is bracketed between two events with sovereign designs for Satan:

- ◆ the occasion of Satan’s arrest and incarceration (i.e., his being placed under rigid restraint and total banishment from roaming the earth)
- ◆ the occasion of his ultimate, eternal judgment (i.e., his consignment in the lake of fire; the very place prepared from before creation for the devil and his angels [*Matt:25:41*]).

Other Scriptures are quite explicit in stating that Satan is NOT bound during the present age. For example, “Your adversary, the devil, prowls about as a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.” *1 Pet. 5:8* (See also *II Cor. 2:11* re Satan’s active designs in this age.)

Critical Interpretive Comment:

Arguments exist claiming that Jesus' words recorded in all three synoptic gospels to the effect that a "kingdom/house divided against itself" cannot stand (cf., *Matt. 12:25-29; Mk. 3:23-27; Lk. 11:17-22*) speak of the same action being referred to in *Rev. 20:2*; namely, the binding of Satan. However, consideration of the wider context of Jesus' statement shows plainly that He is speaking of the imposition of an exorcistic extradition of demons in a local context and for an unspecified period. By contrast, *Rev. 20:1-7* specifies a Satan-directed judgment that will result in an imposed, totally restrictive, binding of Satanic and demonic activity, a comprehensive inability of Satan to perpetrate even a single devilish scheme in the whole of creation – a state of Satanic and demonic incarceration that continues for a precisely specified period of time. Hence, it is the opinion of this author that to speak of these two "binding" actions as having correspondence and equivalence is a clear "interpretive category confusion". From the perspective of a 'first face' reading of these texts, as well as from a consistent grammatico-literal hermeneutic, it seems decisive that the two distinct references to "bindings" cannot be speaking of a wholly similar and fully compatible action, let alone the self-same action. Further, the defeat of Satan wrought in the death and resurrection of Christ, although surely having definitive relevance to both the binding of Satan and his ultimate judgment, is not the self-same act spoken of in *Rev. 20:2*. Specifically to this point, the "unbinding" of Satan that follows at the close of the stated 1000 year incarceration (see *Rev. 20:7-10*) stands in clear (and convincing?!) endorsement of this conclusion.

In further consideration, the consequence of a consistent application of the grammatico-literal hermeneutic leads quite definitively to the conclusion that *Rev. 20:1-10* describes events occurring *after* the physical return of the Lord Jesus Christ (the bodily entrance of "The Word of God" into the created sphere, *Rev. 19:13*), and also preceding both the final judgment of the Great White Throne (*Rev. 20:11-15*) and the institution of the eternal age of the new heavens and the new earth (*Rev. 21:1ff*). This chronological order seems to have a strong compatibility with all previous arguments elaborated under the foregoing arguments set forth here in Part III, and respects all the distinctions discussed in Part I. It is, in fact, for this reason that the author has chosen to include the word "definitive" in the title of this section.

Part III End Note:

There are multiple sections of the apocalyptic writing in *The Revelation* that seem to speak with distinctive clarity to events and conditions that pertain to the Tribulation Period discussed in Part II. The reader will note that the discussion in Part II was essentially limited to exclusive reference to two Biblical texts: *II Thess. 2* and *Rev. 3:10*. Further to this point, this author believes that a decisive case exists for holding that the section *Rev. 6-19* addresses earthly and heavenly events pertaining exclusively to the Tribulation Period, and climaxing with an elaboration of the close of the Tribulation Period with the second coming of Christ. Now, the text of *Rev. 20:1-10*, appearing immediately subsequent to the referenced section *Rev. 6-19*, moves straightway to the specification of a particular 1000 year period that is fundamental to the issue of the Millennial doctrine. Hence, from the perspective of the unity of revelatory truth in this concluding writing of the breathed-out Word of truth "once for all delivered to the saints", the whole of *The Revelation* can be (ought to be?) understood as providing strong undergirding support for the view of eschatological events outlined in these notes. Further, in regard to the sequence of *Arguments* here in Part III, set forth in support of the doctrine of Premillennialism, the writings of the prophets contain descriptive pointers to events that find their consummate fulfillment in the delineated unfolding, both in detail and chronology, outlined in *The Revelation*. However, an exposition of the book of *The Revelation* to establish systematized, definitive support for Premillennialism as hinted at here is quite beyond both the scope and objective of these notes.

Appendix

Considerable difference of opinion, even opinionated difference frequently held with strong and passionate conviction, exists across the various evangelical circles prevailing in Christendom today concerning the nature and fulfillment of the 1000 years spoken of in *Rev. 20:1-7*, and especially with regard to its place and eschatological significance in the unfolding of God's plan for the ages. These differences arise, in large measure, to disparate interpretative frameworks adopted for understanding, particularly, the words of Christ in His Olivet Discourse and the content of the book of *The Revelation*. In this appendix the dominant extant views of "millennialism" are set forth with brief, "descriptive overview" notes, supplemented with schematics that are intended to afford the reader a ready basis for differentiating at least some of the core elements in the various articulated doctrinal positions.

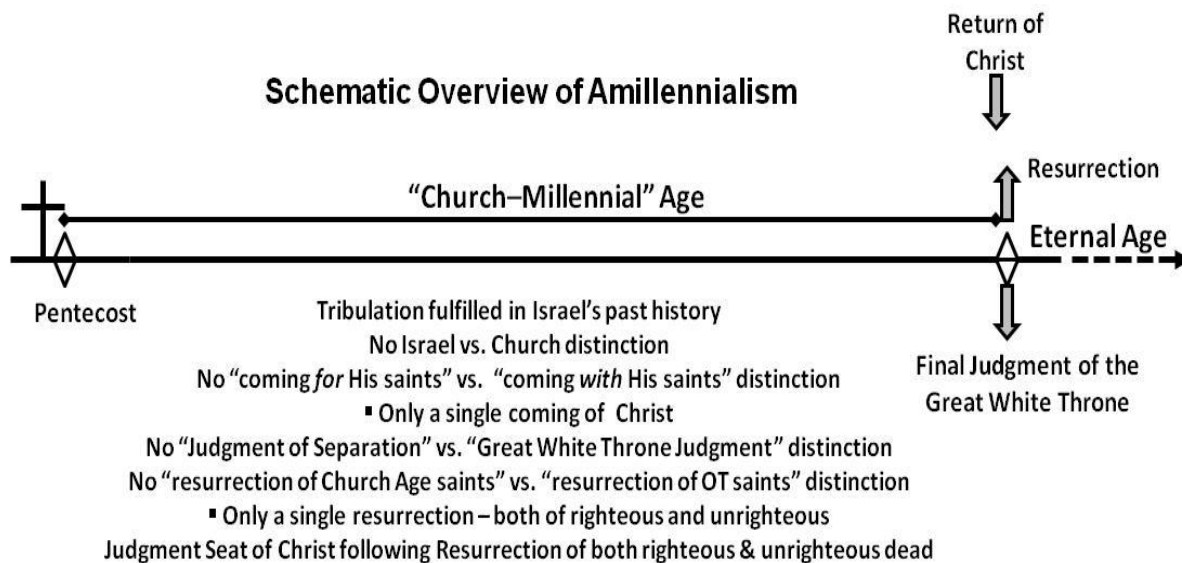
Amillennialism

Amillennialism = "a-millennium"; ["a" = no → no literal millennium (no literal 1000 year era)].

Amillennialism sees the Church Era as coinciding with, and fulfilling all essential detail of, the prophesied Kingdom Age. It assumes that the stated time period of 1000 years, noted six times in *Rev. 20:1-7*, is simply a general (non-specific) reference to a long period of indefinite duration.

That is, it is a time period to be understood in a spiritualized sense, as opposed to a literal sense. To this point, it attributes the binding of Satan noted in *Rev. 20:2-3* to his ultimate defeat already guaranteed by the death and resurrection of Christ. Further, the amillennial view assumes that the N.T. church inherits all unfulfilled O.T. prophetic promises and declarations pertaining to Israel, especially those inherent to unfulfilled terms of the New Covenant.

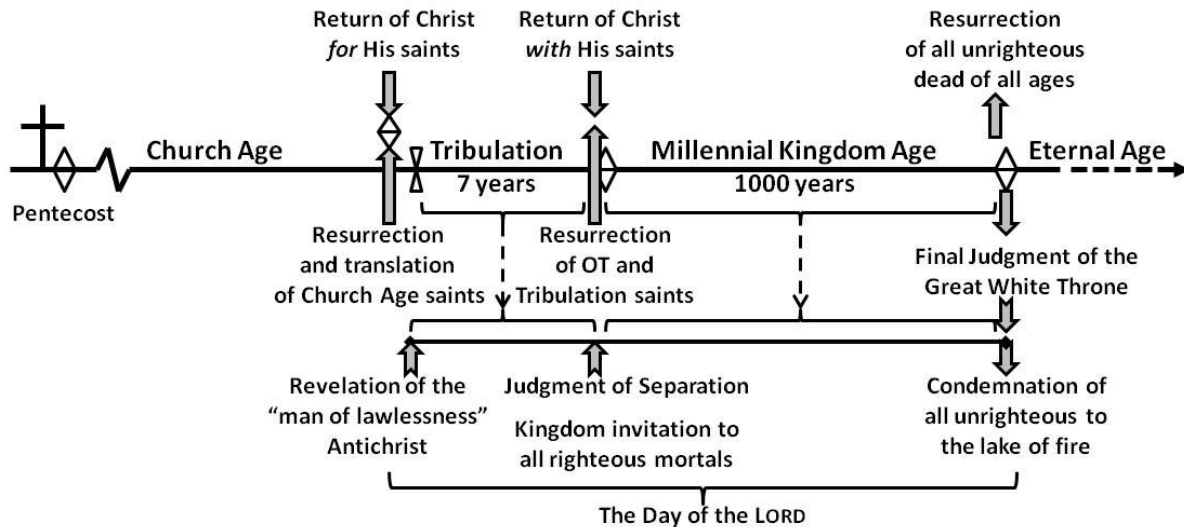
As such, there is no distinction between Israel and the Church in the present era, and there are no pre-conditions for the 2nd coming of Christ and inauguration of the eternal state of the new heavens and the new earth. Amillennialism sees only one resurrection event, a resurrection of both the righteous & the unrighteous that occurs just prior to the beginning of the Eternal Kingdom Age.



Pre-Millennialism

Pre-Millennialism is a doctrinal view that flows out of the adoption of a “whole-counsel”, grammatico-historical-literal approach to understanding Scripture. With such an interpretive stance, this view necessarily takes the repeated and specific reference to a 1000 year period appearing in *Rev. 20* as a literal span of years, yet future, in which all the promises and declarations pertaining to the prophesied, glorious Kingdom Age will come to pass. During this age any and all terms pertaining to national Israel will find literal fulfillment, and there will be a simultaneous fulfillment of the prophesied “regeneration” of the whole earth.

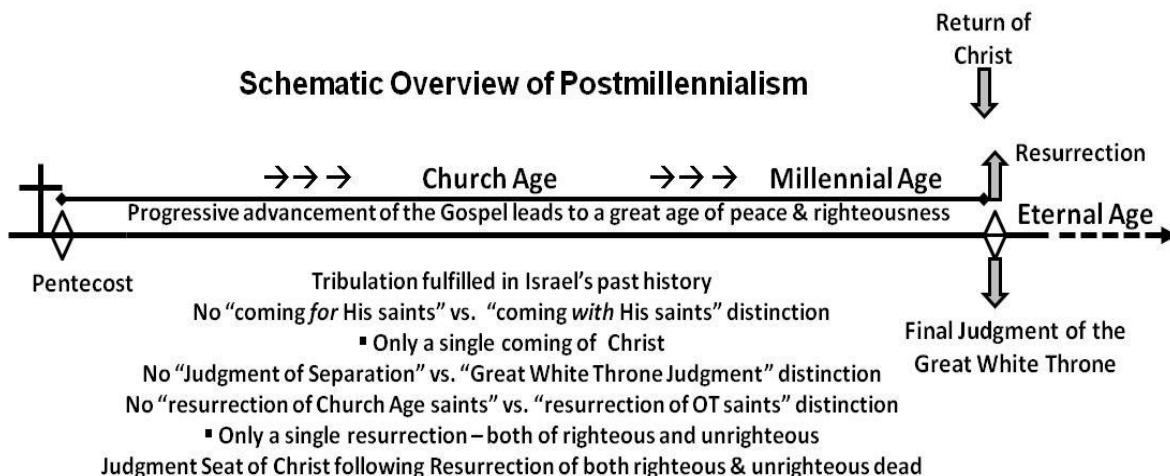
Schematic Overview of Pretribulational Premillennialism



Post-Millennialism

Post-Millennialism sees the growth of the church and its proclamation of the gospel, in an as yet future era, as becoming so impactful in society at large that a great age of peace and prosperity will emerge across the entire earth. This rise of global peace and heretofore unknown prosperity engulfing the whole world will merge into in an age fully commensurate with all prophetic references, and will include Israel attaining its destiny of international prominence. After the realization of this ‘world order’ Christ will return, all the dead will be raised, a final judgment will occur, and “then comes the end” when Christ “delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father” and the eternal state is thereupon inaugurated (*1 Cor. 15:24*).

Schematic Overview of Postmillennialism



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Part IV. Outline Studies on Ultimate Issues

A. The Issue of Judgment and Reward

Fact: God is holy, righteous and just. Therefore, all evil must be judged, and will be judged.

Fact: Every individual will one day stand before his Creator and be judged – personal judgment is a sure and inescapable reality.

Ps. 96:10-13 "Say among the nations, 'The LORD reigns; ... He will judge the peoples with equity. "Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; ... for He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with faithfulness."

Eccl. 12:13-14 "The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good

Acts 17:31 "[God] has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the

Rom. 3:5-6 "The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? May it never be! For otherwise, how will God judge the world?"

Perspective: The specific administration of justice in view is the final and ultimate judgment that God will impose following the resurrection at the end of the present age.

Points to ponder:

- To speak of a final, ultimate judgment does not depreciate the administration of justice in the present era. However, neither does the administration of justice in the present age negate the fact of, and the need for, judgment in the age to come.
- There is a partial, incomplete judgment that occurs during the present age – God administers justice to both individuals and nations through particular acts of divine discipline or through general works of providence, but this is only partial justice. Acts of divine judgment in the present age are not necessarily complete in extent, nor are they expressed uniformly and equitably in measure.
- God has entrusted judgment, in part, during this age to civil government. However, government-imposed justice is imperfect, inconsistent, and incomplete – and relevant principally to injustice perpetrated in interpersonal and civil affairs, and not specifically in regard to transgression of God's law or "injury" to the Sovereign Creator (*i.e.*, injury to the sanctity of truth, injury to the sanctity of life, etc.).
- The Scripture contains clear and decisive statements declaring that a future judgment remains ... one wherein reward and punishment for every person will be justly established (*i.e.*, there remains an individual, final judgment).

[See Scriptures printed above.]

The notes that follow are intended to provide a summary of what God has purposed to reveal concerning His commitment to judgment as well as some revealed particulars concerning the nature and terms of the future, final judgment ... that universal judgment which is unavoidably certain for every member of Adam's race.

The certainty of judgment is evident in the fact that God has sworn an oath that He will judge.
 “Indeed, I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, as I live forever, if I sharpen My flashing sword,
 and My hand takes hold on justice, I will render vengeance on my adversaries,
 and I will repay those who hate Me.” *Deut. 32:40-41*

Acknowledgment: In the composition of this sub-section the author benefitted significantly from multiple writings by Jonathan Edwards.

Proper Conceptions Concerning God and Judgment

- God, the Self-Existent, Eternal Creator is a Being of infinite excellency and greatness – majestic in holiness, infinite in wisdom, awesome in power, perfect in righteousness, unfailing in justice.
- It is reasonable to conclude that the infinitely-majestic Creator created all things and orders all creation for His own pleasure and for His own eternal praise and glory.
- It is reasonable to conclude that the Creator will always do what properly belongs to Him in His holy character and supreme sovereignty.
- It is proper that the Holy Creator will always work in His governance of creation so as to uphold the honor and majesty of His character and the righteous foundation of His rule.

“And in the greatness of Thine excellence Thou dost overthrow those who rise up against Thee;
 Thou dost send forth Thy burning anger,
 and it consumes them as chaff.” *Ex. 15:7*

“For the LORD your God is a consuming fire,
 a jealous God.” *Deut. 4:24*

“ ‘Why should I pardon you? Your sons have forsaken Me and sworn by those who are not gods. ... Shall I not punish these people for these things,’ declares the LORD, ‘and on a nation such as this shall I not avenge Myself?’ ” *Jer. 5:7-9*

“A jealous and avenging God is the LORD;
 the LORD is avenging, a possessor of wrath. ... The LORD takes vengeance on His adversaries,
 and He reserves wrath for His enemies.” *Nah. 1:2-7*

“Who understands the power of Thine anger,
 and Thy fury, according to the fear that is due Thee?”
Ps. 90:11

“O LORD, God of vengeance; God of avenging acts,
 shine forth! Rise up, O Judge of the earth;
 render recompense to the proud.” *Ps. 94:1-2*

“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. Fire goes before Him, and burns up His adversaries round about.” *Ps. 97:2b-3*

“Righteous art Thou, O LORD, and upright
 are Thy judgments.” *Ps. 119:137*

“Say to those with anxious heart,
 ‘Take courage, fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance; but He will save you.’ ” *Isa. 35:4*

- ◆ It is proper that the Sovereign Creator should impose standards and establish laws which moral creatures must submit to in obedience and conform to in behavior, and to threaten sanctions that will be imposed when those standards and laws are transgressed.
- ◆ Transgression of the holy Creator’s standards and laws necessarily involves a cosmic injury to His majestic character, and comprises a grievous assault on and offense against His authority – for His is an infinite majesty and an absolute and supreme authority.
- ◆ It is proper that the Sovereign LawGiver and Creator should impose strict and severe sanctions with respect to the violation of His laws, precepts and statutes.
- ◆ It is proper that the Creator should hate transgression and express just recompense toward every rebellion against and violation of His righteous standards.
- ◆ It is proper that injury to His character and transgression of His authority should be righteously and justly vindicated – He is an infinitely righteous LawGiver and an infinitely just Judge.
- ◆ It is proper that God, the LawGiver and Judge, should deal with transgressors with utmost strictness, for His justice is an essential characteristic of His immutable holiness and His holy immutability.
- ◆ It is proper that the sanctions threatened in God’s law be fully and exactly executed – that is, that all sins be punished equitably and receive the full penalty of the law violated.

- ◆ Sin is properly to be avenged by the holy Creator who created all things for His glory.
- ◆ Hatred of sin is a proper response of infinite holiness, and vengeance for sin is a proper and necessary aspect of God's righteousness and justice; alternatively, of His holiness.
 - If sin should be properly hated by God in His righteousness, then logically it should be punished in His justice per the righteous sanctions He has threatened.
 - If evil has been willed and perpetrated by the creature, then logically it should be justly reciprocated by the offended Holy One per the righteous sanctions He has threatened.
- ◆ God deals with a great strictness in His vengeance because He is so majestically holy ... and all sin is an assault against the honor of His majesty – it strikes at the honor of the infinitely majestic Sovereign (i.e., it greatly dishonors Him).
 - The creature's offense in any and all transgressions of the Creator's law and the dishonoring of His character is an infinite offense, because it is offense against the Person and rule of the infinitely Holy One. Therefore, judgment and punishment must necessarily be strict and severe, even in proper proportion to the offense – justice demands this.
- ◆ God deals with a great strictness in His vengeance because He is so righteously jealous of His glory ... and the Law is purposely made great and glorious because His glory must be respected, honored and magnified; this is the creature's most basic duty ... and God's most basic right.
 - The greatness and glory of Divine law include the good that the law requires, the evil it forbids, and the sanctions that it imposes. It forbids evil of all kinds and of all degrees, and it does so in all cases and at all times. It requires the judgment of eternal death for all moral evil of every kind and of every degree committed by any and every moral creature. This pertains to sins of commission (direct transgression), sins of omission (sins of neglect), and sins of ignorance (violation of available knowledge and of conscience). In short, the Law requires holiness in every action (i.e., comprehensive conformity to the stiff and straight standards of God and His righteousness), and all transgressions must properly receive recompense according to His strict and uncompromising judgment.
 - Even if the creature could live in perfect submission and conformity to God's law, such righteousness would still not accrue merit before God. Why? Because perfect righteousness is simply the creature's basic duty before His holy Creator – he has only done what is required.
- It is unreasonable and extremely unwise for moral creatures to think that the holy Sovereign and LawGiver would not administer justice with respect to His character (His majestic holiness) and with respect to His Law (statutes and precepts that He has articulated in His Word regarding His purpose for creation and regarding His governance of creation).
- If it is proper that the Sovereign Creator should establish laws that conform perfectly to His righteous character, then it is proper that such laws contain threatened punishment if they are transgressed by moral creatures.
- If it is proper that the laws the Sovereign Creator has established for moral creatures contain threatened punishment, then it is proper that every transgression of His laws (i.e., every offense against the infinitely holy Creator) be given the exact measure of punishment that has been threatened – this is only just ... and God is perfectly, eternally, and immutably just.

“Those who, of God's free grace, are admitted to see God and to enjoy the smiles of His face, and to be embraced in the arms of His love, when they behold His wonderful power, His great and dreadful majesty and justice on those who are objects of His wrath – how it will make them prize His love, and how it will double the sweetness of their joy. Comparing His favor and His displeasure together in their minds will give them a more lively sense and strong impression of each.”

Jonathan Edwards

Perspectives Concerning God's Strict Judgment and His Salvation of Sinners

"... being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. ... that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."
Rom. 3:24-26

"Therefore having been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we exult in hope of the glory of God."

But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, we shall be saved by His life."
Rom. 5:1-2, 8-10

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death."
Rom. 8:1-2

"And He did so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory."
Rom. 9:23

With regard to the sins of the elect in the sufferings of Christ, here the strictness of God appears much more remarkably. The infinite dignity of the Person of Christ, His nearness to the Father, and the Father's infinitely dear love for Him, did not restrain Him from fully executing the law. This appears more in the greatness of His sufferings. The inflexibleness of God's justice at Calvary more abundantly appears. His immutability appears in His sticking close to the law.

The glory of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ is revealed in two respects.

First, it shows the glorious wisdom of it, that there should be a way contrived wherein God may deal with such exceeding strictness as Judge of the law, yet pardon all the sin and save the sinners.

What glorious wisdom, that there should be such a way contrived wherein God may be so strict in punishing all sin that ever may have been committed and yet deliver those who have committed the sin.

- ◆ That He may be thus strict in executing the threatening of the law and yet deliver those who have committed sin from all punishment.
- ◆ That He may be thus strict in executing the threatening of the law and yet set at liberty them who have broken the law.
- ◆ That God may save the sinner from all misery, yea, and bring them to greater happiness than if they had never sinned at all and yet manifest His strictness in punishing sin.

What a marvelous wisdom this discovers in Him who has contrived the way of salvation by Jesus Christ! How glorious is this wisdom! How much it is above the wisdom of men or angels.

Second, it shows the gloriousness of the grace of God in our redemption because it is such grace as doesn't interfere with the holiness and justice of God.

If the grace of God, such as is manifested in our redemption, consisted in forgiving sin in a way of absolute mercy, without any sins being punished at all, this would have been inconsistent with the strictness of God as LawGiver and Judge.

Then the mercy of God would have been unbecoming the majesty of God and inconsistent with the holiness of God, and so would not have been a glorious mercy.

That mercy would not have been a glorious mercy that was not a holy mercy; it would have diminished the glory of God's majesty. But now in this way, the salvation of the sinner is done in holy mercy. The holiness of God most remarkably appears in giving Christ to die.

God's appointing Christ to die for sinners above all other means manifests the mercy of God.

There is no other act that so magnifies God's holiness and majesty.

Jonathan Edwards

The fact of a future judgment of all peoples of all ages is emphasized in Scripture by the repeated reference to judging *"the living and the dead"*. This phrase includes every person who has ever lived, or will ever live.

"... the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of *the living and the dead*." Acts 10:42
 "... Christ Jesus, who is to judge *the living and the dead*," II Tim. 4:1
 "... but they shall give account to Him who is ready to judge *the living and the dead*." I Pet. 4:5

Comment: Every person has an innate sense that justice is deserved when conscience and law are violated, and that proper and proportionate justice ought to be served, and that justice will ultimately be served.

The exercise of God's government in this age argues eloquently that God will one day execute complete and perfect justice ... universally and individually.

• **Evidence #1.** Historical examples of divine judgment recorded in Scripture. [see text box to the right]

- These selective instances of partial judgment do not comprise ultimate justice – righteous and impartial and universal justice.
- The Scriptures give instances of divine judgment where both the facts of judgment and the reason for judgment are delineated ... where both the "what" and the "why" of God's acting in judgment are explained.

• **Evidence #2.** The existence and operation of both natural law and moral law.

- Natural law is universal in its extent and is fixed and changeless in its operation.
- Moral law is written on the conscience of every person; it is universal in extent (*i.e.*, every person is endowed with: a moral conscience; a desire for ethics in practice; a sense of guilt when conscience or ethics are violated; and an expectation that deserved justice ought to be and ultimately will be administered).
- Law, by definition, contains sanctions – sanctions which are intended to be imposed by a just judge based on true violations of fixed law ... and so also with God's sovereign governance of His creation.
- ★ Natural law: violation of natural law has sure and inescapable consequences – even injury and death ... and operates so universally.
- ★ Moral law: violation of moral law has sure and inescapable consequences – even injury and death ... and operates so universally, even as natural law.
- ★ Universal law implies the existence of a sovereign Judge who will implement universal justice.

Evidence #1 – specific examples

The fact that God judges universally is clear from these examples:

- The Curse
- The Flood
- Confusion of languages at Babel

The fact that God judges specific peoples or nations is clear from these examples:

- Destruction of Sodom & Gomorrah
- The Babylonian Captivity
- The Destruction of Jerusalem (first by the Babylonians & later by the Romans in 70 AD)

The fact God that judges on an individual basis is evident from these examples:

- Cain (Gen. 4:1-16)
- Nadab & Abihu (Lev. 10:1-11)
- Uzziah (II Chron. 26)
- Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4)
- Belshazzar (Dan. 5)
- Ananias & Sapphira (Acts 5:1-6))
- Herod (Acts 12:21-23))

Examples of instances of divine judgment dotting the pages of Scripture emphasize the certainty of divine judgment in the future as well.

Note: A recommended study is to examine God's own interpretation for His acting in judgment in specific cases.

It is worth noting that judgment and reward are emphasized at the end of both Testaments.

- Mal. 3:13 – 4:3
- Rev. 20:11-15; Rev. 22:12

This fact punctuates the truth that God's purpose and plan for the ages is to judge the present world.

Questions & Answers Relating to Judgment

Question #1. *How will God judge? That is, what judicial principles will be employed in judging?*

Answer.

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1) righteously (w/o injustice): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• based on truth – base on unimpeachable evidence;• based on fact – not based on hearsay or appearance;• based on Law. | 2) impartially (w/o respect of persons): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• without prejudice or bias – not as man judges;• with consideration of “light”, “opportunity” and “responsibility”. | 3) equitably: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• with absolute fairness;• according to uniformity of principle. |
|---|---|--|

Gen. 18:25 “... Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly? (i.e., do justice?)”

Duet. 32:13-14 “For I proclaim the name of the LORD; ascribe greatness to our God! The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He.”

Job 8:3 “Does God pervert justice or does the Almighty pervert what is right?”

Duet. 10:17 “For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, the awesome God who does not show partiality, nor take a bribe.”

Rom. 2:11 “For there is no partiality (no respect of persons) with God.”

Gal. 2:6 “God shows no partiality.”

Col. 3:25 “He who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.”

Question #2. *How will God judge? That is, what evidentiary input will form the basis for judgment?*

Answer. On the basis of works – on the basis of individual performance ... an essential prerequisite for a righteous, impartial and equitable judgment.

Ps. 62:11-12 “One thing God has spoken; these two things I have heard: that power belongs to God; and loving kindness is Thine, O Lord, for Thou dost recompense a man according to his work.”

Prov. 24:12 “... And will He not render (i.e., bring back) to man according to his work?”

Jer. 17:10 “I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results (lit., fruit) of his deeds.”

Matt. 16:27 “For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds.”

Rom. 14:12 “So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God.”

Rev. 2:23 “... and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and will give to each one of you according to your deeds.”

Logical Implications of a Judgment Based on Works:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) All judgment will be administered on an individual basis – it will be a judgment that is fully “personalized”. | 2) There will be degrees of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• punishment in hell;• reward in heaven. |
|--|---|

Comment: A just judgment (i.e., a righteous, impartial and equitable judgment) that is executed on the basis of works requires an omniscient judge. His omniscient and infallible account of all works guarantees a consistently just judgment.

Matt. 11:20-24 "Then He began to reproach the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent.
 'Woe to you, Chorazin!
 Woe to you Bethsaida! ... it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. ... it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you.' "

Comment: Judgment is always a determination of the future based on actions (deeds) performed in the past ... actions (deeds) for which one is called to give an account before the bar of judgment. Stated another way, judgment always involves an examination of the past for the purpose of determining future destiny and future experience (degrees of felicity or degrees of torment).

Comment: Since judgment is based on works ... and since everyone's works differ in quantity and quality ... and since judgment is equitable and impartial ... it then necessarily follows that verdicts must differ in regard to both nature and degree.

Question #3. Who will serve as Judge for mankind?

Answer. The Lord Jesus Christ – the judgment of man will be by a man ... by the Son of Man.

John 5:22-23, 27 "For not even the Father judges anyone, but has given all judgment to the Son, in order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father.
 And He (the Father) gave Him (the Son) authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man."

Acts 10:42 "And He (the Father) ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead."

Acts 17:31 "... [God] has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

Question #4. Where will man be judged? That is, before what judgment bar will an individual stand?

Answer. There are two specific, but different in type and effect, judgment bars noted in Scripture.

1) The Judgment Seat of Christ.

- ultimate destiny = heaven ... this is the fixed destiny of all who appear before this bar of judgment;
- a judgment for the granting of reward or for the loss of reward ... for the assigning of position and privilege.

2) The Great White Throne.

- ultimate destiny = hell ... this is the fixed destiny of all who appear before this bar of judgment;
- a judgment for determination of the degree and nature of punishment in hell.

Rom. 14:10-12 "... For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God (Christ, KJV). ... So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God."

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

Note: The context of these verses clearly shows that the pronoun "we" refers to saints – to regenerated and justified sinners.

Rev. 20:11-13 "And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.
 And I saw the dead, the great and the small before the throne ... and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. ... and they were judged, every one according to their deeds."

Note: Those referred to by "the dead" are all those who do not take part in the "first resurrection" (see Rev. 20:5-6); in particular, those over whom the second death has power.

Question #5. What determines which judgment bar one will stand before?

Answer. All judgment is based on works, and the particular judgment bar before which an individual will stand, and be judged, is determined by the presence or absence of one specific “work”.

John 6:27-29 “Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, ...’
 They said therefore to Him,
 ‘What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?’
 Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God (*i.e.*, this is the work that leads to and endures to eternal life), that you believe in Him (the Son) whom He (the Father) has sent.’ ”

This is the single “work” that distinguishes whether one will stand in judgment before the Great White Throne or at the Judgment Seat of Christ – the “work” of **believing**. Specifically, the single determining work is that of believing (intellectually accepting, willfully embracing and whole-heartedly trusting) that Jesus Christ is God’s one and only begotten Son, the one and only Savior for mankind ... the One who alone has:

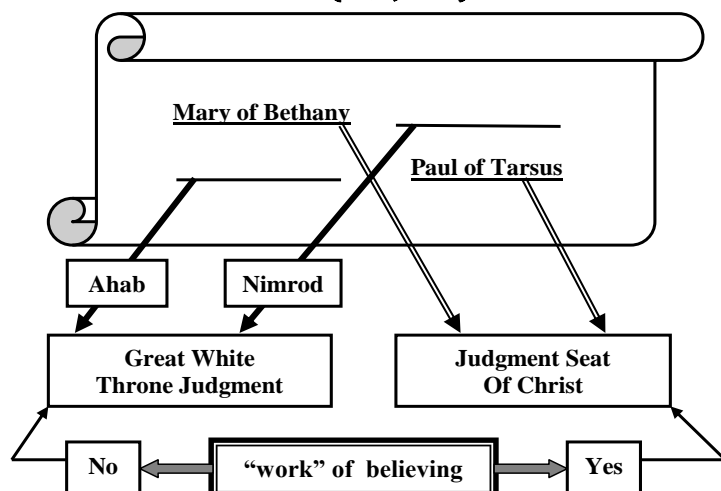
- lived a perfectly righteous life in His humanity;
- propitiated the wrath of God toward man’s sin through His death;
- made atonement for man’s sin through His shed blood;
- conquered sin, death and the grave through His glorious resurrection from the dead;
- ascended to the right hand of the Father where He holds a perpetual priesthood.

Note: John 5:29 speaks of a “resurrection of life” and a “resurrection of judgment”. Hearing and believing the Gospel is the pivotal step that determines which resurrection, and therefore which judgment, applies to a particular person.

John 5:24 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes in Him who sent Me, has eternal life (as a real, abiding, personal possession), and does not come into judgment (*i.e.*, at the Great White Throne), but has passed out of death (*i.e.*, out of the second death) into life (*i.e.*, eternal life).”

Rev. 20:12,14 “And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the [Great White] throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.”
 “And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.”

BOOK (SCROLL) OF LIFE



Rev. 3:5 “He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.”

The “*I will not*” is an absolute guarantee. Here is assurance of eternal security in Christ.

Rev. 20:15 “And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

Consider the following Scriptures that speak further concerning the “*Book of Life*”.

Ex. 32:33 “And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.’ ”

Ps. 9:5 “Thou hast rebuked the nations; Thou hast destroyed the wicked; Thou hast blotted out their name forever and ever.”

Ps. 69:28 “May they (*i.e.*, the wicked) be blotted out of the book of life, and may they not be recorded with the righteous.”

Note: To have one’s name appear in the *Book of Life* is to be accounted righteous.

Rev. 13:8 “And all who dwell on the earth will worship him (*i.e.*, the beast = Antichrist), everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.” (NASB)

[“... everyone whose name has not been written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” (KJV)]

Rev. 17:8 “... And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, ...” (KJV)

Comment: The Scriptures reveal that all persons who will be welcomed into God’s glorious kingdom, have been chosen “from before the foundation of the world” (*Eph. 1:4; II Tim. 1:9*). We see that there are names written in “the book of life from the foundation of the world”, and there are names that are excluded. Those whose names are written in this book will have their names confessed before the Father (*Rev. 3:5*) – a confession that pertains exclusively to those whom Christ redeemed, called, justified and reconciled to the Father. All whose names appear in the Book of Life (*i.e.*, the same group of individuals who are in possession of this single, efficacious “work of believing” ... being born of the Spirit) will appear for judgment at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

All others (*i.e.*, those who are not in possession of this “work of believing”, and whose names therefore do not appear in the Book of Life) are destined to appear at the Great White Throne for final judgment.

- ★ Some general, summary points worth noting – points every person should ponder seriously.
 - There is but one way to be born:
 - born in sin ... born with a nature inherited from Adam, under the same sentence of death.
 - There are two ways to die:
 - one can die in his sins (w/o the “work” of believing in the Son);
 - one can die in faith (with the “work” of believing in the Son).
 - There are two destinies after death – after separation of the soul/spirit from the body:
 - the soul/spirit goes to Hades (destiny of those who die in their sins);
 - the soul/spirit goes to be “at home with the Lord”, (the destiny of those who die in faith).
 - There are two resurrections – two reunifications of the soul/spirit with an immortal body:
 - a resurrection of judgment (the resurrection of those whose soul/spirits are in Hades);
 - a resurrection of life (the resurrection of those whose soul/spirits are “with the Lord”).
 - There are two judgment bars – immediate destinies after resurrection:
 - the Great White Throne judgment (judgment bar for those who lack the “work” of believing);
 - the Judgment Seat of Christ (judgment bar for those who possess the “work” of believing).
 - There are two eternal destinies – destinies after appearance at respective judgment bars:
 - hell (destiny of all who appear before the Great White Throne, judged for their works);
 - heaven (destiny for all appearing before the Judgment Seat of Christ, judged for their works).

Question #6. How will unbelievers (the natural man) be judged?

Answer. By the testimony of law and conscience, plus a record of all works.

Rom. 2:12 "For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law; and all who sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law;"

Rom. 3:19-20a "Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight;"

Rom. 2:14-16 "For when the Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things in the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus."

The universal witness of conscience in every individual will be active, bearing witness and indicting.

II Thess. 8-9 "... dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."
[The Gospel is the sole basis for salvation.]
(See *Acts 4:12*; *I Cor. 15:1-2*)

Rev. 20:12 "And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds."

- ★ The natural man is already declared guilty and without excuse because he has suppressed the ample and irrefutable evidence of God as Creator and LawGiver, the only One worthy of man's worship.
(see *Rom. 1:20*; *2:1*)

Question #7. How will Christians (the regenerated man) be judged?

Answer. By a "fire test" of works ... a quality test of the nature of each person's works; not only the "what" of one's works, but also the "how" and the "why" the works were performed.

I Cor. 3:11-15 "... But let each man be careful how he builds upon it (*i.e.*, upon the foundation). For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show (declare) it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work (*lit.*, of what sort each man's work is). If any man's work which he has built upon it (*i.e.*, upon the foundation which is Jesus Christ) remains, he shall receive a reward (*Gr.*, *misthos*). If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire."

Comment: The phrase "saved, yet so as through fire" seems to refer to the "fire test" of a person's works, and the phrase "but he himself shall be saved" to the reality of possessing the "all-determining work" of believing in the Son whom the Father has sent. The phrase "he shall suffer loss" refers particularly and only to loss of reward for a person who yet has cause to rejoice fully in the gift of salvation based solely on possession of the "work" of believing in the Son.

Note the repeated word "shall" → there is a guaranteed certainty that pertains to the reward, loss & salvation described in these statements!

"... but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God."

I Cor. 4:5

Note: The "fire test" will expose what is authentically holy and truly praiseworthy according to God's personal value system, and this test will thus form a just basis for His judgment of a redeemed and justified sinner's "works done in the body".

- ★ Choices made during life on earth will directly influence the quality of life in eternity. Belief determines judgment bar and ultimate destiny, but works will have a direct bearing on one's relational experience in eternity.
- ★ The judgment of a Christian is a test (a revealing) of the true nature and essential quality of the 'works' performed in one's faith walk and in one's obedience to the Gospel while living in the physical body. The purpose is to determine if a reward will be granted plus the nature of the reward that will be granted. The judgment reward has everything to do with future position, privilege, responsibility and experience ... but not with eternal destination.

Judgment Bases and Comparisons

wood, hay, straw vs. gold, silver, precious stones (*1 Cor. 3:11-15*)
 worthless vs. valuable
 deeds of the flesh vs. deeds of the Spirit (*Rom. 8:1-14*)
 fruit of sin nature vs. fruit of indwelling Spirit (*Gal. 5:16-26*)

- The value of the foundation calls for careful and quality building (*i.e.*, faith works).
- The excellence of the foundation calls for excellence in building materials (*i.e.*, works).
- Fire gives the thought of a purification test – a searching of the true nature.
- Quality (sort) is emphasized, not quantity.

"Nothing is clearer than that a reward is promised to good works in order to support the weakness of our flesh by some comfort, but not to inflate our minds with vain glory." (Calvin)

"I'd say there are at least 25 occasions where the NT clearly teaches that we will be granted rewards according to our works." (Sproul)

Two Greek words are used for 'reward' in the New Testament:

- *misthos* = wages, reimbursement for service (for a work done);
- *apodidomai* = to give back in return; to return as a recompense.
 ['apo' = back, return; 'didomai' = to give, to grant] (*apodidomai* = reimbursement in full measure)

Matt. 5:12 "Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward (*apodidomai*) in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

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

Matt. 6:1-6 "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward (*misthos*) with your Father who is in heaven. When therefore you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward (*misthos*) in full. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay (*apodidomai*) you." And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, in order to be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward (*misthos*) in full. But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut the door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay (*apodidomai*) you.

Mk. 9:41 "For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward (*apodidomai*)"

John 4:35-36 "Do not say, 'There are yet 4 months, and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. Already he who reaps is receiving wages (*misthos*), and is gathering fruit for life eternal; that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together."

Note: No texts in Scripture contain more astounding statements pertaining to rewards relative to life after death than those by the Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospels.

II John 8 "Watch yourselves, that you might not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward (*misthos*)."

Rev. 11:17-18 "We give thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, ... because Thou has taken they great power and hast begun to reign. And the nations were enraged, and Thy wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to give reward (*misthos*) to Thy bond-servants the prophets and to the saints and

Points of note:

- reward (payment, recompense) will be made;
- reward will occur in the after-life (*i.e.*, at the resurrection);
- the reward received will be a blessing – a divine favor that brings true joy and deep satisfaction;
- the generosity of the Master in granting reward will magnify Him as a most glorious Master.

Parable of the Invited Guests

Lk. 14:7-15: (vs. 13-14) “But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay (*antapodidomi*) you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

repay (repaid) → *antapodidomi* = to give back as an equivalent; recompense

Comment: In the Parable of the Minas in *Luke 19:11-27* the reward for diligent, faithful service is stated as “authority” – a position of responsibility and privilege under the “nobleman” who owns the kingdom.

The honor of a servant is to serve under the authority of, and for the honor of, the Master.

vs.26. “I tell you, that to everyone that has shall more be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.”

See *Rev. 2:26* & *Rev. 3:21*. Also, *Matt. 19:27 – 20:16*.

Comment: The widely referenced reward for the righteous, particularly that reward granted to church-age saints, has particular relevance to service under the sovereign rulership of the glorified Christ during the Millennial Kingdom age. The honor of a servant-steward is to hold and exercise authority – most especially an authority received from and exercised under the Master-King ... plus to experience the confidence and trust of the Master-King.

Rev. 5:10 “And Thou hast made [those whom Thou didst purchase for God with Thy blood] to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.”

Rev. 20:6 “Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for 1000 years.”

Rev. 22:3-5 “... and His bond-servants shall serve Him ... and they shall reign forever and ever.”

Note: One of the outcomes of the proceedings at the Judgment Seat of Christ is the assignment of privileged duty to be experienced by resurrected saints during the Millennial Age.

Heb 6:10 “For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.”

Heb. 11:6 “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that **He is a rewarder** of those who seek Him.”

Note: God is a “rewarder” → He is the “*misthos-apodidomai*” Creator ... the “reimbursing, recompensing, rewarding” Sovereign who both pays wages to His elect bond-slave stewards and faithfully & generously gives back in return for service rendered in His name and for His glory.

Matt. 20:15 “Is it not lawful for Me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?”

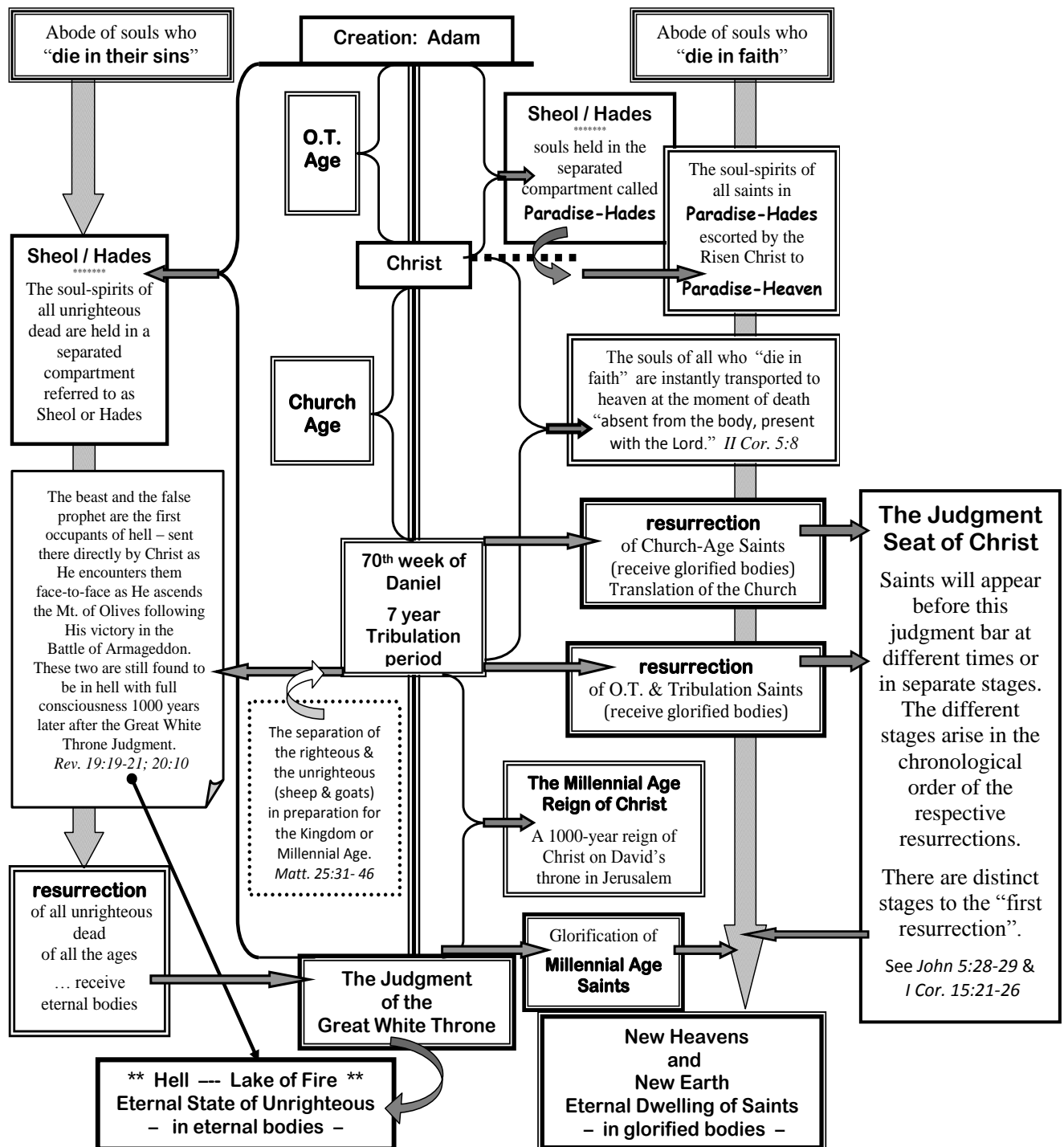
Essential Points to Note:

Choices made in this life here on earth will have a direct bearing on our future lives in eternity.

- Belief (faith) determines judgment bar and ultimate destiny.
 - Salvation is the free gift of God, and should never be confused with receipt of rewards.
- Behavior (deeds) determines quality of experience in eternity ... a fact that pertains both to the righteous (regenerated man) and to the unrighteous (natural man).
 - There will be distinctions of reward in heaven and of judgment in hell that is justly based on one’s works, life priorities, etc. while living in the body in the present age.

An Overview of the Age – From Creation to Consummation

A Chronological Ordering of the Various Resurrections and Judgments



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B. The Issue of Death, The Abode of the Dead, and The Eternal State

It is appointed unto man to die once, and then what?

Some Basic Facts

1. There is only one way to be born:

- in sin ... under wrath ... and with a sentence of death.

“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.” *Ps. 51:5*

“The wicked are estranged from the womb; these who speak lies go astray from birth.” *Ps. 58:3*

“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ... and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. ... you were at that time separate from Christ, ... having no hope and without God in the world.” *Eph. 2:1-3, 12*

“What is man, that he should be pure, or he who is born of a woman that he should be righteous?” *Job 15:14*

2. There are two ways to die:

- in sin ... in Adam ... condemned
- in faith ... in Christ ... justified.

There is no question *whether* a person will die.
The preeminent question of Scripture is: *how* will one die?
This question needs to be carefully weighed by every person.

“For God did not send His Son into the world to judge [and condemn] the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged [and condemned]; he who does not believe has been judged [and condemned] already, because He has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” *John 3:17-18*

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.”
John 5:24

Note: Eternal life is here contrasted with judgment and death. Also, judgment and death are seen to be used as equivalent terms.

“Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.” *Rom. 5:1-2*

3. There are two abodes after death:

- Sheol/Hades
- Paradise.

Comment: The fact that there are two ways to die has profound implications relative to the state and eternal destiny of persons after death.

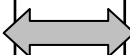
The Bible affirms with clarity, and therefore we affirm with conviction, that the soul exists continuously and eternally with full consciousness.
The continuity of personal, conscious existence is what we refer to as “*life after death*” – it is a necessary essence of “*life after death*”. The soul of every person continues to exist without interruption through the moment of physical death, and continuously thereafter.



Noteworthy Clarification

The terms Sheol (*Heb.*) in the O.T. and Hades (*Gr.*) in the N.T. are used as equivalent designators for the general residence of the soul-spirits of the dead.

“For Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol; neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay.” *Ps. 16:10*



“For David says of Him, ‘... Because Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades, nor allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay.’” *Acts. 2:25-27*

“[David] looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that ‘He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay.’” *Acts 2:31*

The following Scriptures emphasize:

- the sure reality of a continuity of conscious life following physical death;
- the factual reality of a place where the soul-spirit of every person takes up residence upon death – the place called Sheol in many OT texts ... the place where soul-spirits of both righteous & unrighteous dead are held within the ordered economy of the OT age – during the period from creation until the cross of Christ.

<p>“And Abraham breathed his last and died full of days, an old man and satisfied with life; and he was gathered to his people.” <i>Gen. 25:8</i></p> <p>“And Isaac breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people, an old man and satisfied with days;” <i>Gen. 35:29</i></p> <p>“Then [Jacob] charged them and said to them, ‘I am about to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave ... which Abraham bought ... When Jacob finished charging his sons, he drew his feet into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.’” <i>Gen. 49:29-33</i></p> <p>“So Jacob tore his clothes, ... and mourned for his son [Joseph] many days. ... And [Jacob] said, ‘Surely I will go down to <u>Sheol</u> in mourning for my son.’” <i>Gen. 37:34-35</i></p>	<p>“But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the burning bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Now He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to Him.” <i>Lk. 20:37-38</i></p>	<p>“So are the paths of all who forget God; and the hope of the godless will perish.” <i>Job 8:13</i></p> <p>“The wicked will turn to <u>Sheol</u>, even all the nations who forget God.” <i>Ps. 9:17</i></p> <p>“This is the way of those who are foolish, and of those after them who approve their words. As sheep they are appointed for <u>Sheol</u>; death shall be their shepherd; and the upright shall rule over them in the morning; and their form shall be for <u>Sheol</u> to consume, so that they have no habitation. But God will redeem my soul from the power of <u>Sheol</u>; for He will receive me.” <i>Ps. 49:13-15.</i></p>
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➤ Conclusion: comparison of the OT and NT texts quoted at bottom of the previous page, plus the texts quoted above, reveal:

- Sheol is an Older Testament equivalent of the Newer Testament place termed Hades
- Sheol/Hades is the general abode of the dead – both of the righteous and unrighteous.

It is important to distinguish between separated compartments that are contained within the general place referred to as “Sheol/Hades”. The distinction between these differentiated abodes of soul-spirits is set forth most clearly in the teaching of Jesus recorded in *Lk. 16:19-31*.

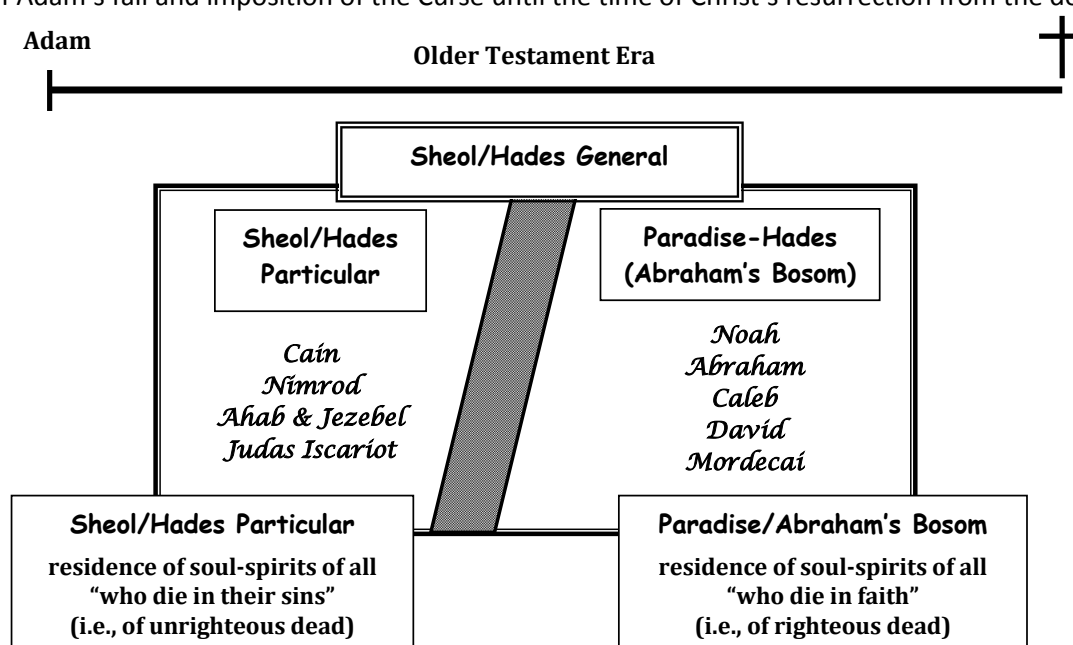
Words of the Scriptural text <i>Lk. 16:19-31</i>	Commentary
<p>“Now there was a rich man, And a poor man named Lazarus. ... Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to <u>Abraham’s bosom</u>; and the rich man also died and was buried. In <u>Hades</u> he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame’.</p> <p>But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And, besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able and none may cross over from there to us’.”</p>	<p>This Scripture clearly defines two distinct residences within the general abode of departed soul-spirits referred to as Sheol/Hades. Our Lord differentiates between one abode called “<u>Abraham’s bosom</u>” and another abode referred to simply as “<u>Hades</u>”. That these are indeed differentiated abodes is clear from the fact that they are separated by “a great chasm”.</p> <p>It seems clear that the abode of the soul-spirit of a righteous person is here indicated as residing in “Abraham’s bosom”, because Abraham is held in Scripture as the quintessential saint who “died in faith”. By contrast, the soul-spirit of an unrighteous person who “died in sin” is here indicated as being held in “Hades”.</p>

Clarifying Distinctions and Terminology

With the evident use of Sheol/Hades in a dual sense across different Scriptural texts, we will hereafter refer to the general abode of departed soul-spirits encompassing all of the OT dead, both righteous dead and unrighteous dead, by the term **"Sheol/Hades General"**. Based on Jesus' teaching per the text of *Lk. 16:19-31* we identify internal to **"Sheol/Hades General"** the existence of two differentiated compartments, two distinct and separated abodes of soul-spirits.

1. The compartment where the soul-spirits of all who "die in their sins" reside, termed **"Hades"** by Jesus as recorded by Luke, we will refer to as **"Sheol/Hades Particular"** for purposes of clarity and precision.
2. The other compartment where the soul-spirits of all who "die in faith", termed **"Abraham's bosom"** by Jesus as recorded by Luke, will henceforth be referred to by the term **"Paradise"**.

Hence, we can represent the abode of the dead during the whole of the OT era in terms of the following schematic. This schematic depicts the state of affairs pertaining to all those who died ranging from the time of Adam's fall and imposition of the Curse until the time of Christ's resurrection from the dead.



★ Observe that Jesus referred to the abode of the righteous dead in *Lk.16:22* as **"Abraham's bosom"**, but as **"Paradise"** in *Lk. 23:43* when He gave His promise to the repentant thief on the cross. Later, after Christ's resurrection, the abode of the righteous dead in heaven is also referred to as **"Paradise"**.

"And [Jesus] said to him (i.e., to the repentant thief on the cross), 'Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in **Paradise**.'" *Lk. 23:43*

Just as we distinguish between **Sheol/Hades General** and **Sheol/Hades Particular**, it is evident that we also need to distinguish between **Paradise-Hades** and **Paradise-Heaven**. That this distinction is necessary is clearly revealed by the use of the word **"Paradise"** in later Scriptural references, such as those listed below.

"And I know how such a man ... was caught up into **Paradise**, and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak."
II Cor. 12:3-4

"To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the **Paradise** of God." *Rev. 2:7*

"And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and the Lamb, ... and on either side of the river was the tree of life." *Rev. 22:1-2*

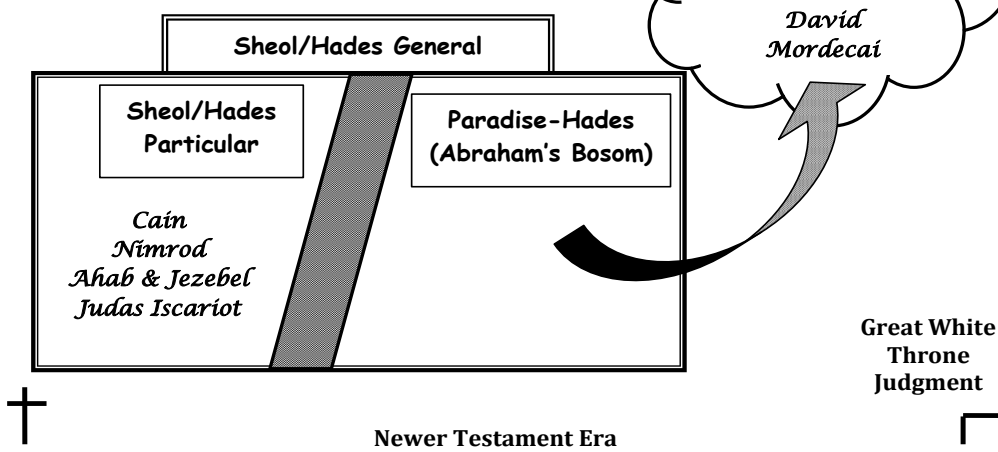
These latter texts are clearly “post resurrection” references; they pertain particularly to that time period following the epoch-changing event of Christ’s resurrection from the grave. Our Lord’s victory over death and the grave, and His accomplishment of a complete salvation for sinners, opened the way for a change in both Sheol/Hades and in heaven. We have clear statements of Holy Scripture, such as listed below, indicating that the soul-spirits of righteous persons go immediately to **Paradise-Heaven** upon physical death, no longer to **Paradise-Hades**.

“Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—for we walk by faith not by sight—we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.” *II Cor. 5:6-8*

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.
... But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.” *Phil. 1:21-24*

It is without dispute that our Lord ascended to the “right hand of the Father” in heaven, and is there seated in the position of authority as Head of the Church, as the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, and as the coming Messiah-King. Hence, for a saint in the post-resurrection age to “be at home with the Lord” and “to depart and be with Christ” means that their soul-spirits necessarily go directly to **Paradise-Heaven**. Not only this, but there is Biblical foundation to believe that that all the soul-spirits of righteous dead of the whole period from creation to the cross have been transported from **Paradise-Hades** to **Paradise-Heaven** – there to forever be with the Lord.

★ All occupants who entered their rest in **Paradise-Hades** during the OT era have been transported to a new place of rest – to **Paradise-Heaven**. The soul-spirits of all the saints of all the ages henceforth reside in God’s glorious heaven where they dwell with full consciousness in the real presence of the risen, glorified Christ. The status of **Sheol/Hades General** has been forever changed – **Paradise-Hades** has been evacuated.



Eph. 4:7-10 is a text containing possible reference to this indicated transfer of OT saints from **Paradise-Hades** to **Paradise-Heaven**. This Scripture is considered somewhat of a “hard saying”, and its intended meaning has been clouded by several differing interpretations. With the goal of exploring its possible support for the view that **Paradise-Heaven** is indeed the present abode of the soul-spirits of all righteous dead, as the quoted texts *II Cor. 5:6-8* and *Phil. 1:21-24* seem quite clearly to require, we will engage a brief textual analysis of *Eph. 4:7-10* conjoined with its originating OT reference *Ps. 68:18*.

❖ Biblical Support for a Post-Resurrection Transfer of OT Saints out of Paradise-Hades

The originating reference *Ps. 68:18* clearly speaks concerning a triumphal return of a warrior-king with spoils and captives associated with a victorious military campaign. The specific earthly reference in view may well have been a reference to David returning to Mt. Zion in one of his victory parades. However, the statements in *Ps. 68:17-18* are decidedly Messianic, and must therefore be speaking of a particular Messianic triumph.

“The chariots of God are myriads, thousands upon thousands; Adonai is among them as at Sinai, in holiness. You have ascended on high, You have led captive Your captives; You have received gifts among men, even among the rebellious also, that Yahweh Elohim may dwell there.” *Ps. 68:17-18*

“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it says, ‘When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men.’
(Now this expression, ‘He ascended’, what does it mean except that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)” *Eph. 4:7-10*

Relevant Interpretive Points

1. Some interpreters, while specifically holding the Messianic context in view, consider *Eph. 4:8* to be a reference to Christ’s conquest of His enemies: Satan, sin, death, and the curse.
 - Counterpoint: The reference in *Eph. 4:8* indicates that the captives are taken to heaven, that very abode where the ascended, glorified Christ has gone. Now it seems neither reasonable nor true that Christ has led captive Satan, sin, death, and the curse to heaven. These enemies all remain actively operative on the cursed earth in this present age. Christ’s victory achieved in His incarnate humanity, especially His triumph over sin, death and Satan, through His death on the cross and resurrection from the tomb, have ultimate triumphal implications over these enemies, but these enemies have not yet been “led captive”.
2. The statement “led captive” in *Eph. 4:8* employs the past tense (aorist), a linguistic fact which contravenes seeing this text as referring to some on-going or future work of liberation as some have proposed. For example, the liberation of sinners from their slavery to sin through the divine work of calling, regeneration and justification, which some infer to be in view in this text, is an on-going deliverance of captives and not a past, completed event.
3. The reference to “descending into the lower parts (region) of the earth” accords well with the statements recorded in *I Pet. 3:19-20* speaking of our Lord’s activity immediately following His death on the cross ... and most likely preceding His glorious resurrection.
 - Note #1: With reference to *I Pet. 3:19-20* and our Lord’s descent into the “lower parts of the earth”, He clearly did not liberate those captive “spirits” who “once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah” (i.e., imprisoned fallen angels), for they are still being held in their incarcerated state awaiting the final judgment (cf., *II Pet. 2:4 & Jude 6*). Yet the text of *Eph. 4:8-9* speaks clearly of a liberation of captives following a descent, even a descent that precedes a subsequent ascension to a place “far above all the heavens”.
 - Note #2. Furthermore, the reference to a descent “into the lower parts of the earth” seems to speak of something quite distinct from the ‘descent’ associated with our Lord’s incarnation (see *Phil. 2:5-8*), His coming to earth as the virgin-conceived son of Mary, as some have suggested.
 - ◆ As an example of this interpretive slant to the ‘descent’ in view in *Eph. 4:9*, consider several modern translations of the first statement of this verse.

- “Now the word ‘ascended’ implies that He also descended to the lowest level, down to the very earth.” (the New English Bible).
- “What does ‘He ascended’ mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions?” (The New International Version).

Clearly translations with such preferred interpretive slants are obstacles to an understanding of the text as pertaining to any evacuation of **Paradise-Hades** and leading the captive soul-spirits to a new abode; namely, a whole-sale translation of those soul-spirits directly to **Paradise-Heaven** as the texts of *II Cor. 5:6-8*, *II Cor. 12:3-4*, and *Phil. 1:21-24* seem to require.

Based on these considerations, it seems more convincing to this author that *Eph. 4:8-9* is actually describing a mighty deliverance of “captives”, even “Your captives” (per *Ps. 68:18* as translated in the NASB). *Eph. 4:8-9* describes a deliverance of “righteous captives” – captives awaiting the completion of God’s great work of salvation, even their arrival at an eternal state of intimate communal relationship with the Creator in true “Shalom” – in a comprehensive state of peace and wholeness of being.

4. There are two resurrections:

- a resurrection of life ... the resurrection of the righteous ... “the first resurrection”
- a resurrection of judgment ... the resurrection of the unrighteous ... a “second” resurrection.

“Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a **resurrection of life**, those who committed the evil deeds to a **resurrection of judgment**.” *John 5:28-29*

“But when you give a reception, invite the poor, ... for you will be repaid at the **resurrection of the righteous**.” *Lk. 14:13-14*

“having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a **resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked**.” *Acts 24:15*

“And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and the word of God, ... and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is **the first resurrection**. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in **the first resurrection**; over these **the second death** has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. ... And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is **the second death**, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” *Rev. 20:4-6, 14-15*.

Comment: There are several, chronologically-separated, resurrections included in the term “**the first resurrection**”. That is, there are several distinct phases to the full scope of “**the first resurrection**”. Further, and from a strict chronological perspective, all participants in “**the first resurrection**” will be raised from the dead before any of the unrighteous dead still residing in Sheol-Hades will be raised.

Those who participate in “**the resurrection of judgment**” (alt., the “second resurrection”) are not raised until just prior to the Great White Throne judgment at the end of the age, and thereupon they will be judged and condemned to their eternal destiny in hell → “**the second death**”. [See chart on page 71]

5. There are two ultimate destinies:

- hell ... “the lake of fire” ... “the second death”
- the new creation ... the new heaven & new earth.

Comment: Both of these terms, the lake of fire and the new creation, speak of real, physical destinies where real persons will exist in real, physical bodies. These are places to be inhabited by persons in imperishable, physical bodies. No one will enter either of these destinies in a disembodied state.

“But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.
II Pet. 3:13

“But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes I tell you to fear Him!”

Luke. 12:5

Note: “hell” = *Gehenna* (Gr.)

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.” *Rev. 21:1*

“And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” *Rev. 20:15*

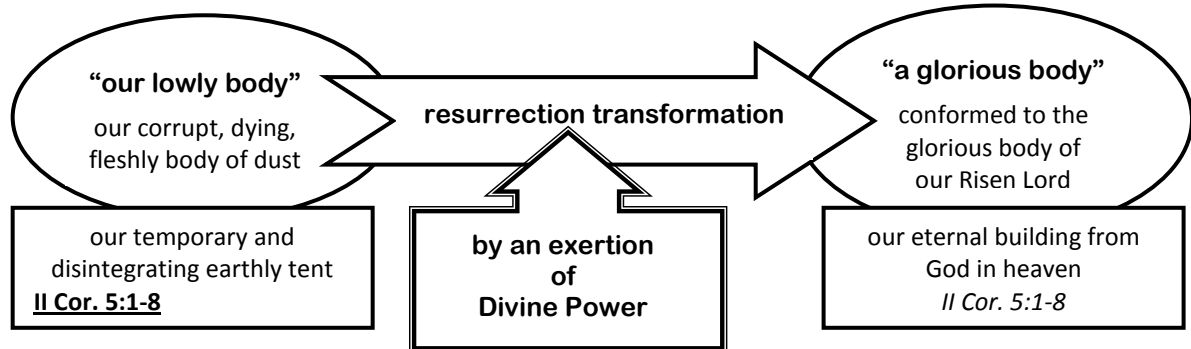
Clarifying Notes:

- ◆ No person is presently in hell. Hell will not be occupied by any unrighteous dead until after the “resurrection of judgment”. All unrighteous dead will then be brought before the “Judge of all the earth” in immortal bodies to be consigned to this eternal destiny.
- ◆ *Hades* is a place where only disembodied soul-spirits reside awaiting final judgment; *hell* is a place where only resurrected people are condemned and sentenced to eternal judgment to be experienced in physical bodies.
- ◆ The word ‘hell’ is used in many English translations of the Scriptures to translate both “Hades” and “Gehenna” without differentiating between these two distinctly different terms that refer to distinctly different places.
 - Hades is a temporary residence
 - Hell will be a permanent residence.

The Resurrection Body – The Eternal State of All Who Die “in Faith”

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with His glorious body, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.” *Phil. 3:20-21*

“even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, **the redemption of our body.**”
Rom. 8:23



“So also is **the resurrection of the dead**. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is **raised in power**; it is sown a natural body, it is **raised a spiritual body.**” ...
“The first man is from the earth, earthy (made of dust); the second man is from heaven. As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. And just as we have borne the image of the earthy, **we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.**” *I Cor. 15:42-49*

“We know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.”
John 3:2b

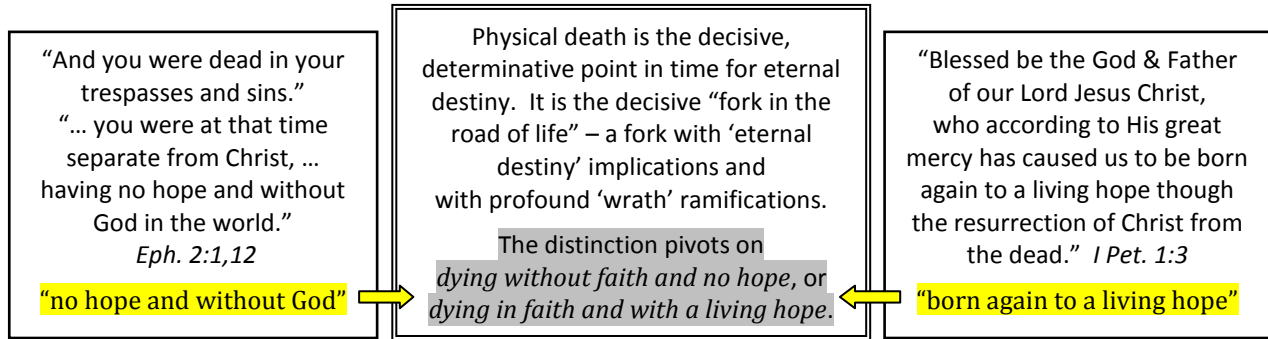
Question: What will our future bodies be like?
A few answers – admittedly somewhat speculative.

- ◆ There will be unmistakable recognition of others.
- ◆ All effects of the Curse will be completely eradicated—no aging, no illness, no physical or emotional limitations, an existence with unhindered and unlimited fulfillment and peace, ... and more, much more—all of which is consistent with living in an environment totally enveloped with the glory and goodness of our Holy Creator – one filled with a sensible experience of the fullness of His glorious presence.
- ◆ We will likely be in a state similar to man in his prime.
 - If Adam had not sinned, he would have lived forever in his prime – the same state of physical and mental being with which he was created.
 - Our Lord was crucified in his prime, and His resurrected body – His eternal, glorified body – had the same appearance as His pre-crucifixion body.

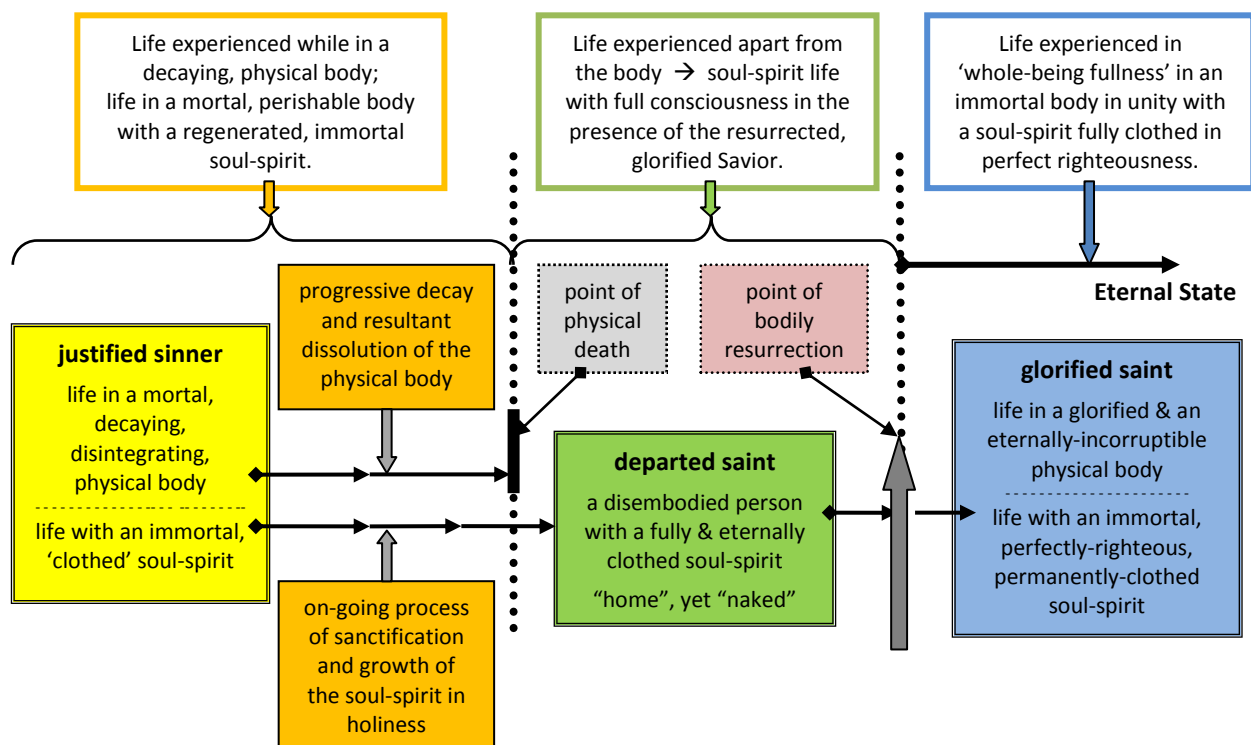
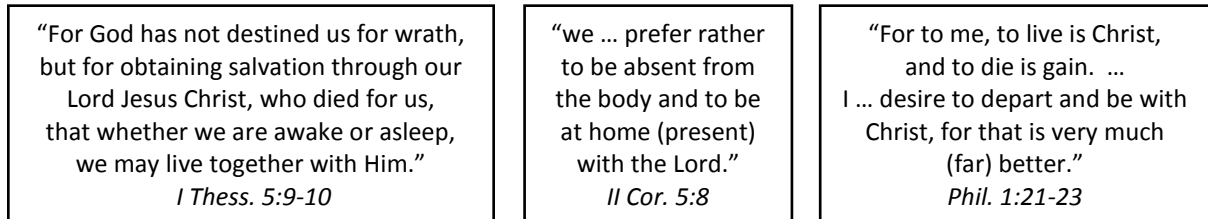
Noteworthy contrasts between
our physical bodies and
our future glorified bodies

perishable	imperishable
dishonorable	glorious
weak	powerful
natural	spiritual
earthy	heavenly
image of dust	image of heaven
mortal	immortal
corruptible	incorruptible

Dying and Death of One Who Dies “in Faith”: Perspectives



Key Promises Regarding Destiny and State of Being



Comment #1. Passing through death for one who dies in faith is a moment accompanied with a wholly uninterrupted, continuously-active, cognitive beholding by the soul-spirit essence. The very same soul-spirit essence that was formerly housed in the now lifeless physical residence is, at death, instantaneously liberated from its former residence, yet its former capacities remain fully functional. The cognitive beholding of the soul-spirit essence includes, in particular, a beholding of Christ that consists of a ‘full-soul’ conscious awareness of being in His glorified presence. It is a beholding that occurs in one real and grand moment, and is both vividly sensible and intensely satisfying.
“To be with Christ is to be in heaven, to be in heaven is to be with Christ.” (Spurgeon)

“And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through the Spirit who indwells you.”

Rom. 8:10-11

“For the anxious longing of creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. ... For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.”

Rom. 8:19, 22-23

Comment #2. Although the moment of death for a saint is, in a most comforting sense, one of continued soul-spirit life and function, it is in another sense a moment of extreme dissonance with respect to one’s total being.

Death shatters every ‘soul-longing’ for harmony of “being-fullness” and of intended “being-purpose” as a creature in God’s image prepared for life in a physical reality.

Yet, it is indeed true that a new and far richer harmony of full personal essence, an essence of soul-spirit plus body, awaits every saint at a certain and determined future moment of bodily resurrection.

Comment #3. There is within the soul-spirit, so re-created by God at our regeneration, and so fitted through the attendant gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit, a ‘soul desire’ to be “fully clothed”.

That is, to be immortal, wholly sanctified, and housed in a perfectly suited, enduring body → to be thoroughly conformed to the very image of our glorified Lord and Savior.

There is in every saint a great antipathy toward being “unclothed”. In the present we experience life in a temporary and corruptible dwelling. Also, even after saints pass through the door of death into eternity, they exist in a disembodied state in that place of rest prepared in the presence of their glorified Savior.

However, when this full and permanent compatibility of one’s total personal essence is realized at the resurrection of the body, then “what is mortal” will be “swallowed up by life”.

Then, and only then, will a person be fully and truly “alive”, alive in a glorious state of existence corresponding precisely to the sense the Creator purposed from the beginning of the world.

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