



Chapter 83
AN OUTLINE OF FUTURE EVENTS

This chapter will present an outline of future events according to the pretribulational premillennial understanding of the Scriptures. This will serve as a framework for further detailed discussions of selected future events.

I. EVENTS SURROUNDING THE END OF THE CHURCH AGE

A. Increasing Apostasy

The term “last days” covers the entire period from the first to the second advents of Christ (Heb. 1:2). Defection and apostasy, among other things, will characterize that entire period (2 Tim. 3:1). So the presence of apostasy is not in itself indicative of the end of the Church Age, but the increase of it is. Apostasy is both present and future, when the climactic apostasy will occur that leads to the religious reign of the man of sin during the Tribulation period (2 Thess. 2:3). We may expect apostasy to become increasingly widespread as we draw nearer to the Tribulation days.

1. *The doctrinal characteristics of apostasy.* These include at least three, including (a) a denial of the doctrine of the Trinity (1 John 2:22–23); (b) a denial of the doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ (1 John 2:22; 4:3; 2 John 7). In John’s day this took the form of denying the true and real humanity of Christ, though it also takes the form of denying the true deity of Christ. Rejecting either the Trinity or the Incarnation denies the existence of the God-man, which is essential to our salvation. If Jesus Christ were not a man, He could not have died; but if He were not also God, that death could not atone for sins. The third point is (c) a denial of the doctrine of the return of Christ (2 Pet. 3:4).

2. *The lifestyle characteristics of apostasy.* Defection in doctrine always brings a decline in morals. Paul listed eighteen characteristics of such declension in 2 Timothy 3:1–5. They are love of self, love of money, a spirit of pride, blasphemy, disobedience to parents, lack of thankfulness, lack of holiness, lack of natural affection, unceasing enmity so that men cannot be persuaded to enter into treaties with each other, slander, lack of self-control, savagery, opposition to goodness, traitors, headiness (rashness or recklessness), high-mindedness, love of pleasure, a pretense of worship without godliness of life.

B. Preparation for the Ecumenical Church

During the first part of the Tribulation days, organized, ecumenical religion will have its heyday. This apostate religious system is described in Revelation 17 under the label “Mystery, Babylon” (kjv). It will be worldwide (v. 15), be unfaithful to the truth and to the Lord (the term “harlot” appears in vv. 1, 5, 15–16), have extensive political clout (vv. 12–13), have a “gold cup full of abominations,” that is, be inwardly corrupt while outwardly glorious and splendid (v. 4), and will persecute the saints of the Tribulation days (v. 6).

The groundwork for such a system will apparently have to be laid before the Tribulation begins, that is, during the closing years of the Church Age. The preparation will likely include both organizational moves toward unity in Christendom as well as the ascendancy of doctrines to which diverse groups can give support.

II. THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

A. The Concept of the Rapture

Our modern understanding of rapture appears to have little or no connection with the eschatological event. However, the word is properly used of that event. *Rapture* is a state or experience of being carried away. The English word comes from a Latin word, *rapiō*, which means to seize or snatch in relation to an ecstasy of spirit or the actual removal from one place to another. In other words, it means to be carried away in spirit or in body. The Rapture of the church means the carrying away of the church from earth to heaven.

The Greek word from which we take the term “rapture” appears in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, translated “caught up.” The Latin translation of this verse used the word *rapturo*. The Greek word it translates is *harpazō*, which means to snatch or



take away. Elsewhere it is used to describe how the Spirit caught up Philip near Gaza and brought him to Caesarea (Acts 8:39) and to describe Paul's experience of being caught up into the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2–4). Thus there can be no doubt that the word is used in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 to indicate the actual removal of people from earth to heaven.

B. The Components of the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13–18)

1. *The return of Christ* (v. 16). The Lord Himself will return for His people, accompanied by all the grandeur His presence deserves. There will be a shout of command (whether uttered by the Lord or an archangel is not stated), and the trumpet of God will summon the dead in Christ to their resurrection as well as sounding a warning to those who have rejected Him and thus have missed the Rapture.

2. *A resurrection* (v. 16). At this time only the dead in Christ will be raised. This means believers since the Day of Pentecost, for though there were believers before then, none of them were placed “in Christ.” The dead in Christ will be raised just before the living are changed. Yet both groups will experience their respective changes “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor. 15:52). The entire procedure will be instantaneous, not gradual. The word for “moment” is the word from which the word “atom” comes. When the atom was discovered it was thought to be indivisible; therefore, it was named “atom.” Even though subsequently the atom was split, the word retains its meaning of indivisible. The resurrection of the dead and the translation of the living will occur in an indivisible instant of time.

3. *A rapture* (v. 17). Strictly speaking, only living believers are raptured (though we use the term to include all that happens at that time). This means they will be caught up into the Lord’s presence without having to experience physical death.

4. *A reunion* (v. 17). The reunion will be with the Lord and with the loved ones who have died.

5. *A reassurance* (v. 18). The truth of the Rapture both comforts and encourages us (for the word does have both meanings).

Paul’s descriptions of the Rapture in both 1 Corinthians 15:51–58 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 give no support to the partial Rapture view, which teaches that only spiritual believers will be raptured at several times during the Tribulation period. Paul stated clearly that “we shall be changed” at that time, and he wrote those words to the Corinthians, many of whom could hardly be called spiritual.

III. EVENTS OF THE TRIBULATION PERIOD

Since the Scriptures describe so many events during the seven years of Tribulation, and since I would like to try to put them all together in as nearly a chronological sequence as possible, I think it would be best to do this in the following chapter.

IV. EVENTS AT THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

A. The Second Coming

At the climax of the campaign of Armageddon, the Lord will return to this earth to judge and to reign. His return is described in Zechariah 14:1–11 and Revelation 19:11–16. It is referred to in many other passages, but these two give the most detailed description of it.

B. The Judgments at the Second Coming

These will be discussed in a separate chapter.

V. THE MILLENNIUM

Since the Scriptures give many details about the future millennial kingdom of Christ, I would like to devote a separate chapter to the Millennium and to the events at the end of it.



Chapter 84
THE TRIBULATION PERIOD

I. ITS UNIQUENESS

In describing the period of the Great Tribulation, the Lord said it will be a time “such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall” (Matt. 24:21). It will be a time of trouble unique in the history of the world. There have been many difficult times since the Lord spoke these words, and He Himself warned the disciples, “In the world you have tribulation” (John 16:33). What is it, then, that makes this future period different? How will the Great Tribulation be unique?

Two characteristics will distinguish the Tribulation from all other hard times that the world has seen. First, it will be worldwide, not localized, as stated in the promise of deliverance (Rev. 3:10) and as described in detail in the judgments of the Revelation. The intense local persecutions and calamities of this present day cannot be the beginning of the Tribulation, for that time will affect *the entire world*.

Then too the Tribulation will be unique because of the way men act. In one of the early judgments, men will hide themselves in the dens and caves of the mountains and say, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb” (Rev. 6:16). When the Great Tribulation comes, men will act as if they think the world is coming to an end.

For years some men have been talking as if they *thought* the end were near, but at the beginning of the Tribulation, they will *realize* that the end is actually at hand. Scientists, politicians, and even church leaders warn today that the end of human history could be upon us, and even use the term “Armageddon,” but people are not behaving as if they believe it. Real estate is being bought and sold, savings are being accumulated, and plans are continually being made for the future. But when the Tribulation comes, people will hide in bomb shelters and will actually seek death rather than try to preserve life. The future, in those days, will hold no attraction.

The uniqueness of the Tribulation lies in its being worldwide and in its terror, which will cause people to want to die rather than live. For a time during the Tribulation, even suicide will be impossible, forcing people to live.

II. THE BEGINNING OF THE TRIBULATION

The Tribulation does not necessarily begin the day the church is taken to meet the Lord in the air. Though I believe that the Rapture precedes the beginning of the Tribulation, nothing is said in the Scriptures as to whether or not some time (or how much time) may elapse between the Rapture and the beginning of the Tribulation.

The Tribulation actually begins with the signing of a covenant between the leader of the “Federated States of Europe” and the Jewish people. This treaty will set in motion the events of the seventieth week (or seven years) of Daniel’s prophecy. There is an interval of undetermined length between the first sixty-nine weeks of seven years each and the last or seventieth week of seven years.

We are living in that interval. It is the time in which God is forming the church, the body of Christ, by saving Jews and Gentiles alike. Since God has not yet finished this present program, the last week of the seventy has not yet begun. When it does, God will once again turn His attention in a special way to His people the Jews and to His holy city Jerusalem, as outlined in Daniel 9:24.

When this last period of seven years begins, “He will make a firm covenant with the many for one week” (v. 27). Who does the “he” refer to? Grammatically it could refer either to Messiah (v. 26) or to “the prince who is to come,” who will probably be related to the people who destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The latter view is better, because usually the antecedent nearer to a pronoun is preferred and in this case it is the prince, not Messiah. Then too nothing in the record of Christ’s life in any way connects Him with the making (and later breaking) of a seven-year covenant with the Jewish people.

This man is the “little horn” (Dan. 7:8, 24–25) who heads the coalition of Western nations in the Tribulation days. He is also called the “man of lawlessness” (2 Thess. 2:3) and is referred to as the beast (Rev. 11:7; 13:1; 17:11; 19:20). At the beginning of the Tribulation he will make a covenant, or enter a league, with Israel. This treaty will align the West with the Jewish nation and will guarantee protection to Israel so that she may reestablish the ancient rituals of Judaism. It appears



that this provision will also assure protection while Israel rebuilds the temple in Jerusalem as the center of her religious observances. Since we know that the covenant will be broken and the man of sin will be worshiped in the temple of God, obviously a temple will have been already built during the first part of the Tribulation (2 Thess. 2:4).

The alignment of western Europe with Israel is interesting in the light of current events. It seems to indicate that Israel will not of herself be sufficiently strong to feel secure in the face of the hostile states around her. She will not be able to “go it alone” at this point, and so will form an alliance with the Western nations. Then the outlook for Israel will seem bright. She will feel secure in her land, she will be worshiping according to the Old Testament pattern, she will have a temple again in Jerusalem, and she will be important among the nations of the world. But this is only the beginning.

III. THE JUDGMENTS OF THE SEALS, TRUMPETS, AND BOWLS

A. The Sequence

Revelation 6–19 describes the Tribulation in detail. We read here about three series of judgments. The first series is related to the opening of the seven seals of a scroll, the second to the blowing of seven trumpets, and the third to the pouring out of the contents of seven bowls.

Do these three series of judgments follow each other in succession, or do the trumpets and the bowls recapitulate the judgments of the seals with greater intensity? In other words, do the trumpet and bowl judgments follow the seals as different and distinct judgments, or do they picture the same judgments?

I believe the three series follow one another in chronological sequence and that there is no recapitulation. Either way, however, the seal judgments are the first judgments of the Tribulation days and will probably occur during the first year of that period.

B. The Seals

1. *The first seal judgment* (Rev. 6:1–2). The opening of the first seal revealed to John a white horse ridden by one who went forth conquering. In interpreting the Revelation, always begin with what is the clearest. Here, it is quite obvious that the opening months of the Tribulation will see nations conquered by the rider on the horse. Some think this rider is the man of sin, the head of the Western coalition of nations. His method of conquest, however, we would call “cold” war. Clearly, this description coincides exactly with the picture of the beginning of the Tribulation given in 1 Thessalonians 5:3—it will be a day when men are talking about peace and safety. This may indicate that we are living in the days immediately preceding the Tribulation—but, on the other hand, there is nothing in the Word of God that would indicate that there could not be another world war in this present age, then *another* time of peace before the Lord comes. Other evangelical scholars agree that the first rider simply represents the spirit of conquest—an attitude that has characterized the nations throughout human history. Doubtless this spirit will be intensified as the end approaches.

2. *The second seal judgment* (Rev. 6:3–4). In the judgment of the second seal, peace will be removed from the earth and men will war with each other. The phrase, “a great sword was given him,” confirms this interpretation. The red color of the second horse suggests bloodshed. War has always followed the spirit of conquest.

3. *The third seal judgment* (Rev. 6:5–6). The third judgment (still probably in the first year of the Tribulation) brings famine to the world. A black horse pictures this event, and the pair of scales carried by his rider bespeaks a careful rationing of food. The Roman denarius (v. 6) was a day’s wages in Palestine in Jesus’ day (Matt. 20:2). Normally it would buy ten quarts of wheat or thirty of barley. Under the famine conditions of these coming days, a day’s wage will buy only one measure of wheat or three of barley—one tenth the normal supply of food. However, there is an ironic twist to this famine. Oil and wine, the very things a majority of people cannot afford, will not be in short supply. The scarcity of basic foods and the availability of luxury items will taunt the common people in their impoverished state.

4. *The fourth seal judgment* (Rev. 6:7–8). This horse will be, literally, a yellowish green. He is the only horseman who is named, and he is called Death. Death, of course, claims the physical part of man, and it is accompanied by Hades, the place of the dead (v. 8), which claims the immaterial part. The effect of this judgment will be devastating—one fourth of earth’s population will be killed by the sword (war), by hunger (the famine that often accompanies war), by death (perhaps



by the plagues and diseases that follow war), and by wild beasts of the earth, which apparently will be unrestrained at this time and will roam about freely, killing men. Man's cleverly devised schemes for bringing in peace, plenty, and longevity will be overturned in the short space of time this judgment will take.

5. *The fifth seal judgment* (Rev. 6:9–11). Though the action of the fifth seal is in heaven, it presupposes that certain events have happened on earth. The group of martyrs in heaven (v. 9) implies that these people have already been killed on earth, early in the Tribulation. These people will be witnessing for Christ early in the Tribulation. They will be slain because of their testimony.

6. *The sixth seal judgment* (Rev. 6:12–17). This judgment unleashes universal havoc on the earth. It will include six catastrophic events: (1) A single great earthquake will take place. (2) The sun will be darkened so that it becomes black as sackcloth. The text does not say that the sun will be turned into sackcloth, but that it will be blackened as sackcloth. (3) The moon will become as red as blood. (4) There will be a meteor shower, with all the natural devastating consequences that follow. (5) Apparently heaven will be opened for a moment so that the men on earth can have a glimpse of that awesome scene, with God on His throne. (6) Every mountain and island will be moved.

These judgments will produce terror in the hearts of all living men. Their hearts will be filled with fear—not primarily because of the physical disturbances or the awful wars and pestilences, but because they will see God on His throne. Men will plead to be hidden “from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb” (v. 16). They will go to any length to avoid facing their Creator and Judge, even to seeking death under the rocks and mountains in which they will try to hide. All classes of people (v. 15) will be affected. As has been true throughout history, there will be no *general* or mass turning to God in repentance, but only a turning *from* God’s face.

These will be the first judgments of the Tribulation. But these will be only the beginning—the worst is yet to come.

IV. THE REDEEMED OF THE TRIBULATION

By the time of the fifth seal a number of true believers will have been martyred. In other words, during the first years of the Tribulation there will be a true witness to the Gospel, and this will be opposed by the ecumenical church, which will be “drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus” (17:6). In the name of religion, the organized church of the first part of the Tribulation will kill true believers for their faith.

How will these true believers have been converted in the first place? With the Rapture of the church, all Christians will have been removed from earth, so none will be alive immediately after the Rapture. If there are to be martyrs, there must first be believers. How will men be saved? In Revelation 7:1–8, we are introduced to a sort of parenthesis in judgment. Even the wind does not blow. (Incidentally, can you imagine the effect on climate of the cessation of the wind even for a short time? Add the disturbance in the topography of the earth, with the shifting of islands and mountains, and you can begin to grasp the increased chaos during these early years of the Tribulation.)

The purpose of this suspension of judgment is that a certain group of people may be “sealed” (v. 3). These people are called “the bond-servants of our God.” Who they are is described in detail in verses 4–8. They are Jews from each of the twelve tribes, and they do some particular service for God. Whether the seal placed on them is a visible mark or characteristic of some kind is neither stated nor implied in the text. A seal need not be visible to be real (Eph. 4:30). It is principally a guarantee of ownership and security. Both these ideas are involved in the sealing of this group. These people are owned by God, which means that they are redeemed. They are kept secure by God, which may mean He protects them from their enemies on earth while they complete their service for Him.

But how were these people saved? Even though there will be no Christians on earth immediately after the Rapture, there will be Bibles and books about the Christian faith. In other words, information will be available to give people the facts on which to find saving faith.

What will be the important work for which God will protect these people supernaturally? Actually, this passage does not specify, but we have hints as to the answer in Revelation 14, where the same group is described as in heaven after their work has been completed. They are said to be the redeemed followers of the Lamb, which may indicate that they are a group of special witnesses to the Gospel in the Tribulation days. They will not be the only ones witnessing, but they will be the only group given special protection from their enemies.



The first judgments of the Tribulation and the religious situation in the first part of that period are repeated, in summary form, in the Lord's Olivet discourse (Matt. 24). Verses 4–14 cover the events of the first half of the Tribulation, for at verse 15 we read about an event that occurs exactly halfway through the seven-year period. Notice how the seal judgments are summarized: "And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars.... For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes" (vv. 6–7). Notice the reference to the martyrs of the fifth seal: "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you" (v. 9). Look at the false religion: "And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many" (v. 11). The ministry of the 144,000 sealed ones, and other witnesses, will account for the fact that "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations" (v. 14). Here are all the major events of the first half of the Tribulation, in capsule form, from Christ's lips before the Crucifixion.

V. EGYPT AND RUSSIA IN THE TRIBULATION

So far we have focused our attention chiefly on the Western federation of nations, headed by the man of sin. But during the first part of the Tribulation other powerful alliances will exist or be in the making. Egypt, to the south of Palestine, will continue to be a strong and threatening nation until the man of sin conquers her. This defeat is predicted in Daniel 11:40–43, and though scholars do not agree as to when this will occur, it seems to be no later than the middle of the Tribulation.

So we can expect to see Egypt remain a power to be reckoned with until about three years of the Tribulation have elapsed. Then, she will be defeated and looted by Antichrist and his army. Egypt does not figure in any of the power blocs or wars of the last half of the Tribulation.

The nations of the East will be forming some sort of coalition and will not actively take part in any of the events involving Palestine until the very end of the Tribulation. All trends among Eastern nations toward independence and detachment from Western influence are significant. They may be preparatory to the alliance that those nations will form.

By far the most important bloc, besides the Western confederation of nations, is that of Gog and Magog. The names listed in Ezekiel 38–39 are identified in Genesis 10:2 as sons of Japheth. The Japhethites migrated, after the Flood, from Asia Minor to the north, beyond the Caspian and Black Seas. They settled in the area occupied today by Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan. "Gog" and "Magog," therefore, may refer to the people who live in the area north of Palestine. She will have with her as allies Persia (modern Iran), Ethiopia (northern Sudan), Put (Libya), Gomer (probably the eastern part of Turkey and the Ukraine), and Togarmah (the part of Turkey near the Syrian border) (Ezek. 38:5–6). The West will lodge a protest (v. 13), but to no avail, and this invading army from the north will cover Israel like a cloud (v. 16). These soldiers will go to rob and plunder the land that thought it was safe under the protection of the West.

At this point God will step in and utterly destroy the forces of Russia and her allies (Ezek. 38:21–39:7). The seemingly invincible troops will be supernaturally defeated and completely routed. The Russian army will be buried in Israel (v. 11), and only then will Russian influence in the Middle East be ended—by the direct intervention of God.

VI. THE PROGRAM OF ANTICHRIST

The Scriptures often divide the seven years of the Tribulation into two equal parts. The last of Daniel's seventy "weeks" of seven years is divided in the middle by a significant event (Dan. 9:27). In Revelation the two halves of the Tribulation are designated either by "time and times and half a time" (Rev. 12:14), or "forty-two months" (11:2; 13:5), or 1,260 days (11:3; 12:6), each of which works out to three and one half years.

With the invasion of Palestine from the north by Gog and Magog, it may seem for a time that the plans of the man of sin (Antichrist) are almost crushed. But supernatural intervention by God and the destruction of the Russian hordes will clear the way for the beast to resume his scheming.

A. Slaying the Two Witnesses

First, Antichrist must eliminate opposition from two individuals (Rev. 11:3–13) who have been plaguing him. The killing of these "two witnesses" will be the beast's first great feat at the middle of the Tribulation.



The two witnesses will have a spectacular ministry during the first part of the Tribulation. They will have power to kill their enemies with fire, to prevent rain, to turn water to blood, and to bring plagues on the earth as often as they wish. Their frequent use of these powers will add to the general devastation. Think, for instance, what will happen when they use their power to prevent rain. Along with the climatic and topographical changes that will occur on earth, unimaginable disaster will result.

Though the witnesses will be invincible for three and a half years, God will permit the beast to kill them after they have finished their work (Rev. 11:7). Making martyrs of the witnesses will win Antichrist wide support among the people of the world. But he will not be satisfied with merely killing them; he will display their bodies in the streets of Jerusalem. People, seeing the witnesses dead, will rejoice that they will no longer have to hear their warnings.

Merely to look on the decaying bodies of these two men will not satisfy people. They will make a great holiday of the occasion and will send gifts to each other. Interestingly enough, this is the only occasion, during the entire Tribulation period, in which rejoicing is mentioned. People will be so overjoyed that the witnesses are dead that this will be a happy holiday for them. If they had believed the witnesses' preaching, their deaths would have been a sad occasion instead of a holiday.

But God will intervene. After three and a half days, the bodies of the two witnesses will be resurrected and translated into heaven in a cloud of glory. Imagine the scene. Long lines will be waiting to view the corpses. Perhaps TV cameras will be focusing on them at the very moment of their resurrection. People in Europe and America will be watching via satellite transmission. The calm, matter-of-fact announcer will suddenly become nearly hysterical as he sees a resurrection in process and realizes that millions of people are depending on him for an explanation. How will the interpreters of the news manage this one? Even the voice from heaven (v. 12) will be heard in millions of homes.

But even before the newspapers can report the story or the commentators write their analyses, there will be another great event for them to cover, an earthquake that will center in Jerusalem and that will destroy a tenth part of the city, killing seven thousand people.

At this time, apparently, the 144,000 witnesses (Rev. 7) will also be killed, and the beast will destroy the ecumenical church (17:16) to clear away opposition to his next great act.

B. Demanding Worship

Having rid himself of all religious opposition, the beast will issue an edict: "Worship me." To enforce his command he will have to break his treaty with the Jews, which allowed them to restore Jewish worship in their rebuilt temple at Jerusalem. This he will do (Dan. 9:27), demanding that he be the object of all worship (Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:4).

How will he accomplish this?

First of all, he will have superhuman help. Satan, we are told, will give him his power and throne and great authority (Rev. 13:2). The devil will work furiously, from this point on, to do everything in his power to thwart God's plans. He will make war with Michael and his angels—and lose. This will result in his being cast out of heaven. Then God will warn the inhabitants of the earth, "Woe ... because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time" (12:12). The power of Satan will be behind the acts of the beast, Antichrist, and he will use him to the full.

Another reason for the beast's greatness involves his being wounded unto death. His deadly wound will be healed (Rev. 13:3), so that all the world will wonder. The phrase, "wounded to death" (KJV), literally means, "as having been slain to death," and it is exactly the same phrase as is used in 5:6 in reference to the death of Christ.

Since Christ actually died, perhaps the beast also will actually die and then be restored to life. He is said to rise out of the abyss (Rev. 11:7), which seems to confirm the idea that he experiences a resurrection. If not, the text at least means he will have some kind of spectacular restoration so that the world will wonder after him. His miraculous resurrection or restoration will make all men acknowledge his uniqueness ("Who is like the beast?") and his might ("Who is able to wage war with him?") (13:4).

The beast's program will include blasphemy and war (Rev. 13:5–7). He will speak insolently against God (Dan. 7:25). Objects of his blasphemy will include the name of God, the dwelling place of God, and those who dwell in heaven. He will be allowed (notice that God is still in control) to make war with the saints (Rev. 12:17) and to kill them. But his power will be limited by God to forty-two months.



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Here is an example of the interweaving of the many forces behind events: God will control all, but Satan will empower the beast, who in turn will act on his own in blaspheming God. Men who join his army and fight for him will do so voluntarily, and they in turn will make martyrs of God's people who, though they are killed, will still be within God's protecting care!

In order to promote his program more efficiently, Antichrist will have an important lieutenant. He is the "second beast" (Rev. 13:11–18), and his sole duty is to promote the purposes and expedite the worship of the first beast, the man of sin. At no time in his career does the second beast promote himself, but his concerns are always centered in the first beast. His power will be as great as that of the man of sin, but he will use it in the interests of his superior, not for himself (v. 12).

This lieutenant will be able to make fire come down on the earth, duplicating the power of the two witnesses in order to show the world that he is as great as they were (v. 13). He will be able to work other miracles (vv. 13–14). He will order men to make an image of the first beast (v. 14), and apparently they will do it willingly and quickly. His next step will be to give life to the image they have made. The word for "breath" (v. 15) is *pneuma*, and this could indicate a supernatural miracle (empowered by Satan) that will actually give life to the image. Of course, the word may be translated "wind," which may indicate some magical sleight of hand, on the part of the lieutenant, to give the image the appearance of real life. The speech and movement of an image could easily be artificial, but they could with equal ease be the work of Satan.

C. Controlling Commerce

However, the greatest feat of the second beast, who is sometimes called "the false prophet" (Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10), will be a squeeze play on men to force them to worship the man of sin. It will be a simple scheme, cleverly devised: "And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand, or on their forehead, and he provides that no one should be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name" (13:16–17). In other words: bow or starve.

A "mark" is an impression made by a stamp, such as a brand used on slaves and animals. Men will become slaves of the man of sin and will have to bear the identifying mark of their slavery. Perhaps timid slaves will have the mark placed in their right hands. To avoid embarrassment, they may try to avoid shaking hands with people in order to conceal the mark. Bold followers of Antichrist may have the mark placed in the middle of their foreheads.

What will this mark be like? Verse 17 indicates that it will be either the name of the beast or his number, and the number is further explained as 666, the number of the man of sin, *not* of his lieutenant. This number has been linked to so many personages as to make them all unreliable coincidences. When this great ruler comes to power, however, there will be no mistake as to who he is. In some way unknown to us now, the number 666 will play a principal part in his identification (16:1–3; 19:20; 20:10).

This will be a grim time in the history of the world. I suppose that Antichrist would succeed completely in bringing the entire world to his feet were it not for the presence of the godly remnant, who will refuse to bow, and for the shortness of the time available to him.

VII. THE TRUMPET AND BOWL JUDGMENTS

A. The Trumpets

In the meantime, God will continue to pour out the judgments of His wrath on the earth. The first series of judgments will be unleashed as the seals of a book are opened. We have already seen what will happen as the first six seals are broken. With the opening of the seventh seal (Rev. 8:1), one would expect a holocaust to let loose. Instead, there is silence—the still silence of expectancy and foreboding. The silence will last for half an hour and will be awesome. The opening of this seventh seal introduces another series of judgments, which are announced by the blowing of seven trumpets (8:7–9:21; 11:15–19). The last three of the seven trumpet judgments are distinguished from the first four by being specially designated as "woes," which seems to imply that they are of harsher character.



Where is the middle (three-and-a-half-year) point of the Tribulation in relation to these judgments? The Scriptures do not specifically say, but many feel that the middle point comes either with the first trumpet judgment or with the first woe judgment (which is the fifth trumpet judgment). If this is so, the first trumpet judgment comes when Antichrist kills the two witnesses and sets himself up to be worshiped. The trumpet judgments seem to continue on into the last year of the period. They are followed by a final rapid series of further judgments in the last months of the seventh year.

1. *The first trumpet judgment* (Rev. 8:7). There will be hail and fire, mingled with blood, on the earth so that a third part of the earth, trees, and grass will be burned. Fire and blood, here, are not symbols of something else. We are to take them literally. They will devastate vegetation on the earth and further add to the climatic disruptions.

2. *The second trumpet judgment* (Rev. 8:8–9). This is explained with a figure of speech—“something like a great mountain burning with fire.” Probably nothing in the realm of our present experience corresponds to this. It will likely be something about which we do not yet know anything, but its effect is clear—a third part of the sea will become blood, and a third part of the world’s shipping will be destroyed. Think of how this judgment will affect the headlines in the papers and the hearts of the people.

3. *The third trumpet judgment* (Rev. 8:10–11). This judgment will affect the supply of fresh water, making it bitter to the taste and polluting to the system. As a result, many will die from the contamination and pollution.

4. *The fourth trumpet judgment* (Rev. 8:12–13). This judgment will affect the sun, moon, stars, and the uniformity of the day-night cycle. Since one third of the heavenly bodies will be smitten, perhaps the twenty-four hour cycle of day and night will be shortened to sixteen hours. The Lord Jesus predicted, in His Olivet discourse, “signs in sun and moon and stars” (Luke 21:25).

5. *The first woe—the fifth trumpet judgment* (Rev. 9:1–12). Like arrows from a bow, the locusts of this first woe judgment will be discharged on the earth. They originate from the bottomless pit—literally, from the “shaft of the abyss.” This pit, entered by a shaft, is under lock and key. Incidentally, chapter 9 contains more occurrences of the words “as” and “like” than any other chapter in the Bible. It was difficult for John to describe what he saw in the vision. Nevertheless, the horror of the judgment is clear.

From the shaft will come “locusts” (Rev. 9:3–11) that are no ordinary insects. They will come straight from Satan’s domain. They seem to be animal creatures *like* locusts, but they are demonic in nature. Perhaps they are demons who take on the form of these unique locusts and who are directed by the king of the shaft of the abyss (v. 11).

These locusts inflict a sting like a scorpion’s. “The pain from the sting of a scorpion, though not generally fatal, is perhaps, the most intense that any animal can inflict upon the human body. The insect itself is the most irascible and malignant that lives, and its poison is like itself.... It is also difficult to guard against them [the locusts], if they can be warded off at all, because they fly where they please, dart through the air, and dwell in darkness.” Unlike ordinary locusts, these creatures will not attack vegetation, but only men. They will be released for five months, during which time men will be unable to commit suicide. This seems impossible, but somehow it will be so.

It is difficult for us to imagine such creatures, but this is no reason for thinking they are mere symbols. Remember that the power of Satan and his demons is great—and these ferocious locusts are demonic. Little wonder that this is called the first woe. Since men do not believe in or accept the existence and activity of demons, people then alive will probably try to give some natural explanation for these creatures and will try to destroy them with a hastily concocted pesticide. But they will find no explanation, and their antidotes will not work.

6. *The second woe—the sixth trumpet judgment* (Rev. 9:13–21). Under the fourth seal judgment, one fourth of the earth’s population will be killed; under the sixth trumpet judgment, an additional one third will die. This means that these two judgments alone will reduce the population of the earth by one half. Add to this all those who will be killed through war, famine, and disease, and it is not difficult to see how common death will be during this awful time.

The means of this judgment will be an army of horsemen numbering 200 million. Many understand these troops to be the armies of the Orient as they march to invade Palestine. Others see them as a horde of demons, for Scriptures give other examples of supernatural armies (2 Kings 2:11; 6:13–17; Rev. 19:14). The weapons of destruction here will be fire, smoke, and brimstone (Rev. 9:17). Since these are weapons of hell, they perhaps indicate that this army is made up of demons, the inhabitants of hell.



One would think that the long obituary columns in the newspapers would startle men into facing their responsibility toward God. Instead of repenting and turning to Him for mercy, however, those who are not killed by this army will harden their hearts. The religion of unsaved men during the Tribulation will be the worship of demons and idols, and murder, sorcery, fornication, and stealing will be common (vv. 20–21). Sorcery may include the misuse of drugs, for we derive the word *pharmacy* from the Greek term. It is interesting to notice that three of these four practices are direct violations of the Ten Commandments. Man's ethics will be a reflection of his religion, and during those days vice, rather than virtue, will reign triumphant.

7. *The third woe—the seventh trumpet judgment* (Rev. 11:15–19). With the sounding of the seventh trumpet will come the announcement that the end is at hand, though seven other judgments must be poured on the earth before all will be finished. These judgments will be the bowls of the wrath of God (16:1–21). These last plagues will come in the closing months, or possibly even weeks, of the last year of the Tribulation, without interruption or pause. The seven angels that have to do with these last judgments will all be told to pour out their judgments at one time. All this will be happening at the same time that Antichrist demands that men worship him. Men will be pressured from every side. Most will decide to cast their lot with Antichrist.

B. The Bowls

1. *The first bowl judgment* (Rev. 16:2). This will bring on men a grievous sore described as “loathsome and malignant.” These words could indicate some sort of cancer. This affliction will come only on those who worship the beast, believers being exempt. But apparently the beast will be able to do nothing for his followers, for they will continue to curse God for these sores even after the fifth bowl has been poured out (v. 11).

2. *The second bowl judgment* (Rev. 16:3). The waters will turn into blood during this judgment. Every living thing in the sea will die. The rather vivid phrase pictures ships wallowing in blood. Under the second trumpet judgment, a third of the sea creatures die (8:9); now the destruction of marine life will be total. Can you imagine the stench and disease this will bring to people who live along the seashores of the world? Seventy-two percent of earth's surface is water.

3. *The third bowl judgment* (Rev. 16:4–7). At this time, as in the third trumpet judgment, the fresh-water supply is affected. Now, instead of wormwood, it turns to blood. The victims of this plague will experience inexorable retribution. They will have shed the blood of the saints and prophets, so now they will have to drink blood. They will deserve what they receive. It is not easy for us to conceive of God dealing with people in this manner. For thousands of years He has been long-suffering and gracious, not dispensing the kind of judgment the world deserves.

4. *The fourth bowl judgment* (Rev. 16:8–9). During this time the strength of the sun will be so heightened that it will scorch men with intense heat. Once again, men will harden their hearts instead of turning to God in repentance.

5. *The fifth bowl judgment* (Rev. 16:10–11). The throne of the beast will be affected, and his capital will be darkened. This will likely slow down his attempt to force all men to worship him. The result will be that men will gnaw their tongues and blaspheme God for their pains and sores, for pain always seems worse in darkness than in the light.

6. *The sixth bowl judgment* (Rev. 16:12–16). The Euphrates River will dry up (it was previously turned into blood). This will facilitate the crossing of the river by the armies of the kings of the East (Dan. 11:44) as they rush to the war of Armageddon.

7. *The seventh bowl judgment* (Rev. 16:17–21). Widespread destruction and havoc will occur, and with it will be heard the cry, “It is done!” Many physical disturbances will follow. An earthquake will divide Jerusalem and cause other cities to fall. Islands and mountains will disappear, and there will be an unheard-of storm in which single hailstones will weigh one hundred pounds. But in spite of the severity and universality of these last judgments, men who survive them will persist in blaspheming God rather than turning to Him for mercy. Everything that man has built in this world will literally collapse before his very eyes, yet he will think he is still the master of his fate and that he has no need for God.

The conclusion of this judgment will bring men to the end of the Tribulation and to the second coming of Christ to begin His reign over earth. Only one more part of the picture remains to be completed.

VIII. ARMAGEDDON



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To review: Before the middle of the Tribulation, the Western ruler, Antichrist (the man of sin), keeping his treaty with Israel, will invade and conquer Egypt. At that point the Russian armies from the north will invade and overrun Palestine, and when all appears hopeless for both Antichrist and Israel, God will step in and supernaturally destroy Russia's northern armies. This will give the man of sin a free hand to break his covenant with Israel, set himself up to be worshiped, and try to conquer the world.

As he proceeds with his program, however, the nations of the Orient will unite and attempt to stop him. To do this, they will march west into Palestine. The sixth bowl judgment will dry up the Euphrates River, speeding their entry into the Promised Land. In the meantime, Antichrist will have planted himself firmly in Palestine as a religious and political ruler.

The battlefield in which the armies from East and West will meet will be the Plain of Esdraelon, the area around the mountains of Megiddo. That's why the battle is called Armageddon—Ar meaning mountain. This plain is about twenty miles south-southeast of Haifa, and the valley today is about twenty miles by fourteen.

Another battlefield will focus on Jerusalem, where there will be house-to-house fighting and temporary success for the enemies of the Lord. But the Lord will send a plague and then stand on the Mount of Olives and "destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem" (Zech. 12:9; 14:12; 14:4; 12:9).

At the second coming of Christ still another area of conflict will center in Bozra in Edom, which is about twenty miles southeast of the southern tip of the Dead Sea (Isa. 63:1–6). Viewing these three areas of the war together, we see a gruesome picture of unbelievable carnage encompassing the entire land from Megiddo in the north, Jerusalem in the center, and Edom in the southeast (about 140 miles).

In the midst of the battle, the Lord Jesus Christ will return, and the armies of heaven will conquer the armies of earth (Rev. 19:11–21). The carnage will be unbelievable (14:20; 19:17–18).

But the outcome is certain—the beast will be defeated and his armies captured. He and his false prophet-lieutenant will be thrown into the lake of fire to be tormented forever. Thus the Tribulation will close.

Why must there be such a time as this? There are at least two reasons: First, the wickedness of man must be punished. God may seem to be doing nothing about evil now, but someday He will act. A second reason is that man must, by one means or another, be prostrated before the King of kings and Lord of lords. He may do so voluntarily now by coming to Christ in faith and receiving salvation. Later he will *have* to do so, receiving only condemnation.

Chapter 85

THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

I. DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION OF THE RAPTURE

As explained in chapter 83, the word "rapture" comes from the Latin translation of the Greek for "caught up" in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Strictly speaking, in this text it relates only to the change in living believers at the time of Christ's return. However, the label, Rapture, usually refers both to the translation of living believers from earthly mortality to heavenly immortality and to the resurrection of the corrupted bodies of believers to heavenly incorruption.

Three passages describe the Rapture: John 14:1–3; 1 Corinthians 15:50–58; and 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18. The facets of the Rapture have been discussed in chapter 83.

II. VARIOUS VIEWS

In the nineteenth century, teaching concerning the Rapture of the church began to be widely disseminated. This raised such questions as whether the second coming of Christ involves several stages, the relation of those stages to the Tribulation period, and the distinctiveness of the church from Israel in God's program. In the twentieth century one of the most debated questions in eschatology concerns the time of the Rapture.

To that question premillennialists have given four answers. (Amillennialists regard the coming of Christ as a single event to be followed by the general resurrection and judgment. For postmillennialists there is also no distinct Rapture.)

The four premillennial views of the Rapture are partial rapture (that is, only certain believers will be raptured), pretribulational rapture, midtribulational rapture, and posttribulational rapture. Partial rapture concerns the extent of the Rapture, whereas the other three views focus on the time of the Rapture.



III. THE EXTENT OF THE RAPTURE—PARTIAL OR TOTAL?

A. Definition of the Partial Rapture

Partial rapture teaches that only those believers who are “watching” and “waiting” for the Lord’s return will be found worthy to escape the terrors of the Tribulation by being taken in the Rapture.

B. Supporters of This View

Apparently this view originated with Robert Govett in 1835 in his book *Entrance into the Kingdom: The Apocalypse Expounded by Scripture*. It was also taught by J. A. Seiss, G. H. Pember, G. H. Lang, and the Local Church Movement.

C. Theological Framework of This View

1. *Salvation*. Advocates hold to salvation by grace and eternal security of the believer, but they interpret debated passages on security as Arminians do with this important exception: the danger facing the believer who fails is not perdition but millennial disinheritance. Every believer has the right to inherit the kingdom, but this can be forfeited through disobedience.

2. *Sanctification*. Often partial rapturists give strong emphasis to sanctification and holiness. They may teach that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is connected with power for witnessing and that the filling and indwelling of the Spirit are for some believers only, rather than for all. This emphasis carries over into their view of the Rapture; namely, that only spiritual believers will be raptured to escape the Tribulation.

3. *First resurrection*. The first resurrection is viewed as a resurrection for reward for spiritual believers, rather than for all. Believers who are not overcomers will be raised after the Millennium. Therefore, that second resurrection (usually seen as involving only unbelievers) will include both believers and unbelievers.

D. Outline of This View

Partial rapturists teach that there will be several times for the Rapture and resurrection of overcomers.

1. *Before*. Just before the beginning of the Tribulation mature living saints will be translated and mature dead saints will be raised.

2. *During*. Then during the seven years of Tribulation other Church Age saints who were unprepared for the initial Rapture will be raptured at various intervals. These are seen in Revelation 7:9, 14; 11:2; 12:5 (the male child includes believers); 16:15 (a Rapture to deliver watching believers from the war of Armageddon); and a final Rapture at the end.

3. *After*. At the close of the Millennium, there will be a resurrection of believers who missed these earlier resurrections of rewards along with the resurrection of unbelievers. The believers will enter the everlasting kingdom, though they will have missed the millennial kingdom.

E. Biblical Support Cited for This View

1. *Suffering*. Many passages teach that believers must endure suffering before they can reign with Christ. Therefore, believers must either suffer now or in the Tribulation period (Luke 22:18–30; Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:16–17; Col. 3:24; 2 Thess. 1:4–5). Some identify the fire in 1 Corinthians 3:12–15 as the Tribulation. Revelation 3:5, it is said, may refer to a temporary blotting out of the Book of Life for carnal believers during the period of rewards that overcomers will enjoy.

2. *What is the first resurrection?* Since the Scriptures view the first resurrection as a prize to be gained, this means not all believers will gain it, only overcomers (Matt. 19:28–29; Luke 9:62; 20:35; Phil. 3:11–14; Rev. 2:11; 3:5).

3. *Birthright*. A believer, it is said, may lose his birthright and thus forfeit his chance to be raptured before the Tribulation (1 Cor. 6:9–10; Gal. 5:19–21; Heb. 12:14).

4. *Baptism of the Spirit*. Since the baptism of the Spirit is seen as empowerment for witnessing, not all believers are in the body of Christ and therefore not all are necessarily raptured.



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5. *Reward*. The Rapture is viewed as a reward that not all believers will attain (Matt. 24:40–41; 25:1–13; 1 Cor. 9:27; 2 Tim. 4:8; Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:24–28; Rev. 3:10).

F. Some Problems with This View

1. *Exclusiveness*. First Corinthians 15:51–52 plainly states that all will be changed, not some.
2. *Baptism of the Spirit*. The baptism of the Spirit does place all believers in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13), thus all will experience the promise of the Rapture.
3. *Who will be punished?* The Tribulation period is never spoken of as a time of chastening for the church or part of the church. It is the time of *Jacob's* trouble.
4. *Reward?* The Rapture is not a reward for godly living; godly living will be rewarded with crowns, not Rapture (2 Tim. 4:8, and other passages on crowns).

IV. THE TIME OF THE RAPTURE

Basically there are three answers to the question of when the Rapture will occur in relation to the seven years of Tribulation. Pretribulationism says it will precede the beginning of the entire period. Midtribulationism teaches it will occur at the midpoint of the seven years; that is, the church will be on earth during the first three and one-half years but will be taken to heaven at that point, thus escaping the last half of the Tribulation. Posttribulationism understands that the church will continue on the earth during the entire period, but that there will be a Rapture as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 at the end, followed immediately by the Second Coming. Each of these views will be examined in the next chapters.

Chapter 86
THE PRETRIBULATIONAL RAPTURE VIEW

I. DEFINITION OF THIS VIEW

Pretribulationism teaches that the Rapture of the church (both dead and living saints) will occur before the seven-year Tribulation period, that is, before the beginning of the seventieth week of Daniel 9:24–27. It is necessary to say “before the seven-year Tribulation period” because some who hold to midtribulation Rapture state that the Rapture is pretribulational, because they understand the Tribulation to refer only to the last three and one-half years of the seven-year period.

II. SUPPORTERS OF THIS VIEW

John Nelson Darby (1800–1882) gave the greatest initial impetus to the systematizing of pretribulationism. This is because he saw the church as a special work of God, distinct from His program for Israel. This, integrated into his premillennialism, led him to the position that the church would be raptured before the Tribulation period when God would again deal specially with Israel.

In the twentieth century the view has been expounded and defended through *The Scofield Reference Bible; Is the Rapture Next?*, by Leon Wood; *The Rapture Question*, by John F. Walvoord; *Things to Come*, by J. Dwight Pentecost; *A Revelation of Jesus Christ*, by J. B. Smith; and *What You Should Know About the Rapture*, by Charles C. Ryrie.

III. SUPPORT FOR THIS VIEW

A. Revelation 3:10

The promise is based on keeping the word of His patience, a reference to all believers (see similar Johannine designations in John 8:51; 14:23–24; and 1 John 2:3). It was made to all the churches, not just the one in Philadelphia in the first century (note Rev. 3:13 and the similar close to each of the letters to these representative churches). It relates to the coming hour of testing on the earth; that is, to the tribulations prophesied later on in the Revelation. It states that



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believers will be kept from that hour (*tereso ek tes horas*). Those who oppose pretribulationism understand the phrase to mean “I will guard”; that is, believers will be guarded throughout the seven years and then emerge from it at the second coming of Christ.

The pretribulationist’s understanding of *ek* is supported by a number of verses that have nothing to do with the Rapture and therefore do not beg the question. “He who guards his mouth and his tongue, guards his soul from troubles” (Prov. 21:23). Guarding your mouth and tongue is not the means of protecting yourself in the time of trouble; rather, it is the means of escaping trouble you are not presently in. In the Septuagint *ek* indicates an external, not internal, preservation. *Ek* also is used in the same way of external protection in Joshua 2:13 and Psalms 33:19; 56:13. Likewise in the New Testament, *ek* clearly has the same meaning. In Acts 15:29 Gentile believers were asked to keep themselves *from* certain practices that were offensive to Jewish believers. The only way they could do that would be by abstaining entirely from the practices. They must withdraw, not somehow protect themselves while practicing those things. In James 5:20 we are told that if a sinning Christian can be turned away from his backslidden state he will be saved *from* physical death. There is no way *ek* could mean he will be protected in the midst of physical death and then emerge from it in some kind of resurrection. He will escape a premature death by being exempt from it.

The same phrase *keep from*, occurs in John 17:15: “I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.” Posttribulationists point out that this promise is fulfilled not by removing believers from the world but by protecting them from Satan while they live on the earth. Then they assert that, similarly, believers will live during the Tribulation but be kept from its wrath.

Such an analogy fails to answer the basic question, How are believers kept from Satan’s power? True, it is not by removing them from this world, but a removal is involved. Paul described it this way: “For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son” (Col. 1:13). John said the same thing when he wrote that “the evil one does not touch [cling to] him [the believer]” (1 John 5:18). Believers have been transferred from one domain (Satan’s) to another (Christ’s), and that is how we are kept from the evil one.

However, the promise of Revelation 3:10 not only guarantees being kept from the trials of the Tribulation period but being kept from the time period of the Tribulation. The promise is not, “I will keep you from the trials.” It is, “I will also keep you from the *hour* of trial” (NIV). Posttribulationists have to resort to finding means to “undercut stress on the term ‘hour’ ”³ by insisting that “hour” means the experiences of a time period but not the time itself. In other words, the church will live through the time but will not experience (some of) the events. But if the events of the Tribulation are worldwide and directly and indirectly affect everybody, how can the church be on the earth and escape the experiences? If our Lord had been saved from the hour of His atoning sacrifice (John 12:27) by living through that time but not experiencing the events of His passion, there would have been no atonement.

Granted, it is possible to live through a time and miss some of the events (like being present at a social function but missing some of the activities), but it is not possible to miss the time without also missing the events.

To summarize, posttribulationists teach unclearly the meaning of the promise of Revelation 3:10. (1) Some seem to say that it means protection (for some believers who escape martyrdom throughout the Tribulation) and then Rapture at the end. (2) Some seem to say that it means protection from the last crisis (which includes Armageddon and the “lull” of peace and safety that supposedly precedes it) by Rapture just before that last crisis. (3) Some seem to say that it means the church will live through Armageddon, be guarded during that time, and emerge (all believers unscathed?) in the Rapture-Second Coming. One thing is clear to posttribulationists: it cannot mean deliverance before the Tribulation begins.

But how clear and plain the promise is: “I … will keep you from the hour of testing.” Not from just any persecution, but the coming time that will affect the whole earth. The only way to escape worldwide trouble is not to be on the earth. And the only way to escape the time when events take place is not to be in a place where time ticks on. The only place that meets those qualifications is heaven.

Perhaps an illustration will help keep the promise in its clear, uncomplicated form. As a teacher I frequently have to give exams. Let us suppose that I announce to a class that I am going to give an exam on such-and-such a day at the regular classtime. Then suppose I say, “I want to make a promise to students whose grade average for the semester so far is A. The promise is: I will keep you from the exam.” If I said nothing more by way of explanation, I expect that the A students



would puzzle over that promise. “Does it mean we have to take the exam or not?” they would ask. And just to be safe, I would expect, they would show up at the appointed time because they would not have understood clearly what I meant.

Now I could keep my promise to those A students this way: I could pass out the exam to everyone and give to the A students a sheet containing the answers. They would take the exam and yet in reality be kept from the exam. They would live through the time but not suffer the trial. This is posttribulationism. Protection while enduring.

But if I said to the class, “I am giving an exam next week. I want to make a promise to all the A students. I will keep you from the *hour* of the exam,” I very seriously doubt if the A students in that class would spend any time debating what I meant or whether or not they had to show up at the time of the exam. They would understand clearly that to be kept from the hour of the test exempts them from being present during that hour. This is pretribulationism, and this is the meaning of the promise of Revelation 3:10. And the promise came from the risen Savior who Himself is the Deliverer from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:10).

B. 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 Paul tried to allay the fears of some who thought that deceased believers might not share in the kingdom. His explanation in that paragraph was something about which they were uninformed. But, in contrast, they were well informed about the beginning of the Day of the Lord as he explained in 5:1–11.

The beginning of that day will come unexpectedly in a time of peace and safety (v. 2), with pain (v. 3) and wrath (v. 9). In the meantime, believers are to live with alertness and sobriety. The exhortations of verses 6, 8, 10 are not to watch for signs during the Tribulation in preparation for the Day of the Lord at the end of the Tribulation, but to live godly lives in view of the coming Tribulation that believers will escape. Of this teaching Paul said they were fully aware (v. 2). How? Partly from Paul’s own teaching to them, but also from their knowledge of the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament, the Day of the Lord is referred to by that phrase about twenty times, often with eschatological implications. In addition, a parallel term, “the last days,” occurs fourteen times, always eschatological. Furthermore, the phrase “in that day” occurs more than one hundred times and is generally eschatological. In Isaiah 2:2, 11–12 (KJV), the three phrases appear, referring to the same eschatological time. So there was ample reason for Paul to say that his readers knew about the Day of the Lord from the Old Testament itself.

But concerning the Rapture there is no Old Testament revelation. This omission from more than a hundred passages seems hard to understand if the Rapture is the first event of the Day of the Lord, as posttribulationism teaches. But if the Rapture is a mystery, unrevealed in the Old Testament, and if it precedes the actual beginning of the Day of the Lord, as pretribulationism teaches, then it is not strange that Paul had to inform them about the Rapture but needed only to remind them what they already knew about the Day of the Lord.

Posttribulationists, then, want to make a very close connection between 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 and 5:1–11, whereas pretribulationists are better served by seeing a contrast of subjects between the two paragraphs.

Thus the posttribulational scenario runs like this: Paul moved with ease from his discussion of the Rapture in 4:13–18 to the discussion of the *parousia* in 5:1–11 because he was talking about events that occur at the same time and not events separated by seven years. Paul’s choice of *de* (the first Greek word in 5:1), a simple connective with only a slight contrastive sense, indicates this close connection. And since the Day of the Lord will not begin until the Second Coming, the Rapture will occur then also.

Pretribulationists point out that the contrast between the subjects of the two chapters is sharpened by the fact that Paul did not simply use a *de* to begin verse 1 but a phrase, *peri de*. This is very significant, because elsewhere in his writings Paul used *peri de* to denote a new and contrasting subject. Notice 1 Corinthians 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12; and 1 Thessalonians 4:9 and 5:1. Granted, the posttribulationists’ contention that the same subject is being discussed in 4:13–18 and 5:1–11 might be supported by the use of *de* alone, but it is completely nullified by the use of *peri de*. So the pretribulationists’ use of the passage is strongly supported exegetically. The Rapture is not a part of the Day of the Lord and therefore cannot be posttribulational.

To summarize: The question of the beginning of the Day of the Lord is a watershed between pre- and posttribulationism. Pretribulationism sees the Day of the Lord beginning at the start of the Tribulation for the following reasons:



(1) The very first judgments (by whatever chronology one uses) include war, famine, and the death of one-fourth of the population of the earth.

(2) The one time the Scriptures mention peace and safety during the Tribulation period is at its very beginning. This time will be followed immediately by war, destruction, and upheavals that will continue unabated until Christ comes. Thus the Day of the Lord must begin at the beginning of the Tribulation, and the Rapture must be before.

(3) The revelation of the man of sin will occur at the beginning of the Tribulation when he makes a pact with the Jewish people.

(4) The much more normal understanding of the verb in Revelation 6:17 conveys the idea that the wrath has already come and continues.

(5) Paul's use of *peri de*, not simply *de*, in 1 Thessalonians 5:1 indicates contrasting subjects.

(6) The removal of peace from the earth just after the Tribulation begins fits only pretribulationism.

If posttribulationism is correct, then it must provide much more satisfactory answers than it has to the following questions:

(1) How can the Day of the Lord not begin with the Tribulation or any part of it and yet begin with the judgments of Armageddon?

(2) How can the final conflict at the end of the Tribulation be shrunk into a single battle of short enough duration so that the church can be raptured before it starts (in order to escape the wrath) and yet turn right around and accompany Christ on His return to earth at the conclusion of what would have to be a very brief battle?

(3) Does protection from wrath poured out on unbelievers really include exemption from the fallout effects of the actions of those unbelievers on whom the wrath is poured? It does not today. Why should it in the future?

(4) How does bunching the wrath judgments at the end of the Tribulation take care of the problem that equally severe judgments seem to take place earlier in the Tribulation and fall on believers as well as unbelievers?

(5) What is the more normal interpretation of the aorist in Revelation 6:17? Does it not indicate that the wrath has already been poured out, that it did not begin with the sixth seal?

(6) Does not the use of the phrase *peri de* in 1 Thessalonians 5:1 indicate that the Rapture is really not a part of the Day of the Lord at the end of the Tribulation?

Only pretribulationism fits harmoniously with all the scriptural evidence and answers those questions satisfactorily.

C. The Church

Other arguments for the pretribulation Rapture include the absence of the church in Revelation 4–19 where the Tribulation is described in great detail; the removal of the Restrainer before the Day of the Lord and the revelation of the man of sin (2 Thess. 2:1–9); and the need to have some human beings survive the Tribulation in their earthly bodies in order to become the parents of the millennial population. This last argument we shall examine in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 87

POPULATING THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

I. THE PROBLEM

When the Millennium begins, some people have to be alive in unresurrected bodies, who can beget children and populate that kingdom. All premillennialists agree with this.

The Millennium not only involves the reign of Christ with His people, who will then have resurrected bodies, but also the reign of Christ over people on this earth who will not have resurrected bodies. If there were only resurrected saints in the kingdom, then there would be no death, no increase in population, and no differences in the ages of millennial citizens (all of which are indicated as characterizing the kingdom—Isa. 65:20; Zech. 8:5; Rev. 20:12). Since resurrected people do not propagate, there would be no way to populate the kingdom unless some unresurrected people enter the Millennium. Thus all premillennialists see the need to have some adults who survive the Tribulation who are not taken to heaven at the end of the Tribulation but who enter the Millennium in unresurrected bodies to become the first parents of the millennial population.



II. THE PRETRIBULATIONAL SOLUTION

The pretribulational understanding of future events satisfies this need easily. The Rapture will occur before the Tribulation, removing all the redeemed who are living on the earth at that time. But many people will be saved during the Tribulation (Rev. 7:9, 14) including a specific group of 144,000 Jewish people (v. 4). Of those saved during that horrible time, many will be martyred (6:11; 13:15), but some will survive to enter the Millennium (Matt. 25:34; Zech. 14:11). The initial group who will enter the Millennium will not only enter with natural bodies but will also be redeemed people who willingly submit to the rule of the King. In due time, babies will be born and grow up. Some will receive Christ into their hearts; others will not. But all will have to give allegiance to the King's government or suffer the consequences. By the end of the Millennium, there will be innumerable rebels who will have given outward obedience to the King, but who, when given the opportunity by Satan after his release, will join his revolution against Christ (Rev. 20:7–9).

Thus in the pretribulational understanding of these future events, the original parents of the millennial kingdom will come from the redeemed (but unresurrected) survivors of the Tribulation, the “sheep” of Matthew 25:32–34 and the faithful Jewish survivors of Ezekiel 20:38.

III. THE POSTTRIBULATIONAL SOLUTION

In contrast stands the posttribulational picture. The church, of course, will live through the Tribulation. Though some will be martyred, many will be protected and survive. The 144,000 Jews and the great multitude of Revelation 7 are included in the church. At the end of the Tribulation, all living believers will be raptured, given resurrection bodies, and return immediately to earth in the single event of the Rapture and Second Coming. This would seem to eliminate all redeemed, unresurrected people from the earth at that point in time so that there will be no one left to begin to populate the kingdom. If the wicked survivors are either killed or consigned to hades at the end of the Tribulation, then there will be no one left in an unresurrected body to enter the Millennium.

So, either the posttribulationist must find some people who will not be saved when the Rapture begins but will be saved by the time that single, instantaneous event of the Rapture-Second Coming concludes (how much time is there?), or he must allow the initial parents of the Millennium to be unsaved people who somehow are not killed or judged at or after Armageddon. Those are the only options open to the posttribulationist to find millennial parents.

We need to be reminded of another detail at this point. The millennial population includes both Jewish and Gentile people (Isa. 19:24–25). So the first generation must be made up of both races. But a posttribulational Rapture will remove all the candidates for redeemed millennial parents of every race. And the judgments of the Second Coming will remove all the candidates for unredeemed millennial parents of every race. Where will those parents come from?

Most posttribulationists do not attempt to give an answer to this question. This may be because posttribulationists do not usually put the details of their system together in an orderly way. Their picture of the future is painted with broad strokes, not fine detail. Posttribulationists do not sponsor prophecy conferences in which their speakers are expected to describe rather specifically the system they promote. Some posttribulationists may never have seen this question as a question, simply because they have not spelled out systematically and in detail their outline of future events. But whatever the reason, most do not address this question.

Robert Gundry is an exception. His answer is twofold. The Jewish progenitors of the millennial population will come from the 144,000 who will not be saved at any time during the Tribulation but only at the end.² The Gentile parents will come from the wicked who will somehow escape death and/or judgment at the end of the Tribulation. Those wicked are the ones left in Matthew 24:40–41 (in contrast to the ones taken in the posttribulational Rapture). He says, “A partial destruction would leave the remaining unsaved to populate the millennial earth.”

Furthermore, an adjustment has to be made in the time of the judgment of the sheep and goats in Matthew 25:31–46 if the posttribulational picture be correct. The reason is simple: If the Rapture is after the Tribulation, then all the sheep (redeemed) will have been removed from the earth, and there would be no sheep to be part of that judgment if it occurs at the Second Coming, which is a single event with the Rapture. There is no way the Rapture can remove the sheep and yet have sheep present on the earth to be judged immediately following the Rapture. So either the Rapture cannot be



posttribulational or the judgment of the sheep and goats must be after the Second Coming (Gundry places it after the Millennium).

We need to examine three things that are necessary to the posttribulational answer: (a) the conversion of the 144,000, (b) the identification of the groups in Matthew 24:40–41, and (c) the time of the judgment of the sheep and goats in 25:31–46.

IV. THE 144,000 JEWS

Some posttribulationists consider the 144,000 Jews to be “spiritual Israel—the church.” If so, then their sealing is at the beginning of the Tribulation and relates to their spiritual salvation as well as physical protection. Gundry acknowledges that the 144,000 might belong to the church (and therefore be saved at the beginning); he prefers to regard them as unsaved throughout the Tribulation and identical with the group that will look on Christ when He returns and believe (Zech. 12:10) and with the Israel who will be saved at the Second Coming (Rom. 11:26–27). The reason for his preference is logical. If the 144,000 were saved any time during the Tribulation years—at the beginning, in the middle, or even during the last year—they would be raptured in the posttribulation Rapture, given resurrection bodies at that time, then return at the same time to reign with Christ in the kingdom. But having been given resurrection bodies would preclude their being the parents of anybody in the kingdom. On the other hand, if they were not saved until the very end of the Second Coming, they would “escape” the Rapture, yet be converted, but remain in unresurrected bodies and thus be able to become parents of millennial children.

Actually, pretribulationists understand that there will be a group of Jewish people converted at the conclusion of the Tribulation who will become the parents of the Jewish portion of the millennial population. They will come from among the Jewish people who survive the Tribulation even though they were unsaved throughout it. When the Lord returns they will be gathered and judged, the rebels (possibly two thirds, Zech. 13:8) to be excluded from the kingdom and those who turn in faith when they see Him to enter the kingdom (Ezek. 20:33–44). Those believing survivors constitute the “all” of all Israel that will be saved at the Second Coming (Rom. 11:26). But they will not be given resurrection bodies at that time; rather they will enter the kingdom in material bodies with the ability to propagate.

Why cannot the posttribulationist also let this group be the millennial parents? Because that group will believe when they see the Lord coming, which would be at the posttribulational Rapture. So they also would be raptured, taken to heaven, given resurrection bodies, and eliminated from parenting. The Rapture, whenever it occurs, will be the greatest separation of believers from unbelievers imaginable, so if there is to be a group of Jewish people who will believe when they see the Lord coming, and if that coming is the posttribulational Rapture-Second Coming, then they will be raptured because at that moment they will become believers. So the posttribulationist needs to have a group that is sealed in an unsaved state long enough to miss the Rapture but not long enough to miss entering the Millennium in material bodies. Thus, as one would expect, Gundry says of Ezekiel 20 that “that passage may not portray a formal judgment at all.” Actually, it cannot in the posttribulational system.

Can the 144,000 be considered unconverted throughout the Tribulation years? The answer is yes. One can hold any interpretation one wishes. The question is not, Is it possible to interpret that way? The question is, Is it reasonable to do so? What does the text of Revelation 7:1–8 say?

It states two very significant facts: the 144,000 have “the seal of the living God” (v. 2) and they are “the bond-servants of our God” (v. 3). The text does not specifically say *what* their service is, but it does say *whom* they serve. They serve God, not Antichrist. Are we to imagine here a group of 144,000 unsaved people designated as God’s bond-servants? Posttribulationists weakly explain that the designation is anticipatory of their millennial service when they will have been converted. Any explanation is possible, but is it the most likely meaning of the text? Certainly not.

But even granting that their designation as God’s servants does not apply to the 144,000 in the Tribulation period but only in the Millennium, the statement in verse 2 is very difficult to harmonize with the posttribulational system. The group is said to be sealed *before* the judgments of the Tribulation begin (v. 3). Try to fit this into posttribulationism. Here would be a distinct group of unconverted Jewish people on whose foreheads God has placed His seal. As unsaved people, they (or surely some of them) will follow Antichrist, who also will place his mark on their foreheads or hands. And the destiny



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of Antichrist's followers *has already been predetermined*: they will be tormented forever with fire and brimstone (14:9–11). None of his followers will be saved, not even 144,000 of them.

To sum up: Posttribulationism needs to have an unconverted group of Jews who will survive the Tribulation, but who, because they are unconverted, will not be raptured at the end, but will be converted by the time the Millennium begins so they can enter the Millennium in their unresurrected bodies and beget children. The only group that can qualify is the 144,000, assuming they can be described as unconverted servants of God who have on their foreheads God's seal before the Tribulation begins and who do not follow Antichrist so they will not have his mark. Is all this possible?

V. MATTHEW 24:40–41

Not only must the 144,000 be identified in a particular way, but the groups distinguished in verses 40–41 must also be identified in a certain way to come up with the posttribulational picture.

According to the posttribulational understanding, these verses say the following: “Then [at the posttribulational Rapture-Second Coming] there shall be two men in the field; one [saved, representing the church] will be taken [in the posttribulational Rapture], and one [unsaved, representing the wicked] will be left [for judgment, though not all will be judged, so some will be left to be parents of the Gentile population of the Millennium].” And the same for verse 41—the one taken is raptured, and the one left is judged.

By contrast, the pretribulationist sees the verses as a general statement of the results of the specific judgments on surviving Jews and Gentiles at the Second Coming. Those who are taken are taken into the judgments and condemned, and those who are left successfully pass the judgments and are left for blessing in the kingdom.

Notice that the posttribulationist must add the stipulation that not all who are left are judged and condemned so that there will be some left to populate the earth. But therein lies an inconsistency: the Rapture will take all the redeemed, but the judgment will not include all the unredeemed. Only part of the wicked will be judged.

Pretribulationists support their view by pointing out that according to verse 39 the Flood took the people of Noah's day into judgment; therefore, those taken at the Second Coming will also be taken into judgment.

Posttribulationists observe that a different word is used in verse 39 for “took away” than in verses 40–41, indicating two different kinds of taking away—verse 39 into judgment but verses 40–41 into heaven at the Rapture. They reinforce this argument by pointing out that the word in verses 40–41 is the same word used to describe the Rapture in John 14:3, “receive you to Myself.”

The two interpretations look like this:

	PRETRIBULATIONAL INTERPRETATION	POSTTRIBULATIONAL INTERPRETATION
“Taken”	Into judgment	Into heaven in the posttribulational Rapture
“Left”	For blessing in the kingdom (inFor judgment (but only a part unresurrected bodies towill be judged so the rest can propagate)	enter the kingdom in unresurrected bodies)

Pretribulationists note that in John 19:16 the same word used in Matthew 24:40–41 (supposedly of the Rapture according to posttribulationists) is used of taking the Lord into judgment, so obviously it could mean judgment in verses 40–41, as pretribulationism teaches. Back and forth the discussion of the words goes. What can we conclude? Simply that the words themselves are inconclusive.



But the debate is not without resolution. It can easily be settled by looking at the parallel passage in Luke 17:34–37, where the same warning about one being taken and one left is given by the Lord. However, Luke adds a question that the disciples asked: “Where, Lord?” They asked Him where those taken would be taken. They did not inquire where those left would be left. If the Lord intended us to understand that those taken would be taken in the Rapture (as posttribulationism teaches), He would have answered the question by saying heaven, or the Father’s house, or some similar expression. But His answer conveyed that they would be taken somewhere quite opposite to a blissful heaven. His answer was, “Where the body is, there also will the vultures be gathered.” Christ’s answer is a proverb about vultures appearing out of nowhere when an animal dies. Where will they be taken? Where there is death and corruption, not life and immortality. The reference is not to heaven, but to judgment. Thus the pretribulationist’s understanding of the identity of the one taken and the one left is the correct one according to Luke 17:37. A posttribulational Rapture is nowhere indicated in these verses.

VI. THE TIME OF THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS JUDGMENT

This judgment of the sheep and goats, placed at the Second Coming by pretribulationists, has to be moved to a later time if posttribulationism be consistent. The reason is that if the Rapture occurs at the end of the Tribulation, that is, at the Second Coming and if all the sheep are taken to heaven in that Rapture, how will there be any left to be assembled before Christ when He comes? They will already have gone. Or to put it another way: the Rapture-Second Coming will separate the redeemed from the wicked; yet this judgment at the Second Coming will do the same, only there will not be any righteous on the earth to separate since they will just have been raptured.

Moving this judgment also provides for unsaved survivors of the Tribulation and Second Coming to enter the Millennium in unresurrected bodies. Gundry admits, “We are therefore forced to put the judgment of the nations after the Millennium.” Forced? Why? Because the condemnation of the goats cannot be of only a part of them, since the text says “all” will be judged. In his interpretation of those left in Matthew 24:40–41, Gundry says that represented only “a partial destruction,” but here all are specifically said to be involved (25:32).

No text requires that there be *unsaved* entering the Millennium. After a few years have passed there will be people, born during the early days of the Millennium, who will grow to adulthood rejecting the Savior-King in their hearts (though outwardly obeying Him). But no text requires that there be unsaved people among the survivors of the Tribulation who enter the Millennium. Zechariah 14:16 (sometimes used to support this idea) refers to the first generation of millennial citizens who came through the judgments as redeemed, not rebels, and who will voluntarily go to Jerusalem to worship the King. But verses 17–21 move on to describe conditions throughout the Millennium, not just at the beginning. As time goes on, some will not obey the King and will have to be punished.

Perhaps the more compelling reason for the posttribulationists’ moving this judgment to the end of the Millennium is not to get goats into the Millennium as much as it is to get sheep into the judgment itself. Let me press the point again: if the judgment occurs at the Second Coming, and if the Rapture has just occurred as part of the Second Coming, and if the Rapture has removed the sheep (as it would), then where will the sheep come from to be present in this judgment?

If, however, the judgment can be moved to the close of the Millennium, then, of course, there will be both righteous and wicked people living at the conclusion of the Millennium to be present. But how, then, does one reconcile the rather diverse characteristics of Matthew 25:31–46 with those that describe what would supposedly be the same judgment at the Great White Throne in Revelation 20:11–15? Notice some of the contrasts between the judgment of the sheep and goats and the judgment at the Great White Throne.

Gundry calls the judgment of the sheep and goats a “pattern for the general judgment at the end of time.” If it is a pattern, it is rather inexact! To be sure, passages describing the same event do not each have to contain all the same details, but these two passages seem to be entirely dissimilar in their details.

If the judgment of the sheep and goats is to be moved to the end of the Millennium then, of course, Matthew 25:31 must be understood as referring to the Second Coming and verse 32 to the end of the Millennium, one thousand years later. In other words, the gap of the one-thousand-year Millennium must come between verses 31 and 32. Premillennialists recognize that such gaps occur in Scripture (Isa. 9:6 and John 5:28–29, for example), so this is not an impossible idea. But is it the likely interpretation?



SHEEP AND GOATS

GREAT WHITE THRONE

No resurrection (though OT saints may be raised)
Resurrection of the dead
at the Second Coming, they will not be a part of
the judgment)

No books opened

Books opened

The word “nations” used (and the word is never
used of the dead)

Sheep present

Righteous not mentioned as present

Three groups mentioned: sheep, goats, brethren
Only one group mentioned: the dead

Reward is the kingdom and eternal life

No mention of reward, only condemnation

Occurs at the place Christ comes to, i.e., the
earth has fled away

Matthew 25:35–40 gives the answer. Do these verses describe millennial conditions? They have to if this judgment will occur after the conclusion of the Millennium. If they do, then the Millennium will have to be a time when Christ and His brothers (i.e., Jewish believers) are hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, and in prison. Those who disobey the King during the Millennium may be imprisoned, but the text says that during the period preceding the judgment Christ’s brothers will be in prison. As certainly as this will not be true during the Millennium, it *will* be true during the Tribulation. Christ’s brothers will be hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, and imprisoned during the Tribulation years, but not during the Millennium when Christ will be ruling in righteousness.

Clearly then, verses 35–40 preclude inserting a gap of one thousand years between verses 31 and 32. The judgment will immediately follow the coming of Christ and will test people on the basis of their heart reactions to conditions that will exist during the Tribulation—conditions that will not be present during the Millennium for Christ’s followers.

VII. CONCLUSION

Where has our discussion led? To the conclusion that posttribulationism cannot provide an answer to the question, Who will be the parents of the millennial population? To be sure, posttribulationism offers some wishful thinking on the subject. They wish the 144,000 would be the Jewish parents, but in order to qualify they will have to remain unconverted throughout the Tribulation as well as through the Rapture-Second Coming, and then be converted. They wish that some of the ones left in the separation of 24:40–41 would be the Gentile parents (others will be condemned to hell). But this twists the meaning of “taken” and “left,” making the taking to heaven in the Rapture contrary to the clear meaning of



“taken” in Luke 17:36. And to make these suggestions consistent, the judgment of the sheep and goats must be placed at the conclusion of the Millennium, and Matthew 25:35–40 must describe millennial conditions.

How much simpler *not* to have to place the Rapture at the conclusion of the Tribulation. That allows for people to accept or reject Christ during the Tribulation, some of whom will survive that time (none of whom will be raptured, because the Rapture will already have occurred) to be judged at the Second Coming (both living Jews and Gentiles), and those who pass those judgments successfully as redeemed people to go into the kingdom in earthly bodies to be the first generation of the millennial population and the parents of the next generation.

Chapter 88 THE MIDTRIBULATIONAL RAPTURE VIEW

I. DEFINITION OF THIS VIEW

The midtribulational Rapture view holds that the Rapture of the church will occur at the midpoint of the seven years of Tribulation; that is, after three and one-half years have elapsed. In this view, only the last half of Daniel’s seventieth week is Tribulation. That is why midtribulationalism is sometimes described as a form of pretribulationalism, since it teaches that the Rapture occurs before the tribulations of the last half of the seven years.

II. SUPPORTERS OF THIS VIEW

J. Oliver Buswell, Jr. taught the midtribulation view. Gleason L. Archer, well-known scholar, also holds this view.²

III. ARGUMENTS FOR THIS VIEW

A. The Emphasis on the Time Period of Three and One-Half Years

Prophetic passages emphasize the last three and one-half years of the seventieth week of Daniel as the time of intense judgments on the earth and a time that begins with some great event. It seems reasonable to conclude that that event is the Rapture of the church. Put these two concepts together (intense judgments in the last half of the seven years and some important event occurring at the midpoint of the seven years) and you must conclude a midtribulation rapture of the church. Scriptural support for this includes Daniel 7:25; 9:27; 12:7, 11; Revelation 11:2; 12:6, 14.

Unquestionably, the prophetic passages do distinguish the two halves of the seven years of Tribulation. But this does not mean that the intense judgments will only occur during the last half. Nor do any of these passages cited speak, even by implication, of the Rapture. But some of them do indicate specific events that will occur at the midpoint of the seven years. For example, Daniel 9:27 states that in the middle of the week Antichrist will cause sacrifice and oblation to cease. Daniel 12:11 mentions the same event. Revelation 12:6 and 14 relate how Israel will flee to a wilderness place of refuge at the midpoint. No Rapture is indicated, for the believing remnant will flee to a place on this earth, and will not be taken to heaven as will occur at the Rapture. The fact that some of these passages do mention great events that will happen at the midpoint but nowhere state that the Rapture is one of those great events is most significant.

Midtribulationists do believe that there will be trials and judgments during the first half of the Tribulation, but these are due to the wrath of men, whereas the judgments of the second half come from the wrath of God. However, notice that Revelation 6:16–17 states that the wrath of the Lamb “has come.” That indicates that the wrath of God will begin before the sixth seal is opened. To fit the midtribulation scheme one would have to place the beginning judgments of the seals in the second half of the Tribulation.

B. The Olivet Discourse

Midtribulationists find support for their view in the Olivet Discourse. The argument goes like this. Matthew 24:27 indicates the Rapture because the word *parousia* used there is also used of the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:15. Also Matthew 24:31 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1 use words from the same root word (*episynago*). To me the argument so far seems to support a posttribulational chronology, since these comparisons seem to conclude that the Rapture and the



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Second Coming are the same event, or at least, that they occur at the same time (the end of the Tribulation). But the midtribulationist avoids that conclusion by arguing that the Rapture in the Olivet Discourse is preceded by signs that should alert believers to the nearness of the Rapture. These signs include the spread of the Gospel (Matt. 24:14), the rise of the beast (v. 15), and general persecution (vv. 10–27). Because these signs will appear during the first half of the week, the Rapture must occur at the midpoint. But frankly, if this is a good argument for midtribulationism, it would seem to be a better argument for posttribulationism.

What about the use of some of the same words for the Rapture and the Second Coming? Does this indicate that they are the same event? (This, of course, is an argument used to support posttribulationism as well.) Of course not. One would expect to find similar vocabulary used to describe events that have some similarity. But similarity does not make sameness.

C. The Last Trumpet

Midtribulationism argues that the seventh trumpet of Revelation 10:7 corresponds to the last trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15:52. If this be true, then the Rapture (described in 1 Corinthians) will occur at the midpoint of the Tribulation (the time when the seventh trumpet sounds). This is a somewhat simplistic argument that assumes that all blowing of trumpets must indicate the same kind of event. This is not true. In Jewish apocalyptic literature, trumpets signaled a variety of great eschatological events, including judgments, the gathering of the elect, and resurrection. The seventh trumpet is a trumpet of judgment, whereas the trumpet in 1 Corinthians is one of resurrection and deliverance. That they indicate the same event is a gratuitous assumption.

Chapter 89
THE POSTTRIBULATIONAL RAPTURE VIEW

I. DEFINITION OF THIS VIEW

Posttribulationism teaches that the Rapture and the Second Coming are facets of a single event that will occur at the end of the Tribulation when Christ returns. The church will be on earth during the Tribulation to experience the events of that period.

II. PROPONENTS OF THIS VIEW

Though a number of writers have held and do hold this view throughout church history, three works have been especially influential: *The Approaching Advent of Christ*, by Alexander Reese; *The Blessed Hope*, by George E. Ladd; and *The Church and the Tribulation*, by Robert H. Gundry.

III. PRE- AND POSTTRIBULATIONISM CONTRASTED

Since pretribulationism and posttribulationism are the two Rapture views most debated today, let me contrast their principal differences.

PRETRIBULATIONISM

1. Rapture occurs before the Tribulation.
2. Church experiences Revelation 3:10 before the Tribulation.
3. Day of the Lord begins with the Tribulation.
4. 1 Thessalonians 5:2–3 occurs at beginning of Tribulation.
5. 144,000 redeemed at start of Tribulation.



6. Rapture and Second Coming separated by seven years.
7. Living Israelites judged at Second Coming.
8. Living Gentiles judged at Second Coming.
9. Parents of millennial population come from survivors of judgments on living Jews and Gentiles.
10. Believers of Church Age judged in heaven between Rapture and Second Coming.

POSTTRIBULATIONISM

1. Rapture occurs after the Tribulation.
2. Church experiences Revelation 3:10 at end of Tribulation.
3. Day of the Lord begins at close of Tribulation.
4. 1 Thessalonians 5:2–3 occurs near end of Tribulation.
5. 144,000 redeemed at conclusion of Tribulation.
6. Rapture and Second Coming are a single event.
7. No such judgment.
8. Living Gentiles judged after Millennium.
9. Parents of millennial population come from 144,000 Jews.
10. Believers of Church Age judged after Second Coming or at conclusion of Millennium.

IV. ARGUMENTS FOR POSTTRIBULATIONISM

A. The Vocabulary for the Second Coming

Briefly stated the argument is this. Since New Testament writers use several words to describe the Second Coming, if the Rapture and the Second Coming are different events separated by seven years, why did they not reserve one word for the Rapture and another for the Second Coming instead of seeming to use them interchangeably?

For example, *parousia*, meaning “coming,” “arrival,” or “presence,” is used in relation to the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:15. It also describes the second coming of Christ in Matthew 24:27. Two different conclusions are possible from this evidence. (1) *Parousia* describes the same, single event, meaning that the Rapture and the Second Coming are a single event at the end of the Tribulation. (2) *Parousia* describes two separate events, both characterized by the presence of the Lord, but events that will not happen at the same time. Either conclusion is valid.



Consider an illustration. Suppose proud grandparents should say to their friends. “We are looking forward to enjoying the presence (*parousia*) of our grandchildren next week”; then later in the conversation add, “Yes, we expect our grandchildren to be present at our golden wedding celebration.” If you heard those statements you could draw one of two conclusions. (1) The grandchildren are coming next week for the golden wedding anniversary. In other words, the grandparents were speaking of the coming and the anniversary as a single event, occurring at the same time. Or (2) the grandchildren will be making two trips to see their grandparents—one next week (perhaps as part of their vacation) and another later to help celebrate the golden wedding anniversary.

Likewise, since the Lord’s presence (*parousia*) will characterize both the Rapture and the Second Coming, the word itself does not indicate whether these are a single event or separate events. In other words, the vocabulary used does not necessarily prove either pre- or posttribulationism.

A second word used for the Lord’s coming is *apokalupsis*, meaning “revelation.” It occurs in Rapture passages like 1 Corinthians 1:7 and 1 Peter 1:7; 4:13, because when Christ comes for the church He will reveal Himself to her. At His coming we shall see Him as He is. The word also appears in passages that describe His coming to the earth at the close of the Tribulation (2 Thess. 1:7), because that event also will reveal Christ to the world.

Two conclusions are possible. (1) The Rapture and the Second Coming are the same single event. Since both are called a revelation of Christ, they must occur at the same time and be part of the same event at the end of the Tribulation. (2) Both the Rapture and the Second Coming will reveal Christ, but not at the same time or under the same circumstances. Therefore, the Rapture and the Second Coming can be separated as pretribulationism teaches.

Notice that the first conclusion used the word *revelation* as a *cataloging* word; that is, it catalogs whatever event is referred to in all the passages where the word is used as the same, single event. The second conclusion sees the word *revelation* as a *characterizing* word; that is, it is used to characterize different events in the same way, as a revelation.

It becomes more obvious, then, that the vocabulary used in the New Testament does not seem to prove either pre- or posttribulationism. The third principal word for the Second Coming is *epiphaneia*, meaning “manifestation.” At the Second Coming, Christ will destroy Antichrist by the sheer manifestation of His coming (2 Thess. 2:8). The word is also used in reference to the hope of the believer when he will see the Lord (2 Tim. 4:8; Titus 2:13). Are we to conclude that the word is cataloging those references to refer them to the same single event? Or can we conclude that it is characterizing two different events as both involving a manifestation of Christ but not occurring at the same time? The answer is either (but not both!).

Clearly, then, the vocabulary does not prove either a pre- or posttribulational Rapture of the church.

Why, then, does this argument continue to be used? Simply because posttribulationists continue to believe that it is a valid support for their view, even claiming that it “substantiates” their view.

But the posttribulationist’s underlying assumption in continuing to use this argument is that these words catalog rather than characterize. To be sure, vocabulary might do that; but to be equally sure, it might not.

Take the word “motor.” My automobile has a motor. My wife’s washing machine has a motor. My moped has a motor. Our furnace fan has a motor. My camera has a motor that automatically advances the film. Is the term “motor” a characterizing feature of these rather diverse machines? Or is it a means of cataloging them that would force us to conclude that everything that has a motor is the same thing? The answer is obvious.

Do presence, revelation, and manifestation characterize different events or catalog the same event? The pretribulationist says the former; the posttribulationist concludes the latter.

B. The Church is Not Said to Be in Heaven But on Earth During the Tribulation According to Revelation 4–18

Pretribulationists point out that though the word “church” occurs nineteen times in Revelation 1–3 and once in chapter 22, it does not appear even once in chapters 4–18, which describe the Tribulation period. Therefore, they conclude, the church is not on earth during the Tribulation but in heaven.

In response, posttribulationists say the church (that is, the last generation of the church) will be on earth during the Tribulation according to Revelation 4–18 for these reasons. (1) Nowhere in these chapters is the church said to be in heaven, something we would expect the text to say if it were true. (2) The occurrence of the word “saints” in 13:7, 10; 16:6; 17:6; and 18:24 shows that the church is in fact on the earth during the Tribulation. (3) Other descriptions of believers



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in the Tribulation aptly apply to Church Age believers, indicating that Tribulation believers will be the last generation of Church Age believers and that they will go through the Tribulation. Let's examine and critique each of these arguments in more detail.

(1) Is the church in heaven during the Tribulation? To this question pretribulationists reply along either or both of two lines. Most identify the twenty-four elders as representing the church, and since they are seen in heaven in 4:4 and 5:8–10, the church is mentioned as in heaven. Some think this argument is nullified since the critical text of verses 9–10 has the elders singing of redemption in the third person as if redemption were not their own experience (thus they could not represent the church, which has been redeemed). But this is really not a strong argument. Notice that Moses sang of redemption that he experienced in the third person (Exod. 15:13, 16–17).

Pretribulationists also point out that the background of Hebrew marriage customs argues for the church's already being in heaven before the coming of Christ at the end of the Tribulation. Jewish marriage included a number of steps: first, betrothal, which involved the prospective groom traveling from his father's house to the home of the prospective bride, paying the purchase price, and thus establishing the marriage covenant; second, the groom returning to his father's house and remaining separate from his bride for twelve months, during which time he prepared the living accommodations for his wife in his father's house; third, the groom's coming for his bride at a time not known exactly to her; fourth, his return with her to the groom's father's house to consummate the marriage and to celebrate the wedding feast for the next seven days (during which the bride remained closeted in her bridal chamber).

In Revelation 19:7–9 the wedding feast is announced, which, if the analogy of the Hebrew marriage customs means anything, assumes that the wedding has previously taken place in the father's house. Today the church is described as a virgin waiting for her bridegroom's coming (2 Cor. 11:2); in Revelation 21 she is designated as the wife of the Lamb, indicating that previously she has been taken to the groom's father's house. Pretribulationists say that this requires an interval of time between the Rapture and the Second Coming. Granted, it does not say seven years' time, but it certainly argues against posttribulationism, which has no time between the Rapture and Second Coming.

(2) Does the word "saints" refer to Church Age saints? Actually the appearance of the word "saints" in chapters 4–18 does not prove anything until you know what saints they are. There were saints (godly ones) in the Old Testament (Ps. 16:3); there are saints today (1 Cor. 1:2); there will be saints in the Tribulation years (Rev. 13:7, etc.). The question is: Are the saints of this Church Age distinct from saints of the Tribulation period (pretribulationism) or not (posttribulationism)? The uses of the word will not answer the question.

(3) Do other phrases identify Tribulation believers with Church Age saints to indicate the church will go through the Tribulation? Such phrases include "die in the Lord" (Rev. 14:13; cf. "dead in Christ" of 1 Thes. 4:16–18), "who keep the commandments of God" (Rev. 12:17; 14:12; cf. 1:9). To use these similarities to prove that the church will be present in the Tribulation requires that similarity means sameness (a major assumption). On the other hand, one would expect distinct groups of saints (i.e., church saints and Tribulation saints) to be described in similar ways since they are all saints.

The same holds true for the use of the word "elect" or "chosen." Some have concluded that since the elect are mentioned as being in the Tribulation in Matthew 24:22, 24, and 31, the church will go through the Tribulation. But what elect people are meant? The heathen king Cyrus was called God's anointed (Isa. 45:1). So was Christ (Ps. 2:2). Israel was called God's chosen one (Isa. 45:4) even though the nation was a mixture of redeemed and unredeemed people. Christ is also God's chosen One (42:1). So is the church (Col. 3:12). So are some angels (1 Tim. 5:21). All elect are not the same, and the chosen ones of the Tribulation days do not have to be the same as the elect of the church simply because the same term is used of both groups.

C. Second Thessalonians 1:5–10 is Best Interpreted as Teaching Posttribulationism

Posttribulationists understand this passage to say that "Paul places the release of Christians from persecution at the posttribulational return of Christ to judge unbelievers, whereas according to pretribulationism this release will occur seven years earlier." In other words, since release comes at the Second Coming and release is connected with the Rapture, the Rapture must be at the same time as the Second Coming.

Let us examine the posttribulationist's answers to three questions about this passage.



(1) What is the subject of Paul's discussion in these verses? The posttribulational answer is release for Christians from persecution.

(2) When will this release occur? At the posttribulational return of Christ.

(3) What group of people will experience this release? Obviously, just those Christians who survive the Tribulation and are alive at the posttribulational Rapture.

First of all, observe the posttribulational answer to question 3. The passage only addresses the release of Christians living at the conclusion of the Tribulation. If that is true, why did Paul seemingly ignore the Thessalonians, who had suffered persecution and who had already died? Death was the means of release for them. Indeed, why did he not mention that avenue of release, which some of those to whom he was writing might yet experience? To be sure, the rapture of the living will bring release from persecution, but only a relatively small percentage of believers will ever experience that means of release, since most will have died prior to the Rapture. If release was Paul's chief concern here, and if that release will come at the posttribulational Rapture, then Paul was offering that hope of release to a very small group of believers.

Viewing this passage from a posttribulational slant, one must conclude that the release for Christians is connected with flaming judgment on unbelievers. It is not described in terms of meeting the Lord and forever being with Him, nor in terms of a resurrection for those who have died, as other Rapture passages describe it. Obviously if one's enemies are punished, then there will be release from their persecution. But the point is this: where is the Rapture described in this passage at all? The judgmental aspect of the Second Coming is given the prominence, and though, according to posttribulationism, the Rapture is the initial part of the Second Coming, that initial part is *entirely absent* from this discussion.

If Paul so clearly believed in a posttribulational Rapture, then why did he not at least mention that Rapture in passing since it is the moment of Rapture that brings release, not the following judgment on the enemies of God? Christians who live through the Tribulation (if posttribulationism be correct) will be released from persecution the instant they are raptured, *whether or not* Christ judges their enemies at that same time.

Notice some of the words in this passage that emphasize God's judging of His enemies: "righteous judgment" (2 Thess. 1:5), "just" (v. 6), "repay" (v. 6), "affliction" (v. 6), "flaming fire" (v. 7), and "retribution" (v. 8). This vocabulary is strangely absent from the Rapture passages of John 14:1–3; 1 Corinthians 15:51–58; and 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18. Actually the Rapture can be found in this passage only if one's eschatological scheme superimposes it there. Exegesis does not produce the Rapture from this passage.

Why is the posttribulationists' use of this passage so jumbled? Simply because they have answered the first question wrongly. That question was, What is the subject of Paul's discussion here? And the answer is not, as posttribulationists say, the release of Christians from persecution.

The subject of the passage is not release but vindication. Paul did not focus on when or how the persecuted Thessalonians will be relieved of persecution; rather, he assured them that God will judge His enemies and thereby vindicate those who have suffered.

One of the most spectacular displays of God's judging will occur at the second coming of Christ when the armies of the world arrayed at Armageddon are defeated by Him and when all living people will have to appear before Him (Ezek. 20:33–44; Matt. 25:31–46). It is on those people living at that time that vengeance will fall. Dead rejectors of Christ will not be judged until after the Millennium at the Great White Throne. Looking back, we know for a fact that none of the unsaved who actually persecuted the Thessalonians will be judged at the Second Coming but at the Great White Throne.

Since vindication is the subject, that explains why Paul did not mention that Rapture in this passage, for the Rapture is not a time of vindication of God's righteousness by judging the world. It is a time of release, of hope, of meeting the Lord. Some Thessalonians had found release through death even before Paul wrote. Eventually all of them found it that way. Since the first century, many persecuted Christians have found the same release through death. Some will find it at the pretribulational Rapture. But only those believers living at the end of the Tribulation will find it then, not because a Rapture takes place then, but because they successfully pass the judgments and see their enemies condemned.

But if vindication at the Second Coming falls on a relatively small group of Christ's enemies (think, by comparison, of the many who have opposed Him through the centuries), why should this particular time of vindication be given such prominence? Simply because the end of the Tribulation brings to a climax the long rebellion of mankind, a rebellion that



will be halted by the personal intervention of the Lord. Not all of the Lord's enemies will be judged then, but those who will be are the epitome of rebellion. Awful as the persecution of the Thessalonians may have been, horrible as subsequent persecutions of believers have been and are, those in the past or present do not compare with that which will transpire during the Tribulation period.

Think of an analogy. Antichrists were present in the first century (1 John 2:18). Antichrists have come and gone throughout the centuries. But one great Antichrist is yet to appear on the scene of history, and he will be the epitome of opposition to God. Other antichrists are now in hades awaiting the judgment at the end of the Millennium that will cast them into the lake of fire forever. But the coming great Antichrist will be judged at the Second Coming, and when he is, God will be vindicated over all antichrists, though their particular judgment will occur much later.

All persecutors of believers will be judged later, as well. The judgment of those living at the Second Coming will vindicate God's righteousness with respect to them and to all persecutors who died before them.

If death or the Rapture brings release from personal persecution, why should believers be concerned with this future vindication? Because the case against persecutors cannot be closed until Christ is vindicated and righteousness prevails. Persecution may cease when death occurs, but the case against the persecutors is not closed until they are judged. And believers are concerned not only about relief but about vindication.

Notice a biblical example of that principle. Hear the Tribulation martyrs in heaven, before the end of the Tribulation, crying out to God for vindication (Rev. 6:9–11). “When will You settle the score against those who killed us?” they ask. Of course, they have already obtained release through physical death and are in heaven; yet they are concerned about vindication. And the Lord replies that they will have to wait a little longer for that vindication until others are also martyred on earth.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and 5:9, Paul extended the hope and assurance of escape from wrath by means of a pretribulational Rapture. In 2 Thessalonians 1, he assured his readers that the enemies of the Lord will be judged.

In summary, chapter 1 does not teach that release from persecution will necessarily occur at the same time as the Second Coming. It does not picture the Rapture at all but focuses on the judgment on the wicked and the vindication of Christ that will occur at the Second Coming. That vindication gives assurance to saints of all ages that righteousness will prevail.

Chapter 90 THE MILLENNIUM

To build the kingdom on the first coming of Christ produces a theological error with many serious ramifications. By kingdom, I mean the rule of Messiah on earth as promised to David (2 Sam. 7:12–16). To claim that Christ established this Davidic kingdom at His first advent requires a deliteralizing of the promises made to David and results in confusion between the church and the kingdom. Among other things, church ethics and kingdom ethics are intermixed, usually with the result that kingdom ethics are promoted more than church ethics. Thus Christians are urged to live the kingdom here and now.

That mistake was made by some during the earthly life of Christ (Luke 19:11). The truth is that the messianic kingdom will be inaugurated at the second coming of Christ. At that time the land promise made to Abraham and his descendants will be fulfilled (Gen. 15:18–21). Then the promise made to David that his descendant (Messiah) will sit on the throne of the kingdom forever will be fulfilled. Without a Millennium in which all these promises can be fulfilled, the promises have to be canceled for some reason or be fulfilled in Israel's past or in the present nonliterally.

I. THE LENGTH OF THE MILLENNIUM

Six times in Revelation 20:2–7 the length of the Millennium is stated to be 1,000 years. The repetition of this figure underscores both its literalness and its importance. George E. Ladd, a premillennialist who denies the literalness of the figure, says: “It is difficult to understand the thousand years for which he [Satan] was bound with strict literalness in view of the obvious symbolic use of numbers in Revelation. A thousand equals the third power of 10—an ideal time.” Apparently Augustine first conceived of 1,000, the cube of 10, as representing the perfection or fullness of time.² Amillennialists usually interpret the number in this same manner. One may properly ask why 10 raised to the third power is ideal instead



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of 10 raised to the tenth power, or some other power? Furthermore, to deny the literalness of the number because Revelation is a symbolic book is to ignore that not everything in the book is symbolic, and therefore it would be necessary to give reasons why any given passage is symbolic. There is no reason to reject the literal meaning of 1,000 as indicating the length of the millennial reign of Christ.

II. THE GOVERNMENT OF THE MILLENNIUM

A. The Type of Government

The government of the messianic, millennial kingdom will be a theocracy. This is the same form of government God used for Israel in Old Testament times; only in the Millennium the Lord Jesus Christ will personally and visibly reign over the affairs of all mankind (Dan. 7:14). His rule will be as a benevolent despot (Rev. 19:15). As a result, there will be perfect and complete justice for all, and sin will be immediately punished (Isa. 11:4; 65:20).

B. The Center of Government

The topography of the earth will be changed by the time the kingdom begins to function, and the city of Jerusalem will be the center of government (Isa. 2:3). That city will be exalted (Zech. 14:10); it will be a place of great glory (Isa. 24:23); it will be the site of the temple (33:20) and the joy of the whole earth (Ps. 48:2). Jerusalem, scene of so much war and turmoil both in the past and present and victim of future judgments during the Tribulation, will never again need to fear for her safety (Isa. 26:1–4).

C. The Rulers in the Government

David will apparently be a regent in the millennial kingdom. A number of prophecies speak of David's important place in the kingdom (Jer. 30:9; Ezek. 37:24–25). Apparently David, who with other Old Testament believers will be resurrected at the second coming of Christ, will act as a prince under the authority of Christ, the King.

Authority over the twelve tribes of Israel will be vested in the hands of the Twelve Apostles (Matt. 19:28). Other princes and nobles will likewise share in governmental duties (Isa. 32:1; Jer. 30:21). It seems too that many others of lesser rank will have responsibilities in various departments of the kingdom government. The Parable of the Minas (Luke 19:11–27) indicates that those who have proved their faithfulness will be given much authority. The church, too, will have a part in governing the earth (Rev. 5:10). Though many of the normal procedures of government will be carried out by subordinates, Christ will be King over all.

D. The Subjects of the Government

The first subjects of the rule of Christ during the kingdom will be the Jews and Gentiles who survive the Tribulation and enter the kingdom in earthly bodies. At the very beginning of the Millennium all the people on earth will be redeemed, for all unredeemed will have been judged at Christ's return. Of course, babies will be born right away so that in a few years there will be many who will be of age to decide for themselves their own spiritual relation to the King. They will have to be subject to Him at least outwardly, but whether they give heart allegiance will be a matter of personal choice. All will have to accept Him as King; some will also accept Him as personal Savior. All of these people will be living in mortal bodies. Resurrected saints will, of course, have resurrection bodies, not subject to physical limitations. This also means they will not contribute to space, food, or governmental problems during the Millennium.

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MILLENNIUM

A. Spiritual

Some allege that the millennial kingdom cannot be a spiritual one if it is earthly. But "earthly" and "spiritual" are not necessarily mutually exclusive. If the two concepts were incompatible, Christians today could not be expected to live



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spiritual lives in earthly bodies. During the Millennium, God will join the spiritual and the earthly in a full display of His glory on this earth. The earthly kingdom will manifest the highest standards of spirituality.

B. Righteous

Our Lord will be a King who reigns in righteousness (Isa. 32:1). Righteousness will be the belt of His loins (11:5). With righteousness He shall judge the poor (11:4; 16:5). Zion shall be called the city of righteousness (1:26). Only the righteous shall enter the kingdom at its inauguration (Matt. 25:37), and those who thirst after righteousness shall be filled (5:6).

C. Peaceful

As a consequence of righteousness, the Millennium will be an era of peace. Former enemies, like Egypt, Israel, and Assyria, will be at peace with each other (Isa. 19:23–25). Jerusalem, site of many conflicts throughout the centuries, will be at peace (Zech. 8:4–5). Indeed, the whole earth will be at peace (Isa. 2:4). One ramification of this will be the elimination of defense budgets, which will release resources for other purposes.

D. Prosperous

The earth will be increasingly productive throughout the Millennium as wilderness and desert places become useful (Isa. 35:1–7). One harvest will be followed by another (Amos 9:13–14). Social needs and injustices will be eliminated (Ps. 72:12–13). The curse to which the earth was subjected when Adam sinned will be reversed, though not completely lifted until the end of the Millennium when death will be finally conquered.

E. Religious

Full knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth during the Millennium (Isa. 2:2–3). Apparently sacrifices will again be offered in a temple which will be built and in operation during the Millennium (Ezek. 40–48). Premillennialists understand these sacrifices as a means of memorializing the death of Christ. Religious holidays will also be observed during the Millennium (46:1–15; Zech. 14:16).

IV. WHAT THE MILLENNIUM WILL MEAN TO CHRIST

In premillennial eschatology much is made of what the Millennium will mean to the world, to Jerusalem, to Palestine, to Israel, to the nations, etc., and rightly so, for it will affect many changes for good in the entire earth. But there is another perspective perhaps more important to consider: What will the Millennial Age mean to our Lord?

In Psalm 2:7–8 King Jesus was promised authority to rule the earth in righteousness. Certainly He did not see that promise fulfilled during His first advent, though He paid the price of His own life for it. In Revelation 5 He is proclaimed worthy to take the sealed book, open it, and receive the inheritance that is rightfully His. This will be fulfilled when He comes again (11:15).

Why is an earthly kingdom necessary? Did He not receive His inheritance when He was raised and exalted in heaven? Is not His present rule His inheritance? Why does there need to be an earthly kingdom? Because He must be triumphant *in the same arena* where He was seemingly defeated. His rejection by the rulers of this world was on this earth (1 Cor. 2:8). His exaltation must also be on this earth. And so it shall be when He comes again to rule this world in righteousness. He has waited long for His inheritance; soon He shall receive it.



Chapter 91
FUTURE JUDGMENTS

In the program of God, there are several judgments yet in the future. It is not accurate to speak of one great Judgment Day to come, for these future judgments will occur at different times.

I. JUDGMENT OF BELIEVERS' WORKS

A. The Scriptures Involved

Two principal passages recount the fact and details of this judgment (1 Cor. 3:10–15; 2 Cor. 5:10). Other relevant passages include Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:1–5; 9:24–27; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 2 Timothy 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:4; and Revelation 2:10; 3:11; 4:4, 10.

B. The Judgment Itself

Though not specifically stated, this judgment will apparently take place immediately after the Rapture of the church, since the twenty-four elders who likely represent believers have their crowns in the scene in heaven at the beginning of the Tribulation (Rev. 4:4, 10). Further, when the bride returns with Christ at His second coming, she is clothed with the righteous deeds that have survived the examination of this judgment (19:8).

The site of this judgment is the bema of Christ. Earthly bemas were raised, thronelike platforms on which rulers or judges sat when making speeches (Acts 12:21) or hearing and deciding cases (18:12–17).

Only believers will stand in this judgment, for Paul made clear that it relates to those who have built on the Foundation, Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:11–12).

The nature of the believer's works will be examined in this judgment to distinguish worthy works from worthless ones. These works are the deeds done by the believer during his Christian life. All will be reviewed and examined. Some will pass the test because they were good; others will fail because they were worthless. Both good and bad motives will be exposed; then every believer will receive praise from God (1 Cor. 4:5). What grace!

C. The Outcome of Judgment

The outcome will be either reward or deprivation of reward. Salvation is not in question, for those deprived of reward "shall be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Cor. 3:15). Yet, as mentioned above, apparently every believer will have done some things that God can praise.

Nevertheless, the deprivation is real and may involve forfeiture and shame. Certainly it means forfeiting rewards that otherwise might have been received. The word *zemioo* in 1 Cor. 3:15 carries no idea of suffering in the sense of physical or mental suffering. Its basic idea is loss in the sense of forfeiture of reward that could have been received.

John clearly taught that rewards may be lost because of unfaithfulness during one's lifetime (2 John 8). His concern was that his readers would receive a full reward, that is, receive all that could be theirs through continued faithfulness. This same idea of loss is part of Paul's analogy of the Judgment Seat with running a race (1 Cor. 9:24–27). His concern was that he not be disapproved, that is, do nothing that would make him unworthy to receive rewards. Perhaps even more vividly John wrote about the possibility of a believer being ashamed at Christ's coming (1 John 2:28). "The passive voice coupled with the expression *autoou* suggests that a believer withdraws in shame. It suggests a shrinking back from Christ, perhaps from a sense of guilt, with the believer producing the action [rather than Christ putting the believer to shame]."

Summarizing in a very balanced way, Hoyt concluded as follows:

The Judgment Seat of Christ might be compared to a commencement ceremony. At graduation there is some measure of disappointment and remorse that one did not do better and work harder. However, at such an event the overwhelming emotion is joy, not remorse. The graduates do not leave the auditorium weeping because they did not earn better grades. Rather, they are thankful that they have been graduated, and they are grateful for



what they did achieve. To overdo the sorrow aspect of the Judgment Seat of Christ is to make heaven hell. To underdo the sorrow aspect is to make faithfulness inconsequential.

II. JUDGMENT OF OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS

Daniel 12:1–3 speaks of the Tribulation period (v. 1), resurrections of the righteous and the wicked (v. 2), and rewards for the righteous (v. 3). Many understand the resurrection and reward of the righteous to refer to the resurrection and judgment of believers of the Old Testament at the conclusion of the Tribulation. New Testament revelation places the resurrection and judgment of the wicked of all time at the conclusion of the Millennium (Rev. 20:11–15). Of course it is not unusual for Old Testament prophets to place side by side events that later revelation separates by some period of time.

It is possible that Daniel 12:1–3 refers only to the resurrection and rewarding of Jewish believers of the Tribulation days. They will be rewarded for having insight for seeing through Antichrist's deception and for leading others to faith during the Tribulation days.

III. JUDGMENT OF SAINTS OF THE TRIBULATION PERIOD

Revelation 20:4–6 relates the resurrection of saints of the Tribulation period who died during that time. Because of their opposition to Antichrist's program, they were martyred, but God raises them from the dead just before the Millennium begins. No specific mention is made of a judging and rewarding; it can only be assumed to take place at the time of resurrection. (The phrase "judgment was given to them" in v. 4 refers not to being judged but to the activity of saints judging people in the millennial government.)

IV. JUDGMENT OF JEWISH SURVIVORS OF THE TRIBULATION

Before the inauguration of the millennial kingdom, the survivors of the Tribulation, both Jewish and Gentile, must be judged in order to ensure that only believers will enter the kingdom.

The judgment of Jewish survivors is described in Ezekiel 20:34–38 and illustrated in Matthew 25:1–30. Ezekiel states that it will occur after all surviving Israelites have been regathered from the ends of the earth to the land of Palestine. Christ will cause them to "pass under the rod" (see Lev. 27:32) to purge out the rebels. As a result, those rebels (unsaved) will not enter the land of Israel (Ezek. 20:38) but will be cast into the outer darkness (Matt. 25:30). In contrast, those who successfully pass through this judgment will enter the millennial kingdom to enjoy the blessings of the New Covenant (Ezek. 20:37). This group will not be given resurrection bodies at this time, but will go into the kingdom in their earthly bodies and will become the parents of the first millennial Jewish babies.

V. JUDGMENT OF GENTILE SURVIVORS OF THE TRIBULATION

Also at the second advent of Christ, Gentile survivors of the Tribulation will be judged by Him. Matthew 25:31–46 describes this in detail. Joel predicted that it would take place in the "valley of Jehoshaphat" (Joel 3:2), which may refer to the Kidron Valley on the east side of Jerusalem. Jehoshaphat simply means "Yahweh judges."

Both passages say that these Gentiles will be judged for their treatment of Israel during the Tribulation period. Christ is the Judge; the Gentiles are being judged; by all rapture schemes the church has already been raptured to heaven; the "brethren," the treatment of whom becomes the basis for the judgment, can only refer to Christ's natural brethren, other Jewish people (Rom. 9:3). For a Gentile to treat any Jewish person with kindness during the Tribulation will place his life in jeopardy. No one will do this merely out of a beneficent attitude, but only out of a redeemed heart. Therefore, this is not a judgment of works, but of genuine faith that produced such selfless works (or the lack of it which produced no such works).

Those who lack saving faith and demonstrate that lack by not doing good works will be sent to the lake of fire. Those whose good deeds prove the presence of saving faith will enter the kingdom. Like the Jewish survivors of the preceding judgment, they will enter in earthly bodies and become parents of the first millennial Gentile babies.



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You will notice that I have understood this judgment to concern individual Gentiles, and not, as some translations imply, national groups of people. The word used in the passage is translated in the New Testament by “people” two times, “heathen” five times, “nation” sixty-four times, and “Gentiles” ninety-three times. Other references to a judgment at the second advent of Christ depict a judgment of individuals (Matt. 13:30, 47–50).

VI. JUDGMENT OF SATAN AND FALLEN ANGELS

Satan and his angels will also be judged, evidently at the conclusion of the millennial kingdom. To be sure, Satan has had other sentences passed on him, but this will be his final one that confines him forever in the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10). The angels who are judged at this time also will experience the same fate (Jude 6–7). Believers will apparently be associated with the Lord in judging (1 Cor. 6:3).

VII. JUDGMENT OF THE UNSAVED DEAD

At the conclusion of the millennial reign of Christ, unbelievers of all time will be raised and judged. Their resurrection is the resurrection of judgment spoken of by the Lord in John 5:29. Their judgment will take place before a Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11–15). Their Judge is the Lord Christ (see John 5:22, 27).

Those judged are simply called “the dead”—unbelievers (in contrast to “the dead in Christ,” which refers to believers). This judgment will not separate believers from unbelievers, for all who will experience it will have made the choice during their lifetimes to reject God. The Book of Life that will be opened at the Great White Throne judgment will not contain the name of anyone who will be in that judgment. The books of works that will also be opened will prove that all who are being judged deserve eternal condemnation (and may be used to determine degrees of punishment). It is not that all their works were evil, but all were dead works, done by spiritually dead people. It is as if the Judge will say, “I will show you by the record of your own deeds that you deserve condemnation.” So everyone who will appear in this judgment will be cast into the lake of fire forever.

JUDGEMENT	TIME	PLACE	PERSONS	BASIS	RESULTS	SCRIPTURE
Believer's Works	Between Rapture and Second Coming	<i>Bema of Christ</i>	Believers in Christ	Works and walk of the Christian life	Rewards or loss of rewards	1 Cor 3:10–15; 2 Cor. 5:10
Old Testament Saints	End of Tribulation/Second Coming		Believers in Old Testament times	Faith in God	Rewards	Dan. 12:1–3



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Tribulation Saints	End of Tribulation/ Second Coming	Believers of Tribulation period	Faith in and faithfulness to Christ	Reign with Christ in the Millenium	Rev. 20:4-6
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Living Jews	End of Tribulation/ Second Coming	Wilderness	Jews who survive the Tribulation	Faith in Christ	Believers enter kingdom; rebels are purged	Ezek. 20:34- 38
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Living Gentiles	End of Tribulation/ Second Coming	Valley of Jehoshaphat	Gentiles who survive the Tribulation	Faith in Christ as proved by works	Believers enter kingdom; others go to the lake of fire	Joel 3:1-2; Matt. 25:31- 46
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Satan and Fallen Angels	End of Millenium	Satan and those angels who follow him	Allegiance to Satan's counterfeit system	Lake of fire	Matt. 25:41; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 20:10
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Unsaved People	End of Millenium	Before the Great White Throne	Unbelievers of all time	Rejection of God	Lake of fire	Rev. 20:11-15
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Chapter 92
RESURRECTION AND ETERNAL DESTINY

I. THE FACT OF RESURRECTION



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The Bible teaches clearly and in many places the truth of resurrection of the body. Bodily resurrection is primarily a biblical revelation, for Greek philosophy, which saw the body as a hindrance, taught only the immortality of the soul.

A. In the Old Testament

1. *Job 19:25–27*. During his affliction Job longed for death as a way of relief and wished that he could know there was some sort of hope beyond the grave that would make his present suffering tolerable (14:13–14). He expressed that hope in 19:25–27, a hope in a living God who would vindicate his case even after his death. He is sure that even after his body is decayed, he will see God from his flesh (v. 26). When the Hebrew preposition, *min*, is used with the verb “to see,” it indicates the vantage point from which a person sees; i.e., Job expected to be in a body in his resurrected state.
2. *Exodus 3:6*. In His debate with the Sadducees, the Lord cited this verse as proof of the fact of resurrection (Matt. 22:31–32). The argument is based on the fact that when God identified Himself to Moses at the burning bush He did so by associating Himself with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in a living relationship that did not cease when those patriarchs died.
3. *Psalm 16:8–11*. In these verses David was writing of his own future resurrection. These verses were cited by Peter in Acts 2:25–28 and 31 as finding their ultimate fulfillment in the resurrection of Jesus Christ on the first Easter.
4. *Psalm 49:14*. Here the psalmist asserts that the righteous will ultimately triumph over the wicked, either in this life or in the life to come (“in the morning”).
5. *Isaiah 26:19*. Here the prophet explicitly teaches the bodily resurrection of the redeemed.
6. *Daniel 12:2*. Here both the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the wicked are taught. The New Testament reaffirms these two resurrections (John 5:28–29) but reveals they will not occur at the same time (Rev. 20:4–5).
7. *Zechariah 14:5*. If “holy ones” refers to believers, then this prophecy assures their resurrection, for they come with Christ at His second coming. Some, however, think it refers to angels, though possibly to both resurrected believers and angels.

B. In the New Testament

1. *Matthew 16:21; 17:23; 20:19*. Christ predicted His own resurrection on the third day after His death.
2. *Matthew 22:31–32; John 2:19–22; 5:28–29; 11:25–26*. Christ taught the truth of resurrection.
3. *1 Corinthians 15:20–24, 35–50; 2 Corinthians 5:1–4; Philippians 3:21; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18*. Paul not only taught bodily resurrection but also gave added details about the resurrection body.

II. THE ORDER OF RESURRECTIONS

As already noted, all bodily resurrections fall into two categories: the resurrection of life or the first resurrection, and the resurrection of condemnation or the second resurrection (Luke 14:13–14; John 5:28–29). These resurrections will not occur at the same time, so time is not the distinguishing feature; life or eternal death is.

A. The Resurrection of Christ

First in the order of resurrections was the resurrection of Christ. Though others had been raised from the dead before Christ, He was the first to rise from the grave with a body that was no longer subject to death (Rom. 6:9; Rev. 1:18). This is why Paul called Him the Firstborn from the dead (Col. 1:18). His resurrection is the first of many to come (1 Cor. 15:23).

B. The Resurrection of Those Who are Christ’s at His Coming

This resurrection will include several groups: the dead saints of this Church Age (1 Thess. 4:16), the dead saints of Old Testament times (Dan. 12:2), and martyrs of the Tribulation period (Rev. 20:4). These resurrections of the saints of all ages constitute the first resurrection (Rev. 20:6), the resurrection of life (John 5:29), or the resurrection of the righteous (Luke 14:14).



C. The Resurrection of Unsaved Dead at the End

The last group to be raised will include the unredeemed dead of all time, and they will be raised at the end of the millennial kingdom to stand before the Great White Throne in a judgment that will sentence all of them to the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11–14).

III. BETWEEN DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Strictly speaking, death is the separation of the material from the immaterial (James 2:26). In the case of every death, the body is disposed of, usually by placing it in a grave. But the immaterial facet of a person continues to exist for all eternity. The question before us now is, What is the state of the immaterial part between physical death and bodily resurrection?

A. For the Unredeemed Person in Old Testament Times

When such a person died, his soul, spirit, or immaterial nature went to sheol to wait for the resurrection of the body at the end of the Millennium. But the body is also said to be in sheol, for about half the times the word for sheol is used in the Old Testament it refers to the grave (see Num. 16:30, 33). Other times it refers to the place of departed spirits, of both the righteous (Gen. 37:35) and the wicked (Prov. 9:18). This is the place of darkness where the unredeemed dead are confined until death (which claims the body) and hades (the Greek equivalent of sheol, which claims the soul) give up their dead at the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:13).

B. For the Unredeemed Person in New Testament Times

The body goes to the grave, and the spirit goes to hades to wait for the resurrection of the body at the close of the Millennium (as with Old Testament unredeemed people) (Luke 16:23). Hades stands in contrast to heaven (Matt. 11:23; Luke 10:15) as a fiery place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 13:40–42), a place of eternal torment (Mark 9:43–48), and a place of outer darkness where there is no light at all (Matt. 22:13).

C. For the Redeemed Person in Old Testament Times

In the case of the Old Testament saint, the debated question is, Where did his soul (spirit or immaterial nature) go at the time of death? Was he taken immediately into the presence of the Lord, or did he go to the saved compartment of sheol/hades from where he was taken into heaven when Christ descended into hades between His death and resurrection?

Hoyt expressed this latter option this way: “As a result of the resurrection and ascension of Christ, a reorganization took place in the intermediate state. There was a removal of all the righteous from the upper part of sheol-hades, and its gates were barred to entrance by any saved soul thereafter. From this time on paradise is above where Christ is, and the spirits of all the saved go to be with Christ at the moment of physical death.”

Several passages are cited in favor of this viewpoint. In Ephesians 4:9, Paul wrote that Christ “descended into the lower parts of the earth.” Some understand this to mean that our Lord descended into hades between His death and resurrection to take those in the “saved compartment” of hades into heaven. However, the phrase “of the earth” may be an appositional phrase, meaning that Christ descended (at His Incarnation) into the lower parts (of the universe), namely the earth.

Also cited is the account of the rich man and Lazarus, which supposedly shows that both men went to hades, the rich man to punishment in one compartment of hades and Lazarus to bliss in the other compartment (which is labeled “Abraham’s bosom” [Luke 16:22] in the story). Clearly the account teaches some important facts about death and hell: (a) there is conscious existence after death; (b) hell is a real place of torment; (c) there is no second chance after death; and (d) the dead cannot communicate with the living. But does it teach two compartments in hades? Not really, for Abraham’s bosom is not said to be in hades but rather “far away” (v. 23) from it. Abraham’s bosom is a figurative phrase for paradise,



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or the presence of God. It was paradise that was promised to the repentant thief by the Lord (Luke 23:43), not a blissful compartment of hades.

First Peter 3:18 is also linked with the supposed descent of Christ into sheol/hades. While there between His death and resurrection He announced His victory over sin and removed those in the paradise compartment to heaven. More likely, however, the verse means that the preincarnate Christ preached through Noah to those who, because they rejected that preaching, are now spirits in prison.

According to Harry Buis, the two-compartment theory was a development of the intertestamental period. “The main development of the doctrine of eternal punishment in this period comes from the fact that sheol is now divided into two compartments: one for the good, called paradise; the other for the evil, called gehenna.”

I believe that the Old Testament saint at death went immediately into the presence of the Lord. The repentant thief was promised he would be in paradise the day of his death (Luke 23:43), and paradise was the presence of the Lord (2 Cor. 12:4). At Christ’s transfiguration Moses and Elijah appeared in His presence talking with Him.

Are we to understand that this conversation between Christ, Moses, and Elijah took place in the upper compartment of hades where Moses at least would have been until after the death of Christ? Are we to understand then that the transfiguration of Christ took place in paradise-hades? Are we to understand that Elijah was taken at his translation to sheol/hades and not heaven? I think not; rather, the Old Testament saint went immediately to heaven to wait for the resurrection of his body at the second coming of Christ.

IV. UNIVERSALISM

Simply stated, universalism states that sooner or later all will be saved. The older form of universalism, which originated in the second century, taught that salvation would come after a temporary period of punishment. The new universalism of our day declares that all men are now saved, though all do not realize it. Therefore the job of the preacher and the missionary is to tell people that they are already saved. Though Karl Barth denied that he taught the universal reconciliation of all men, he clearly did teach the universal election of all in Christ. Others plainly state, for example, that God’s radical love pursues men until all are saved.

A. Biblical Evidence

Verses that universalists appeal to are John 12:32, “will draw all men to Myself”; 1 Corinthians 15:22, “in Christ all shall be made alive”; Philippians 2:11, “every tongue should confess”; and 1 Timothy 2:4, “who desires all men to be saved.” But these verses do not teach that all people will ultimately be saved. John 12:32 says that the Cross of Christ makes possible the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles. Notice that the Lord in the same passage warned of judgment on rejecters (v. 48). First Corinthians 15:22 states that all who are in Christ will be raised, not that everybody will. Philippians 2:10–11 assures us that someday all people will acknowledge Jesus as Lord, but not necessarily as Savior. First Timothy 2:4 expresses God’s desire that all be saved, but does not promise that all will be.

Universalists conveniently overlook other verses. Consider, for example, some of the Lord’s own words. “He who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36). “These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matt. 25:46). Because the same word is used it is impossible to argue that eternal punishment is not unending in the same way that eternal life is.

Other New Testament passages that teach eternal damnation include 2 Thessalonians 1:8–9, “will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord”; 1 Corinthians 1:18; 4:3; and Hebrews 2:3. Everyone is either saved or lost, and anyone who dies without receiving Christ as personal Savior will be eternally condemned.

B. Theological Evidence

Some universalists prefer to argue theologically. They appeal to the nature of God as being totally love. How, then, they ask, could such a God condemn anyone either in this life or the life to come? God is too good to reject anyone. However, God’s character involves not only love and goodness but also righteousness, holiness, and wrath. Universalists sacrifice God’s righteousness to His love, which results in a god different from the God of the Bible.



Others argue that a just God would not give infinite punishment for finite sin. But this ignores that important principle that crime depends on the object against whom it is committed (an infinite God) as well as on the subject who commits it (finite man). Striking a post is not a culpable act as striking a human being is. All sin is ultimately against an infinite God and deserves infinite punishment.

V. CONDITIONALISM

Conditionalism or conditional immortality defines everlasting punishment as utter extinction into oblivion forever.

A. Biblical Arguments

Eternal destruction in such a passage as 2 Thessalonians 1:9 means, for the conditionalist, a quality of destruction, namely, extinction. “Eternal” is also understood to be a qualitative word mainly; thus, eternal fire means a fire that neither begins nor ends with the present age, which gives us no clue as to what happens to those thrown into it. Concerning the parallelism between eternal punishment and eternal life in Matthew 25:41 and 46, one conditionalist says that “we must be careful in pressing the parallel between ‘eternal’ life and ‘eternal’ punishment that we do not fall into any spirit of vindictiveness or ungodly joy at the fate of the wicked.” No further exegesis of that passage is offered. The same author states that there is “no clear exegetical basis in Luke 16 for any conclusion concerning the end of the wicked.”

This sample shows the kind of artificial exegesis conditionalists must resort to in order to substantiate their position.

B. Theological Arguments

Traditionalists usually understand death as separation. Conditionalists define it as nonlife, that is, eventual extinction. Of course, such a definition will not work in the case of the death of Christ, or of physical death, or of death to self.

Conditionalists insist that God alone has immortality (1 Tim. 6:16) and human beings, therefore, do not. However, a number of other attributes are predicated of God alone that do have correspondence in man (e.g., wisdom, Rom. 16:27).

The unanswerable question for the conditionalist is this: If the wicked are to suffer an unspecified length of punishment before being annihilated, could we not expect that such a climactic event as that annihilation be stated somewhere in the many eschatological passages in the Bible?

Will it be possible for believers to be without tears in heaven when some they knew on earth will be in hell? Apparently so, and only because the believer’s own perspective will be so changed to realize the serious consequences of sin (Isa. 66:24).

Of course no one takes any delight in the eternal punishment of the wicked. That doctrine should serve to compel even more to persuade people to come to Christ to receive eternal life.¹

¹ Ryrie, C. C. (1999). *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (pp. 535–609). Chicago, IL: Moody Press.