

THE MOUNT OLIVET SERMON; Matthew 24 and 25

Part 1 Chapter 24

The destruction of the temple and the last days

Matt. 24:2 ...truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down.

Our Lord delivered the Mount Olivet Sermon on the Mount of Olives just prior to His passion, (His torture and death on a cross). The Mount of Olives, in the NT, is a high ridge lying east of Jerusalem, parallel to the city and separated from it by the Valley of Kidron. It was formerly planted with olive trees, of which few remain. This sermon is in regard to the near future and the extended future events that will be a precursor to the end times. The Sermon is prophetic, it points to the Tribulation Period and the Lord's Second Coming. As in the whole of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus is primarily teaching Jews, but that is not to mean that Gentile believers weren't a part of His gatherings. Jesus is concerned with His church and He is not partial to any sect or religion nor does He have any prejudices against others. He sees a person's heart and everyone as a sinner in need of a Savior regardless of how they identify themselves or each other.

This passage, also known as the Olivet Discourse, begins in response to the disciple's questions in verse three. Their first inquiry was an attempt to ascertain when the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, of which Christ spoke about, would take place. The second query concerned Jesus Christ's Second Coming and the end of the world. Some scholars feel that Jesus only responded to this second question.

There are two different views on how this passage relates to end times events. Some theologians suggest that this entire portion of Matthew relates exclusively to eschatological, (doctrine that deal with death, resurrection, judgment and immortality), events. They propose that chapter 24 should be divided into four parts: the first half of the Great Tribulation, the second half of the Tribulation, the signs of Christ's coming, and the illustrations of the sudden end to the world. They also suggest that chapter 25 is an exhortation to God's people to be watchful for the coming of events previously mentioned in chapter 24.

On the other hand, there are those who believe that not all of the things Christ mentioned in these two chapters necessarily refer to eschatological events. These people suggest that chapter 24 opens with a general description of the events that will mark the end to the world, revealing the deceit and rampant sin that will be evident on the earth. Then, they propose that Christ sets forth the signs that will precede the end of the world. These "signs" are divided into two categories: Jerusalem's destruction and God's restrained judgment on the

earth during the Church Age. This chapter closes with the fulfillment of the events that take place marking the end of the world, as well as Christ's gathering of His people and the Battle of Armageddon. The proponents of this view also hold that Matt. 24:45-25:46 gives the details regarding the future judgment of the visible church and of mankind.

Matt. 24:1, 2; And Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. And He answered and said to them, "Do you not see all of these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down." In these verses Jesus begins His prophetic apocalyptic teaching, that is, the ultimate destruction of evil and the triumph of good. It is interesting here that as the disciples point out to Jesus the beauty of the temple, in His response He does not want them to get distracted away from what is really important by the things of this world which at best only have temporary beauty and endurance, but to be conscious and aware of the greatest events that are about to take place in the spiritual realm, that is, His Second Coming that will empower Him to resurrect them and give them eternal life, this subject has infinite beauty and endurance.

There is nothing of this world that is so beautiful and magnificent that it can compare with the life He is about to give to them through His atoning death. So let's take these two verses apart and translate them from the original Greek: *And as Jesus progressed out of the buildings of the Temple grounds, He was departing from that location when His adherents, that is those pupils who accepted His instructions and made them the rule of their conduct for life, approached Him recalling and pointing out to Him the historical and worldly beauty of the buildings and stone edifices of the Temple. And so He answered authoritatively corresponding to what they had said, "Do you not discern or understand any of these things that I have just taught? Pay attention! I, who am the Amen, (truth itself), tell you as a most certain and infallible truth, the day is coming when there is not one building stone of size and beauty with which this temple was built that will be left here in this place one upon another, which will not be thrown down."* He could not be more direct in His response letting them know that there is nothing of this world that is permanent. They, His disciples, seemed to be more awe struck by the buildings than learning about and anticipating His Second Coming. They were preoccupied with the transient instead of the eternal, concerned with shadows rather than substance. Jesus warned that the building would be so completely destroyed that not one stone would be left on top of another. Titus tried unsuccessfully to save the temple, but his soldiers put it to the torch, thus fulfilling Christ's prophecy. When the fire melted the gold trim, the molten gold ran down between the stones. To get at it the soldiers had to remove the stones one by one, just as our Lord predicted.

But the most important fact that Jesus was teaching to them, I think, is sometimes overlooked and that is that there is nothing of this present evil age that has or will have value in His kingdom nor will anything of this world be able to survive His judgment upon His return as the Father directs the institution of a new heaven and a new earth. The most colossal, in beauty and magnificence, of objects made glorious in the grandeur of this present evil age, seemingly indestructible, cannot compare with what Christ has waiting for us.

While the disciples were awe struck by the massive stones and their beautiful exterior, they found it difficult to believe that not one of these stones would be left one on top of another. These stones were immense, seemingly immovable, truly a sanctuary from all that they feared. They had seen lesser stones of stature remain one on top of another in much of the Roman and Greek architectures of the past that were seemingly immovable and indestructible. To the Jews this temple symbolized God's presence among them; to have the temple destroyed was to have their God desert them. This same thing applies to what Jesus was trying to teach them; while Jesus walked and talked with them it was hard for them to realize that the time was coming when their Rock, Jesus Christ, will soon be destroyed. In addition some of those who worshipped at the temple were about to see God's judgment in action also.

The purpose for the words that Jesus spoke in verse 2 was both theological and prophetic. The sovereign judgment of God was about to fall on this unbelieving people; and just as Jesus as the Lord of the temple had proclaimed its purification, here He predicted its destruction. The true God of Abraham, for which the temple was built to worship, had been replaced by a god that Jesus Christ was not familiar with, it had become "a den of thieves," a place of worship for the god of money, the flesh, and pride, and so it must be destroyed. This not only applies to the physical temple itself, but also to the temple of the Holy Spirit, that is, our personal bodies. ***Luke 19:43, 44; For the days shall come upon you when your enemies will throw up a siege bank before you, and surround you, and hem you in on every side, and will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.***

I am afraid that some of the churches that we visit on Sunday mornings have also become a place to worship the god of money, having become a religious business, rather than a place to worship the True God and these too must be destroyed, as, in my opinion, is predicted in ***Revelation 18 and Isaiah 21; Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! And all of the images of her gods are shattered on the ground.*** Some commentators make a very valid point connecting the Catholic Church with "Babylon." However, I personally think that this view is somewhat narrow-minded. My past experiences with what are referred to as "Evangelical Churches" and other protestant churches, have left me somewhat spiritually hungry, not being filled like I

expected to be before I entered in. It seems as though some and probably the majority of “churches” have become nothing more than religious corporations, and pastors nothing more than CEO’s of those corporations. The main concern of the church is to fill the pews, to look like a thriving successful business, so that the church can meet the financial bottom line, being more concerned with financial success than spiritual success and the two are not related.

Not all of the congregation in these businesses will be interested in the message given for them, so for them they have hired a choir or a band to provide entertainment and give the sanctuary a concert like atmosphere. Some people are willing to pay for this entertainment which helps keep the Pastor paid, because if he doesn’t get paid he will leave, while a real pastor would trust in God for his provision. As long as everything is in its place the congregation is satisfied with their spiritual condition, they see no need to grow spiritually; the pastor senses that growing spiritually might scare some of the congregation away, having to face the truth of their depth of depravity in their sin. In the world a smaller congregation means a lesser effectiveness of the pastor as a business owner and manager. This of course means less prestige as a church which in turn means even a smaller congregation. Or could this whole scenario mean that God has withdrawn His Holy Spirit from out of the church, thus, the church is no more a viable business? There is no desire for intimacy or relationship with the Lord or other members of the congregation in this type of church. It is nothing more than a social gathering and the day will come, as prophesied in the book of Revelation and others, when these “churches” will see the time when the Holy Spirit will withdraw Himself and the buildings will be torn down in judgment.

Churches should be attracting people for the reason of excitement, but not to be entertained. Paul taught against such churches, **2 Tim. 4:3, 4; for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires; and will turn away their ears from truth, and will turn aside to myths.** The time that Paul writes about that will come, I believe, is here today. The attracting should be coming from the messages of repentance and salvation and God’s gifts of love, mercy, and grace! Churches do not need to create ways to be exciting unless they are afraid to preach the truth of the gospel. If the truth chases the congregation away they have nothing to gain by being entertained by a Christian top 40 band or a smooth talking pastor. If Christ alone is not the attraction, if the truth causes people to leave, what they are seeking is to have their flesh satisfied, their ears tickled and not their spirit. When money becomes the main focus the “church” and the pastors are more concerned about the approval of men, then the gathering has become a “Babylon.” The movement to “home churches” has become the alternative to wanting to get in depth teaching and a seeking out of the truth of the Bible. I think this gathering more closely resembles the church that Christ desired and established and the way He desires it to continue. A place where there can be not

only intimacy with our Lord but also with each other. In this case, physically because of the size of a house, the congregation stays small, stays intimate, and does not lose its focus.

Coming woes

Matt 24:7; Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.

The way that Jesus responds to His disciple's excitement and amazement concerning the beauty and the massiveness of the temple and its adjoining buildings catches them a little bit off guard. Rather than joining in with them in their excitement He uses this as an opportunity to teach them about what the future holds for Him and His church, praying that they and we might see this as a greater cause for joyous excitement. ***Matt, 24:3-14; And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end, (or the consummation), of the age?" And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for these things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will famines and earthquakes. But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name. And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But, the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come."***

As our Lord answers the questions posed to Him in verse 3, that is, when will all that we as believers stand for be torn down and when will You come back for us,? He answers their question in a way that is much like what we experience when we are going down a highway headed for a certain destination. As we come nearer to our destination we begin to see signs telling us how long it will be before we get there and advertisements telling us of what we can expect as we arrive. The destination here is the Day of our Lord, or His second Coming. We certainly don't want to miss any of these signs, or get lost along the way, as the destination draws nearer and nearer with each passing hour. By being complacent or falling asleep, just as His disciples did as Jesus prayed, we risk missing some important details of our destination. So let's take these verses apart and examine the signs, not merely to satisfy our own curiosity, but to make ourselves prepared and able to prepare others for His Coming: *And as He was sitting upon the Mount of Olives, His disciples came to Him discreetly, not wanting to bring attention to*

themselves for what they were doing, saying this, "Tell us, Teacher, at what time and manner shall these things come into existence, and also, what shall be the sign, in addition to the destruction of the temple, revealing the future events of the deeds that will reveal the coming and presence of the Messiah and His kingdom, the kindness of His grace, and also the completion of this age, that is, the consummation or accomplishment of its purposes?" And so Jesus, using discretion, returned this answer saying this to them, "Direct your mind upon, consider, take heed, be aware of, observe, and examine yourself, in order that no one causes you to err. Because great multitudes will come forth before the public making the appearance as of being Me and claiming to be the ultimate teacher and author of salvation but giving their own opinions on teachings seemingly as though they are the one being in authority, saying, I am the Messiah, and in so doing will cause great multitudes to err. And in addition, you will be continually comprehending that there will continue to be wars and in addition reports of wars; take heed, do not be disturbed about these things, because those things are unavoidable and must come to pass, however, that is not even yet the end of this generation, or the end of all things or the beginning of the Great Tribulation. Because one race will rise up as an adversary against another race, and people in a territory under kingly rule against people in a territory under kingly rule, and also in and throughout every place there will exist hunger, famine, and scarcity of food, plagues and pestilence and also there shall exist ground shaking earthquakes. However, every one of these signs are merely the commencement of sorrows that will follow after wars, famines, and other catastrophic events that will gradually increase in intensity and frequency. At that time the enemies of Christ will deliver you into the powers of tribulation and affliction, and then they will put you to death, and while you are alive you will also continue to be subjected to a persecuting spirit by every race of mankind because you are representing Me on earth. And, in addition, when these things have come to be, multitudes will scandalize and will deliver over one another with evil intent to the power, authority and pleasure of their enemies and they will also possess an active ill will and conduct towards them, that is, they will have a persecuting spirit. Additionally there will be a multitude of those who falsely assume the work of a prophet when they pretend to foretell of things to come that will begin to exist, and will cause multitudes to form a wrong judgment. And so, because sin, iniquity and unrighteousness will continue to be on the increase in its magnitude and extent, the Christian love of many, in a spiritual sense, will grow cold. However, until the last person, who perseveres, endures, sustains, and bears up in doing well continually until the end of all these things is reached or the time of the end of this generation arrives; he shall experience spiritual salvation. Additionally, this gospel of Jesus Christ and the glad tidings of the kingdom of God shall continue to proclaim its religious truth to the end, until the gospel of Christ with its attendant privileges and obligations is preached to the whole of the inhabited earth as a declaration which confirms or makes itself known to all of the races, at that time when the Christian favor has become established, shall the end be and the consummation of all things.

After Jesus had crossed over to the Mount of Olives the disciples came to Him privately and asked Him three questions;

1. When would these things happen; that is, when would the temple be destroyed?
2. What would be the sign of His coming; that is, what supernatural event would precede His return to the earth to set up His kingdom?
3. What would be the sign of the end of the age; that is, what would announce the end of the age immediately prior to His glorious reign? (The second and third questions are essentially the same).

We should remember that these Jewish disciples' thinking revolved around the glorious age of the Messiah on earth. They were not thinking about Christ's coming for His church; they knew little if anything about this phase of His Second Coming. Their expectation was His coming in power and glory to destroy His enemies and have rule over this world or present evil age.

Also we should be clear that the Jews were not, in their talking, asking about the end of the world, (as the KJV puts it), but the end of an age, that is, the end of the status quo on earth.

Their first question is not answered directly. Rather the Savior seems to merge the siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 with a similar siege that will occur in the latter days, in the study of prophecy, we often see the Lord moving almost obscurely from an early, partial fulfillment to a later, final fulfillment. Like almost everything in the spiritual realm of growth it is a timely process and not an immediate change.

The second and third questions are answered in verses 4-44 of chapter 24. These verses describe the 7 year Tribulation Period which will precede Christ's glorious Advent. The first three and one half years are described in verses 4-14. The final three and one half years, known as the Great Tribulation or as it is known by some as the Time of Jacob's Trouble, will be a time of unprecedented suffering of those on earth; ***Jer. 30:7; Alas! For that day is great, there is none like it; and it is the time of Jacob's distress, but he will be saved from it.*** After reading this verse my natural curiosity and desire to learn Scripture came back to the words "but he will be saved from it." Who is the he? For the answer let's tear into this verse and try to translate it from the Hebrew: *Alas! We can possess a hope-filled and joyous expectation, because in a future period of time God's presence and character in power, counsel, compassion, and mercy will be significant, because there is nothing in time that compares to it; and also, it is the time for the occurrence of God's destruction and distress in judgment on the earth; however God's favored people will be brought to a place of safety.*

Many of the conditions characterizing the first half of the Tribulation have existed to an extent throughout human history, but will appear in a greatly intensified form during the period of this discussion. It's hard for us to imagine that the atrocities that have occurred in our history

could be intensified or be in a worse condition, but Jesus tells us that we have not seen the worst of character of mankind yet.

Those in the church, that is the “Lord’s favored,” have been promised tribulation, but this is far different from *the* Tribulation which will be poured out on a world that has rejected God’s Son, ***John 16:33; these things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.*** In these times where peace seems as elusive as chasing a wild rabbit let’s take the time to define these words spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ: *All of the promises that I have spoken to you about I speak this to you in the same manner so that you may possess My state of peace. In the world that is filled with a mass of people who are hostile or at least indifferent to the truth and also to the fewer followers of Christ you will continue to have a condition of trouble, however, I say this to encourage you; I am victorious over the world that is filled with a mass of people who are hostile or at least indifferent to My truth and My followers.* “These things” that Jesus speaks of in verse 33, embraces all of the final teachings and admonitions that He has spoken to them. The reference is general because Jesus is now at the end of His time to teach, He doesn’t have anything left to teach them that they haven’t already heard and because His speaking of these things has the purpose of bringing them peace with its manifestation of courage. In former passages Jesus says that He leaves and gives His peace to the disciples. Peace is the objective condition and situation when all is well between us and God. Now Jesus indicates that He gives this gift of peace to the disciples. He is leaving it as His blessed legacy when departing from them. And He does this by means of His Word, “these things I have spoken to you”. By saying all of these things to the disciples He places them into a condition that is truly designated as “peace.”

“My peace,” is something of which the world has no concept. Of course this involves having faith in the Word. “In order that you may have peace,” pictures the disciples with peace now and forever as a personal possession. In this safe condition they now are, and in it they shall remain. They have the peace that is the same peace of the Lord Jesus Christ as a result of having Christ in them. So, being in this condition He tells them that there is no situation in the world that can cause you to be troubled and afraid. We are courageous, not troubled and afraid. Jesus refers to this condition when He says “in the world you have anguish,” which is due to the world’s hatred and persecution. At times this feeling will prevent the feeling of peace though, but it should not permanently destroy their condition of peace. So, Jesus tells them to fight against this feeling of depression, “be courageous;” untroubled and unafraid. No matter what the world does to them, they have peace with God through Jesus Christ. They can face the world’s hatred with a heart that is cheerful and strong, enjoying their peace in spite of the opposition of the world. Jesus adds a great reason why the disciples should go on with peace and courage filling their hearts: “I have conquered the world,” despite all of its rage the

world cannot prevail against Me. Jesus' victory is also the disciple's victory for they are in Him and He is in them. And so faith in Him is victory over the world. How foolish it now seems to be afraid of a crushed and defeated foe! In trying to achieve this condition of peace in His disciples Jesus is not looking for immediate results. He knows all things, which includes the limitations of the present hour for the disciples; however, this shall soon pass. Then full peace and joy shall fill their hearts when they realize, indeed, that Jesus has conquered the world. Sometimes changing our fear to peace is just a matter of a change in perspective of how we look at things of the world. This our Lord has the power to do and is included in His victory over the world.

The disciples of Jesus firmly believed that Jesus was the true Messiah and has come in the flesh. He was with them and they expected that He would continue to be with them because they had no notion of Him ever leaving them and coming again. Whenever He spoke about His dying and rising from the dead they seemed to not understand what He was talking about and probably assumed He was speaking metaphorically as He did so often in His parables. Therefore they wanted to know what signs they should look for in regards to this coming of His of which that He was now speaking. They did not understand that this Second Coming of His was to judge the world on the last day, but they thought it was His kingdom and glory coming to rule this present day world. Many of them thought that they would be present and see this day when this day came and they would not be dead before it came. So they wanted to be informed, they wanted to know what would be the sign to look for as to when this temporal kingdom would be set up. Since this temple was to be destroyed they were hoping that a new one would be built, even much more magnificent than this one, this was the popular Jewish notion of the time. After the new temple was built it would be an indication that a new state of things would commence; the present world or age would be at an end and they would ring in a new age. So they also were very interested in knowing what the signs would be that the present world has come to an end or at least the present order of things in the Jewish economy. Jesus answers their questions in this chapter, although not in the way that they expected, yet in the true sense of the Coming of the Son of Man and the end of this present evil age. He does it in such a manner so as to be instructive to these disciples and to His current disciples.

Jesus never gives the disciples an exact date and He had no exact date to give them as to when all of these things would take place, ***Acts 1:7; He said to them, "It is not for you to know the times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority." Mark 13:32; but of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone."***

The word translated "coming," in verse three, means basically "presence" or "arrival." In the Greek culture it was used to designate the visit of a ruler and this is how Jesus was using

this word. The same Jesus who ascended to heaven will again visit the earth in His personal presence at the end of this age in power and glory. **1 Thess. 2:19; For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?" Acts 1: 11 and they also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."** He will come to destroy the antichrist and evil, to raise the righteous dead, and to gather the redeemed, **2 Thess. 2:8; and then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming. 1 Cor. 15:20-23; But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order; Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming. John 5:25-29; Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live. For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.**

The word "coming" as it is used in Matt. 24:3 is defined as an event that takes place when the Lord, as a ruler, shall come out of heaven; **1 Thess. 1:9, 10; For they themselves report about us what kind of reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers from the wrath to come.** At that time the dead who are believers will rise first, and then those who are believers and are alive will be changed and be caught up in the air by Jesus Christ.

The "return" of Christ will also be what is translated from the Greek to mean "a revelation of or the taking the cover off of something that is hidden." It is an unveiling or disclosure when the power and glory which are now His by virtue of His exaltation in heavenly session will be disclosed to the world; **Eph. 1:20-23; when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the ones to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is the body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. Phil. 2:9; Therefore God also highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name. Heb. 1:3; And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He made purification of sins,**

He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Heb. 2:9; But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. Christ is now resurrected and ascended reigning as Lord at God's right hand and sharing God's throne; **Rev. 3:21; He who overcomes, I will grant him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.** His reign is now invisible to the world. It will, however, be made visible by His revelation at the consummation of this age.

There is yet a third word used in the Greek which is related to the Second Coming of the Lord and that word means "a manifestation." In the Greek it was used especially of the appearing of the gods and also of the manifestation of divine power and providence in extraordinary events. In the NT it is used of the appearing of the manifestation of Jesus Christ on earth, **2 Thess. 2:8; and then the lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring an end by the appearance of His coming. 1 Tim. 6:13, 14; I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Tim. 4:1; But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons. 1 Tim. 4:8; for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. Titus 2:11-13; For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.** In 1 Timothy 4:1, the term "fall away from the faith" intrigued me since the "falling away from the faith" in modern terms would mean to quit attending a certain denomination of religion and to revert back to a lesser disciplined spiritual life, but I don't believe that the word "faith" is used in that context in the NT, so let's amplify this verse to get the full meaning and context of what Paul is teaching us: *But, on the other hand the Holy Spirit, who is the author and authority of revelations to men, communicating knowledge of future events, expressly says that in the latter or final times certain ones will stand away from their convictions, belief in the truth, and the doctrines of faith, and embrace seducing evil spirits and also the teachings of heathens.* In this context to understand what falling away from "the faith" is intended to mean we need to define faith: *that which is believed.* In this case it is the "belief in Christ's death as the grounds of justification before God" or simply "saving faith." Falling away from this faith then would mean that they no longer believe that Christ's death, alone, was sufficient to atone for their sins and would not, thus, be declared righteous and justified before God. They will choose instead to follow deceitful teachings of demons influences or imposters of Christ. First the imposters come, then, coupled

to them, the doctrines that they teach, and these are what Paul calls “doctrines of demons.” The great danger is that today false doctrines are not recognized as coming from demons unless they deny the faith, as faith is spoken of in the preceding sentences; as if the devil is not cunning enough to begin with little “white” lies, as if only big lies are what he is capable.

Some of these will be good church members, following the truth. Most of them are those who attend churches that have turned faith into a religion and have come from the world’s biggest religions. They think that they have their security in the numbers of members of a church or religion while thinking that “all of these people couldn’t possibly be wrong!” From my studies I am convinced that the symbolic “Babylon” mentioned in Revelation are all of the churches that have turned faith into religion and the number of attendees alone make this a devastating event when “Babylon” falls and heaven rejoices. Like an infection these churches have found their way into every country of the world and so when the Holy Spirit withdraws Himself and it falls in judgment and it is destroyed it has a profound effect on the entire world.

In the twentieth chapter of Revelation we read of two distinct resurrections from the dead, ***Rev. 20:4-6; and I saw thrones, and they that sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for one thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.*** We can miss a lot of the context of the verse if we don’t go back to get the Greek meaning and context of these English words, as we will find out as we go along in this study, so let’s get the Greek interpretation of these verses to help us understand the meaning of the verse: *And so I, John, perceived and understood what I saw to be a seat of judgment attributed to the Apostles in the kingdom of God , and they sat on them as if it were on the judgment seat of Moses, and they had the power of judgment given to them by Christ. In addition I saw the animating element of men, or that aspect of a man that is his immaterial nature that makes him aware of his body and his natural, physical environment, that is, the souls that had departed from the body of them that were beheaded for their testimony of Jesus, that is, the announcement of the gospel based on a personal knowledge of Him and the apostolic preaching of Christ, and I also saw those who had not paid reverence and homage to false gods or idols, rendering divine honors, worship, adoration to them and prostrating themselves before these idols and specifically to the beast that rises up from the bottomless pit or the one from the sea that makes war upon the two witnesses, the ones that opened their mouths to blaspheme God, which is a part of the symbolism for hell, or give worship to its prototype, Satan, from which the beast is*

drawn, and additionally these persons had not taken the beasts mark either cut in or stamped on as a sign upon their forehead or upon their hands; and then they were raised from the dead and began to have physical life and existence and began to enjoy the honor and prosperity of kings along with Christ for the duration of a symbolic thousand years. However the remaining ones of these who are still dead to Christ and His gospel were not revived to life again and remained physically dead until the symbolic thousand years of Christ's reign on earth were fulfilled. This is the first in the order of the two resurrections. Those who possess the favor of God, that is, those being in the state of being marked by the fullness of God and additionally considered by God to be morally clean, justified, are the ones who have a part in the first of two resurrections; upon these persons the second death or the rejection from the kingdom of God and damnation possess no power over them, no authority or rule, instead they shall continually be figurative priests unto God and Christ offering Him spiritual sacrifices and additionally will belong to Christ and will reign and have predominance with Him for a symbolic thousand years. In this chapter 20 of Revelation we read that Jesus will come back to set up His symbolic 1,000 year reign on earth. On a note of caution, in my opinion the whole of the Book of Revelation was not intended to be read or understood literally. There is a lot of symbolism used and I will try to bring out the symbols as I can. I don't want this to turn into a study of Revelation, but I also think that it is important to understand the verses as they intended to be understood.

Such symbols that are used in these verses are:

- a. Beheaded; those who have died for their faith in Christ
- b. The beast; the anti-Christ and his kingdom and a false prophet; (the beast being symbolic of someone that is cruel, sly, and cunning, therefore not suitable for a sacrifice to God).
- c. The mark on the forehead; identified by unpardonable sin of thoughts, mind, intelligence, ruler-ship or lordship
- d. The mark on the hand; identified by unpardonable sin in actions, and possessions
- e. They came to life; received a perfect body to receive their soul and spirit
- f. One thousand years; A large segment of time

The significance of the number 1000 in Rev. 20:2-7 is very much disputed. On the one hand, there are those who take this to be formally literal and understand it to represent a period of time lasting one-thousand years. Those who locate this period after the return of Christ are called premillennialists. Those who locate this period of time before Christ's return are called postmillennialists. On the other hand, there are those who take this to be essentially literal and understand the thousand-year reign to represent ideally the present spiritual victory of Christ and His redeemed over this evil world system, which they refer to as Babylon; they are called amillennialists or nuncmillennialists (now millennialists). The use of the expression

“thousand years” itself does not require a formally literal translation or interpretation. The Book of Revelation is apocalyptic and as such uses numbers, places, personages, and its other elements primarily as symbols. How we interpret the word “millennium” or how we decipher when it will occur does not deserve having time spent on it since it is not a salvational issue and it can be reserved for another study at another time.

At the time spoken of in these verses as the second death, the unrighteous dead will be judged. We can tell by the Scripture verses in the Book of the Revelation of Christ, that there will be a symbolic thousand years between each resurrection in which the risen saints will reign with Christ. By those who spiritualize most of the book of Revelation it is claimed that since verse four speaks of the souls of the saints and not of their bodies that this must refer to the spiritual resurrection when a believer is resurrected from his old life of sin to a new life of regeneration. The verb used in relation to these souls is “beheaded” (as with an axe); the reference is to the souls which have been beheaded and it cannot be spiritualized. This is a literal resurrection of the body since the word “resurrection” is used in referring to the body, for the most part, and only once figuratively in a verse in Luke.

The condition indicated in Rev. 20:4, however, is not that of a spiritual regeneration from spiritual death, but of actual death of the body. The vision of Rev. Chapter 20 speaks about disembodied spirits and souls. These are the souls of those who have died; death as being interpreted as the separation of the spirit from the material body. There is only one way that we can interpret the reviving of the souls and that is their reunion with their separated bodies. Therefore, the resurrection actually is when the departed spirit is joined together with a new body. In verse four, we read that these disembodied souls or spirits “lived” using a Greek word that is never applied in any instance in the NT to the souls in their disembodied state. However, it is constantly used to describe that reanimation by which the soul is united again to its tabernacle of the flesh. The souls from their disembodied existence receive again an identifiable existence but in a different form.

When we speak of “the spirit or the soul” as it is used in the Greek we are talking about the rational spirit, and/or mind; the element of life. Generally “spirit” is spoken of as distinct from the body and soul. Soul and spirit are very closely related because they are both immaterial and they both contrast with body and flesh. Scripture, however, introduces a distinction between the two immaterial aspects of man’s soul and spirit. That they cannot mean the same thing is evident from their being mention together as body, soul, and spirit in **1 Thess. 5:23; Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.** Just to make sure we understand this verse the way it was meant to be understood in the context of which it was written I think that it is important to get the Greek root and

interpretation of these words: *And also may the True God and Author of blessedness Himself by the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit on the heart make you entirely spiritually clean and render you pure; and also may your immaterial nature that allows you to communicate with God who is also spirit and your manifestation of life and your flesh continue to be kept in safety, preserved, and maintained to completion of your physical life, until the Coming of Christ.* This same distinction is brought out in **Heb. 4:12; For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.** The spirit is man's immaterial nature which enables him to communicate with God, who is also spirit. The soul is the aspect of his immaterial nature that makes him aware of his body and his natural, physical environment. The difference between soul and spirit is not one of substance but of operation. Man's immaterial aspect is represented in Scripture by the single terms of soul or spirit or both of them together.

Man's spirit is the vital spirit of life, the principle of life residing in man. The breath breathed by God into man and again returning to God, that is, the spiritual entity in man. The spirit is that part that can live independently of the body. When Christ died He gave up His spirit, **Matt. 27:50; and Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.**

All throughout 1 Cor. 15 the verb that is translated "to quicken," (KJV vs. 22, 36, 45, etc.) without any doubt whatsoever means the resurrection of the body from the dead; **1 Cor. 15:22; for as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.** This word in these instances means to make alive, to make a new living person which is achieved by raising the body to be united with the separated soul-spirit. Thus we affirm that the verb "they lived" in the latter part of Rev. 20:4, must refer to the resurrection of the body and the reunification of that resurrected body with the spirit-soul of those who were dead. To affirm that this is so in verse 6 we have a definitive reference that this is the first resurrection, or as the Greek has it, "the resurrection, the first one," **Rev. 20:6; blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.**

Of the 42 times in the NT that the word "resurrection" occurs, with the exception of Luke 2:34, in the Greek it always means the resurrection of the body. It is never used with the meaning of spiritual regeneration. Furthermore, the two resurrections contrasted cannot be one spiritual and the other physical for there is a chronological separation between the two.

The entire scene revealed here is that of judgment and it is of the dead, small and great, standing before the Lord to be judged; **Rev. 20:12; And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books (or, scrolls) were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were**

written in the books, according to their deeds. With these words translated from the Greek with their definitions it could read like this: *Additionally I perceived the dead, the great in importance and the young in age, standing in their place before the judgment seat of God, and books of judgment were opened; and also an additional book was opened, which is the book of life that is the book that contains the names of the righteous who are to inherit eternal life inscribed in it; and the dead were judged in a judicial sense of their secret things which were written in the books, because the Lord Jesus does not leave us ignorant as to the tests that He is going to apply as our judge and He urges us to judge ourselves ahead of time for the purpose of self-correction according to our works in reference to them being morally right or wrong.* This verse is a contrast between the people who were not adequately and completely judged during their lifetime on earth but are being judged in the afterlife in their reconstituted personalities. Thus the meaning is clear that the souls spoken of in Rev. 20:4 are those whose bodies are resurrected and joined with their souls as indicated in verse 12 of Revelation 20.

The point should be made here that in reference to the blotting out a name from the book of life we have the assurance that the Lord will not blot out the name of the victor (or the one who is saved), and with this assurance we are confident that once God writes in a believer's name there is no way that anyone else will be able to blot it out. This is proof that the Lord cannot make a mistake. He is the only who could blot it out since He is the One who wrote it in. If anyone else would have the power to blot it out, then that person would be more powerful than the Lord Jesus. The only ones who, during the Tribulation period, will worship the Antichrist will be those whose names were never written in the book of life, nor were they written during the Tribulation period. The theory that God writes in His book of life the name of everyone born into the world and then erases those who do not believe is unfounded and refutes His omniscience.

We have the prediction of Christ's return to raise His saints in **1 Thess. 4:16; For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.** Let's interpret this verse from the Greek meanings: *Because the Lord Himself will come down from the residence of God and will make contact by means of a shout to for His to meet Him in the air, by means of the voice of the God-man, and also with the trumpet that sounds the command of God; and then the dead who are in a relationship with Christ and who are a new creation, with their redemptive body, shall arise from the dead and come to life first.* There is also a similar expression of the angel descending from heaven, even as the Lord will descend from heaven in **Rev. 20:1, And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand, (or, by his authority).** It is apparent that, in 1 Thess. 4:16, the Lord is accompanied by an archangel who sounds his trumpet and then the dead in Christ shall rise first. The two scenes must refer to the same event, for although Rev. 20:1 refers only to an angel, 1 Thess. 4:16 refers to both

the Lord and an angel. Since there is no doubt that this latter verse deals with the resurrection of the bodies of the believers, Rev. 20:1 must also refer to the same.

The Apostle Paul speaks of the resurrection of Christ and then of those who are Christ's at His coming in **1 Cor. 15:20-25**; ***But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order; Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.*** Let's take a look at how these verses may translate from the Greek words: *However, Christ has been raised from the dead, and He is the first one to be raised from the dead of those who have died physically. This is true because in as much as through the fault and agency of a man destruction, perdition, and misery, both physical death and exclusion from the presence and favor of God is the consequence of sin and disobedience came to be, by means of the agency and power of a man, we will be made alive from out of the dead. Because as compared to and just like Adam everyone must be dead to the Law, i.e., to have no more dependence upon mere legal righteousness for justification and salvation no more than a dead man would have, we must be self-crucified and dead together with Christ, so that we also shall be raised from the dead and made alive by means of conforming to Christ. However, everyone in his own resurrection arranged and in an orderly manner; it shall be Christ the first to be raised from the dead and made alive, then next those who are determined By Christ to be persons who are conformed to Christ at the time of His presence, after that, then comes the end of the work of salvation, which is the entrance into heaven, the last or the remainder of the dead that are conformed to Christ and He will deliver up His people over to the Father for His care, charge, or kindness, at this time He will have put an end to all earthly ruler-ship and all powerful adversaries against the gospel and persons in authority, the mighty, and powerful ones. Because He must rule until which time He has put His foot on every one of His vanquished adversaries.* There is no doubt whatsoever that these are the same saints described as those who constitute the first resurrection in Rev. 20:5.

The dead are spoken of in contrast to the blessed and the saints in Rev. 20:6; 12. The dead are the unbelievers who appear before the Great White Throne to be judged. These are "the rest of the dead" referred to in Rev. 20:5. These "rest of the dead" are those who are being judged and are separated in their rising and destiny from the believers who live and reign with Christ for 1000 years and sit with Christ on His throne and reign with Him. On the other hand, the rest of the dead are those who are unbelievers and are the dead who stand before the throne to be judged to eternal condemnation.

The first group, that is the believers, will have incorruptible and immortal bodies according to **1 Cor. 15:51-54; Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable (or, incorruptible), and we shall be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and the mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “Death is swallowed up in victory”**. Paul gives us some very interesting teachings here in these verses concerning the dynamics of our resurrection so let’s take these verses apart and amplify what he is teaching us: *Let me draw your attention to what I am about to tell you that is naturally unknown to human reason and is only known by the revelation of God and is that which we can look forward to; indeed, we shall not all sleep the sleep of death, however we will all be changed, transformed outwardly to match our inwardly change that has continually been occurring for the better, glorified, freed from the last traces of flesh which has hitherto hindered you, but when Christ returns to remove His disciples from their toils and struggles on earth and to take them to a place He has prepared for them in His Father’s house to be with Him, at a definite moment in time, instantly, at the blink of an eye, when the trumpet of the last day sounds by command of God; because the trumpet sounds announcing the Coming of the Christ, and then the resurrection from out of the dead will occur and we will be raised in a state that is not corruptible, we shall be changed in our nature for the better, just as the transfiguration upon the mount was a prophetic anticipation of that which we who are in Christ shall experience at Christ’s return. Because this body is mortal it is subject to the laws of corruptibility and must inevitably take on the quality of the incapacitation of corruption, and this body that is subject to death must be furnished with the power and quality of a body that is not subject to fatal activities, but take on a quality of life such as the quality of life of God. However, at the time when this body that is subject to the laws of corruptibility will have been furnished with the body that has the quality of being incapable of corruption, and this body that is subject to death will have been furnished with the quality of life that God has, then the words of this saying comes to pass, “physical death and eternal separation from God is swallowed up triumphantly.* In these verses in Corinthians reference is made to the body being mortal. This is not the body of the unbelievers that is referred to, but that of believers. It indicates that, at the time of salvation, God does not change everyone’s body to exempt them from the degeneration of age and sickness and finally death but only the believer’s body. The body of the believer is constituted exactly the same as the body of the unbeliever and is subject to the same laws of corruptibility while on earth, but is changed upon our resurrection. These verses provide a clear indication that this characteristic of corruptibility will be changed to one of incorruptibility, a mark of the believer’s resurrection body, which is glorious even as is Christ’s resurrected body. **Rom. 8:23; And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even**

we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. Phil 3:20, 21; For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

“Corruption” is used of the physical means which cannot bring spiritual salvation; ***1 Pet. 1:17- 19, 23; and if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a Lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God.*** Silver and the seed of the body are called corruptible, which applies to something material. The incorruptible does not refer only to the soul, but also to the body of man.

Spiritual death and hell are the effect of sin. Man is under the power of hell because he is under the power of sin. Satan is the father of sin and the lord of hell. Those whom he holds under sin, he holds under death. The redeeming work of Christ overcame the power of sin and hence the power of Satan and hell. The true Church is the company of the redeemed and as such cannot be overcome by all the powers of hell. ***Col. 2:15; when He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through them. Heb. 2:14, 15; since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. 1 John 3:7,8; little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Rev. 1:17,18; “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.”***

In the NT the word “immortal” expresses the nature not of life itself, but strictly speaking, only a quality of life such as the quality of life of God and the resurrection body of the believer. Our bodies are subject to death, that is, mortal, not simply because it is liable to death but because it is the organ in and through which death carries on its fatal activities. It is true that Jesus Christ suffered death, His physical body and His spirit separated one from the other, but they did not remain separated. He brought them together once again with an incorruptible body that had all the characteristics that our resurrection body will have. The Lord Jesus Christ

Himself, however, has inherent immortality, in that no one could permanently separate His body from His spirit. He raised His body and joined it together with His spirit which temporarily had been committed to the Father. Thus He is the only One who inherently has always had immortality. He never gave it up and He still has it. Therefore “immortality” always refers to the non-separation of the spirit. This is the quality of having the spirit attached to the resurrection body, while “incorruptibility” refers to the incapacity of the new resurrection body to deteriorate. This is a quality, however, that our present bodies do not have but will have in the resurrection.

In Rev. chapters 2-3 we see Christ working on earth in His church. In the fourth chapter, however, we are transferred to the heavenly or spiritual realm. **Rev. 4:4; And around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their head. Rev. 4:10; the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne.** The word for elders in this verse is derived from a Greek word which means an assembly of aged men which act as a governing body of the church. But how is it that the church is now found in heaven? Something must have intervened, thus bringing about this transfer of the earthly residence of the Church to the heavenly one. This transfer is not mentioned in the Book of Revelation, but it is mentioned elsewhere. And here it is important to mention that the Bible should not be viewed as being made up of many smaller parts but as a whole. One prophecy complements another. The event that describes this transfer is called the “rapture of the Church.” The Greek word for “rapture,” as a noun is only used once where it is interpreted as “robbery, catching up, to catch up or away;” **Matt23:25; Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. Luke 11:39; But the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness.** And the same word is used to mean “seizure” in **Heb. 10:34 For you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one.** In these three instances it has nothing to do with the event of the transfer of the earthly Church to its heavenly abode but when it is used as a verb it is used for this purpose and in the context of the “Coming of the Lord,” which undoubtedly means the Second Coming and not the first coming of Jesus, **1 Thess. 4:15-17; for this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.** The first

thing to take place at that time is the raising of the dead who are in Christ and the transforming of the bodies of the believers who are still alive.

Matt. 8:16, 17; And when evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "He Himself took our infirmities, and carried away (or, removed), our diseases. Isa. 53, from which this quotation is taken, deals with these three truths:

- (1) Jesus Christ is prophetically presented as dying for us which involved His becoming flesh for us, ***John 1:1; In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:14; And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.***
- (2) In order to die, He had to take upon Himself the infirmities of mankind, and in so doing, He experienced suffering and sickness and death. In His body on the cross He took our transgressions upon Himself, dying on our behalf. ***Isa. 53:5; He was crushed for our iniquities. Phil 2:6-8; although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.***
- (3) His death on the cross was also the payment of our ultimate and complete liberation from the weakness and mortality of our present body. His death was necessary for His resurrection. As such, His death, along with His resurrection, became the first-fruits (or, the model), of our own resurrection. This however, will not be realized until this mortal body shall be clothed in immortality, ***2 Cor. 5:4; For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.*** God has His own timetable for the complete fulfillment of all that He accomplished on the cross: present spiritual salvation that is progressive in its realization; the indwelling of the Spirit of God in our present mortal body; and ultimately the exchange of our present mortal and corruptible body for the resurrection body which will be immortal and incorruptible.

Over

the believers the second death will have no power. As believers, they will never be separated

from God and their resurrection body will never be separated from their spirits as occurred in their first death.

The other dead unbelievers, whose names are not in the Book of Life, acquire corruptible bodies as their resurrection bodies. These are not subject to change since they are cast in the Lake of Fire. Clearly there are 1,000 years existing between these two resurrections. The chronological order of the resurrection is also detailed in 1 Cor. 15:21-25. Verse 22 says “as in Adam all die,” (in the Greek it indicates that all are in the process of dying), even so in Christ all shall be made alive, (referring to a future event of the resurrection of all of the bodies, believers as well as non believers). This is a statement of universality of the resurrection although it does not mean that this is simultaneous, that is, that the unbelievers will be resurrected at the same time that the believers will. Immediately Paul goes on, however, to designate the order of the universal resurrection by saying, “But every man in his own order”. This intimates that there is more than one band or group of those who are being resurrected. The first one, the first fruits of the resurrection is Jesus Christ. What is translated “first fruits” in the phrase, “Christ the first fruits” is the word which means “the One who starts it off,” the One making a beginning. Paul calls Him the “first born from the dead” or the first One given up by the world of the dead. The Lord Jesus leads this group who are His: “After they that are Christ’s at His coming.” “Afterward” here, indicates chronological time. These are believers referred to as “the dead in Christ” who shall rise first. They are the same blessed and holy ones who shall be raised first to reign with Christ for 1,000 years.

Between the resurrection of Jesus Christ and those that are Christ’s, the believers, there has been a long time, (at least 2000 yrs. at this time). 1 Cor. 15:24 begins with a word that is mutually used, that means “afterward, after, or after that.” Going back and looking at the history of these events, in our historical perspective we see that about 2000 years have elapsed since the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the present time, is it not within the realm of possibilities that there can be 1000 years between the resurrection of the believers and the resurrection of the unbelievers?

What then, according to Paul, is the next chronological event after the resurrection of believers? This is stated in 1 Cor. 15:24; which begins with the word or words “afterward,” in the phrase, “afterward the end.” The “end” does not indicate an end or the termination of the world, but the goal, the expected purpose, the fulfillment, the event which will spell the conclusion of Jesus Christ’s work as a Mediator. “When He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power.” This is the conclusion Christ’s purpose in becoming man, which is called the “consummation of the age,” ***Matt. 13:39, 40; and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. Therefore just as the tares are gathered up and***

burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. Matt. 13:49; So it will be at the end of the age; angels shall come forth, and take out the wicked from among the righteous. Matt. 28:20, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Heb.9:26; Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. It is evident that this consummation completes the work which the Lord Jesus came to do for those who would believe on Him that He would raise them from the dead, give them an incorruptible body, and cause them to reign with Him forever. He also puts an end to death. These believers will never die again as they did when they were in their Adamic body.

Consequent to Christ's completion of His work for the believers, He subjugates (enforces His authority) the unbelievers as expressed in **1 Cor. 15:27; For he has put all things in subjection under His feet, but when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him.** The rest of the dead, as we read in Rev. 5:20, do not live (or in other words, are not resurrected) until the 1000 years of Christ's reign on earth with the believers is finished. It is at that time that death and Hades give up their dead that are in them and every man is judged according to his works. We see that there is absolute harmony between the teaching of Rev. Chapter 20 and 1 Cor. Chapter 15, one explains the other. The Scriptures teach that God's actions are not an eclectic picking and choosing, but according to His foreknowledge, **Rom. 8:29; For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first born among many brethren.** Jesus Christ came to save all and His salvation is offered to all, but the only ones that are saved are those who believe on Him, **1 Tim. 4:10; for it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.** They are a separate group of people within the world who are going to be treated in a distinct manner, different from those who do not believe, **1 Thess. 5:9; for God has not destined us for wrath, but obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.** The believers, therefore, are from within the world and are called out of the world. However, they still live in the world and the day will come when they shall be, if dead, resurrected first. Then those who are Christ's and are still alive at the coming of the Lord will be changed so that their bodies will become appropriate to the new environment that will be created by God for them to live in, **Rom. 8:19-23; for the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope, that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body; 1 Thess.4:14-**

16; For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Rev. 21:1; And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.

In the same manner, the Lord is going to call the believers from among the dead, **Luke 20:35; but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead; neither marry, nor are given in marriage.** The expression “the resurrection from the dead” in the Greek means “the resurrection, the one from among the dead.” This indicates that there are some who will be raised and others who will not be. Here we have once again God’s discernment, the Scriptural teaching of election that as some are chosen in the world to be saved from the world spiritually because they believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, so those who believed are going to be chosen out from among the dead.

Since the redemption provided by Christ, there has always been a believing and an unbelieving group dealt with by God separately; not in a fickle, changeable way, but according to their own choice of believing what God’s sacrifice in and through Christ has accomplished. This is very clearly demonstrated by Paul in **Phil. 3:8- 11; More than that I count all things to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, in order that I may attain to the resurrection of the dead.** This expresses the same thought and teaching of Luke 20:35. Paul intimates that this was an intense desire on his part to strive to attain this resurrection, to belong to this first group of those who are going to be resurrected. If the resurrection is one, in general, inevitable resurrection, there is absolutely no reason why Paul should strive for it since it is going to come anyway. And why should our Lord speak of those who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that age and the resurrection out from among the dead, if there were not those who are counted unworthy and are not going to attain to this resurrection? This choosing for resurrection is referred to in OT passages also, for example **Dan.12:2; And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.** Let’s look up the Hebrew words of this verse to amplify what Daniel is telling us: *Also numerous numbers out of them that are dead and in the ground, in the dry loose dirt that covers the earth, will be resurrected, these to a time beyond this temporal sphere of living, however others*

resurrected to reproach, scorn, and taunt and the objects of repulsion. It is evident that some awake at one time and others at another, which agrees with the NT declarations, especially that of Rev. Chapter 20.

Are there any verses that support a simultaneous resurrection of the just and the unjust? Some quote **John 5:25; Verily, verily I say unto you, the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.** Like-wise we read in **John 5:28; Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in which all that are in graves shall hear His voice.** The dead here may refer to only those who belong to Christ because it is only they that recognize His voice; **John 10:27; My sheep hear my voice,** which indicates that those who are not His sheep do not hear His voice. All of these verses are in context with the resurrection. In it all made clear that it is the Holy Spirit within us that causes us to recognize Christ's voice when He shall speak to us and our bodies shall be raised; **Rom. 8:11; But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Jesus Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.** That Spirit is the bond of life between Christ and all that sleep in Him and the pledge of their redemption from the grave. The unbelievers will not hear His voice and will not be raised at the same time as the believers. Therefore the passage in John 5:25, 28, refers to only the resurrection of believers. This is given to them as a distinct inheritance.

2 Tim 4:1, 2; I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom; preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove and rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. These here are other Scripture verses of significance. We see that Timothy was charged with preaching the word of God. Reference here is to the judgment by Christ of the living ones at the time when He shall come for that purpose and the dead ones who will be raised who are among the rest of the dead of Rev. 20:5 and 12. Here the word "living" does not refer to believers and "the dead" to unbelievers, but rather to both unbelieving groups, i.e., those who would be alive at that time and those who would be dead.

In **John 5:28, 29 Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment;** and **Luke 20:36; for neither can they die anymore, for they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection;** there is no doubt that these verses refer to a literal rising of the body from the grave. If we apply these verses to those in **Rev. 20:1-6; And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he**

should not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years; in these verses we see them, the saved and the unsaved, perfectly fitting the words of our Lord.

The object of the Lord Jesus coming again is expressed as the final judgment. It is a judgment of individuals, a judgment of universal scope, and a judgment in which Christ, the Son of Man, is Himself to be the Judge. ***Matt13:47-50; Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind; and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down, and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away. So it will be at the end of the age; the angels shall come forth, and take out the wicked from among the righteous, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.***

Because the resurrection will be universal, the judgment will be also, ***Mark 13:27; And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth, to the farthest end of heaven.*** The judgment will be a transformation of all that exists in accordance with the advent of a new heaven and a new earth, ***Rev. 21:1; And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.*** On the Day of Judgment the people of Christ will be called to an everlasting participation in the glories of His heavenly kingdom, and His enemies will be sentenced to eternal condemnation.

In the last judgment Christ will be the judge as before, i.e., here and now, ***Acts 10:42; And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. Acts 17:30, 31; therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. 2 Cor. 5:10; For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. 2 Tim. 4:1; I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ***

Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead and by His appearing and His kingdom. All of mankind will appear before His judgment seat. The righteous will thus have in His presence a perfect vision and possession of the goodness that they have, having been chosen in Him, ***2 Tim. 4:8; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. 1 John 3:2; Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.*** The wicked will see with regret what an abyss of sin and suffering they have fallen into, ***Rev. 1:7; Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen.*** In such an aspect, it may be said men will hereafter judge themselves. Those who are unlike Christ will find themselves as such to be separate from Him. The two classes of people are parted because they have acquired distinct natures like the sheep and the goats, ***Matt. 25:31-34; But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all of the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on His left. Then the King will say to those on His right, Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.***

The future judgment will thus be determined only by how much or how little people have let the Holy Spirit convict them of their sin and allowed Him to reform their heart while they were in their body, ***John 16:8-11; And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. 2 Cor. 5:10; For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what He has done, whether good or bad.*** At the judgment, the books will be opened and every man will be judged according to his works, ***Rev. 20:12; And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.*** Each man's character will be manifested as the light of Christ falls upon it. The people of Christ will receive their reward at the last according to what their life has been. They have acquired a close likeness to Christ by their lives of true holiness and love.

Judging on the part of God is an absolute necessity because He is a just God, rewarding those who obey Him and His laws and punishing those who choose to live in the slavery of their sin rather than trusting in, relying on, and having faith in Jesus Christ that He has forgiven our

sin, provided a cloak of righteousness that justified us as our right to be heirs to share eternity with Him.

The Day of our Lord, or the final judgment, is always connected with the promise of the return of Christ to this earth. Christ connects the completion of the kingdom with a decisive occurrence, the great event of His own coming and presence. The exact time of this occurrence is unknown, but Jesus has given us hints of signs to look for as the time draws near, which we will examine in this study.

From the ethical point of view, we are told in Scripture that we should not judge others according to appearance or according to the flesh, ***John 7:24; Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment. John 8:15, 16; You people judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone. But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and He who sent Me.*** The reason why we should not judge others unto condemnation is because our judgment, at best, can only be based on partial knowledge. We are not entirely aware of the inner lives, motives, and principles of other people. We are not acquainted either with the antecedent conditions of their actions, or the possibilities of justification, progress, or amendment that their future may contain. Both Christ and Paul clearly expressed caution in one man judging another even if the outward evidence seems convincing, ***John 8:10, 11; And straitening up, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" And she said, "No one Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go your way. From now on sin no more." 1 Cor. 4:5; Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.*** As we read these verses we see why we are encouraged to practice patience and forbearance in the interest of an individual and also of the church. It does not, however, mean that we should not properly exercise the grace of discernment and proper evaluation of people. How would we know not to "give that which is holy to those who are like dogs" if we do not evaluate them properly? Or how would we guard ourselves against false prophets or false disciples? Our judgment of others must never be for the purpose of self-elevation, condemnation, or for entertainment of a Pharisaic attitude of self praise.

Who are those who will be judged before the judgment seat of Christ? It is evident from the context of these verses that this is the judgment of believers that is connected with Christ's Second Coming, ***Rom. 14:1-13; Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or***

falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One man regards one day above another, another regards everyday alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself, for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written; as I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall give praise to God. So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. 2 Cor. 5:1-11; For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven; inasmuch as we, having put it on, shall not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—for we walk by faith, and not by sight—we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God and I hope that we are made also in your consciences. This passage is concerned with the evaluation of our life on earth and its character and works. This does not imply that when the believer dies and is with Christ he loses his identity and his past life is forgotten. When we leave this tabernacle of our present body, our spirit goes to be with Christ which constitutes the greatest reward and gain for the believer as we stand in His glory. The believer does not become an unidentifiable spirit in heaven where Christ is, but puts on a new garment. **Acts 1:11; and they also said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.** We are not told what this garment will be, but it must be a garment of identity of the bodiless spirit immediately after death. This "garment" is translated as "house" in Corinthians and as a "habitation" in Jude. All we can say is this, when we trace the word back to its original roots, concerning the word "garment," is that it is a dwelling place and pertains to a house where one actually lives.

However, its contextual meaning is that it refers to the clothing that we as spirits shall put on after death. In Jude it refers to the habitation or dwelling place which the fallen angels left. This would seem to indicate it is a dwelling place of angelic beings who are spirits, **Jude 6; And the angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day.**

This “house” or “habitation” has a parallel word that when translated from the Greek means “dwelling place,” as it is used in **Eph. 2:19-22; so then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.** Here “dwelling place” is presented as a habitation of God through the Spirit or in the Spirit. Here it is presented as a dwelling place of God who is spirit. But this word is not confined to defining a dwelling place for holy spirits; this same word is used to describe the habitation of devils who are also spirits. We conclude therefore that both of these words, in the Greek, “habitation” and “dwelling place” is a place of spirits or spirit beings. There is going to be a distinct garment or housing for each believer which he or she receives immediately after death. But the implication is that it is not going to be the same for all persons is found in this next verse. **2 Cor. 5:1, 2; for we know that if the earthly tent, which is our house, is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven.** The word for “house” means a building in the process of being constructed. What is stated here by Paul is that while we are here on earth there is a house being built for us into which we shall move, and this is presented also as clothing which we are eager to put on. The building and the clothing are in accordance with our works of faith here on earth, whether good or bad. Our skin of our body is referred to as a tabernacle or tent, indicating that it is not a permanent structure for us as contrasted with the eternal dwelling place which is intended to be permanent. **2nd Cor. 5:10; for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.** This is in full accord with the teaching of Paul in the Book of Romans in regard to the righteous judgment of God for all people, believers and unbelievers.

The complete and final evaluation of the believer’s life, however, is going to be connected with the Second Coming of the Lord as it is going to be explained in this study. The dead in Christ will be resurrected first and the believers who are still alive will be changed to receive a body conformable to that of those who have already risen. **1 Thess.4:13-18; But we do not want you to be misinformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again,**

even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words. The Lord makes it very clear that our reward shall be distributed to each believer in the resurrection of the just which must precede the resurrection of the unjust, ***Luke 14:13 14; But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, since they did not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous. Rev. 20:4, 5; And I saw thrones, and they that sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.***

The unbelievers will be judged consequent to their resurrection and this judgment is identified as the Great White Throne Judgment, ***Rev. 20:11; And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.*** It can be taken as a term parallel to the Judgment Seat of God or of Christ. Up until now the judgments of God and Christ were temporary, intermediary, but the throne indicates a final judgment which will also include the believers of the Tribulation Period. It is designated to be a white throne because white is the color of light, the symbol of purity, innocence, holiness and, therefore, absolute justice. A hypocrite has no white robe. He is only like a whitewashed wall. ***Acts 23:3; Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! And do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation to the Law order me to be struck?" Matt. 23:27; "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead man's bones and all un-cleanliness."*** However, the elders, the martyrs, and the great multitude that came out of the Tribulation are all clothed in white raiment, ***Rev. 4:4; And around the throne there were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads. Rev. 6:11; And there were given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, should be completed also. Rev. 7:9; After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the lamb, clothed in***

white robes, and palm branches were in their hands. Their robes were not always white, but they washed them and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. **Rev. 7:14; And I said to him, "My Lord, you know, and he said to me, "these are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."**

This judgment of the great white throne is the absolute revelation of all that both believers and unbelievers of all times ever did in their lives, thus conveying who they really were and are, and they are given a just apportionment of either punishment or reward. We believe that the great white throne does not only involve unbelievers, but also believers, both of the period of time prior to the Great Tribulation that is described in Rev. 6-19 and the saints that were saved during the time of the tribulation.

Tribulation to the early Christians did not mean so much ill health, poverty, or loss of friends, as much as the sacrifices they had to make and the perils they had to meet from their proclamation or profession of Christ. In the book of Hebrews, the writer says that after his readers were converted, "they endured a great conflict of sufferings; partly being the object of staring and gazing, both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly becoming parkers with them that were so used," **Heb. 10:32, 33; But remember the former days, when after enlightened, you endured great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. Heb. 11:37, 38; They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, ill treated, wandering about in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.** Tribulation is the appointed destiny of Christians. Paul reminds the Thessalonians that both he and they were appointed unto tribulation, and that he had told them before when he was with them that they were to suffer tribulation; **1 Thess. 3:3, 4; So that no man may be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know.** John is also a partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus and he tells the church of Smyrna that they shall suffer tribulation 10 days; **Rev. 1:9; I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. Rev. 2:10; Do not fear when you are about to suffer. Behold the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.** The Christian is presented as being joyful in tribulation since there is a deeper experience of the presence of Christ and of the kingdom of God when tribulations come. In the face of much affliction the churches of Macedonia have an abundance of joy. **2 Cor. 8:1, 2; Now, brethren,**

we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of liberality. The Thessalonians received the word with much tribulation, with the joy of the Holy Spirit; 1 Thess. 1:6; You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit.

In the case of the Christian, tribulation results in increased energy and blessedness of the spiritual life. ***2 Cor. 4:17; For momentarily, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison. Rom. 5:3; And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance.*** However, God comforts the faithful in tribulation and the comfort that He gives allows us to have the ability to comfort others; ***2 Cor. 1:3, 4; Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 2 Cor. 7:6; But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus.*** Our Lord's judgment will put an end to a believer's tribulation, and they will be rewarded with rest. ***2 Thess. 1:5, 6; This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you indeed are suffering; for after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you.***

The more severe portion of this period of tribulation is referred to as "The Great Tribulation" of which, according to Scripture, there can only be one in the history of the world. This period is also described in ***Zephaniah 1:12-18; And it will come about at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are stagnant in spirit, who say in their hearts, the Lord will not do good or evil. Moreover, their wealth will become plunder, and their houses desolate, yes they will build houses but not inhabit them, and plant vineyards but not drink their wine. Near is the great day of the Lord, near and coming very quickly; listen, the day of the Lord! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. A day of wrath is that day, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness; a day of trumpet and battle cry, against the fortified cities and the high corner towers. And I will bring distress on men, so that they will walk like the blind. Because they have sinned against the Lord; and their blood will be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung. Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them on the day of the Lord's wrath; and all the earth will be devoured in the fire of jealousy, for He will make a complete end, indeed a terrifying one, of all inhabitants of the earth.*** The "Day of the Lord" includes the millennial age and the judgment that follows as well as the bliss that God brings upon His own. This period, being a part of the Day of the Lord, is described by the prophet as a day of wrath, a day of trouble, distress and death.

In our study, as we proceed through the verses in this chapter of Matthew, we will see that Christ gives us a description of the initial events of this period. Then, as Matthew goes on, Jesus summarizes this period telling us that it ought not to be mistaken by being identified as the general tribulation that Christians may have suffered on earth. Rather it is a tribulation the kind of which was never known from the beginning of the world and will never be repeated once it has been experienced.

The seven year period of tribulation is to be identified with the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy, which parallels the future of Israel in tribulation according to ***Dan. 9:24-27; Seventy weeks have been declared for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end to sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place. So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. And he will make a firm covenant with many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate, (or causes horror).*** This prophecy can be quite confusing because there are no definite times mentioned and many have thought that this prophecy was being fulfilled in their time, but it was not yet the time, so let's take these verses apart and see if we can translate these verses from the Hebrew so that they can be a little better understood: *Seventy (or, a multitude), weeks (or sets of seven years, seven being symbolic of completion or fulfillment), have been determined by God that His will concerning your people (i.e., Daniel's) and concerning the rebuilding of your consecrated and sacred city (Jerusalem) will be accomplished and God's sovereignty will be established, to restrain the guilt and punishment that comes from rebellion, to seal up a general state of sinfulness, to provide reconciliation for the deliberate twisting and perverting of sin that is particularly evil, to cause for a time of right relation to the ethical and legal standards beyond this temporal sphere, to fulfill your revelation of future events and the proclaiming of that which the Lord gave him to say, and also to sanctify the Most Holy Place (or the tabernacle).* Therefore you are to discern and to act with insight knowing that the amount of time that will pass on account of the going forth with the command to reestablish and complete the reconstruction of Jerusalem until the future time of the Anointed One, the Ruler, there will be seven groups of seven years and sixty-two weeks of years (sixty-two being symbolic of the beast and men) ; Jerusalem will be reconstructed again, with streets and a channel of water built around the city for defensive purposes, even during the designated time of enduring conditions

of political, military, and religious oppression on God's people. At a time after that period of time consisting of 434 years the Anointed One will be cut off and have no one, and the people of the ruler of this world (the beast and men), who is to come, will have a common purpose and goal, that is to wipe out Jerusalem and the Most Holy Place in the Temple with the force of a flood. And His time will end as foretold by the prophets with a coming judgment; even to the end of this period of time there shall be wars decreed for destruction that have already been decided. And the army of the beast made up of men will cause a covenant to prevail with a large number of people that have armies for one group of seven years, and at the halfway point of the seven years the beast and his men, and the peoples that have a covenant with the beast and his men will cause the daily ritual sacrifices and grain offerings to cease; and in the shadow of detestable things such as putting their own idols in the temple, will come these armies lead by the beast will who cause horror, even up to a complete annihilation of everything holy, until a decree is declared by the Prince to have His anger poured out on the one who causes the horror. This part of Scripture is one of the most important and controversial prophecies in Scripture. Daniel had been praying about the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the return of his people to the city that had been conquered and scattered throughout the known world. God gave Daniel a time frame for all of His dealings with Israel. Verse 24 is the key to understanding the prophecy. It speaks of Daniel's people and the holy city (Jerusalem). Atonement for iniquity would be made for all sin at Calvary; this applies to individuals and not to the nation Israel. Since the time of the destruction of Jerusalem to the time of Calvary is obviously longer than seventy weeks this is how we know that Daniel is not speaking of a literal 7-day week, but years. There are still sinful people, but they will be purged. "The Most Holy Place" is now destroyed, but it will be reestablished. The beginning of the time is the decree to rebuild Jerusalem. The "seventy weeks" can only refer to years, since Daniel specifies "three full weeks" when he refers to "seven day" periods, in ***Daniel 10:2 In those days I, Daniel, had been mourning for three entire weeks.*** Also the prophecy is an expansion of God's earlier revelation of the "seventy years" captivity. Some biblical scholars suggest that in all probability, the sixty-nine weeks began with the decree that was issued to Nehemiah in 445-444 B.C. and ended 483 years later (based on 360 day years) on Palm Sunday. Then there is a gap in Daniel's prophecy, a feature that is characteristic in Daniel's writings. This occurs because over thirty years elapsed between the crucifixion of Christ (Messiah shall be cut off) and the destruction of Jerusalem (destroy the city and the sanctuary). However, all of this follows the first sixty-nine weeks. As long as God is gathering the Church out of the world, this seventieth week remains future. Once the "times of the Gentiles" are complete, the clock of God's judgment will count off the last remaining week; ***Luke 21:23, 24; Woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land, and wrath to this people, and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be***

fulfilled. There is the appearance of a prince who will have a definite relation to Israel. Israel will receive another leader of her own and will make a firm covenant with him. He will then break the covenant and turn upon Israel in great persecution. Then there follows total war against Israel and the supplanting of worship with abomination, the antichrist having rebuilt the temple for Israel. This then will be brought to a sudden end by the return of Jesus in glory and the ushering in of His kingdom.

In the passage of Rev. 7:14, there can be a wrong interpretation of what “coming out of the great tribulation” means in the context of this verse. And some people, i.e., commentators, have erroneously capitalized The Great Tribulation, to prove their point. They point to a verse that supposedly settles the question, **Dan. 12:1; now, at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such a never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book; will be rescued.** In the Tribulation, “the great (one)” all the tribulations mentioned in all of the passages that speak of tribulation are combined, and thus with reference to the church this tribulation of all the ages is rightly called “great.” **Acts 14:22; through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.** The word “many” spreads out the great multitude of tribulations. The tribulations of the last period are certainly included. Exceedingly severe tribulations appear from time to time; but tribulation, pressure, is never entirely absent from the church while it exists in this present evil age. What we must bear as individuals varies; it varies even on the different days of our own lives. In Rev. 7:14 John sees the church which now has all of its tribulations behind it. It is in a place where no part of the long and great tribulation of the past will ever touch the blessed again. Not even hunger, thirst, heat, or a single tear will be in evidence.

So, what preserved the blessed while they were still in the Great Tribulation? John does not praise their fortitude or any merit they achieved. This is what he adds; *and did wash their flowing robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* John sees these white robes as the blessed stand before the throne of the Lamb. It seems that already, in this life positionally, we wear the robes in which we shall shine in heaven. The Greek grammar expresses past facts; “they washed and whitened,” which is one act, whitened by washing in the Lamb’s blood, not two acts. Washing being the forgiveness of sin and whitening as being the living of a holy life. The washing in this blood removes all sin and all stain and thus renders clean, white, and holy the blessed.

Blood is red, yet the Lamb’s blood whitens. “To wash” occurs frequently in Scripture; “to whiten” is usually expressed by saying “to cleanse.” The blessed cleanse and wash themselves when the Lord cleanses them. To wash our robes means that we believe in the bloody expiation of the Lamb and we appropriate this for ourselves. This blood and nothing else in the universe

whitens us so that we can stand before God. Here on earth our robes still become stained and need constant cleansing as a practical fact, however, positionally, they remain white and holy as they remain so in heaven.

Those who wash their robes are those who come out of the tribulation to eternal glory. This applies to all of the slaves (servants) of our God. John is permitted to see the whole church and nothing less. Just as God and the Lamb have seen it forever, we must now forever see it through John's eyes.

These blessed ones of the tribulation will not worship the Antichrist because their names have been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb; **Rev. 13:8; And all who dwell on earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.** There has to be a time for the reward of the tribulation believers and that time is at the Great White Throne Judgment where believers will be declared righteous and justified to take up residence with God forever.

There is, however, only one book called the Book of Life in which the names of the believers are written. It is in connection with this final judgment that our Lord spoke in Matt. 25, which will be a part of this study in the next chapter. This is the time for the reward of those who gallantly resisted the Antichrist, that great beast. It is interesting indeed that here the word "throne" is used in the plural. There are thrones for judges. These thrones must include Christ and His Apostles, and His saints; **Matt. 19:28; And Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, that you have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."** **1 Cor. 6:3; Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more matters in this life?** There will also be a judgment, by the saints of God, of all the persons as they live during the millennial reign of Christ on earth; **Rev. 20:6; And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who has not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.** It should be noted here that after the millennial reign of Christ, Satan will be released, but after that he will be sent to his final destiny and be cast into the Lake of Fire along with those who have resisted the gospel of Jesus Christ, **Rev. 20:10; And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Rev. 20:14, 15; And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. Rev. 21:8; But for the cowardly and the unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and**

sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. The beast or the Antichrist and the false prophet who were active during the Tribulation will have already been cast into the lake of fire, ***Rev. 19:20; And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone.***

In all of this study about the Second Coming of Christ, the Great Tribulation, judgment, the millennium age, and rapture, this study would be deficient if we did not concern ourselves with a positive statement about “salvation” by defining it, understanding it, and knowing how to obtain it.

Salvation is defined as: safety, deliverance, and preservation from danger or destruction. Deliverance from danger; ***Hebrews 11:7; By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence (or, having become reverent), prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.*** Deliverance from slavery, ***Acts 7:25; and he supposed (or, was thinking), that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance (or, salvation) through him (or, through his hand); but they did not understand.*** Deliverance from our enemies, ***Luke 1:70, 71; as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old—“salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.”*** Hence the general definition of salvation is “welfare or prosperity,” ***Phil. 1:19; for I know that this shall turn out for my deliverance (or, salvation), through your prayers (or, supplication), and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.*** By implication salvation can have the meaning of spiritual “victory,” ***Rev. 7:10; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, “salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”*** In the OT definition of salvation it can mean deliverance from present danger or trouble, or, more especially, defeat in battle. However, it is also deliverance from future condemnation that Jehovah would rightly bring upon Israel. Such salvation can have eschatological connotations, that is, doctrine that deals with death, judgment, resurrection, and immortality.

In the NT, salvation is deliverance from sin and its spiritual consequences, involving an attachment to the body of Christ, and admission to eternal life with blessedness in the kingdom of Christ, ***Rom. 10:9, 10; if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved, for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, (or, to righteousness), and with the mouth he confesses resulting salvation, (or, to salvation).***

The concept of God as the Savior of individuals is expressed throughout the OT. Jehovah is referred to as the Savior of the meek and of all that put their trust in Him, ***Ps. 149:4; for the Lord takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the afflicted ones with salvation. Ps.86:2; so preserve my soul, for I am a godly man; O Thou my God save Thy servant who trusts in Thee.***

This type of salvation was deliverance not only from the spiritual consequences of sin but from the pollution of sin itself. Such an awareness of the necessity of personal inner cleansing is expressed in a number of the Psalms, ***Ps. 51:10-12; create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free spirit.*** Here the salvation for which the Psalmist prays includes deliverance from sin as one of its elements. The OT prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel give the clearest expression to the idea of salvation as deliverance from sin, ***Jeremiah 31:31-34; “Behold days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” Ezekiel 36:25-29; “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all of your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. And you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God. Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness; and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring famine on you.”*** In these verses it is plain to see that when we have a heart for God, that is, when we want to live according to His kingdom authority and not by the world’s authority, He will protect and provide for us. It’s like He’s giving us a taste of heaven here on earth. But this kind of change of disposition requires that we trust in Him, rely on Him, and have faith in Him. To exclude ourselves from the temptations of the world is not possible within our own strength, I believe that is why we see so many, including ourselves, at times, failing to be who we desire to be in Christ. Everything that we have learned about life, our identity as to who we are or would like to be, what we trust in, in a secular sense has to be discarded. That was the lesson of the rich young ruler who asked Jesus what he must do to be saved. He had become rich in all of these

secular avenues and Jesus' reply to him and to us is, "get rid of your all of your attachment to this world and humble yourself and follow Me."

The crown of this personal salvation is reached in the doctrine of the resurrection. Since the realm of the dead is under God's control, those who have been made righteous, who die in distress, still have hope after death to the salvation of God. This hope finds sporadic utterances in the OT, ***Dan. 12:1-3; now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.***

In a short summary we have from the OT salvation meaning, (1) deliverance from present danger or trouble especially from defeat in battle. (2) A preliminary foretaste by the righteous, after death, of the enjoyment of the age to come. It is into a world such as this, with concepts of salvation as explained, that the Lord Jesus came with His gospel of salvation.

In the teachings of Jesus the word "salvation" is used only twice by Him—in the conversation with Zacchaeus and in the interview with the woman of Samaria.

According to Jesus, to have salvation was to have the kingdom of God within the individual. So salvation was treated as a present experience. To the sinful woman in the house of Simon, He declares that her faith has saved her and bids her to go in peace. To Zacchaeus He says, "Today salvation has come to this house."

Jesus taught that when one possesses His salvation or eternal life, death brings no interruption in the communion of the individual with God. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's spirit, we can presume, is in the presence of God. To the dying thief on the cross the promise is made that, on that same day, his place would be (positionally) with his Master in paradise.

Salvation, especially as viewed by Paul, is also an eschatological conception, eschatological meaning an adverb for theology dealing with death, resurrection, judgment, and immortality. Those Christians who are alive when the rapture occurs, along with the dead in Christ, will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and freed from the last trace of their flesh which had hitherto hindered them and shall enter into the joys of His heavenly kingdom; ***1 Cor. 15:50-53; Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we all shall be changed. In a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be***

changed. For this perishable (or, corruptible), must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. It is this glorious experience—still in the future—to which Paul refers when he uses salvation as an eschatological term.

But salvation is not merely deliverance from future punishment; it includes also freedom from sin as a present power. Indeed, it is this present deliverance which alone makes the future possible. Through union with Christ, the believer has become new creature, **2 Cor. 5:17; therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature, the old things passed away; behold new things have come. 1 Cor. 13:11; when I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.** The believer has to die to sin, crucify the flesh with all of its passions and lusts, and enter upon a life of spiritual righteousness, peace, and joy, **Romans 14:16, 17; therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.** The believer is a saved man reconciled to God, claiming and receiving the privileges of a son. **Romans 8:14, 15; for all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba, Father.”** The believer rejoices in the daily experiences of a Father’s grace, knowing how to glory even in tribulations, since he has learned that all things work together for good to them that love God, **Rom. 8:28; And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him, to those who are called according to His purpose.** The believer continues to have his conflict with sin, but as he once felt himself to be the slave of the flesh, sold unto sin, he now knows himself to be its master. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made him free from the law of sin and of death. And the day is coming when, through the transformation of his body, he shall be freed from whatever defiling contact with sin still remains.

In the Gospel of John and in the letter of 1 John, salvation is a present and final eschatological experience **John 3:15, 16; whoever believes may in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. 1 John 4:16, 17; and we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this, love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the Day of Judgment; because as He is, so also are we in the world.** The transformation has begun, it has been inaugurated and eternal life is already the possession of all who believe on Christ. He that hears Christ’s word and believes Him that sent Him has eternal life and does not need to fear judgment. Christ is represented as the “Bread of Life” of which if a man eats it he shall live forever, **John 6:50, 51; “This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. “I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone**

eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh.” Many times, as in these verses, Jesus speaks allegorically and we can misrepresent what He is saying, so let’s take these words in this verse and define them from the Greek: *This Person that you now see is what could be compared to bread because I am the divine spiritual nourishment that feeds the life and soul of Christians which comes down from a higher plain of living that exists in heaven to a lower plain the exists on earth, so that anyone may be continuously fed by faith and be sustained in a spiritual and eternal life and not be separated from the Father eternally. I am what can be compared to as the living Bread, active, and enduring imparting eternal life that comes from a higher plain of spiritual life to a lower way of life on earth; if anyone is fed by faith in this Bread, he shall have life eternally; and the living, enduring, active faith which I shall give for them to eat and drink so that the world can have eternal life is represented in Me as the principle of life and nutrition for the regenerated soul.* In contrast to the manna that the Israelites ate as they were on their way to the Promised Land, the Lord Jesus spoke of Himself as the bread that came down from heaven. If anyone ate this bread, he would not die. This did not mean that he would not die physically, but that he would not suffer a spiritual death which is defined as separation from God and would have eternal life in heaven. Even if he did die physically, his body would be raised at the last day, and he would spend eternity with the Lord.

In this and the following verses, the Lord Jesus spoke repeatedly of men eating of Him. What does He mean by this? Does He mean that men must eat of Him in a physical literal way? Obviously that idea is impossible and repulsive. Some think, however, that He meant to teach that we must eat of Him in the communion service; that in some miraculous way the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ and that in order to be saved we must partake of these elements. But this is not what Jesus said. The context makes it quite clear that to eat of Him means to believe in Him. When we trust the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior we appropriate Him by faith. We partake of the benefits of His Person and of His work. Augustine, the historian, puts it this way, “believe and you have eaten.”

Jesus is the Living Bread. He not only lives in Himself, but He is life-giving. Those who eat this bread will live forever. But how can this be? How can the Lord give eternal life to guilty sinners? The answer is found in the latter part of the verse; “the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” Here the Lord Jesus was pointing forward to His death on the cross. He would give His life as a ransom for sinners. His body would be broken, and His blood would be poured out as a sacrifice for sins. He would die as a substitute for us. He would pay the penalty that our sins demanded. And why would He do this? He did it for the life of the world. He would not die just for the Jewish nation, or even just for the elect. But His death would be of a sufficient value for the whole world. This does not, of course, mean

that the whole world will be saved, but rather that the work of the Lord Jesus at Calvary would be sufficient in its value to save the whole world, if all men came to Jesus.

When we read that He is the resurrection and the life and whosoever shall believe in Him shall never die we are saying that if we believe in Him we will be resurrected to eternal life with Him. We still have the capacity to die physically, but Jesus is referring to spiritual life.

The final form of salvation is connected with the redemption of the universe. Whatever is hopelessly evil—whether in nature or in man or in spirit—shall be at last brought under Christ's feet. No foe will remain to dispute the authority of Christ or mar the glories of His eternal kingdom. The last enemy to be destroyed will be death. Not until then will Christ's saving work be finished, and He restores to the Father the power given to Him, that in the redeemed universe God may be all in all. In order for saved man to live in a compatible environment, the Lord will create a new earth and a new heaven, in which he will live in peace and righteousness; **Rev. 21:1; And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away and there is no longer any sea.** As we define this verse from the Greek words to English it would read as follows: *And additionally I perceived of a renewed, superior, more splendid heaven and a qualitatively new earth, because the former heaven and earth, because of its evil, has perished and there is no longer an expanse of the ocean.* To take the place of the earth and heaven that "passed away," John now sees, in his vision, a new heaven and a new earth. The heaven and earth as we now see them in the universe, grand and wonderful, indeed, but sadly corrupted by sin and evil passed away. After our body and soul have been glorified we shall be a new creation indeed. The same holds true with the earth and heavens. This is more than just an analogy for the first heaven and earth that were created for us, it is what we see as our sin corrupted what God had given us. There is a new heaven and earth created by God, but, what about the sea? This verse says that there will no longer be any sea. There are two plausible answers to this question, one; the function of the sea, that is, to supply evaporation, clouds, rain, rivers, and springs, is no longer needed. Or, two, the word "sea" is a symbolic word that means "restless masses of humanity in wicked nations." The new heaven and earth surely would not have a place for such people. Or maybe we'll just have to wait and see what the Lord means by these words. The process of shaping us into what God had in mind for us to be was cut short by man's propensity to sin and as no further action was taken by the Lord at that time, we are indeed left unfinished. In the end, all human beings are lost in sin and do not reflect the image of God in any sense of completeness, which is what God desired for us from the beginning.

Jesus now begins to answer the disciple's second question about the end of the age and the Coming Kingdom. The disciples wondered what sign would reveal these things, but Jesus warned them about false messiahs. During the first half of the Great Tribulation Jesus warns His

disciples that there will be many false messiahs, all claiming to be Him. They will succeed in deceiving many. The current rise of many false cults may be a prelude to this, but it is not the fulfillment. ***Jer. 29:8; for thus says the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, "Do not let your prophets who are in your midst and your diviners deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams which they dream."*** The way in which Jesus begins to answer His disciples shows that His heart is full of compassion and concern for the disciples. With the introduction to this sermon is a mighty warning; "Do not indulge your disciples in their curiosities, but instruct them in things that are useful to know." They are to live with "their eyes wide open," so they don't miss or fall for any deception that comes their way, by means of these illusionists, which Christ knew His disciples were fond of and were in danger of being ensnared by, because they were looking for signs, which would make them vulnerable to deception. They have to be careful not to be tricked by their eyes or ears into believing what is not true. There would be many false prophets with counterfeit signs of spiritual power and authority. Their coming "in My name" means that they will seize upon the name of Christ for themselves or elevate themselves to His stature.

The procession of such deceivers started before the time of Christ and it will continue onto the end of time. Some have been petty and just have some little sect of fanatics following them and some sit on thrones like the popes in their long succession. Some are just plain in it for the money and some are just obscenely vicious. The sad thing is that they shall actually succeed in deceiving many because all men have an attraction for religious error, and many yield to it with avidity and develop a strong fanaticism. They are limitless in perverting to their own ends what the Scriptures say about the kingdom.

But these do not come by Christ's orders or with delegated powers and authority from Him. But they assume the name Messiah, which was set aside for Christ only, and take upon themselves His spiritual office and challenge the honor and dignity which belongs to Him alone. In this period of time many set themselves up to be deliverers and redeemers of the people of Israel. Each of them had many followers in great numbers, who they lead to spiritual destruction. ***1 John 2:18; Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour.***

When Jesus teaches us that one of the signs of the last days is that there will be wars and rumors of wars, it would be easy to think that we are seeing this fulfilled today, but what we see is mild compared to what is to come. God's prophetic clock has begun and these conditions will quickly manifest themselves. Famines, pestilences, and earthquakes will occur in various parts of the earth. Even today world leaders are alarmed by the specter of famine due to the population explosion. But this will be accentuated by the shortages caused by wars that are a signal that alarms us to the rotten condition of the world.

Jesus is preparing His disciples, then and now, for a difficult passage of time before His return. These noises about war are not to upset the poise and confidence of the disciples. Why? Because it must be, it is necessary due to the condition of the world and God's judgment upon that condition. As political situations worsen, as wars ravage the world, Jesus' disciples and all of His followers should not be afraid that God has somehow lost control or that His promises will not come true. Even when the world seems in chaos, God is in control. Such things must happen as part of God's divine plan. And it seems that we, here in the United States, are being set up to follow a false Messiah through our political system. We demand more and more from our government in the way of entitlements and have become more and more dependent on our government to solve not only our personal crisis but the crisis of the world also. We must always remember that the government is not our Messiah and we should not put expectations on our government that only Christ can provide.

Rev. 6:4; and another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth and that men should slay one another; and a great sword was given to him. In this verse a red horse is chosen because "a red horse" is symbolic of "war, bloodshed, and death; strength, swiftness, and power; spiritual support, or power of the flesh." Let's take this verse apart to see what else this verse might be saying: *also another of the remaining horses, a flame colored, fiery red one that represents bloodshed and death that is about to come swiftly, departed; and to him who sat on it, it was permitted to take away peace and harmony of individuals from the habitable earth by force, and that men, because of lack of peace, should slaughter one another; and a sword that is used for cutting, symbolic of war machines, that was used to a great extent was given to him.* The NT era is not different from that of the OT as regards to war, famine, and death. The wild passions of the wicked and the sin abroad, in all nations, constantly precipitate wars. In the midst of them and despite them the Lamb brings His kingdom to its triumphant consummation. Wars themselves, as signs of ripening unto final judgment, are a continuous sign of the end; they are like great placard advertisements that are strung along the highway of the world's history. Schemes and pacts to abolish war on earth, however well intended, are hopeless, as long as the world and the nations love sin and deal in corruption and unrighteousness. Some thought they were waging world war one in order to end all war, and now, against their will, they learn that it was only pregnant with more wars and rumors of war.

The fact that wars result when one nation rises against another nation, a body of people that is held together by the same customs, and kingdom rises against kingdom, a body of people that is under one king or government, is rather self evident. But these clashes are always at the height of abnormality. Jesus goes on to teach that in addition to the wars, famines and earthquakes will be on the increase and more evident. The world of nature is affected by sin in the same way as the world of men, and so these disturbing manifestations are

a sign of the end. But just because they are a sign of the end does not mean that the end will soon follow. More of these manifestations will occur, not always consecutively but often concurrently and simultaneously.

But, verse 8 of Matthew 24 tells us that all of these things are merely the beginning of what is about to occur, Jesus refers to these things as “birth pangs.” As we know, the baby is not usually born immediately upon having contractions, these pains are only the beginning of the process. He uses this analogy to tell us that just as birth pains get gradually greater and greater until the birth, so too, these signs are only the beginning of things that will gradually get violently worse and worse until that final day.

Jesus’ words indicated to the eager disciples that there would be a span of time before the end of the age and the coming kingdom—it would not come that week, or immediately after His resurrection, or even right after the destruction of Jerusalem. First much suffering would occur as a part of life on earth, while history would move toward a single, final, God planned goal—the creation of new earth and a new kingdom. The description that Jesus uses of sufferings as “birth pangs” was not new to the Jews; it is a typical metaphor for the beginning of pre-kingdom travail and suffering in many books of the prophets.

While we must never trivialize suffering, all of these troubles must not alarm Christians. Because Jesus has warned us about them, we know that they must precede the arrival of God’s glorious kingdom. Persons who try to predict the date of the last day and the day of His return by counting earthquakes have not read Jesus’ words carefully. Everything will happen according to God’s divine plan. Our only responsibility is to be prepared, to endure, and to continue to teach the Good News to all nations.

Faithful believers will experience great personal testing during the Tribulation. The nations will conduct a bitter hate campaign against all who are true to Him and if we examine the moral condition of the entire world we can see where, at a minimum, the birth pains have started. Not only will believers be tried in civil courts, but many will be, and are being martyred because they refuse to recant.

Because of what some potential believers see occurring in the lives of believers, they will deny the Lord rather than suffer and die. Family members will inform against their own relatives and betray them into the hands of brutal persecutors. In these outbreaks of persecution many shall be trapped, that is, get so caught up in being attached to this world, even with their life, that they get caught like an animal that has had a trap sprung on them. Any potential for faith has been killed as they give up information that leads to believers being persecuted. It would not be correct to say that they have stumbled, because you can quickly recover from stumbling. The wormy fruit falls whenever the wind blows. They let money,

goods, position, honor, liberty, or blood, be the price at which they would sell out Christ. One thing must be made clear here, no matter what these people declare about themselves, we cannot call these people believers, that is, those that allow themselves to become so attached to the world that they would sell out anything and everything to hold onto it. They boast about being a Christian when everything is quiet and tolerable, however, when they see Christians being persecuted in whatever manner, they change their position. Jesus teaches us that once the believer is saved nothing can change that condition; obviously one that sells out his brother in Christ was never saved. These corrupt people have become a traitor to the Name just like Judas. They use their knowledge and their connections to help destroy the faithful by denouncing and delivering up Christ's faithful.

In addition when some see the success that false prophets are having, as the world sees success, securing followers, property, and finance, they will attempt to do the same with success also. They will deceive hordes of people. These are not to be confused with the false messiahs of verse 5. False prophets claim to be a spokesperson for God. They can be detected in two ways: their prophecies do not always come to pass and their teachings always lead men away from the true God. These false prophets will probably come out of our churches, which will make them more believable. They pretend to have a spirit of prophecy and have new revelations of a better understanding of the Scriptures. Their success most likely will come from laziness on the part of the church members who do not do their own Word study or check the spirit of the teachings of these men, by testing what they say as compared to what God's Word says. They do this primarily by taking His word out of context, helping to make it apply to their false teaching. Instead of having other people tell us what the Scriptures say we need to examine it for ourselves and let the truth of the Word speak to us. Just as there was in the OT, there will be and even are today, false prophets among us who tell us what we want to hear, with the intention of to draw more people in, increase their following, which usually leads to more financial gain and power.

It only makes sense that as people turn on one another and suspicion of motives grows among the church, not knowing who you can trust and who you cannot, that the love for the brethren would begin to grow cold, and so it will; as can be evidenced even as we compare the church of forty years ago to today's church. Lack of acts of love will become more and more common and evident and internal relationships will become fewer and fewer and shallower and shallower.

In addition doctrinal defection and laxity from the false prophets automatically entail which feeds the moral defection and laxity. When one applies doctrinal statements of Scripture fast and loose and does not permit it to bind on the conscience how can a person stay firm with moral requirements? Thus lawlessness will be multiplied; the law that directs the Christian in

avoiding sin and in doing good works will be broken. Like an uncontrollable infectious disease the license of one to practice immorality will infect the others. On account of this, because immorality also brings along with it a lack of trusting, the love that flows from faith and evidences its presence and strength in fellowship shall grow cold as though it had been struck by an icy blast. The fervor and strength of Christ's love will be gone. And that means that its root, faith, has withered and is dying or is dead. This is the picture that Jesus is giving us of a sign that marks His Second Coming and the end of this present evil age. It is dark and the darkness steadily increases. Does this picture suggest a wonderful golden age that will rise in triumph in the world prior to the end? Not likely! The trend, more than likely, will be to continue to grow worse, as "birth pangs," until our Lord Jesus calls an end to it all.

But, as a Christian, we should not lose heart, because Jesus tells us that "he who endures until the end shall be saved." This obviously does not mean that men's souls will be saved at that time as a result of their enduring; salvation is always presented in the Bible as a gift of God's grace, received by faith in Christ's substitutionary death and resurrection. Neither can it mean that all who endure will escape physical harm; we have already learned that there will be many martyrs. It is a general statement that those who stand fast, enduring persecution without apostatizing, will be delivered at Christ's Second Coming. No one should imagine that apostasy will be a means of escape or safety. Only those who have true faith shall be saved. Although saving faith may have lapses, it always has the quality of permanence.

This is the bright aspect of the prophecy; in spite of every opposition the church of true believers will endure. When Jesus refers to a person that will endure He uses the singular, "the one that endures" because He wants each one of His disciples to think of himself as being in that situation or circumstance at some time. To endure means "to bear whatever a true confession of Christ brings upon us." Jesus Himself says that in the case of some this will mean death. The verb here, from the Greek, as it is used by Him, means "to stand one's ground, or to remain under." It has the simple idea of endurance up to life's end here on earth, **Rev. 2:7; He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. "To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God."** Let's translate this verse from the Greek meanings of these words: *To the one that has unto himself the ability to hear and has a mind to understand, let him give heed and understand what the Holy Spirit of God communicates, instructs, and continually warns the entire church of Christ. "To him that is victorious over the world, evil, and all of the adversaries of His kingdom, I will give of my own accord and good will to be fed by faith and to be sustained in a spiritual and eternal life, which is in the place where the spirits of the just dwell with God.* Everyone has an ear, in fact two. God gave everyone an ear so that he could hear. Hence the guilt when one who has an ear does not hear. You who have an ear also do not have an excuse, consider yourself warned. If you do something to your ear so that, hearing, you do not hear when the Lord speaks you stand self-

condemned. This does not have a double sense; it is not a play on physical and spiritual ears and hearing. However, the grammar of the verse says, “let him actually, effectively, hear!” *The Lord always speaks so that He is heard effectively.*

We notice that in this verse Jesus does not say “what I am saying,” to the churches, but “what the Spirit is saying.” Here the Spirit is named because it is His special work to operate through the means of grace and to effect faith by hearing and all of its fruits, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self control.

Although this verse is addressed to the Ephesians’ Church, this letter is not intended only for the Ephesians’ but for all of the churches then and now. We understand the words “is saying” as equal to “is now saying and will continue to say by the mouth of the Lord.”

The command to hear is followed by a promise “to the one who overcomes I will give to him to eat from the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.” The connection here to the overcoming is victory over hostile forces, some visible, some invisible. The thought does not refer to victory finally achieved at the end of our life but to the believer who stands and endures his tribulation as a victor from beginning to end. This is a point worth noting. The victor and only the victor shall receive a reward. We could say that this reward is won by him, but we do not claim any merit in receiving this reward, but we receive it as a gift from the Lord, a gift of the Lord’s abounding grace.

The tree whose quality is the life, the eternal life which God wanted us to have in the beginning, is what Jesus has obtained anew for man after his fall, which shall again be ours in all of its fullness after we enter into Paradise. The fruit of this tree is the life or salvation. The promise given in Rev. 2:7 is that the victor shall eat from the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God; he shall taste and enjoy all the blessedness of eternal life in the Paradise of heaven by means of his spirit at death and by means of his body and spirit after the resurrection of our perfected bodies. This is reserved for only Jesus’ faithful followers. The stress on this verse is not on endurance, but on salvation; the verse offers both a promise and a warning. This became a precious promise to believers who were struggling during intense persecution throughout the history of the church. But, this bears repeating, enduring to the end does not bring salvation; it marks us as God’s elect. It’s the assurance of our salvation that empowers us to endure. While some of us will suffer and die, none of these followers will suffer spiritual loss or eternal loss.

Then Jesus Christ gives us another glorious promise. It is combined with the clearest statement found in the Gospels concerning the timing of the end of the world. First, the gospel will be preached in the whole of the inhabited world. During this period, the gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed worldwide, as a witness to all of the nations. ***Matt. 4:23; And Jesus***

was going about in all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel, (or, good news), of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people. Nothing could stop its spread. It is called “gospel,” which was a word that was originally used to designate the reward handed to a messenger of good news, then it came to mean the good news itself. “The gospel” is an old English term. “This gospel” refers to it as Jesus is now proclaiming it. Its content is “the kingdom”, the rule of the Messiah over men’s hearts and lives which includes both his rule of grace and of glory as the context indicates.

It is preached as a testimony to all of the nations; it is one that is intended, as all testimony is, to arouse faith and, when in spite of its absolute truth it is rejected, to testify and to witness against those who refuse to believe. The latter must be included because of what Jesus said in verse 9; “to all the nations” specifies what “in the whole world” really means. Every nation will eventually face this gospel testimony and together with that testimony the question of faith or unbelief. To reject this testimony is to stand self condemned. The truth must be accepted as truth; when it is turned down as being a lie, the man who turns it down pronounces his own verdict.

“Then,” meaning, “Not until then,” “shall come the end,” “the end” meaning the goal or the end of the world, or the consummation of God’s plan for salvation. By the time Matthew’s readers would hear these words, Jesus’ prediction had already begun to be fulfilled. Reaching all of the nations occurred at Pentecost, ***Acts 2:5-11; Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were bewildered, because they were each one hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and marveled saying, “Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we each hear them in our own language, to which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.”*** And the preaching was spreading to all of the world, ***Col. 1:5, 6; because of the hope laid up for you in heaven of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel, which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth.***

Verse 24:14 of Matthew is often misused to show that Christ could not return for His church at any moment because so many nations have not yet heard the gospel. These verses seem to refute that argument and this difficulty is removed when we realize that in God’s sovereignty He has allowed a means or an opportunity by which they could receive Him. All people have been convicted in their heart to reject whatever god they choose to worship and

to seek Him out. The nations that choose not to be informed are the nations that have rejected this conviction and/or have chosen to follow a false god rather than to face the persecution of following Christ.

As we study the Mt. Olivet Discourse, Matt. 24:3-14, we will notice several parallels between these verses and Rev. 6:1-17. These are some examples:

- a. The rider on the white horse...the false messiah
- b. The rider on the red horse...war
- c. The rider on the black horse...famine
- d. The rider on the pale horse...pestilence or death

To take it further we should take note that the events in Rev. 6:12-17 are linked with those in Matt. 24:19-31.

The Great Tribulation, Perilous Times

Matt. 24:21; for then there will be great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall.

From the events which constitute “the signs” of the end of the world Jesus turns to directions and warnings that pertain to the destruction of Jerusalem. The change of subject is obvious. As far as treating both with clear distinction in the same discourse is concerned, who can object when the destruction of Jerusalem, like the flood and like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorra, is made a type of the end of the world?

Matt. 24:15-28; Therefore when you see the Abomination of Desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; let him who is on the housetop not go down to get the things out that are in his house; and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak. But woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days! But pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath; for then there will be great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short. Then if anyone says to you, “Behold here is the Christ,” or “There He is,” do not believe him. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold I have told you in advance. If therefore they say to you, “Behold, He is in the wilderness,” do not go forth, or “Behold, He is in the inner rooms,” do not believe them. For just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashed even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures gather. Sometimes when we read

prophecy literally it can cause us to misinterpret what the prophecy is saying, so let's take these verses apart so that God's Word can speak to us more clearly: *Then, at that time, when you shall perceive the unclean, impure idol worship, the immoral and corrupt, being emptied out on earth, which was foretold by the one named "God is My Judge," the one from the OT who was a foreteller of future events concerning the consummation of the age, set in place in the tabernacle of the rebuilt abode of God, the consecrated place, (let everyone consider this and think it about by means of reading), at that time let those who are in the area near Judea move hastily away from danger upon the nearby hills; let the person who is on the roof of the house move away from danger without going down into the house to remove any of his possessions from his house; and also to him who is in the cultivated land do not return to get possession of his cape and shirt. However, misery and pity will befall on the person that is in the circumstance of being in the condition of having a child in the womb and also those who are nursing babies in those days! But now pray to God for good and to avert the evil that you may encounter in your fleeing and pray that it may not begin to be in the foul weather of winter, or on a day of worship and rest; because at that time there will be a continuous period of time in the history of the world occasioned by God's direct interference, that cannot be compared to any time since the creation of the world up to this time, nor ever shall there be another time like this time. And, in addition, if these determined days had not been shortened absolutely no man would have been spiritually saved; but on behalf of the sake of the elect, those determined days shall be shortened. At that time alone if someone speaks to you saying, "Pay attention, here in this place is the Messiah," or, "there in that place," do not be persuaded to trust in, rely on, or have faith in that person. Because false messiahs seeking to establish their own throne and also false prophets who have falsely assumed the work of a prophet will be raised up and pretend to foretell of things to come that are lies and they will perform and exhibit things of exciting admiration including attesting miracles and seemingly performing acts outside the laws of nature, so as to cause even the chosen ones to form a wrong judgment. Pay attention to what I am saying, I have spoken of these things in advance, before these events have taken place. If therefore you find yourself in the situation where they speak these words to you, "Pay attention, Christ is in the uninhabited and uncultivated tract of the country," do not go to that place, or, if they say, "pay attention, Christ is in the place of privacy," do not trust in, rely on, or have faith in them. Because just as comparatively sudden as the lightning comes out of and appears from the same direction as the rising sun, and becomes visible, all the way through to the sinking sun, so too shall be the coming of Christ, or He who is also called the true Messiah. Relative to what I have taught you remember this proverb, "Because wherever there is a dead body of a beast that is the place where the rapacious birds that prey on the dead will gather."*

In verse 15 we read about the "seeing the Abomination of Desolation as recorded in Daniel," and the verse ends in "let the reader understand," so in obedience to these words we need to spend some time on what this expression means. In Rev. 13 we have two beasts

mentioned, the first is the antichrist, in verses 1-10, who comes out of the sea and the second is the beast from out of the earth. The first beast is a political ruler while the second is a religious leader. The antichrist has already been revealed by this time in Rev. 6:2 as the rider of the white horse who brought false peace. This reminds us of the words in **John 5:43; I have come in My Father's name, and you did not receive Me; if another shall come in his own name, you will receive him.** Reference is made by Christ to the future antichrist that would be welcomed as the producer of great peace among men. In Matt. 24:15 the Lord Jesus Christ refers to this antichrist as "The Abomination of Desolation."

Daniel describes this antichrist as "another horn, a little one," which arises from among the ten horns, which are kings (or dictators) who will be ruling in the area of the Roman Empire in the last days. Daniel describes him as having eyes like a man and a mouth that speaks great things; **Daniel 7:8; while I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth uttering great things.** He calls him a king of fierce countenance who understands dark sentences, **Dan. 8:23-25; And in the latter period of their rule, (or, kingdom), when the transgressors have run their course, (or, finished), a king will arise insolent, (or, strong of face), and skilled in intrigue, (or, ambiguous speech). And his power will be mighty, but not by his own power, and he will destroy, (or, corrupt), to an extraordinary degree and prosper and perform his will; he will destroy, (or, corrupt), mighty men and the holy people, (or, people of the saints). And through his shrewdness he will cause deceit to succeed by his influence, (or, hand), and he will magnify himself in his heart, and he will destroy, (or, corrupt), many while they are at ease, (or, secure). He will even oppose, (or, stand against), the Prince of princes, but he will be broken without human agency, (or, human hand).** In Second Thess. 2:3-12 Paul identifies this man as the "man of lawlessness...the son of destruction," and the "lawless one." The prediction of the final doom of the antichrist is in **Rev. 19:19-20; And I saw the beasts and the kings of the earth and their armies, assembled to make war against Him who sat upon the horse, and against His army. And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image; these two were thrown alive into the Lake of Fire which burns with brimstone.** The second personality is the beast that comes out of the earth, **Rev. 13:11-18; And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon. And he exercises all of the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed. And he performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it has given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who has the wound of the sword**

and has come to life. And there was given to him great breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast might even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed. And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free man 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 sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast for the number is that of man; and his number is six hundred sixty six. Some of the verses in the book of Revelation can be hard to decipher because John uses a lot of symbolism, so let's take the time to define these words the way he intended them to be heard: *Additionally I perceived with my eyes and in my mind a second representative of hell that had an evil agenda emerging from human birth and speaking of worldly things; he also possessed double the normal strength and power in his charisma, in general he has the appearance of a meek lamb, but he speaks lies in his preaching as does the serpent Satan. He additionally continues in everything that he does as having the power, abilities, and faculties of the first beast who gets his authority from hell. He also has the ability to cause the whole inhabited earth and those who inhabit it to continually pay homage and reverence to the first of the representatives of hell, whose deadly wound that causes death was miraculously healed. He also continues to effectively cause great signs to be done as wrought by false prophets, so that he causes fire to come down from out of the sky to the inhabited earth in the presence of men. And he also causes those who live on the inhabited earth to make wrong judgments by means of the signs which were performed by him by the authority of the person that represents hell; he speaks with authority to direct those who dwell on the inhabited earth to cause them to create a prototype drawn from the person who represents hell who is also the one that had the wound that causes death from a knife and has come to life. In addition there was given to him the power to give this prototype of the representative from hell the spirit of life, so that the prototype of the representative from hell has a voice used to speak blasphemies of God and he will cause the same number as the persons who do not give homage and worship to the prototype of the representative from hell to be killed. And so he has the power over all, the young and the full grown, the prosperous and the poor and helpless, the freeborn and the one bound to serve, to cause them to be given a mark to be cut in on their right hand or on their foreheads as a sign of an agreement and fellowship in confirmation of a promise. And he provides regulations that not one person will be able, by provision of law, to trade, barter, or sell merchandise unless he bears the cut of the sign resembling the prototype, either the name or the number of his title. In these words is knowledge of symbolic things. Let him who continually has an intellect figure out the number of the representative from hell, because the number is that of a human and his number is six hundred sixty six.*

The final verses or paragraph of chapter 13, of the Book of Revelation, encourages us to use our intellect while reading about the symbolism of whom or what John is describing. So in

verse 11 we can deduce that this person that is referred to as the “second beast” is not a spirit. He comes up out of the earth just as Adam did when God created him, so it is of human origin and not a spirit or a demon. If we perceive this second beast to be a “movement,” rather than a single person, we could say that it is of demonic origin embraced and promoted by humans. This beast has the appearance of being harmless and innocent, much like you would envision a gentle preacher or pastor that you might become emotionally attached to and mistake this identity as being attached to a person who has your best interest in mind. But, in our intellect, we know and understand that his speech is filled with deception and lies especially about Jesus Christ, the True Lamb of God and he is only saying things that are like a salve meant to soothe our conscience.

He has the personality of a lamb, but speaks as a dragon. His conduct and speech resembles more of a person that gets his authority from hell rather than from Jesus Christ. The powers and strength of his charisma causes a lot of people to follow him and they begin to worship the first beast whose teachings represent a doctrine from hell because they realize that he is a product of a miracle; having had a fatal wound, a wound that would be sure to kill any human, and he is seemingly miraculously healed. This healing can cause some to believe that he has been sent from heaven and could even be the Messiah in His Second Coming. To more entrench persons to follow him he performs miracles and illusions, especially being able to call down fire from heaven in their presence, but it is all an illusion that imitates miracles. But, just as some of us stand in awe of the tricks that present day illusionists perform; he will convince even some who claim to be Christian that he is indeed sent from heaven and these are true miracles. But, looking at the context of these verses I don’t see where they do anybody any true good; they seem to be more along the line of being for entertainment and making impressions. This will happen especially, it seems, after he has given his followers an image of the first representative of hell that he seems to make to come to life and to speak.

We already have technical devices that seem to have a life of their own that can speak commands as well as follow commands. But the end of verse 15 teaches us that not all of us will fall for his tricks, because it says that as many as do fall for his tricks an equal number are killed because they recognize, recall, and trust in these verses and they are not fooled by his chicanery. However, everyone in every aspect of society it seems will be given a choice, take the mark or suffer and die. It seems that in order to survive this craziness a whole new Christian society will have to be created, since you will only be able to make transactions, of any sort, with the mark of the beast. So a mark-less society will have to be started, which really shouldn’t be too hard since we are told to separate ourselves from the worldly values and attitudes that the non-believers thrive on.

We are warned in the final verse of chapter 13 to educate ourselves especially on the symbolism that is used to prepare us for these days. This marking is the devil's counterpart and counterfeiting of the "sealing of the slaves of God," with a difference being that the slaves are sealed, where corruption cannot enter in, but the beast is identified only as a mark which is easily corrupted. Symbolically the hands are the works that you do and the forehead is symbolic of your mind, your way of thinking that also determines who and what you are. The first "beast" can be also a movement rather than a person, *the whole antichristian power in the whole world*. We should not be naïve enough as to not recognize that this is currently going on even in churches today that call themselves "Christian." The churches are allowing themselves to be more and more influenced by worldly values every day and less by the Word of God. The second beast could very well be the "pastors" or leadership of these churches. WE NEED TO HOLD OUR LEADERSHIP ACCOUNTABLE TO STICK TO GOD'S WORD IN THEIR PREACHING! And not follow them blindly to the abyss.

The second beast causes all to worship the first beast and to receive the mark on their right hand or on their forehead. All who receive this mark of the beast will be cast into hell to burn forever and ever according to **Rev. 14:9-11; And another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives the mark on his forehead or upon his hand, he will also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."** These verses warn us of the consequences of choosing to live out our life with the mark that we are warned of to not participate. So it seems that we should understand what this warning tells us: *And, also, another messenger from God, a third one, followed in succession, declaring with a loud voice, if any man is in the spiritual condition to desire to give homage and reverence to the prototype of the representative from hell, and receives his mark cut into his forehead or upon his right hand, that person will also be a part of the dreadful judgment of God unto sinners to the fullest extent that causes them to be reeling and staggering to destruction as they get drunk from the cup of God expressing His wrath; and they will be continuously afflicted with the pain from eternal punishment and abode of demons and the souls of the wicked and other unpleasantries and frustrations in the presence of the holy messengers of God and in the presence of the exalted Jesus Christ. And so the essence and evidence of their torment ascends unto the ages of ages; additionally they will continuously be without inward tranquility day and night; these are the persons who give reverence and homage to the representative from hell and his prototype, and whoever takes for himself the cutting in of the mark of the beasts identity.* This exposition in chapter 14 is worded to match chapter 13 and is made a separate proclamation in order to bring out most plainly the truth that all who bow before the

antichristian power do so, and can do so, only after having been fully and completely warned regarding the consequences of their thoughts and actions. The warning is given in the third person singular, "if anyone worships," etc. It is objective, individual, intended for any one and every one, whoever he may be. To worship the beast and his image is directly opposite of worshipping the Creator.

Anyone who worships the beast and receives his mark, also thereby accepts the consequences. Choose the beast, the antichristian power, and reject God and the Lamb. By rejecting the Lamb and the One whom the Lamb represents, that is, the efficacious sacrifice that enabled forgiveness of our sin; it should be obvious that rejection of our forgiveness would result in our retaining our sin and thus not justified to be in His Kingdom. If you choose the beast you choose what the beast brings with him, the cup of God's wrath, the torment of fire and brimstone. These two words are symbolic of God's unmitigated anger and wrath without one drop of water to dilute. First the wrath of God; next hell, to suffer the unmixed wrath is to be cast into hell. The water (which is what was usually used to dilute wine), here representing God's grace; you will receive his full measure of wrath without any of His grace. The addition of brimstone, burning sulphur brings out more vividly the torments of hell. We get a glimpse of this torment when we visit places that sulphur has reached the top of the earth. However, human expressions are used to represent what is really beyond our present powers of conception. This is also true of heaven however.

Human language is compelled to use terms of time in an effort to present the timelessness of the other world where there is neither day nor night. Scripture condescends to our finite limitations of our mind, for if the language of infinity were used, no human mind would understand.

This beast is also referred to as the "man of lawlessness" by Paul in his writing to the Thessalonians and is the same thing that is referred to as the antichrist in other Scriptures. The preposition "anti" indicates opposition and not in place of Christ. This person will be one who is opposed to Christ and not one who tries to take the place of Christ. The characteristic of this individual is that he opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship. He claims to be God. He is not Satan, but his coming "is in accord with the activity of Satan." He will seem to be a miracle worker, but we must keep in mind that Satan is the greatest among all deceivers. It is clear that Paul thinks of the supreme effort of Satan as not in the past, but in the future. He does not think of the world gradually evolving into a perfect state, but of evil continuing right up to the end. At that time, evil will make its greatest challenge to good, and this challenge will be led by the mysterious figure who owes his power to Satan and who is the instrument of Satan's culminating challenge to the things of God. Paul predicts the outcome of Christ consuming the man of sin with "the breath of his mouth." Christ only needs to use a

single word to both create and to destroy. In the end the last supreme challenge of Satan will be defeated.

In these verses, back to Matthew, Jesus is letting His disciples know that what He is telling them is not something new, that they have not heard before, because this is what Daniel was prophesying and for the present disciples we see it repeated again in the Book of Revelation; ***Daniel 9:27; And he will make a firm covenant with the many for 1 week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate. Dan. 11:31; And forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice, and they will set up the abomination of desolation. Dan. 12:11; And from the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1290 days.***

When we get to Matt. 24:15, we are at the point of the middle of the Tribulation period. We know this by comparing verse 15 with Daniel 9:27. Daniel predicted that in the middle of the seventieth week, that is, at the end of three and one half years, an idolatrous image would be set up in the holy place, i.e., the temple in Jerusalem. All men would be ordered to worship this abominable idol. Failure to comply will be punishable by death. The erection of the idol will be the signal to those who know the word of God that the Great Tribulation has begun and we note that at the end of verse 15 the Lord wants the one who reads the prophecy “to understand.”

From the events that constitute the signs of the end of the world Jesus turns to directions and warnings that pertain to the destruction of Jerusalem; we are to use this comparison that Jesus makes for the end of the world which will mimic some of the historical events of Jerusalem and will require metaphorically the same preparation. The change in subject is very obvious. As far as treating both with clear distinction in the same discourse is concerned, who can object when the destruction of Jerusalem, like the Flood and like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, is made a type of the end of the world?

First of all, Jesus tells them when to flee out of the country, namely when they see the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place, the Temple itself. “Abomination” is the main term, something that is utterly abominable in God’s sight, and this will occur right in the Temple that is consecrated to God. “Of desolation” characterizes the abomination according to the effect it must produce, namely, desolate the desecrated Temple; leave it empty of worshippers. The moment the believers see this (and it is something that will be unmistakable and easy to see) they are to flee the country posthaste. This is the same abomination that was spoken of by God through Daniel in verses 11:31, 12:31, and a little bit in 9:27. Jesus does not say that Daniel prophesied the event that would usher in the destruction of Jerusalem. He says

only that the same kind of abomination with the same kind of an effect would appear in the Temple.

The application of Daniel's prophecy calls for special insight, and thus Jesus adds parenthetically, "He that reads let him understand," namely the words of Daniel.

The abominable thing, which threatened and brought desolation upon the city, temple, and nation; by which is meant the Roman army as is mentioned in **Luke 21:12-20; *But before all of these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake. It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. But you will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, and you will be hated by all on account of My name. Yet not a hair on your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives, (or, souls). But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand.*** This is the wing that is mentioned, in those days armies were called "wings;" as in **Isaiah 8:8; *Then it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass through, it will reach even to the neck; and the spread of its wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.*** The Roman armies were the desolating ones to the Jews, they had no regard for other's religion, and to whom they were an abomination; not only because they consisted of heathen men, and un-circumcised persons, but because they were chiefly worshipping images of their gods, which were on their ensigns. Their images and idols were always an abomination to the Jews.

So the abomination that Jesus refers to were the ones written about by the Talmud writers (those who wrote Jewish civil and religious law), and it was this abomination that made desolate. It left the Temple empty of worshippers. Now, our Lord observes that when they should see the Roman armies encompassing Jerusalem, with their ensigns flying, with these abominations on them, they can conclude that their desolation is near. But, He doesn't necessarily speak to the Apostles, because most of them will be dead by then or in other countries. But He mentions this to His disciples or followers or any person wherever that should see and recognize this abomination of desolation. Interestingly in the Gospel of Mark "abomination of desolation" translates from the Greek as; *the desolating sacrilege set up where he should not be.*

When, therefore, this that Daniel, under a spirit of prophecy, spoke of should be seen, "standing in the holy place", near the walls and around about the whole holy city of Jerusalem, which was so called because of the sanctuary and worship of God in it; and which in the process of time, stood in the midst of it, the abomination destroyed both. So then the warning at the

end of the verse, “let him understand,” that is, whoever reads the prophecy of Daniel, will easily understand the meaning of it, and will see and know for certain, that now it has been accomplished; that they will now know how to escape the desolating judgment, unless they are given up to a judicial blindness and hardness of heart; which was the case of the greater part of the nation.

The majority of the persons who occupied Judea were Christian, which includes Jerusalem, so, for their own safety they should flee to the mountains outside of Judea, because before too long their refusal to bow to the image would soon be detected. They would never be safe in Judea during a time of war; the mountains that would keep them safe are beyond the Jordan in Pella. And the Christians did as Jesus admonished them to do, and as far as historians can tell this evacuation was done during fighting among bloody factions in the city that were making an abomination of the Temple, ***Luke 21:21; Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are in the midst of the city depart, and let not those who are in the country enter the city.***

When the Christians leave Judea the utmost of haste will be necessary. If a man is sitting on the housetop, he should leave all of his possessions behind. It would be likely that a Jew or a Christian would be on his roof during this time because they had battlements around them, which they made use of, both for diversion and for pleasure, for private meditation and prayer, so it was somewhat of a safe place. The flat roofs made it possible to use this space either for devotion or for recreation for social conversation and sometimes for preaching, ***Matt. 10:27; what I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops. Acts 10:9; And on the next day, as they were on their way, and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray.*** Let him not come down in the inner way, but by the stairs, or ladder, on the outside of the house, which was the usual way. They had two ways of going out of their house, the one way they called “the way of the doors,” the other “the way of the roof.” A ladder was fixed at the entrance of the door of the upper room, and from this he would go down into the house by way of the ladder and leave the same way. ***Mark 2:4; And being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying.*** Jesus is telling them to leave by way of the ladder and to not go inside the house. Time spent in gathering belongings might mean the difference between life and death. Also a man seen with a lot of possessions may be stopped along the way to be robbed or turned back and fail to escape with his possessions or his life. Is it just me or does this sound familiar, as compared to what the Israelites encountered as they were leaving Egypt to escape the Pharaoh?

The man working in the field should not return for his clothes, wherever he may have left them. It was usual for the people that work in the fields to strip themselves to their shirts, and lay their clothes at the corner of the field or at a certain area of the land. We must suppose that this is the case here for our Lord does not mean that the man working in the field should not return home and fetch his clothes, which were not left there. They were brought with him when he went to the field, then taken off and laid aside while he did his work. But as soon as he had heard the news about the siege of Jerusalem he should immediately make his way to the mountains. Much like Lot was instructed to do at the burning of Sodom. He was not to return to where he had laid his clothes, just as Lot was not to look behind, however, if his clothes laid in the path that he took to escape to the mountains he might grab them as he went by. But he was not to go back for them because of the swiftness and suddenness of the desolation. Clothes held much more value during Jesus time on earth than they do today, but it's not really about the clothes that is the issue here, he is to not go back and get anything of worldly value, just as a true believer would not do, he would rely on the Lord for his provision. "Life, true life, is worth more than many robes."

In these verses there is undoubtedly a dual reference both to the historical present and to the future; first, the profaning of the Temple by the Roman armies, then the flight with haste going to the mountains. All of these depictions are historically accurate but these same circumstances will revisit the earth at the end of the age.

During this time pregnant and nursing mothers will be at a distinct disadvantage; it will be hard for them to make a speedy escape. Jesus has compassion with the thought of the hardships that such persons fleeing from the doomed city and country will bring onto the pregnant and nursing women. These women, whether they have a baby in the womb or in their arms, will have an extra burden and will be slowed by their condition and thus easy prey for the Roman soldiers or those waiting on the roads to rob them of their goods.

Some may think that because this verse starts out with a "Woe!" that it should be viewed as criminal for them to be with child, or they are about to have a judgment pronounced on them. But, such is not the case here, for it has always been esteemed a blessing to be fruitful and bear children. But what this "woe" does is express the miserable circumstances these women would be experiencing. Who, because of their heavy burdens, would not be able to make speedy flight to the hills or the mountains as would be required of them in order for them to escape. (Those who have children are not told to leave them behind). Or they would be obliged to stay at home and endure all of the issues that would come with the siege. So this word of "woe" is not expressive of sin or punishment, but of pity and concern for their misery and distress. Their case is much worse than those of the men on the housetops, or in the fields,

who could much more manage their escape. So the focus here, as in all of the discourse, is “to be prepared,” however you are able.

To everyone Jesus preached that they should pray that this siege would not happen in the winter or on a Sabbath. It is more obvious for us today to see why He would want this for His disciples concerning the winter, because the winter months would make it more difficult to get away, but why not on the Sabbath? It could possibly be that The Sabbath law stated that a person could not go more than 1050 yards away from his house, so a Sabbath’s day journey would not get them very far to escape the siege.

The word “Sabbath” first occurs in Ex. 16:23, but the institution of the day of rest is much older and is founded in nature and, like marriage, was instituted in Paradise; **Gen. 2:2, 3; *And by the seventh day God completed His work which He had done; and He rested on the seventh day from all of His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all of His work which God had created and made.*** The word usually indicates the seventh day of the week which by God’s appointment was set apart for His service, but it is used also for other days of times separated and sanctified in a similar way.

Originally the Sabbath was devoted to simple rest from worldly toil. The fourth commandment does not concern itself with any specific religious service, except to generally keep it holy. Subsequent legislation by the legalistic minds of the day made it a holy convocation, or gathering. The sacrifices of the Temple were doubled; the showbread was changed; the inner court of the temple was opened for solemn services; the prophets and the Levites took the occasion for imparting religious instruction to the people. It was a day of holy joy. There was freedom for social enjoyment. Indeed the fear was that the day would be men would lose sight of the meaning and waste it by idleness and degrade it by sensuality and drunkenness because it was so joyous.

But after their captivity there arose the school of the Pharisees, and by them the attractive character of the Sabbatical observances was destroyed. In place of the joy, they imposed upon the people the yoke of a scrupulous, slavish, sabbatarianism or rigid adherence to the Sabbath rules which made the Sabbath an end instead of a means, which hampered the spirit of true worship and laid greater stress upon the punctilious obedience (focusing on the details) to mere human regulations than upon the commands of the Law. Some of the ridiculous prohibitions were as follows: walking in the grass on the Sabbath because its bruising effect would constitute a kind of threshing; wearing nailed shoes because they would be viewed as carrying a burden; mounting a tree lest a twig should be broken. It was against this perversion of the commandments that the Lord protested. He refused to sanction Pharisical legalism and vigorously defended His Sabbath miracles.

The example of Christ represents the Sabbath, not as a day of gloom, but as a pleasant and healthful day of rest, quiet gathering to worship, and Christian benevolence. Jesus kept the Sabbath in the highest sense of the term. He observed every jot and tittle of the Mosaic Law in the freedom of the spirit. He taught us that acts of necessity and mercy are to be performed always, even on the Sabbath, and worldly occupations are to be put as far as possible out of our thoughts. In the Christian church the first day of the week has been substituted for last day as a day of worship and rest. This, however, is in commemoration of the resurrection of Christ. By adopting the first day of the week instead of the last day of the week for rest and worship, the Christian church at the same time unloaded all of the detailed rules and regulations that rendered the Sabbath Day a day of legalistic bondage. The Christian church has full justification for this change. Upon the first day of the week Christ arose from the dead. The disciples before the Ascension assembled on Sunday when Jesus appeared to them. According to all authenticated tradition, Pentecost occurred on the first day of the week. Paul preached at Troas on the first day of the week which was, among those Christians, the day of religious service. Apparently they met at night because they may have had to work, being in a heathen environment. Paul tells the Corinthians that everyone is to “on the first day of every week let each of you put aside and save as he may prosper.” It was on the Lord’s Day, and this is the name that He calls it, that John on Patmos saw through the open door into heaven in the book of Revelation.

In reading these verses of Matthew 24:15-28, we can feel the compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ that He has for His elect; He thinks of the cold and the wet of the Palestinian winter and the possibility that the time of “your flight” may not occur at this time of the year. Or it may not occur on the Sabbath when the country is filled with fanatical Jews, who would become furious at a supposed desertion of the Sabbath. The view that at this time the Christian would still be observing the Jewish regulations, including those regarding the Sabbath, probably is not warranted. Jesus tells the Christians “to keep praying” that these possibilities may not come to pass; for everything is in God’s hand. He can do either, speed up or delay the day of their judgment upon the Jewish nation. In the words “keep praying” there lies the veiled promise that God will hear. As we look back in history we can see that the Christian’s prayers were heard and answered as the immediate siege of Jerusalem took place in the summer, however, this prophecy is not only for the immediate future but also for the advent of the Second Coming.

Some theologians have speculated that Jesus did not mean that He wanted His disciples to pray that the siege would not come on the Sabbath Day, because the word “day” does not appear in the text, but that He meant a Sabbath Year, when no fruits or vegetables would be in the fields and there would be a great scarcity of provisions among the people who would not have sufficient amount to eat for themselves let alone for strangers.

But in the next verse when Jesus says “that there will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world,” we know that He is referring to more than just the siege of Jerusalem that occurred in A.D. 70, because this description isolates the mentioned period from all of the inquisitions, organized massacres and persecutions, purges, and genocides; all of which have previously happened and continue to happen in this world. This prophecy could not have been fulfilled by any previous persecutions because it is clearly stated that it will end by the Second Coming of Christ.

Jesus’ words could be taken as referring to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. Seventy, but they are so emphatic and clear that they must point ultimately to the final period of tribulation at the end of the age because Jesus stated, nothing like it had ever been seen or would ever be seen again. Yet the great suffering is tempered by a great promise of hope for true believers. ***Dan. 12:1; Now, at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. Rev. 7:13, 14; And one of the elders answered, saying to me, “these who are clothed in white robes, who are they, and where do they come from?” And I said to Him, “My Lord, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Rev. 16:18; And there were flashes of lightening and sounds of peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty.***

Jesus tells us that this age of tribulation that will end at the Second Coming, will be so intense that unless those days are shortened none will survive. This cannot mean that the Great Tribulation, so often specified as lasting three and one half years, will be shortened. It may mean that the 3 1/2 years are a shortened period of what could have been a much longer time of tribulation. That’s not hard to see as we look at the recent wars that we have been involved in, most lasting over 10 years.

During the siege of Jerusalem the intensity and the severity of the tribulation was so great that a prolonging of the days would have claimed the lives of everybody in the Jewish nation. It was a period of about four or five years from 66 to beyond 70. And still these days were shortened and the history of this brief period furnished the strongest evidence that, if the Jewish fanatical craze of this time had continued, it would’ve ended in Jewish self annihilation. The very first clause states that the shortening enabled some of the Jews to remain alive. This shows that the phrase “because of the elect” refers not only to the elect in general but also to their spiritual interests. By the power of God the Jews were at that time kept from extinction

and they are still being kept and seen as a sort of strange phenomenon in the world. If God had not preserved a seed, a remnant, according to His election of grace, that they should be saved, they would've been like Sodom and Gomorrah, not one would've escaped.

As we've gone through this part of the study we realize that Jesus' words were not just intended for the immediate future of those listening to Him, but also a prophecy of signs that would be like a trumpet to announce the arrival of His Second Coming. They also ultimately point to the final period of tribulation at the end of the age because Jesus stated that "nothing like it had ever been or will ever be." Many of these persecutions that He has talked about have already occurred; but more is to come. While a certain amount of persecution happened in the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, Jesus also envisioned the persecution of believers throughout the coming years. This persecution will also be cut short because of the severity, that is, if they didn't have a specific ending time no one would survive. Jesus is referring to physical survival here as opposed to what we read in Matt. 24:13 where He is referring to spiritual survival. The time would be cut short for the sake of the elect, God's chosen people. The shortening of time will limit their duration so that the destruction will not wipe out God's people and thus their mission. God is ultimately in charge of history and will not allow evil to exceed the bounds He has set. Jesus had predicted the Cross for Himself; here He is predicting persecution, death, and resurrection for His disciples.

Who are the "elect"? In the OT "elect" refers to Israel, particularly those who are faithful to God; ***Psalm 105:43; And He brought forth His people with joy, His chosen ones with a joyful shout.*** In the NT "elect" refers to His church—all believers, ***Rom. 8:33; who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the One who justifies.*** In Matt. 24:22 the words "elect" or "chosen" do not refer to OT Jews but to all faithful believers, whether Jews or Gentiles. Paul wrote ***Rom. 8:29, 30; "For those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son...Those whom He predestined He also called; and those whom He called He also justified; and those whom He justified He also glorified.*** God foreknew those who would respond to Him and upon those He set His mark or predestined. It is clear that God's purpose for people was not an afterthought; it was settled before the foundation of the world. Those that God passes over have seen God and the nature of His kingdom, but have no desire for it. Those that God chooses or elects, have seen God and the nature of His kingdom, and want to be with Him. For the question to us is this; in the midst of a relationship with God do you want to be with Him as He is within His identity or disposition? If we are to be with Him in the midst of an inner personal relationship, we will become His children. It is to say that His presence will have a direct effect on what and who we are as a person.

When a time for suffering comes, even as it does just in our everyday living, the important thought for all of Christ's disciples is that they need to remember that God is in

control of the severity and the length of time that we suffer. Persecution will occur, but God knows about it and will control the intensity and how long it will take place. The main thrust of Jesus' teaching is to show His mercy toward the faithful and to show that God is loving and sovereign. He will not forget His people, ***John 14:18; I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.***

When we get to verses 23-26 of Matt. 24 we read of Jesus' focus turning to false christs and His warning concerning them. In an atmosphere of crisis, reports will circulate that the Messiah is in some secret location or people are being especially affected by the gifts of the Holy Spirit in a certain location. Such reports could be used to trap those who sincerely and lovingly looking for Christ. So the Lord warns all of His disciples, and we are included, not to believe reports of a local, secret Advent. Even those who seemingly perform miracles are not necessarily from God; miracles, or what appears to be a miracle, can be from a deceptive satanic origin.

The Man of Sin will be given satanic power to perform lying miracles, or what appears to be a miracle but is merely a deception or illusion, ***2 Thess. 2:8- 10; And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all of the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.*** These verses are pertinent to our understanding of events that will take place so that we see the need to be prepared by receiving God's knowledge, wisdom, and understanding of His teachings; so let's amplify these verses to get the full impact of what Paul is teaching us about His Second Coming: *Also, at that time, the one who transgresses the law, the one who has kept secret who he was previously, the worker of iniquity, and the one who tries to resist people from coming to Christ and He Himself opposes Christ, will be supernaturally made known, he is the person whom the Lord will destroy with the power of the words breathed from His mouth and He shall also render him ineffective with the second appearance of our Lord at His Coming; that is whose presence is in accord with the false miracles of Satan, with the total power of working miracles and signs claiming to act by divine authority and lying omens, and also with every deception by those who impede the worship of the true God by their obstinate adherence to worldliness or idolatry of those who are exposed to eternal separation from God, for they did not admit with the mind and the heart, i.e., they did not approve, embrace, or follow with affectionate regard the faith and practice of the true gospel, so that they might be rescued and preserved from spiritual eternal separation from God which is common to all men because of Adam's sin.* In this one verse, (9), we have the three names by which supernatural manifestations or miracles were called. They are *all power, signs, and wonders*. Observe how these lying miracles are accomplished by the energy of Satan. Miracle working is not necessarily evidence of God's

power. It has been made clear in especially these last verses that those who have heard the gospel and have rejected it will be damned. These will not have a second chance to be saved during the millennial reign of Christ.

The false christs do not necessarily deny the existence of Christ. On the contrary, he builds on the world's expectation of such a person, while he blasphemously appropriates these to himself and affirms that he is the foretold One in whom God's promises and the saints' expectations are fulfilled. He is of the same character as the antichrist, who opposes the true Christ. The antichrist affirms himself to be the Christ. Both are against the Christ of God. The final antichrist will also be a pseudochrist as well. He will usurp to himself Christ's offices, presenting himself to the world as the true center of its hopes, the sanctifier of all its needs, and the healer of all its ills. He will be a pseudochrist and antichrist in one.

There is a distinction between the antichrist and the pseudochrist, a false Christ. The pseudochrist does not deny the existence of Christ, but takes advantage of the fact of the expectation of the appearance of Christ. He thus deceives the people in believing that he is the Christ, whereas antichrist denies the existence of the true God.

In Paul's epistle to the Thessalonians, he asserts that before the day of Christ (the day of the rapture of His church), there must come first an apostasy or a standing off, and the man of sin, the antichrist, will be revealed. He will sit in the new temple yet to be rebuilt under his own direction during the first three and one-half years of the seven year period of the tribulation. He will demonstrate great satanic powers and will perform signs and lying wonders. The Lord will slay this antichrist at His Second Coming. The antichrist claims and wins respect equal to that of God and makes war on God's people. He rules for three and one-half years over the earth and is finally destroyed by the Lord in a great battle.

In verse 23 Jesus repeats the warning that He gave in verses 5 and 11 but now restricts it to the period marked by the disintegration of the Jewish nation. When the verse starts out with the word "then" it makes it plain that Jesus is speaking of this particular time when Jerusalem was heading for destruction. The condition of expectancy indicates that such cries would indeed, reach the Christians. As former Jews who are now believers in Jesus as the Christ they would be especially susceptible to the deception involved; for had not Jesus promised them His glorious return, and might He not be returning at this very time? The old love for their nation would also have its effect, for it believed that Jesus would deliver the Jews and make them conquerors of the world. When men are in dire need it seems that they often long for a Savior and usually under false pretenses make promises as they would to another man, but mostly, no matter how sincere they are at the time, it is a short lived promise and soon, when things calm down again or they realize that Christ is not going to respond immediately to their needs, they return to putting Christ back on the shelf where He was when they dusted Him off to save them from the current distress.

Many of those who were leaving Jerusalem and being scattered to different locations would pass others who would tell them of rumors of different locations where someone had seen or heard the Messiah. But Jesus is warning them ahead of time to not believe it. There were many who claimed to be the Messiah, some with the intent of trying to encourage the people to stay and fight for the city instead of giving it over to the Romans.

In times of persecution even strong believers will find it difficult to be loyal. They will so much want the Messiah to come that they will grasp any rumor that He has arrived. To keep believers from being deceived by false messiahs. Jesus explained that His return will be unmistakable; no one will doubt that it is He. If believers have to be told that the Messiah has come, then He hasn't. Christ's coming will be obvious to everyone.

During this very period of Jewish calamity false christs and false prophets shall arise and shall furnish even signs and astounding things with the intent of deceiving people. However the history of the destruction of Jerusalem furnishes no evidence for the fulfillment of this prophecy.

It is true that the historian Josephus mentions no false christ, but the line of demarcation between a prophet and a christ are fluctuated in the minds of the Jews, and at a critical time such as this, if ever, the hope of a Messiah to deliver them must have flared up in connection with these prophets.

So then we understand the statements made in verse 24 to mean that these christs and these prophets were intended to deceive even the "elect," which however, would be impossible. The false miracles are designed to actually deceive so that the elect would really regard these false christs and false prophets as true christs and true prophets and thus believe in their purported revelations. However, in the case of the elect they will fail.

We can become easily confused by differing opinions of whether Satan can perform miracles or not, but one thing we must always keep in mind is that he is known as the "Great Deceiver," capable of making deception look like reality. This reminds me of the illusionists that make the circuits performing their great deceptions; they have the knowledge to trick the mind into thinking that what is an illusion is in fact reality. Indeed if we read 2Thess 2:9 correctly we will notice that it refers to the miracles as "false wonders," ***2Thess. 2:9; the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders.*** My belief is that God alone works true miracles and if this were not so would we not also hear in Scripture about the good angels performing miracles? Angels can play a part in the performance or carrying out of a miracle but not in the creation. Satan's whole purpose is attained when, by means of lying wonders, he makes men think that they are seeing a genuine miracle. We can sometimes have a tendency to ascribe too much power to Satan and his demons which is liable to do us greater harm than good. If the elect could be actually and permanently deceived, they, of course, would not be the elect; and this is why the Scriptures add the words "if possible." The reason that they are converted and become true Christians and persevere to the end is because they are a part of the elect. To talk of a final seduction of a persevering Christian is a contradiction of terms. A persevering Christian cannot be finally and totally deceived. Yet what prevents their fatal deception is not a mysterious decree of God protecting them alone but the effective power of His grace, the effectiveness of which in their case is foreknown by God. This also explains the title given to them in Scripture as "the chosen," those

whom God chose as His own from all eternity; those who already then were presented to God as being saved effectively and forever by His grace which is bestowed on us as His gift to us.

Most false messiahs build their following from faithful church attendees who have been led astray. Often the cult leader's appeal is based on the words "I am the true way." "I will fulfill your expectations you have, or I will be the power that you need." They may not use these exact words, but this is what is intimated by the words that they do use.

Through the grace and mercy of God believers have been told in advance to beware of the things that are meant to deceive especially them and Jesus calls attention to it by the exclamation of "behold!" "I have told you before hand," the Greek grammar views matters from the standpoint of the event when these deceptions begin to operate. He doesn't mean that He has already told them in this discourse, but He has told them before these deceptions begin to happen so as to give sufficient notice and warning of them to His elect. It would be inexcusable if they were not upon their guard against them. Then the believers are to tell themselves, "He has told us in advance," and already the fact that He truly prophesied and forewarned them is to keep them undeceived and safe. Satan is not concerned with deceiving those that are not Christian because these already belong to him.

While the elect might not be taken in by the deceptions they and we are still responsible to help keep others from being deceived. And this applies to anything that we learn about our Lord; all that we know and learn about Him is meant to be spread about to others, especially those who would seem to be lost. Spiritual vigilance is a major theme of Jesus' discourse to His disciples as He sat on the Mount of Olives. Jesus' warnings about false teachers still holds true today. Upon close examination, it becomes clear that many promises that leaders make are not in agreement with what the Scriptures tell us. Only a solid foundation in God's Word can equip us to perceive the errors and distortions in false teaching.

No Christian is to pay any attention to cries from anywhere, especially places in the "wilderness", where you might feel alone and insecure, unfamiliar with the surroundings, not knowing where to get counsel if it is needed, making ourselves vulnerable. All that is waiting for us there is deception and lies. When Jesus comes He will announce His coming in a way that you will know that He is here and that it is Him right where you are at the present time.

Jesus explained earlier that, by contrast, His coming would be as obvious and unmistakable as a flash of lightning bursting across the sky. Lightning may flash in one part of the sky and be seen just as clearly in another part; "so will be the coming of the Son of Man." He will not be hidden away in the wilderness or in some guarded and secret inner room in a building. The whole world will see Him in the brilliance of His heavenly glory. No man will then cry, "Behold, come and see!" or "I know where He is." Shams of Christ have always been poor shams. The glory of the real Christ is beyond imitation. But men's ignorance of the Son of Man is still stupendous.

The carcass that Jesus speaks of, in verse 28, is defined as something that has no life in it, in the Greek it refers to anything that has fallen from walls and buildings to being living creatures. Here the carcass or corpse is the false prophets, and false christs, with their lying miracles, but just as road kill attracts the vultures of nature so too will the spiritual road kill attract those who are ignorant of the

events taking place and the importance of these events. They see this corpse as an easier means to be filled because it will not resist and the congregation has gotten to the point that they don't care if it is spiritually nutritious as long as it satisfies them. The carcass in this case, in my opinion, includes the false churches, the ones that have turned Sunday services into a Sunday business. These institutions teach what is best for the financial bottom line of their institution as a focus of ministry rather than the truth of the gospel. They are more concerned with what will cause the congregation to keep filling the seats and emptying their pockets. The congregation is even being charged money for what Christ intended to be given as a gift, that is, the gift of their ministries. This I believe is the carcass that has fallen, where those who have come to church just to have their ears tickled by hearing preaching that tells them their sin is not so bad, they could be worse, they just need to make some behavioral changes. These false preachers will not confront people concerning their sin because if they do they risk losing being in the black on the financial bottom line. By making their patrons uneasy they know that they can go to another "church" that will make them feel easier about their sin so they tell them what will keep them coming back instead of repentance and confession of their sin. **Rev. 18:2; and he cried out with as mighty voice saying, "Fallen, fallen, is Babylon the great! And she has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird.** The fallen corpse pictures apostate Judaism, Christendom, and the whole world system that has leagued against Christ and His church. The corpse is easy pickings for the vultures.

We must keep in mind that Jesus Christ will return in glory that is instant and visible to the whole world, and the crying out that we hear is to try to distract us to another place or another christ but these calls are in reality only the vultures that are on their way to feed on the corpse. As Jesus teaches this verse He is indicating by His words the hopelessness of the state of the church nation; it has become a corpse that has turned to putrefication, fit only for vultures. In its fallen, deplorable, miserable, and in a spiritually lifeless state it can be compared to the body of a man, or any other creature that has been struck dead with the lightning from heaven; being destroyed by the breath of His mouth and the brightness of the coming of the Son of Man.

So this verse points to a time of judgment and Jesus has taught all of His disciples to be constantly on the lookout for signs of His Coming. He doesn't mean that we should wait until we see signs to be prepared for His judgment, but that we should always be prepared because no one knows the day or the time except the Father and only a white washed hypocrite would wait until the last minute to prepare; **Matt. 23:27; Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead man's bones and all uncleanness.**

The Glorious Return

Matt. 24:30 ... and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all of the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.

If we are not prepared for His Second Coming we could lose hope when we see His creation responding to His judgment upon the earth. It will be evident that our Lord taught that immediately

after such tribulation there will be events that our world has never yet seen and will only see once, but for His elect, He will appear for them amongst the calamity and chaos caused by His judgment. **Matt. 24: 29-31; But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, (or, heaven), and the powers of the heavens, will be shaken, and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.** For those who are not His “chosen ones” these verses can instill a lot of fear and trembling because it is the beginning of their eternal death and punishment, but for His “elect” it will be a day that calls for great celebration as we prepare to arrive at our final destination to live out our existence. So let’s define these words from the Greek meaning and context: *On the other hand shortly after and in connection with the period of time in the history of the world that is occasioned by God’s interference, that is, the seven year tribulation, after those days the splendor of the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not shed its acquired brilliance, which will affect the atmospheric air around us, and the stars will fall from over-arching, all embracing heaven, and the sun, moon, and stars will be loosed from the power that keeps them in order and they will be put into a state of wavering, rocking, and vibratory motion, which has never happened in this world before and will never happen again, and after that the miraculous deeds and events that reveal the coming of the Messiah in His kingdom will appear in the air, that is, a phenomena that has a spiritual end and purpose to announce His coming, and at that time every race of people of the inhabited earth will be heard with loud expressions of grief to lament with wailing what they see, and they will perceive with their eyes and know that the Messiah is resting on and surrounded by the clouds of the over-arching all embracing heavens and He is supplied with omnipotent majesty and great dignity and splendor bringing an end to the Great Tribulation. And also at that time He will send forth His messengers accompanied by a mighty sound of a trumpet to gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other and they will assemble His chosen ones.*

We see a little more clearly exactly how Jesus answers the questions addressed to Him in verse three. First, the more closely related, for them, question of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. And then, His description addresses the distant future and concerning the end of the world and His Second Coming. The first picture He paints for them, in verses 4-14, presents a world survey which brings us to the end. The second picture, in verses 15-28, presents the overthrow of the Jewish nation and brings us a reference to the true end which will be like a mighty flash of lightning and will not occur in connection with the Jewish calamity. Now, Jesus tells us just what “the end” and His Second Coming will be, for the two will occur together. Verses 29-31 present the Second Coming as it will occur.

At the close of the Great Tribulation there will be terrifying disturbances in the heavens. The sun will be darkened, and since the moon’s light is only a reflection of the sun’s light, the moon will also withhold its light. The stars will plunge from the heavens and planets will be moved out of their orbits. Needless to say, such cosmic upheavals will affect the weather, tides, and seasons on the earth. There will not be any intervals of time between the end of the Great Tribulation and this cataclysm. When the last day arrives “immediately” all that is stated in verses 29-31 will occur, there will be no lengthening of this time, it all happens at once. The world of the stars shall collapse, all that holds the heavenly bodies

in their orbits and enables the sun and the moon to light the earth will give way. We shouldn't waste too much time thinking about what it is going to be like in these days because these days are beyond human conception.

What Jesus describes here John saw in a vision of the end times recorded in **Rev.6:12-14; And I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth, made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. And the sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.** Just so there are no misunderstandings about what Jesus is prophesying and what John saw in His vision let's define these Greek words that make up these verses: *Then, after that, I saw and understood that He was opening the sixth seal (six being figuratively a time of reckoning by the Jews) that was impressed upon the book for privacy and security, when my full attention, all of it, was drawn to an earthquake that was great in magnitude; and also the brilliance of the sun came to be darkened to black as compared to a coarse black cloth made of the long hair of goats, and then the brightness of the moon came to be darkened as compared to blood; and also at the same time the sun, moon, and stars of the heavens fell from their place to the inhabited earth, as compared to a fig tree that impulsively throws its winter fruit that has not yet ripened at the time of being shocked and shaken by a violent wind sent from God Himself. And additionally the heavens were disjoined as compared to an ancient book when it is gathered as a scroll; and also all of the mountains and hills and islands were shaken to and fro and moved out of their spot that they occupied.* These and other verses in chapter 6 of the book of Revelation begins a teaching of what is commonly called "the Day of the Lord" or the day of God's judgment on the earth in the Scriptures. This is the beginning also of the Day of Christ, because on the same day the believers are caught up in the air to be with the Lord. The believers are taken from the earth, and God's judgment is then poured upon those who have rejected Christ. Here we have the beginning of the millennium in my opinion. These seven years of tribulation form the seventieth week in the prophetic seventy weeks of Daniel. Each week stands for seven years, **Daniel 9:24-27; Seventy weeks, (or units of seven), have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish, (or, restrain), the transgression, to make an end, (or seal up), of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place. So you are to know and to discern that from the issuing of a decree, (or, word), to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah, (or, the Anointed One), the Prince, there will be seven weeks and sixty two weeks; it will be rebuilt again, with plaza, (or streets), and moats, even in times of distress. Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, (or, no one), and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end, (or, his end), will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war, (or, war will be decreed for desolation), desolations will be determined. And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offerings; and on the wing of abominations, (or, detestable things), will come one who makes desolate, (or, causes horror), even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate, (or, causes horror).** The events that take place during the seventieth week of Daniel, or in this case the period of seven years are the same events spoken about in our study. There has never been a period in the history of the world with the characteristic events described in this

passage of Scripture. The Day of the Lord also includes the thousand year reign of Christ on earth commonly known as the millennium.

The series of these divine judgments are symbolized first, as the seven seals; secondly as the seven trumpets; and thirdly as the seven bowls. Between the sixth and the seventh bowls of wrath there is like a parenthetical portion. This is meant to give some further explanation or to reveal something new that was not previously revealed.

As the Lord Jesus takes the book He begins to open the seals of the book and the following is seen: (1) a rider on a white horse representing the false peace which the antichrist will bring; (2) a rider on a red horse representing war; (3) a rider on a black horse representing famine; (4) a rider on a pale horse representing death; (5) martyred souls under the altar representing persecution; and (6) catastrophic changes on earth bringing about destruction.

A most important point to be noted is that the sixth seal is the end. In succeeding visions we are again placed in the last day. John is permitted to see some things more than once, but each time from a different perspective. The sixth seal presents only the end, the phenomena's that occur at the end. Because of the symbolic nature of the number six it indicates that the revelation is not yet complete, (7 being the symbolic number of completion), there is more to follow. The word that we interpret as "*earthquake*" is better rendered as a quake or a shaking and not merely an earthquake. Here it involves the dislocation of the universe. What we call the heavens John saw being separated from its place, shriveled and curled like paper. The mountains and the islands were moved so as to disappear.

Coming persecutions and natural disasters will cause great sorrow in the world. But when believers see these events happening they should realize that they can look forward to His reign of justice and peace. Rather than being terrified by what is happening in our world, we should confidently await Christ's return to bring justice and to restore His people.

Then a sign of the Son of Man will appear in the heavens, we are not told what the sign will be; His first appearing sign was that of a star in the heavens. Perhaps a miracle star will announce His Second Coming, in the interpretation we are told that it will be some kind of heavenly phenomena that will have a spiritual end or purpose, which could be the announcing of His coming. Still others believe that the appearing itself is the sign. Whatever is meant, it will be clear to all when it appears and all of the races of the earth will mourn evidently because it means their time of judgment is near. The powers of the heavens by which God held the universe of the skies in place are broken and removed; God's omnipotent hand reaches down to wrap up the affairs of earth and of man. And of course, at once all the tribes or races of earth shall see this, that is, the Son's manifestation in glory will be what the tribes see.

The question is asked whether one of these tribes includes the Christians who are alive at the end. That would be a strange name for them because they are already set apart from the tribes by the title of "His elect" and Jesus has specific instructions for them in order to remove any fears that they might have. The elect should be at peace with these events signaling His coming, but the consternation of the tribes is due to the forthcoming judgment that now overwhelms them, it is now time to pay up for

the choices they have made, for honoring the strange god of their flesh and other abominations. Accordingly, the verses in Matthew 24:29-31 seem to indicate that these events will happen after the tribulation at which time all Christians should be raptured from earth.

Now they see Him coming accompanied by the clouds in the sky, the symbol of heavenly majesty with power and much glory, to the Jews clouds signified divine presence. This power is Christ's omnipotence which is manifested in the heavenly bodies and His glory is the sum of all of His divine attributes as displayed before men. ***Dan. 7:13, 14; I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him, and to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all of the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.*** This verse serves as the clearest OT background of Jesus' application of the phrase "Son of Man" to Himself. In His discussion of the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world, He used it of the Second Coming of the Son of Man, as He did in His trial before the high priest. At one time the Son of Man appeared on earth in lowliness and allowed Himself to be humiliated and crucified; but at the end His omnipotence and His great glory will be fully displayed. The Son of Man will return from the sky, just as He would leave. He will arrive to defeat Satan and judge all people, and there will be no doubts to His identity. ***Zech. 12:10-12; And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born. In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadarimmon in the plain of Megiddo. And the land will mourn, every family by itself; the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves.*** (Just as a side note, when we read of the mourning of Hadarimmon, this is the name of a combination of two Syrian gods, Hada and Rimmon; a vegetation god and a storm god.)

John saw this passage as looking forward to both Jesus death on the cross and to His Second Coming, ***Rev. 1:7; Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen.*** Let's get an amplified reading of this verse in order to better see the correlation in and of these verses: *Give your attention to Him who is moving toward you accompanied by and surrounded by the clouds; so that all of the inhabitants of the earth will gaze at Him and perceive Him, even those who pierced Him through; and also every nation of the inhabited earth shall lament because of Him. Yes indeed! He is a faithful and a true witness, so be it!* This verse, like Matt. 24:30, expresses the hope of the Coming of Christ's kingdom. This is the coming that will cause consternation to all of His foes. It is the Coming for the purpose of judgment at the Last Day. These clouds symbolize Christ's majesty and power. Every eye on earth, at the same time, shall be draw toward Him, even those who pierced Him, which tells us that even those who try to deny Him as the true Son of God will no longer be able to embrace their denial; the undeniable truth of proof is before them. This produces a sense of hopeless grief in His enemies, in the case of trying to describe the depth of this grief he says that it will be much like the grief of losing an only son. In the OT days a son, and especially a first-born son, was highly prized because he would be the one to carry on the family name, traditions, business, etc. and to have only one and to lose that one caused

much grief because it would be a sort of an end in itself. This grief should not be realized or seen as a point of repentance for them, because they are not willing to repent and the time for repentance has passed for them.

The designation of “the Son of Man” by our Lord Jesus Christ was used by the Lord Jesus to designate His Messiah-ship. As we have read in Daniel 7:13, Daniel describes a vision in which four great beasts come up from the sea; a lion, a bear, a leopard, and a beast with four horns. These are judged by the “Ancient of Days” (God the Father) and their dominion is taken from them. Thereupon the prophet said, “I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him.” Daniel does not regard “the saints of the most high” as coming down from heaven. They are already upon the earth suffering the oppression of the tyrant symbolized by the little horn and awaiting deliverance and reversal of conditions, which comes when the Most High sits for judgment.

With but one exception the name “Son of Man” is used only by our Lord Himself. The exception is ***John 12:34; The multitude therefore answered Him, “We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, the Son of Man must be lifted up?” “Who is the Son of Man?”*** And even here it is presupposed that Jesus had spoken of Himself as “the Son of Man.” The multitude was familiar with the title Son of Man. To them it was a designation for the Messiah. Their difficulty was to reconcile Messiahship with exaltation through death. The fact that both friends and enemies were acquainted with the representation of the title as to Messiahship is confirmed by the fact that not a trace of inquiry is presented either by the disciples or the wider public as to the meaning of the title. They were not perplexed by the designation.

The Son of Man was a title of self-designation by our Lord Himself. It was a messianic title before our Lord used it. A speaker usually applies a title to himself with an obvious purpose which his hearers would discern. Taking the first occurrences we conclude that Jesus used this title in the presence of hostile scribes. The scribes were charging Jesus with blasphemy because He assumed to pronounce the forgiveness of sins which is God’s prerogative. We read that the multitudes “glorified God which had given such power unto men.”

Our Lord adopted this title more fully and consistently, most probably because of Peter’s confession at Philippi Caesarea. We are not told precisely why our Lord used this designation in preference to any other messianic title, but it was a title which did not possess the limitations of other messianic titles. It allowed the concept of the Suffering Servant to be integrated with that of Messianic King. Daniel did not identify the suffering Messiah before the Triumphant One who was going to come in glory, but since it is an event that follows, what precedes cannot be precluded. What Daniel failed to disclose, the Suffering Messiah, Jesus revealed. Only when the crucifixion and the resurrection were accomplished facts, in light of which His disciples might discern how false and misleading had been their narrow concept of what Messiahship could be, does Jesus speak to them of Himself in other terms.

If the “Son of Man” was a title capable of being associated with suffering and death, it was a title already associated with the glorious coming of One who should have everlasting rule over a world in which the powers of evil should no more have sway. He declared that He was going to be the Judge. The

Son of man spoke of Christ's descent from heaven which indicated a close association with God more than any other current messianic title that could have been used.

But it also spoke of a closer association with man universally and not only with Israel, which would've been indicated if He designated Himself as "the son of David." When Jesus attached the concept of suffering to His Messiahship, He did so in order to make it clear that the entrance upon His sovereignty was still far distant. This is why He used the title most frequently when speaking of His suffering.

After the crucifixion and the resurrection, Jesus began to speak to them of Himself as the Christ. The utterances concerning the return of the Son of Man in glory and the predictions that the Son of Man must suffer and die are in strict correlation.

So why did not, (except for Stephan), Jesus' followers apply this title to Him? It was because Paul wrote primarily for Greeks who would most likely not understand the title "the Son of Man" the way that the Jews understood. The Gentiles would've taken the title to refer simply to a man. The use of this title would have led the Gentiles to an undue and, therefore, misleading stress, about our Lord's humanity. To the Jew, the Son of Man suggested the Lord from heaven; not so to the Gentile. When the association of the name with heavenly origin and majesty could not be assumed, there the Apostles adopted other terms as they spoke or wrote of their risen and ascended Lord and proclaimed Him as "the Christ, the Son of God."

The early church refused to refer to Jesus as "the Son of Man" because He had already sat upon the throne of God and was, in fact, no longer merely a man but the ruler of heaven and earth. The new designation as "Lord" indicates the widening range of the church's appeal beyond the confines of Judaism.

When the Son of Man descends, He will send His angels throughout the earth to gather together His elect people, i.e., believing Israel, to the land of Palestine. From all of the earth they will gather to greet their Messiah and to enjoy His glorious reign. The trumpet shall sound with a mighty tone to call the dead back to life, **1 Thess. 4:14-17; For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.** The angels shall then gather all the elect, whose spirits are now united with their glorified bodies, together, up to one place, namely Christ's right hand.

The Biblical conception of earth is that it is made up of four quarters, the four directions from which the winds blow. This conception is still common: north, south, east, and west. The

pertinent phrase in **Mark 13:27; from the farthest ends of the earth, to the farthest end of heaven**, only emphasizes the preceding phrase by pointing to every remote part under heaven.

Some call these phrases are poetical, and that is due to the fact that the ideas expressed remain and must remain beyond human conception. We prefer the idea of a globe, the one hemisphere being the opposite of and hidden from the other. And so we might ask how both hemispheres shall at the same time see the Son of Man in the clouds, hear the angel trumpet, and yield up the dead. Or, with our ideas of space we might wonder how all the millions that have lived on the earth shall find room to stand, and with our conceptions of time we might ask how long it will take until the last person has been judged. The answer to all of these questions is that after the events mentioned, in verse 29, none of these present limitations of ours will exist and everything that is necessary to happen will be accomodated.

The word for “coming” means literally “Presence” or “arrival.” In the Greek it was designated to announce the arrival or a visit of a ruler. The same Jesus who ascended into heaven will again visit the earth in a personal presence at the end of the age in power and glory to destroy the antichrist and evil, to raise the righteous dead and to gather the redeemed, **Acts 1:11; “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.” Matt. 24:3; “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?” 2Thess. 2:8; And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming. 1 Cor. 15:23; But each in his own order; Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming. 2Thess. 2:1, 2; Now we request of you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together of Him, that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.**

The specific meaning of the word “coming” in these Scriptures is made clear in and is defined as the time when the Lord shall come out of heaven, **1Thess. 4:15; For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. 1 Thess. 1:10; to wait for His Son from heaven, who He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.** At that time the dead who are believers will rise first, and those who are believers and are alive will be changed and be caught up in the air by Jesus Christ.

The return of Christ will also be a “revelation” or a “taking the cover off of something” that is hidden. It is an unveiling or disclosure when the power and glory which are now His by virtue of His exaltation in heavenly session will be disclosed to the world, **1 Pet. 4:13; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation**

of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation. Christ is now reigning as Lord at God's right hand and sharing God's throne. His reign is now invisible to the world. It will, however, be made visible by His revelation.

There is yet a third word related to His Second Coming and that is "a manifestation." In the Greek it was used especially for the appearing of the gods and also of the manifestation of power and providence in extraordinary events. In the NT it is used of the appearing of the manifestation of Jesus Christ on earth.

Eph. 1:4, 5; just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will. In these verses there are two verbs that introduce us to the much debated subject of God's election. One is in verse 4, "He chose us." In Greek it means to "select out or choose out of." From this verb we have the noun which means "choice or election." We also have the adjective, "chosen out." The verb, in the Greek, means that at one particular time in the past, God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. In the Greek grammar it has the meaning of "being His own decision."

The second verb that addresses itself to the subject of God's election of the believer is in verse 5, made up of the preposition "before" and "to determine." The compound verb means to *determine or decree before hand or to predestinate.*

In the Bible there is set forth on the one hand the sovereignty of God, and on the other, man's free choice and hence responsibility.

Peter, in speaking of Christ on the day of Pentecost, said, **"This Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of Godless men and put Him to death, (Acts 2:23).** Here in one verse we have the two principles brought together: the sovereign purpose of God in the delivering up of Christ so that men might be blessed, and human choice and responsibility in crucifying the "Prince of Life" on the other.

The perplexing question that arises is "can a man know he is one of the elect?" A careful reading of the epistle to the Romans will throw much light on the subject. There is not a word about election until we are more than half-way through the eighth chapter. The reason is clear because, until we know that we are children of God and free from condemnation, we are neither in the right position nor condition to receive the truth nor be counted as one of the "elect."

In the early chapters of Romans, we have described man's ruined condition and his standing before God as a guilty sinner. Then follows the sinner's justification by faith without

works through the finished work of Christ, the way in which the believer is freed from the misery of sin and delivered from the law. The result is that there is “no condemnation,” the spirit bearing witness that we are children of God, **Rom. 8:16, 17; The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.**

It is then, and not until then, that the believer learns that he has been predestinated and is one of the elect. Then, it is stated that, as believers, **we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to His image of His Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified, (Rom. 8:28-30).**

The person who may find himself described in the third chapter of Romans is a sinner under condemnation who stands in need of justification by faith in Christ as His savior, **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Rom. 3:23).** He does not know, nor is it any concern of his, whether he is one of the elect or not. No one who desires the peace of God is refused it. If one, however, finds himself described in the eighth chapter of Romans and is already a believer, he knows that he is an elect child of God and that he has been predestined unto salvation.

The important thing to point out is that no one who is saved can say that he is saved because of his own choice of God. His salvation is in response to God’s choice of him. And, on the other hand, no one who is lost can say that he is lost because God willed him to be lost.

A very helpful illustration may be derived from family life: a stranger is denied a share in the little familiarities and secrets of a family. No one in the family is willing to take him into the delightful confidences of its innermost secrets. In the same manner, the unregenerate are excluded from the sweet, inner experiences and knowledge of the secrets of God which He entrusts to the members of His household. It is declared in **Ps. 25:14; the secret of the Lord is for those who fear Him; and He will make them know His covenant.** Truly, therefore, the doctrine of election is as a family secret, and only the children of God know it and have the capacity of grasping or understanding the deep things of God. **1 Cor. 2:14; But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.**

Christ died for all. It does not mean for only some, and while this truth is clearly revealed, nowhere does it say that His sacrifice was an effective substitute for all; we must

accept the gift that he is offering to us in order for the gift to be effective. Just as a vaccination that is intended for everyone to cure disease is not effective if a person does not receive the vaccination; **1 John 2:2; And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; (i.e., believers) and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.** It is to be noted that the expression “the sins of” in the translation is not in the Greek text. Therefore, the Gospel is preached to all, and over and over again God says that whosoever believes in Him (that means anybody) shall receive everlasting life; **John 3:16; For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. Acts 10:43; Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins. Acts 13: 38, 39; Therefore, let it be known to you brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed (or, justified).** The Gospel invitation is for all, and therefore all who hear are responsible without excuse. Thus, if one perishes in his sin, he will be lost, because he himself chose to be condemned and not because God willed it to be so, **Titus 3:10, 11; Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.**

Parable of the fig tree

Matt. 24:38... for as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark.

By using this parable Jesus answered the disciples question regarding when these events He spoke about would happen, which goes way back to verse three of this chapter. The disciples, like everyone else who lived in Palestine, knew when summer would come by observing the twigs and the leaves of fig trees. The Mount of Olives was known for its fig trees, which were often twenty to thirty feet tall. At the time of Passover the budding would be just beginning. Jesus and His disciples probably walked past many fig trees on their way to Jerusalem as they crossed the Mount of Olives. Fig trees lose their leaves in the winter while the other trees of Palestine do not and they bloom in late spring while many of the other plants bloom in early spring. This is why Jesus chose the fig tree, because of its peculiar characteristics; since the buds come late it was a perfect example to picture the delay of the Second Coming. The dry brittle twigs getting tender with the rising sap and the leaves coming out were certain signs that summer is near. Inherent in this process is patient waiting. There is no hurrying the natural cycle of the fig tree. So it is true, all believers must patiently wait for the Second Coming.

Matt. 24:32-41; Now learn the parable from the fig tree; when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; even so you too, when you see these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all of these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. Then there shall be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left. In the same way that they could interpret the season by the leaves on the trees, so the disciples could know when these significant events would occur. When they see all of these things, referring to the events described in previous verses, they would know that the destruction of Jerusalem would soon follow. Some scholars feel that the phrase “it is near” refers to the desecration of the temple, but the NASB (the most literal interpretation of the Greek) interprets this verse to say that “He is near” and so it makes more sense to have this phrase refer to His Second Coming.

Therefore we know that His coming is both certain and near. The fulfillment of Jesus’ other prophecies would assure the disciples that the other prophecies that He has taught about would be true also. To understand this parable fully will take an English translation of the literal Greek; for example “He is near” was spoken over two-thousand years ago and it doesn’t sound like, at the time, that He was very near to coming and so we will try to decipher the context: *Indeed, follow these instructions to learn these facts regarding the plan of salvation, especially the suddenness of His coming from a short story in which the fig tree is used to represent and illustrate a truth: at the time when the fig tree’s shoots begin to spring forth from larger branches that has already become soft and tender to the touch, and also thrusts forth its leaves, you begin to know that the time of summer is at hand. Likewise also you too, at the time that you witness all of these things take place like this, you will understand that He is near, right close, by the door, meaning metaphorically near at hand. I, who am the Truth itself, tell you as a most certain and infallible truth, that this race of men and space of time will not perish until everyone of these things are in a state of being in existence. The over-arching, all-embracing heaven beneath which is the earth and that which is there in and the habitable earth shall perish, however, My divine revelations and declarations of the gospel shall not perish. Also regarding that Day and the brief interval of time that the Lord’s Second Coming will be so as to announce His judgment on the earth and men, not one person is acquainted with it as far as its timing is concerned, not even the angels of God’s residence, nor the Son who is God’s anointed, no one except the glorious Father of the Son, without others. Just as were the days of Noah*

*when everyone was taking everything with an evil connotation and giving a malicious interpretation to the actions of others, exposing a nature which is evil and makes one suspect evil in others so shall the days be that are preceding the great event of the coming of Christ. Just as in those days which were marked by a point in time before the flood of Noah's time they were eating and reveling in food and they were entering into a conjugal state and giving in marriage until the day that Noah and those that accompanied him came into the hollowed out wooden vessel, and they also did not know from then until the point in time came that was marked by the flood and were all taken away and removed out of the world by death; so shall it be with the promised arrival and presence of the Son of Man to this earth for the completion of His kingdom. At that time there shall be two men sitting in an area of cultivated ground; one will be taken away for punishment as those that were caught up in the flood of Noah's days and one will be let go to be free for the purpose of entering into the blessings of Christ's kingdom and the righteous rule of Christ upon earth. At that time there will be two women grinding flour or cornmeal at the hand mill; one will be taken away for punishment as those that were swept away in the flood of Noah's days and one will be let go to be free for the purpose of entering into the blessings of Christ's kingdom and righteous rule of Christ upon the earth. When we are referring to "the Second Coming of the Son of Man" it is for the purpose of removing His disciples from their toils and struggles on earth and to take them to a place He would prepare for them in His Father's house; **John 14:1, 2; Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.** This is what is referred to as the "Second Coming" of the Lord in **1 Thess. 4:15; For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep.** This "coming" is going to be startling and unexpected. The Lord will gather His elect, come to raise the dead in Christ, to transform the living who have believed, and to take them all to be with Him. Simultaneously, however, there will begin a time of great suffering for those unbelievers who died and who are alive at the time of the Second Coming.*

To teach this coming event our Lord uses a parable or a metaphor to give us a comparison that we can relate to here on earth. When the branches of a fig tree turn green and tender, you know that summer is near. We have seen that the fig tree pictures the nation of Israel. For hundreds of years Israel has been dormant, with no government of its own, no land, no temple, no priesthood—no sign of national life. The people have been scattered throughout the world. Then in 1948, Israel became a nation with its own land. Government, currency, stamps, etc. Spiritually, the nation is still barren and cold; there is no fruit for God. But nationally, we might say that its branches are green and tender.

While the Lord's prophecy has unrolled a picture of dread, it is, nevertheless, bright with hope for the elect. So Jesus bids the disciples to learn from the fig tree; when its branch

becomes soft with the swelling of the sap and it starts to grow leaves, the disciples realize that summer is near and that makes them glad. The branch is in the process of growing leaves.

Israel's emergence as a nation means not only that the beginning of the Tribulation is near, but that the Lord Himself is near, He is at the door ready to make His presence known to everyone.

If Christ's coming to reign is so near, how much more imminent is the Rapture of the church? If we already see shadows of events that must precede His appearing in glory, how much closer are we to the Second Coming.

The explanation of the parable is designating a time of Jesus Christ's coming. The budding of the fig tree is observed by all men, but in order to understand its significance as presented by Jesus even the disciples must be told. "Realize!" what all of these things mean. When "all of these things" are unduly stressed strange views may result. Some of them and us may focus more on the "things" rather than what the "things" signify. This is why Jesus speaks of these things as "birth pains." These are only signs of a bigger and more important event. Thus all that pertains to the destruction of Jerusalem is included. Yet it is unwarranted to stress "all" so that it implies that the disciples could not come to the realization of what the signs signify until they have actually seen all of them occurring repeatedly through the centuries. They need to see false christs, false prophets, wars, and persecutions only once in order to see them all and thus to be impressed by what these things really signify. It also ought to be plain that the signs mentioned in verse 29 are not included because these events themselves are the end.

When Jesus says that He is near, at the door, it refers to a person who is about to enter a building. The meaning of Jesus' words is that every sign advertises the end as being "near." ***Rev. 3:20; Behold I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to Him, and will dine with him, and he with Me.*** This verse is worthy of a Greek translation: *Pay attention to what I say, I stand fast and I am resting by the symbolic door of your heart and I continue to rap for entrance; if the condition exists that anyone comprehends My voice and also receives Me willingly into their heart, I will enter into him, and I will also share My kingdom with him, and he with Me.* The promise of this verse is, indeed, incomparable. When we realize who this is that is dictating these words, that when he first saw Him John fell at His feet as one dead, we should marvel that He should stand knocking at any man's door and be waiting to be let in. Here we have the sweetness of all of His heavenly grace, all the gentleness of the gospel which seeks to win souls. This is His heavenly power to save.

"I am standing at the door" implies that it is He who comes as He does to all sinners. He is not far off waiting for us to come to Him. He stands at the door, like a friend, and keeps

knocking to be let in, asking for entrance to our heart. The thought is overwhelming that the everlasting King comes from His throne to ask a beggar to receive Him. And we, sometimes, have the nerve to keep Him waiting. The knocking does not refer to someone who knocks two or three times and then leaves if the door is not immediately opened. He comes and will wait and knock and knock again. It is the sinner's hour of grace when the King stands and knocks. Who of us, in our right mind, would not rush to open the door? He knows just when to come; He never chooses the wrong hour. The gospel in which the Lord comes for His elect, calls and calls for their heart to open the door. "I will come in and will dine with him and he with Me," describes fellowship that begins and continues. This dining together is not postponed until we reach heaven, or until the Lord's Second Coming, it starts in the present here and now! It is our fellowshiping with Him as a personal friend. From the days of the disciples up until the present day these advertisements of what is to come are to have the same effect. Just when the end will come no man knows. We ought to be ready at all times for its coming since all the signs have already occurred again and again, just as a kind person would remind us again and again to be prepared so that we are not counted as being a part of the lost, but as one of His chosen.

After explaining His meaning of the fig tree as it relates to signs of His Coming, Jesus added, "assuredly I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away until all these things take place." "This generation" could not mean the people living during the days of Jesus while He was on the earth. They have all passed away, yet the events of chapter 24 have not taken place. So what then did our Lord mean by "this generation"? There are two plausible explanations. The first says the generation that sees the beginning of these things will see the end. That is, the same people that have seen the rise of Israel as a nation, (or who see the beginning of the tribulation), will see the Lord Jesus coming in the clouds of heaven to reign. From my own personal study of the Greek meanings I prefer to rely on the second explanation, which is that the word "generation" should be understood as "race." This is a legitimate translation of the word; it means of the same stock, breed, or family. So Jesus was predicting that the Jewish race would survive to see all of these things accomplished. We must keep in mind that as we study Matthew his primary audience that he was teaching or writing to was Jewish. Their continued survival, despite atrocious persecution, is a miracle of history. In addition to this is the thought that in Jesus' day, "this generation" was a race that steadfastly refused to acknowledge Him as Messiah. He could have also been predicting that the race of Jews would continue in their rejecting of Christ until His Second Coming. At that time all rebellion will be crushed, and only those who willingly submit to His rule will be spared to enter the Millennium with Him.

To emphasize the unfailing character of His predictions, Jesus added that heaven and earth would pass away but His words would by no means pass away. When He speaks about "heaven," He is not referring to the dwelling place of God, but of the stellar and

atmospheric heavens—the firmament above us. The dissolution of the heaven and earth is described in **Rev. 20:11; And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.**

The statement that “the heaven and the earth shall pass away, but My words shall in no wise pass away,” loses much of its force when it is regarded as an assurance of the fact that the simultaneously existing generation of Jews will not have disappeared before all things foretold by Jesus shall have reached its end. The words gain force, however, when the prophecy of Jesus’ words in verse 34 are properly understood. This verse is only one of Jesus’ words. Jesus does not restrict His statement to His present discourse and to the many statements that it includes. He does not say, “These are My words,” but what He does say, when it is properly interpreted, is, “all of My words, inclusively,” My words shall not in any way pass away. Despite their apparent durability the physical heaven and earth “shall pass away.” The truth never changes and always remains the truth. So, does this mean that they will “pass away;” by annihilation, reduction to nothingness, or transformation to a different form of existence? The most decisive passages that we have to answer that question are these, **Rom. 8:19-23; for the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. Rev. 21:1-5; And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and he shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death, there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying and pain; the first things have passed away.” And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.” 1 Cor. 7:31 and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it; for the form of the world is passing away.** So the physical heaven and the physical earth will change completely; when they are changed at the Second Coming, we shall not recognize them because they will not be tainted by man’s sin. But the words of Jesus will never undergo even the slightest change either in meaning or in form. His teaching and His words were true and would remain for all eternity; truth cannot change. If a fact changes, the truth of the fact did not change but our understanding of the truth of the fact did.

As to the exact day and hour of His Second Coming no one knows, not only does not anyone on earth know, but none of the angels in heaven, and not even the Son of Man Himself. This should warn us and prepare us to be skeptical of anyone who tries to set the date or against our own temptation to try to figure out for ourselves what the date will be. Only the Father knows and He isn't telling.

The fact that the angels, although they are in heaven, do not know the date does not especially surprise us, because the ministry of the angels is to be messengers for God and there is no reason for them to know or want to know. But the fact that the Son would not know the day and hour is a little bit of a surprise. While the verse names this person according to His divine nature, it predicates something concerning His human nature. In their essential nature of oneness the Three Persons know everything, but in His state of humiliation the Second Person did not use His divine attributes except for His need of them in His work as a mediator, and knowing the date and time of the end of the age does not pertain to this ministry, ***Phil. 2:5-8; Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*** So His divine omniscience was used by Jesus only in this restricted way. That is why here on Mt. Olivet He does not know the date of the end. One thing we can trust is that in God's divine omniscience He has decided that it is better for us to not know as a way to best serve His purpose for us and to bring glory to Him.

The emphasis on this verse is not on Jesus' lack of knowledge, but rather on the fact that *no one knows*. It is God the Father's secret to be revealed when He wills. No one can predict by Scripture or science the exact day of the Second Coming. Jesus was teaching that preparation, not calculation, was needed. Actually not knowing is a benefit to us because it makes it easier to separate the false prophets from the true prophets, someone who is predicting the day or the hour of His return obviously is a false prophet and not to be listened to or to be followed, because he speaks lies.

In the days of His Second Coming, however, most people will be indifferent, just as they were in the days of Noah. They went through their routines of life as if they were going to live on this earth forever. This verse 37 carries the theme initiated in verse 36 regarding the unexpected nature of the Second Coming and its need for vigilance.

In the days of Noah, before the great flood, the people of the world were wholly unconcerned about how they lived their life and the consequences that might arise out of that living. They spent the 120 years that God had fixed as the limit of His grace, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage as if God's warnings through the prophets were not legitimate

and no judgment was pending for their actions. These actions are not sinful in themselves but they obtain a sinister significance when a total disregard of God's warnings is observed which underlies this kind of conduct. We will notice that there is no mention of worship or sacrifice of repentance mentioned. I get the feeling that this is much like the person today that believes that he will be saved because he opens doors for ladies, always allows them to go before him and is polite and kind to his neighbors. These examples are not sinful until it comes to being done to the exclusion of repentance and fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

The first outpouring of God's judgment upon sinful people in the days of Noah has a natural connection with the final outpouring at the Lord's return. People will be going about their daily business, just as in Noah's time. Just as the flood caught them unaware and after it was too late and swept them away in judgment, so it will be at the Coming of the Son of Man. Although they were warned that a flood was coming, they lived their lives as though they were flood proof and their flood insurance covered everything, including their lives. When the flood came they were unprepared, outside of the only place that could give them refuge. That is just the way that it will be when Christ returns. Only those who chose to open the door, the ark of safety, will be rescued.

The people of Noah's time never realized anything, they waited too long to see if Noah was predicting the truth or if he was just some crazy extremist. The fact that the ark was being built on dry land, that Noah told them why he built it, all seemed like they were observing some kind of nut that had really lost touch with reality. Until! The floods came and took away everything, nothing of civilization was left. This is exactly how the Second Coming will be. There will be plenty of enough warning, actually more than enough, but it will all fall on deaf ears. They will see these warnings as an ark is being built on dry land. But they have unsympathetic hearts as they attempt to explain away every sign being explained by science or reason, exercising their academic philosophies instead of their spiritual insight.

To help illustrate how it's going to be on this upcoming day Jesus gives us two examples. Jesus pictured a time when its business as usual in Palestine—the men working out in the field; the women doing domestic chores such as grinding grain. "There will two men in a field; one will be taken and one will be left." "There will be two women grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left." It's amazing to me how long I have misunderstood the timing of these verses. I always thought that the ones that left were being raptured, not so! The one's that have been taken away are the ones that get "caught in the flood and are swept away to judgment, the other is left to enjoy the reign of Christ with Him.

Be ready for His Coming

Matt. 24:46; Blessed is the slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.

In view of the uncertainty as to the day and the hour of Christ's return, men out to watch. If someone knows that his house is going to be broken into, he will be ready, even if he doesn't know the exact time. The Son of Man will come when He is least expected by the masses. Therefore His people should be on their toes of expectancy. We can have a tendency to put off the things that we think we can accomplish tomorrow, but our repentance for our sin, as a means of preparation for His Coming, should not take on this attitude, for it may be possible that there will not be a tomorrow. As we read through these passages in Scripture we will see a contrast of disposition in two slaves. Some see this as a contrast in two people, but when I read it I realize that it is more about the contrast of persons inside of me, the battle that goes on between the old man and the renewed man!

Matt. 24:42-51; Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would've been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think that He will. Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all of his possessions. But if that evil slave says in his heart, My master is not coming for a long time, and shall begin to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him at an hour which he does not know, and shall cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; weeping shall be there and the gnashing of teeth. The Second Coming and the angels' accomplishment of their task of "gathering the elect" will happen so suddenly that in the blink of an eye, one of those person's will be swept away and the other left. The reason? One was ready and one was not. The one that was not prepared was caught up in the amount of time that had passed without His return and so falsely assumed that it would not happen in his lifetime. Because he could not get a firm time or date of His return he assumed these warnings were fantasy, but no one could give him a firm time because no one except the Father knows when Christ will return. These next verses seem to have their focus on His elect being properly prepared. What is proper and what is not, is not for us to decide, we should allow the Son of Man Himself to tell us, so let's translate these verses so as not to miss anything of importance that He is teaching us as a way to prepare us for His return: *Possess a general attitude of alertness in view of actual or imminent tests of your spiritual life now, because you are not acquainted with which hour of the many hours to come in your life that Your Lord is coming for you. But also continue to know this, that if the condition existed that the head of the family had known at which hour of many of the hours of the period of night that the one who steals secretly was coming, the head of the family would have continuously had an attitude of being alert and the robbery would not have taken place because he would not have permitted*

his house to be broken into. So therefore, you ought to be continuously prepared also; because the Son of Man is going to come to you in the same manner at a period of time when you do not think He will. Who then is an attestation of God's faithfulness and is a person who is all consumed in the will of God whom his Lord has caused to be in charge of His household in order to put into the hands of the slaves their sustenance at the appointed time of God? The one who possesses the favor of God and is marked by the fullness of God is the one who becomes a partaker of God's nature through faith which identifies him as one who serves God and is consumed by His will; he is the one whom his Lord finds mercy on because he is continually doing what is faithful and sensible, prepared for His return to us. I, who am the Amen, Truth itself, tell you as a most certain and infallible truth that our Lord will place him in a condition and position where he is set apart and give him power and authority over all of His goods. However, if that man is living in a condition that exposes his heart as being morally wicked, vicious, bad in heart, conduct and character thinking this way, "My Lord is lingering and not coming back for a long time," and he shall begin to punish in enmity with his fists and afflict calamity on his fellow man who is in the same condition as he and he also begins to continuously revel and carouse with those who are getting drunk with fornication, i.e., those who never have enough of it. The Lord of that man will be here at a time when he does not look for Him and at a time which he does not have knowledge of; and he shall be scourged and have allotted to him a part with those who speak and act under a feigned character; and sent to a place where there shall continuously be wailing and also the grating and gnashing of teeth. When I read this parable I generally consider that it has implications of referring to Christ's Second Coming, which would be true; but I also have to consider that all that He taught of being prepared also relates to the time of our physical death. All of what He teaches applies to both; and in that case His coming will be at different unexpected time for all of us.

Jesus draws the proper conclusion for His disciples: "Be watchful therefore, constantly keeping your eyes open." Namely, in order to see the signs that will precede the Second Coming; to remember the promised final day and be ever, ever on the ready for it. Then Jesus reminds them of what He taught them in verse 36, "Because you do not know the day or the hour that Your Lord will come." For despite all of our solutions to all of our puzzles no one will know the answer to this one by figuring out the day or the hour. In fact, when we are so sure that it cannot be such and such a day, it may, at long last, be the day!

Jesus provides them with an illustration to help them understand what He is teaching; a house owner had failed to watch for a thief because he did not know which of the four watches of the night the thief would appear, even though he had a general warning that he was going to come, he saw it as a waste of time to keep vigilant all night long. The result was that he slept and the thief broke through the door or window and stole whatever he wanted. Jesus puts this to them in a scenario that would never happen; if he had known when a thief was coming he

would've fervently watched and would not of let himself sleep. Jesus' reasoning behind telling this illustration was not for the purpose of causing conjecture about when He will return, but to warn people to be ready. In this simple parable Jesus points out the importance of constant spiritual vigilance.

So don't make the same mistake that the house owner made, being lulled into a false sense of security because you have been vigilant for years and He has not come, missing one night of vigilance wouldn't hurt, would it? This is the astonishing thing about the uncertainty of time. Even those who are constantly on the watch will be completely surprised.

In the closing section of this chapter, our Lord Jesus shows us that a servant manifests his true character by his conduct in view of his Master's return. All servants are supposed to feed the household at the proper time. But not all who profess to be Christ's servants are genuine.

The wise servant is the one who is found caring for God's people. Such a one will be honored with vast responsibility in the kingdom. The Master will make him ruler over all of his goods.

This is the first of three parables in which Jesus describes and emphasizes the fact that we should be ready for His Coming. Who is the slave that is faithful and sensible in view of the undated coming of his Lord? This is not an ordinary slave; his lord set him in a position of being over the household of the other slaves and he did this so that the other slaves may be given their food in due season. Jesus, here, is referring to the ministers and the pastor's of His church whose obligation is double and includes that of the household committed to them. It is a great distinction to be taken from the ranks of the common slaves and to be made the head slave over all of the rest. The trust that is imposed in this distinction ought to act as a strong incentive to be trustworthy, and in return, sensible and capable of living up to the trust received.

In the times of Jesus walking the earth it was a common practice for masters to put one servant in charge of all the household business. The servant that is described as faithful and wise parallels the disciples who were given unprecedented authority by Jesus, sharing in His very ministry. Yet it also describes those appointed to positions of leadership in the church who should be found faithfully carrying out their duties when Jesus, (the master), returns. Such activity explains how Jesus' followers can be watchful and ready, these will be the servants who will be given the great reward. If God has given you more than He has given your neighbors, and there is always going to be someone who has less, dedicate the abundance to Christ and realize that you are only a steward of that which God has given to you—because the day is coming when you are going to have to give an account for every penny.

Until his lord comes the servant is faithfully doing exactly what his lord told him to do and his lord finds him doing exactly that when he returns. The slave does not just sit idly by outside of his house looking for his lord's return and speculating about his timing, doing what he wants to do until he sees him coming and then puts on the pretense of having kept himself occupied during the whole time of his absence doing what he was told to do. He is busy inside the house obeying what he was told to do and his lord's coming, although it is a great event, will not have any shame or untrustworthiness attached to it. The unworthy slave could well identify with the person who is waiting to have a death bed salvational experience, this person thinks he can party hard, engaging in satisfying the flesh and then at his time of death have a change of heart. We have heard of so many who think this way and then they die in the midst of partying, the Lord came to that unprepared person at a time when He was not expected.

Jesus tells us that the slave that is obedient is blessed, so what does it mean to be "blessed." Being "blessed" means to possess the favor of God; that state of being marked by the fullness from God. It indicates the state of the believer in Christ and is said of a person who becomes partaker of God's nature through faith in Christ, **2 Pet5. 1:4; For by these He has granted to us precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.** The believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit because of Christ and as a result should be fully satisfied no matter their circumstances. Being blessed differs from being happy in that the person is happy who has good luck (happy coming from the root "hap" meaning luck as a favorable circumstance). To be blessed is equivalent to having God's kingdom within one's heart, which is what Jesus is telling us in the Sermon on the Mount when He speaks of being blessed. Blessed is the one who is in the world yet independent from the world. His satisfaction comes from God and not from favorable circumstances.

This conduct is so important that Jesus announces with the seal of verity and of authority just what this slave's blessedness shall be, "he will be in charge of all of his possessions." The lord will make him the head slave of all of his estate and he will keep that position from this time forward. The reality of what Jesus is telling His disciples is much better and greater than any illustration that He could give.

Then Jesus contrasts this faithful and sensible slave to an evil slave. The evil slave represents the nominal "believer" whose behavior is not affected by the prospect of his Master's return. He begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards. Such behavior represents that he is not ready for the kingdom. When the King comes, He will punish him and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. A place of where the desires of the flesh are frustrated. Many who profess to be Christian show by their hostility toward God and His people and their fraternization with the ungodly that they are not looking for Christ's return

and we might even go so far as to say they don't even believe in His return. For them His return only means the pronouncement of His judgment rather than His blessing. If we are still keeping the association of Noah in mind, the persons who only have judgment to look forward to will far outnumber those who are blessed. Some servants might decide to take advantage of their leadership positions, bullying others and indulging themselves. Jesus may indeed stay away for a long time, but that will never be an adequate excuse for our lack of ministry.

Since the Lord is gone the evil one casts off his spiritual restraints and reveals the depravity of his true inner nature, which he has only hidden up to now. Instead of tending to the others of the church, he now lords it over them as the tyrant that he is. He is a sample of ministers that act like popes. Instead of doing the work that is faithfully entrusted to him, he gives the reins to his lower passions which he had to hide while his lord was present. Now he is an example of the ministers who are self-seekers, who indulge their flesh, when they think that they have plenty of time to ask for forgiveness and repent of who they are.

What will happen to persons such as these? We must keep in mind that in the context of this verse "the minister" is not just the person leading the Sunday services; it's everyone who has been given a gift with which to minister. They will be caught in their own folly. His Lord will come on a day that he is not expecting Him to come. Many persons have thought that they can call a halt to their activities in time to be saved. But every yielding of the flesh blinds the moral senses and only helps to make him a greater fool. His end will be his execution; he will be cut in two with a horrible saw and thus receive his just reward of his faithlessness; **1 Chron.20:3; And he brought out the people who were in it, and cut them with saws and with sharp instruments and with axes. 2 Sam. 12:31; He also brought out the people who were in it, and set them under saws, sharp iron instruments, and iron axes, and made them pass through the brick kiln.**

At the end of the parable Jesus stops speaking in a metaphor and starts to speak literally when He speaks of what becomes of such people. They will be lumped together with the hypocrites and sent to hell. It is hard for us to think in terms of existing eternally, but this punishment that they will receive will not be just for a part of their eternal existence and then be freed from the pain and suffering. Jesus teaches us that this punishment will be eternal; it will have no end or not even a letting up of intensity. **Matt. 18:8; And if your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the eternal fire.** In a nutshell this verse is teaching us that if our flesh is causing us to stumble it is better to be deprived of some of the things of the flesh and have eternal life rather than to have our flesh fully satisfied and burn in hell. Let's take this verse apart from the Greek to get it full context: *But, if you are in a possible condition in which your arm from your shoulder to your fingers or your foot causes you*

to stumble or in any way offend God, remove your right hand or your foot and also throw it from you; because it is useful for you to enter into eternal blessed life, life that satisfies, being indwelt by God, the life of bliss and glory in the kingdom of God which awaits the true disciples of Christ after their resurrection, lame or crippled in the legs or the hands, rather than to have two arms from the shoulder to the end of the fingers or two feet and be cast away into the unending judgment of the abode of demons and wicked men. Since this present evil age is what it is it cannot leave believers alone, it's like that pesky mosquito that buzzes around your head never giving up on finding a place to alight. This age is always trying to set traps and bait believers in all sorts of ways. And because Jesus is also aware of these conditions He pronounces this woe from this verse. Nothing that attracts the flesh is worth losing your salvation. Also, these attractions will not be offered as a viable excuse to God for their sin. Since saving grace is so rich and great all of our excuses have been taken away.

These entrapments may come to us through those we considered as a disciple, or through any agent of the present evil age, or even from within ourselves because of the sin that remains in us. This verse is, of sorts, a repeating of verses ***Matt 5:29 and 30; And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it far from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than you whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to go into hell.*** While these two scriptures are identical in substance, the wording varies. While one says "so that one of your members perish and not your entire body go to hell," (paraphrasing), it switches to "it is better to enter into the kingdom of God maimed or lame, instead of going to hell with your arms and legs intact." The positive "to enter into life" explains the previous negative, "not to be thrown into hell." In both verses "life" is the true life of heaven, the opposite of eternal "life in hell."

With the strong language of these verses (not meant to promote self mutilation), Jesus describes how the disciples should renounce anything that would cause them to stumble or turn away from their faith. Temptation to sin can come from various sources and various weaknesses in our own flesh. In the Bible "feet" are often associated with traveling to do evil, and our hands are associated with our accomplishments. Our eyes are associated with vision or desires of the heart, aspirations, or ambitions.

If it is our desire to follow Jesus then we must remove the things that are a temptation to sin. Any relationship, practice or activity that leads us to sin should be stopped. When we have a corrupted diseased organ or limb in our body we seek to have it surgically removed, and so should believers do with the corrupt activities in our life. Just as surgery can sometimes give us life and freedom from disease, so too, removing the stumbling blocks of our life can give us freedom from sin and produce true life in us. Of course these surgical procedures are only

intended as a metaphor because we know that removal of anything from our body will not keep us from sinning. It is the seat of our desires, feelings, affections, passions, and impulses that not only causes us to sin but what can cause us to be tempted. Jesus explained that it would be better to have lost some worldly possession, attitude or action than to keep it and be thrown into the eternal fires of hell because of it. While it is true that we can never be sin free while we are living on the earth God wants us to have an attitude that renounces sin instead of holding on to sin.

