

REDISCOVERING
REVELATION

REDISCOVERING REVELATION

“I Will Build My Church”
Applying a First Century Message to our Day

A Heavenly Vision for Earthly Good

Kent Hodge

Christian Faith Institute

Christian Faith Ministries International



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Email: kent_ruth@hotmail.com

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Revd. Dr. William Kay
Bangor University, Wales and editor of the Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association.

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Appreciation

To the Provost, board, staff and students of Christian Faith Institute and pastors of Pentecostal Christian Faith Assembly churches in Africa.

To the prayer partners, supporters and coordinators of Christian Faith Ministries International.

To the editors of *Rediscovering Revelation*.

Preface

Pre-millennialism (the belief that Jesus will come and reign in earthly Jerusalem for 1,000 years) takes much of its basis from a wrong interpretation of Matthew chapter twenty-four. Interpretive principles are applied to the chapter that are Greek or Western in origin and do not align with the Hebrew Scriptures and thought in the text.

A wrong understanding of Matthew twenty-four can present us with a world view that has serious implications – in particular, relating to our view of how the kingdom of God in Christ comes; the interaction of our faith and the world in which we live; the mandate to be salt and light in the world, and to overcome evil with good.

It is common to regard the “wars and rumours of wars” of Matthew twenty-four as a catalyst for the second coming of Christ. This creates belief in the inevitability, even the promotion of such wars and rumours, as the means of establishing the kingdom of Christ. But this view is in direct contradiction to the teaching of Jesus, who said His kingdom is not of this world and that His kingdom does not come about by human means.

The Jewish zealots of Jesus’ day saw the kingdom politically and were out to overcome Rome and felt the Messiah should come in this sense. Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem on a donkey symbolising humility, rather than on a horse symbolising warfare, was a direct contrast. Jesus came to give us inner transformation: that being how His kingdom comes. It is by His blood and His Spirit that He saves. This is the use the New Testament writers make of these Old Testament passages, and the way in which we are to understand the Hebrew prophets.

But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen. Hos 1:7

A-millennialism and post-millennialism, on the other hand, both see the millennium (i.e. the kingdom of Christ) very differently. The Hebrew prophets foretold the present reign of Christ from heaven, where His

kingdom would extend through all the world and reach every group of people. His present reign in our hearts would bring peace with God and with one another. The sin and “beast” within the human heart would be overcome by the reign of Christ. “Of the increase of his government” in us, i.e. over the former self-centred rule of sin, there would be no end.

This present reign of Christ prompts us to “beat our swords into ploughs”. The mutual hatred between Jew and Palestinian, or between any other types of groupings, gives way to a brotherhood in Christ that is genuine, as we yield together in love to His lordship. This is how “the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock” Is 65:25: portraying formerly warring tribes sharing at Christ’s table of faith. Wherever His kingdom extends through the true gospel, this is what we see. This is not speculation on the millennium, as an eschatological interest or hobby, but actually seeing the millennium as a current reality, daily taking root in the hearts of people.

Introduction

The New Testament Gospels and Epistles contain teachings that were given to the early church in the historical context in which Jesus and the first apostles lived. Their statements often explicitly refer to the events which occurred or were expected in that day.

It is commonly accepted that to understand the scriptures correctly we must read them as the recipients would have received and understood them. This means understanding the historical context in which they lived, the Hebrew idioms and language styles in which the scriptures were given and the Old Testament passages from which they were drawn. These factors make up the mental framework by which the early disciples and church understood what they were taught.

Approaching the book of Revelation is no different. It was an epistle written to seven churches which then existed in Asia Minor. Our first step in understanding Revelation must be to ask what it meant to those who received it. It is only after we have embarked on this first step that we can ask what lessons from Revelation may be applied to our own time.

Revelation is often used as a speculative tool in predicting end-time events before the second coming of Jesus. These predictions have always been in error and therefore most preachers today shy away from using the epistle in a profound way. However, when Revelation becomes clear to us, as it was understood in the first century of the church, its applications and encouragements become a valuable resource.

This book, *Rediscovering Revelation*, was written for this purpose; that in understanding the epistle we may all benefit from its lessons in the way God intended. He didn't preserve the epistle for us to relegate to non-use, but to *reveal* the gospel and victory of Christ throughout the church age.

This book is not a verse by verse treatment of Revelation. It covers the intended themes of the book. For a more detailed commentary and

for follow up study, please see the *Further Reading* section at the back of this book. This book doesn't have all the answers on the questions it looks at, nor does it cover all scripture says on the issue. However, we do hope you will allow it to provoke your reflections on the gospel of Christ and lead you to further study.

Rediscovering Revelation begins with an appraisal of a common belief system that impacts many people today, known as *dispensationalism*. This appraisal is necessary to prepare the reader for what Revelation teaches. The church is not a temporary dispensation. *Jesus and His church* is the reason for creation and the theme of the whole of the Old and New Testaments.

Our prayer is that the glory of Christ will be more greatly revealed in and through you and those you love, to encourage the church in the days in which we live. "I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." The blessings of Christ's rule through the church shall extend to all nations on earth in the years ahead.

Dr. Kent Hodge

A Dispensation of Error

A Wrong Foundation

Since the mid-nineteenth century futurism has, in some quarters, become a popular view in interpreting the book of Revelation. This popularity began with John Nelson Darby and became wide spread through the works of Scofield and Dake in their reference Bibles editions.

Some popular forms of futurism teach that almost all the contents of the book of Revelation are yet to be fulfilled in the future. It is said that from chapter four of Revelation onwards the subject is about a seven year tribulation period that is still future. During this seven year period a man called antichrist will arise and cause everybody to receive a literal mark of 666 on their body. Some versions claim that half way through this seven year period the church shall be raptured out of the world. Then after a great tribulation Jesus will return and reign in Jerusalem for one thousand years.

This has produced constant speculation about the antichrist. All the theories proposed have proved abortive. Futurism has stimulated constant date-setting on the return of Jesus, while Jesus forbade this (Acts 1:7). This view of Revelation makes believers negative about the church's role in the world as salt and light, instead looking for the rapture to get out of the world: contrary to John 17:15 where Jesus prayed we be taken not out of the world, but kept from the evil. Escapism results in self-fulfilled prophecy regarding decay and falling away in our societies. The doctrine of a pre-tribulation rapture is not once mentioned in the scripture and has never before been mentioned by any church father, neither among the first apostles nor since. The doctrine was developed from a "prophecy" in Scotland in 1830.

This future seven-year idea is said to come from Daniel chapter nine, where Daniel states there will be seventy weeks of years from his day to the coming of Christ to establish the new covenant. This, read in context, has nothing to do with Christ's second coming. However,

dispensationalists claim sixty-nine weeks (483 years) passed till Jesus' first coming and the prophetic clock stopped, so we are still waiting for the last week (seven years) to usher in the second coming of Jesus. Daniel does not state, nor even hint, anything about this gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks. It is wrong to build a system of belief on something that the scripture has not said.

“Gap teaching” is common in the Scofield and Dake Bible commentaries. They claim there was a gap of millions of years between God's creation in Gen 1:1 and a supposed second creation in Gen 1:2. Nothing in the Bible teaches this. They claim that before Gen 1:2 there was a pre-Adamic race of people that were all destroyed. They claim that millions of years later God started again and created Adam. This is not taught anywhere in the scriptures. The Bible states clearly that Adam was “the first man” (1 Cor 15:45).

They claim Satan rebelled and was cast down to earth after creation and this caused the first destruction on earth. Nowhere do the scriptures teach this. These ideas come from Jewish myths. Paul told Timothy to give no heed to the Jewish myths circulating in the churches of Ephesus (1 Tim 1:4-7). Dispensationalism (see below) itself is a Jewish myth, which predictably leads men back to the law and away from Christ. It wrongly interprets Isaiah chapter fourteen and Ezekiel chapter twenty-eight, which plainly speak of men and not of Satan. (We look at this in more detail in our book *Christ in You*: where it is shown that *Lucifer* is not a name for Satan.) Inevitably, these errors focus attention on the devil (which is his aim) and not on the Son. Satan was not cast down to earth before the creation of man. His role as accuser was cast down when Jesus brought us grace and the gospel through His death and resurrection. (Luke 10:18, Matt 16:17-19, John 12:31, Col, 2:13-15, Rev 12:9-10.)

There is a gap: the gap is not in the scripture, but in their understanding of it! Scripture must be interpreted through the finished work of the Christ in the new covenant. All the Old Testament looks forward towards this and all the New Testament looks back to this.

Dispensational Error

Associated with futurism are the teachings of dispensationalism. These teachings come in different forms and often teach that God saves people in different ways in different dispensations. The English word “dispensation” may be used in a valid way and may refer to a stewardship given or time fulfilled, an era or age – the new covenant and revealing of Christ came in the fullness of time. But it is the teachings known as “dispensationalism” we are speaking of here.

Forms of dispensationalism teach that in Abraham’s time people were saved by following their conscience, but when the Law of Moses came people were saved by the law. The Bible consistently refutes this. Scripture shows (e.g. Paul in Romans and Galatians) that people are saved only one way, in all eras – by Jesus Christ through faith. No one has been or can be saved by the law:

For as many are of the works of the law are under a curse . . .
That no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. Gal 3:10-11 & Hab 2:4

Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified
in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. Rom 3:20

Even in Habakkuk in the Old Testament it is said that the just shall live by faith. The law was never given to save, but to point us to Christ:

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to
Christ, that we might be saved by faith. Gal 3:24

Faith was preached to Adam and Eve, when God clothed them and spoke of the coming seed of woman. The gospel was preached to Abraham and he was given the promise by grace, not by works (Gal 3:8, 16-18, John 8:56). He was justified by faith (Rom 4:3). Isaac and Jacob were also called by grace alone (Rom 9:9-13). David was justified by faith (Rom 4:6-7). If we claim that any man in any age can be commended to God by conscience or by law, we speak against the gospel (Gal 3:22). Moses broke the law, so not even he was saved by

it. Every man has broken both his conscience and the law of God and stands condemned by both of these (Rom 1-3).

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God:
being justified freely by his grace through the redemption
that is in Christ Jesus. Rom 3:23-24

Most Pentecostals and many Evangelicals are impacted today by dispensational teachings, even though they might not even be aware of it. Dispensationalism has fostered spiritism, extreme arminianism (works salvation), speculative end-times teachings and withdrawal from society. A denial of the gospel has led many into misguided spiritual warfare activities, not knowing that Christ has broken every curse, whether the curse of the law, ancestral curses or those put on them by other people.

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every man that hangs upon a tree. That the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles . . . Gal 3:13-14

If the blessing has come through Jesus then the yoke is broken by faith. But “faith comes by hearing” and since some people haven’t heard this from the Spirit of God within their heart they don’t have faith and they go chasing after demons. People who falsely call themselves men or women of God also prey on them for money, promising them freedom.

Because dispensationalism can foster spiritism (the manipulation of spirits, believing one gains personal advantage), many people stray from the gospel into false teachings, such as *sowing of seeds* (money or the like), to manipulate God for one blessing or another. This brings us back to pre-Reformation days where indulgences were paid to gain God’s favour: whereas the scriptures plainly teach we are saved, healed and delivered freely by grace, through His shed blood and not by works or any payment of our own. His blood and grace are the “keys of the kingdom”, which hypocrites, false ministers and thieves hide so they can beguile others and use them. This is throughout much of the “body of Christ” today and is identified in scripture as the “harlot

church". As Reformed truth delivered people from the "priest craft" or earlier years, it delivers from a different form of "priest craft" today, by upholding the supremacy of Christ.

Not Knowing the Scripture

Some forms of dispensationalism have taught that the church age (or age of grace) is temporary. This teaching claims the church was an afterthought of God when the leaders of Israel rejected Jesus. It says that when Jesus returns the Law of Moses will be restored and the church and grace will no longer be required. It denies the scriptural truth that the church is the ultimate and eternal purpose of God in creation and sending of His Son.

Because this claims that the church was a temporary afterthought, it maintains that the church was not anticipated or prophesied by the Old Testament prophets. It says that when the prophets spoke about a new temple and of the coming kingdom of Messiah, they were speaking about a restored nation of Israel in a coming 1,000 year reign in Jerusalem on earth, and not of the church after Christ's resurrection. This teaching thus claims that the church is not mentioned at all in the Old Testament prophecies.

Some forms of dispensationalism thus teach that Jesus will return to Jerusalem and reign for 1,000 years, during which time the temple will be rebuilt, the Levitical priesthood will return and sacrifices will once again be offered as before. Thus it is denied that the priesthood of Melchisedek in the church is eternal.

These forms of dispensational teaching are contrary to the book of Hebrews which states that Christ put away sacrifice and offering forever, by the offering of Himself once and for all. God will never bring back offerings under the law or old covenant system. He has perfected the saints eternally with the shedding of His blood. The teachings explained above are therefore antichrist in that they deny the efficacy of the blood of Christ for salvation in all ages since creation into eternity. The church and bride of Christ are an eternal state and will never be replaced by a return to the law or old covenant.

In that He said, A new covenant, He has made the first old.
Now that which decays and waxes old is ready to vanish
away. Heb 8:13

This verse above was written in Hebrews before AD 70, before the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. When the temple was destroyed the whole old covenant system was seen no more. Christ brought in the new covenant and made the former covenant old. When Hebrews was written the whole sacrificial system going on in the temple at Jerusalem was about to vanish with the destruction of Jerusalem soon after Hebrews was written.

By which testament we are sanctified, through the offering
of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Heb 10:10

The offering of Jesus and the church redeemed by that offering are eternal.

And I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and
the Lamb are the temple of it. Rev 21:22

Contrary to dispensationalism, the Bible says that Christ, His faith and grace are the rock of all ages. He goes before David and upheld David in his time, and He comes after David. He is the root of David, meaning all old covenant believers had their root of salvation in Him by faith. He is the offspring of David, meaning He is the eternal fulfillment of David. David's day was a shadow, to which we are never going back. Christ is the eternal substance, the Alpha and Omega.

I am the root and the offspring of David. Rev 22:16

There are so many prophecies in the Old Testament that speak of the coming church. The church was set forth in prophecy as the coming new covenant, new temple and kingdom of Messiah. In Daniel chapter two the church is the rock cut out without hands, that fills the earth. When the prophets spoke of a new Jerusalem, new heaven and new earth they spoke of the church (2 Cor 5:17, Heb 12:22, Rev 21:2). This was a mystery in those days and Paul said this

mystery of the prophets was fulfilled and revealed in the church (Col 1:26, 27, Eph 3:3-6).

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah . . . until Shiloh comes,
and to Him shall the gathering of the people be. Gen 49:10

The Old Testament is replete with hundreds of prophecies about Christ and the ecclesia, or church, the gathering of people to Him. All these are called out by God.

Behold, I and the children whom You have given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel. (Israel meaning all of God's called out people.) Is 8:18 (See Heb 2:13 showing this is referring to the church.)

And all Your children shall be taught of the Lord. Is 54:13

In this last verse, "children" means "seed". The seed of Christ are those who believe on Him, His church. Jesus quotes this same verse in John. "Taught of the Lord" means that Christ's seed are all those who are taught by the Father.

No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of the Lord. Every man therefore that has heard, and learned from the Father, comes to Me. John 6:44-45

Here Jesus said that the phrase "all your seed shall be taught of the Lord" means that the church shall consist of all those that the Father calls to Him. When the Father calls us, i.e. teaches us, we come to Christ.

All the apostles of the New Testament show how the church is the fulfilment of all Old Testament shadows and prophetic expectations. The passages are too numerous to mention here. In the Christ and His church are contained all the promises and hopes of Israel, thus Jesus said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." See Acts

28:20, Paul said “that for the hope of Israel (the gospel he preached) I am bound with this chain”. That is, all the hopes and promises made to Israel were fulfilled in the gospel Paul and Jesus preached. But many then denied that and sought to fulfil those hopes through the law and through Jerusalem, as dispensationalism does today.

In Acts 15:16 the apostles show the church is the return of the Lord through His Spirit to restore Israel, after their judgement in Babylon and 400 silent years in the intertestamental period. The return here is not the second coming, but His returning again in mercy to those He had given over to judgement, to restore the elect (the residue) in the gospel. Dispensationalism completely twists the plain meaning of this text. The council of apostles stated that the Gentiles coming to Christ is the fulfilment of the prophets, that the church is the rebuilding of David’s tabernacle through Christ, that the Gentiles might be joined to it. This passage is a clear reference to the church:

Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom My name is called, says the Lord, who does all these things. Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world. Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God . . .
Acts 15:14-19

This prophecy is a reference to Amos 9:11-12 and to hundreds of other verses in the Old Testament. For example see 1 Chron 17:12, 1 Sam 2:35, Ps 2:8, 22:27, 72:8, Is 2:1-4, 54:13-15, 55:1-5, 60:3, 62:2, 65:1, Hag 2:9, Zech 12:10, Ezek 47, John 7:37-39, Acts 7:48, 1 Pet 2:5-10.

Dispensationalism seeks a fulfilment of prophecy with Jesus reigning in earthly Jerusalem, just as the Jews in the first century sought a

nationalistic solution to a political problem. For this cause they missed the gospel and with a stiff neck refused the truth. This is the same error being committed today. "My kingdom is not of this world." Reading the book of Revelation as a dispensationalist leads completely away from its intended meaning. The Crusaders of Europe 1,000 years ago committed this same error. Kingdom building on earth is the bane of all religions and is destructive to mankind. It is today just as Paul said in the first century:

Well spoke the Holy Spirit by Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, saying, Go to this people and say, Hearing you shall hear and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see and not perceive. For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Acts 28:25-27

God Does Not have Two People Groups

Some forms of dispensationalism teach that God has two groups of His people today: the church and national Israel. This is a heretical teaching as it denies Christ. How can anyone be just before God outside of Christ?

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything nor un-circumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. Gal 6:15-16

Unbelievably, dispensationalism twists this passage to say that Paul is speaking here of two groups: the new creation and the nation of Israel (Israel of God). The passage is a very clear statement from Paul saying the new creation is the Israel of God. We see this teaching throughout Paul's epistles.

Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship

God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Phil 3:2-3

Paul warned here that those who preach justification through the works of the law are evil workers, because they cause us to boast in ourselves. He said that the true circumcision (by this he means the true faith) is that we have confidence in Jesus Christ and not in our national descent (not in the flesh). To be of God's Israel is a spiritual inheritance.

The scripture is clear that the church is the fulfilment of God's promises to Israel. Some have said this means that the church has replaced Israel. No, rather the church is Israel and always has been Israel. Israel means prince of God and denotes someone who has faith and is thus a member of God's family. Thus Jacob's name was changed to Israel when he met God and was changed. But Israel is singular, not plural, just as Abraham's seed is one, not many (Gal 3:16). The promises were made to Christ and Jacob was just a shadow or type of Israel and bore the name prophetically of Christ's coming.

And if you are Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Gal 3:29

Since Christ is Israel (the seed, the one who inherited the promises: see Is 49:3, 49:6, Hos 11:1, Matt 2:15), then those of us in Christ are also counted as the seed and heirs of the promises given to Abraham. The scripture specifically teaches then that true Jews, the true heirs of Abraham, are those who are in Christ Jesus. (See also Rev 2:9, 3:9)

Throughout the Old Testament Israel was always "God's people" within the people, not the whole nation of Israel. The true Israel was those who knew Him and believed in Christ's coming. It was the remnant that God kept who did not bow the knee to Baal (1 Kings 19:18, Rom 11:4). It was those He called out. The concept of the ecclesia is not a New Testament innovation, but was always spoken of in the Old Testament. It is just clearer after the resurrection of Christ and more Gentiles are now grafted in than before. Jesus Himself pointed this out in His ministry and was hated for it (Luke 4:24-30).

So when Paul defines Israel in Romans he says that “not all Israel which are of Israel” (Rom 9:6), meaning there is national Israel and also the Israel of faith, which is the true people of God. Paul continued, “Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children, but In Isaac shall your seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.” (Rom 9:7-8) Paul quoted from Gen 21:12 showing from the Old Testament what true Israel is (this is not a new covenant innovation). He said that only Isaac was counted as true Israel, because he was born not of the bondwoman (flesh, law), but of grace.

Abraham’s children are specifically said to be those who are of faith. Abraham is the father of faith, so his children are those of faith, who are like their father, not those of racial descent. He was called while still uncircumcised, “That he might be the father of all them that believe . . .” (Rom 4:9-14) John the Baptist and Jesus taught the same (Matt 3:9, John 9:39-44, Matt 8:11-12).

Paul clearly stated that there is no difference between Jews according to the flesh today, than those born of the flesh in Genesis: that is, Ishmael. They are both equally the seed of the flesh:

For this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and answers to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all (all believers, whether Jew or Gentile). Gal 4:25-26

It is not common for people today to make this clear. Many are afraid of being labelled anti-Semitic. But this was taught us by Jews in their scripture, so how can it be anti-Semitic? It is just calling a sinner a sinner, whether Jew or Gentile. Claiming anti-Semitism in this matter is a form of political correctness that has hindered the gospel. Anti-Semitism or anti any race is not of Christ and must be denounced, but let us not confuse the gospel with this. To preach what many preach on Israel today you have to change or ignore most of the Bible, yet this is what people have done.

The best thing you can do for someone who calls them self a Jew is to tell them the gospel. I met one and said to him, "You are not a Jew and I am." I added, "You are not circumcised and I am." At first he was not happy, but when we looked at the scripture together he changed and said, "No one has ever told me this before, thank you so much." For the scripture says that he is not a Jew who is one outwardly by the circumcision of the flesh, but who is one inwardly by the circumcision of the heart. (Rom 2:28-29)

In God there is no such thing as a distinctive Messianic church. We do not have Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. We just have one church in Christ. I met a lady who said she was a Messianic Jew. I replied, "No you are not. There is only one church." She became very angry. Reaching the Jews for Jesus is good, but there is nothing in any of our cultures to commend us to God. The Bible says the way the Jews turned their back on the Lord put an end to any boasting. But all men are the same. "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." (Rom 3:23)

And that He might reconcile both (Jew & Gentile) to God
into one body by the cross, having slain the enmity (the law)
thereby. Eph 2:16

This passage in Ephesians shows that the law of the old covenant was the division that made Jew and Gentile irreconcilable. On the cross Jesus fulfilled and thus took the law out of the way as a means of coming to God. Now both Jew and Gentile come to God through His Spirit by the blood of Jesus, and not in any way by our cultural distinctive. To go back to the law is to build that wall again, that Christ brought down by His blood.

People often use Hebrew words such as Shalom, and Yeshua and many others. Sometimes people do this as a campaign to Judaize the faith. This is deception. There is nothing holy about Hebrew. It is a language of man that God used, just as He uses any other language. Holiness is only in Christ. Refusing this truth is the stubbornness and stiff necked nature that the scripture speaks of. Holiness only comes by the Spirit of Christ. If someone is not Hebrew, why would you speak Hebrew to

them? If we are studying Hebrew to better know the Old Testament that is different.

People may think this is too strong, but I hope I am just being plain. We are not offending anybody who wants to put their faith in Jesus (Yeshua, or Isa) and who wants a faith and righteousness not of themselves or of their culture, but of Christ freely through His blood. It only offends if we are not crucified with Him. This is important today because many people are preaching that we must go back to the law, the feasts of the old covenant and the Sabbath. Merit is only in Christ; He to whom the law pointed. Many charlatans preach conformity to ceremonial law to raise money.

Concerning the land that the Crusaders fought for and that is being fought for today, it is not holy. The scriptures, in particular Hebrews, tell us that Jesus fulfilled the everlasting promises to Israel in Himself and that He is the substance. The old covenant land was the shadow (Heb 4:8-10, 11:9-10, 11:13-16, 11:39-40, 12:22-24). When Jesus spoke to the woman at the well He said that in the new covenant there is no holy land (John 4:19-24).

The book of Hebrews is a general warning not to go back to the old covenant law. The author said it is merely a shadow and has no eternal life in it. He said that to go back to the law was to tread underfoot the Son God and put Him to an open shame. Paul said in Galatians it would place us back under the curse. In the early church Jewish believers continued for some time in some of their old covenant practices in the temple and synagogues because:

1. They were very slow to grasp the significance of the gospel and the changes this brought to worship (Luke 24:25-26, 44). We see this throughout Acts also (Acts 10:9-16, Acts 15:1-2 & Gal 2.)
2. They wanted to win their Jewish countrymen and thus continued in their ways to some point. (With regard to the council of Jerusalem, the apostles made a few restrictions on the believers, specifically because of the synagogues in the districts: Acts 15:19-21, see also 1 Cor 10:27-33.) But the zeal for

the law amongst the Jews eventually brought about significant problems, as the book of Hebrews shows. The Jewish believers were in great danger of falling away from Christ.

3. God Himself eventually put an end to the distinction between the Jew and Gentile believer by destroying the temple in AD 70. Finally, in the minds of people that launched the church as a totally separate body to Judaism.

Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances (the written law) that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross. And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. Col 2:14-17

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. Rom 10:4

Some people say we must minister “to the Jew first” as Paul did everywhere he went, as recorded in the book of Acts. Paul did this because of the doctrine of “firstfruits”. Those saved from the Jewish nation were the firstfruits of the gospel to Christ, and then after that the Gentiles. We will see this soon as we look at the Revelation, in regard to the 144,000 from the Jewish tribes. They were the firstfruits of the harvest. That has now been fulfilled, in the first generation of the church. Jews are still called today, as are people from all nations.

Citing Paul’s words, some people say we owe the Jews a special favour—because we have received of them spiritual things in the gospel, we owe them natural assistance (Rom 15:25-27, see also 1 Cor 8:11 & Gal 6:6). Paul said this regarding the famine that was then in Jerusalem and he was taking money to help them. But this collection was not for Jews in general, but to the churches, the believers in Palestine suffering physically because of famine. The Christians in Corinth were also being urged to help their brothers in Christ. But today the ones we received spiritual things from are those who brought the gospel to us.

The ones who first preached the gospel to you and me, those through whom we today first believed, probably were not Jewish believers.

Rom 11:26 tells us that “all Israel shall be saved”. In several passages in Romans and in Paul’s other epistles, he defines Israel clearly as all called out believers. In Romans chapter eleven Paul is simply explaining how God calls these believers from Gentiles and Jews, having provoked the Jews to jealousy. Paul explains he is speaking only of the elect and not the whole Jewish nation. Rom 11 has nothing to do with Christ’s second coming (which is never mentioned in the chapter or anywhere in Romans). Paul highlights how God grafts individual Jews elected in Christ back into Christ and makes them partakers of resurrection life (new birth – from their former state of death in sin and rejection of God). Paul simply explains that God first deals with all boasting and pride and then brings us all in by grace alone. It is a wonderful description of God’s wisdom. In the gospel Jesus fulfils: He “shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Rom 11:26), where “Jacob” is the whole elect people from Jew or Gentile: just as *Jacob* in Genesis represents the elect, not the seed of the flesh. (For a more detailed exegesis of specific verses in Romans chapter eleven see our book *Christ in You*.)

This is the theme of Romans:

Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law (Jew), but to that which is of faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all (all who believe). Rom 4:16

This verse explains that God removes boasting first, and then brings in the elect on the basis of grace alone, so *that the promise may be sure*: certain in its fulfilment i.e. through Christ alone, without man to mess it up, thus rooting out original sin: self worship, the default setting of the human heart, and thus addressed in the first commandment (Ex 20:3). *To all the seed*: Jew and Gentile elect: *seed* being Abraham’s true offspring through God. The whole book of Romans sets out to explain this verse. First, it’s not of law or conscience that we are saved: by these all are lost. (Ch 1-3) So it’s of faith (Ch 4-6), but this faith is His faith (a gift) in election, through grace (otherwise we boast in

our faith), and as a consequence of which nothing can separate us from His love. (Ch 7-8) *Israel* then are these elect: those circumcised of heart. (Ch 9) The Jews stumbled, not to fall, but for the elect among them to fall in behind the Gentiles to humble them, to be received into life through grace alone: as being “not a people”, but by undeserved gift, just as the Gentiles were grafted in. We as Gentiles must continue in humility, or we too will be cut off. (Ch 10-11) That is Romans. There are other important matters regarding Christian life in chapters twelve to sixteen.

And the result or all this, or the conclusion?:

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements, and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counsellor? Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM and IT SHALL BE RECOMPENSED unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen. Rom 11:33-36

These and many others passages have been taken out of context, particularly since the mid-nineteenth century, and have been twisted and used to preach modern earthly Zionism, which is not biblical.

Correctly Dividing the Word of Truth

Before we start with the book of Revelation we must deal with dispensational hermeneutics, or method of interpretation of scripture. Dispensationalism interprets scripture according to its own method and system, without regard to the testimony of the Spirit within scripture. It claims to be a conservative Bible approach, but dispensationalism interprets the Bible through Western literalism and not in line with the Hebrew style in which it was written. The concepts of dispensationalism in regard to end-times teaching are in fact based on ideas borrowed from Ancient Eastern and Greek paganism and are not in line with the way the Bible is written.

Dispensationalism claims to hold to the literal message of scripture. It claims to interpret the Bible literally and by this deceives people into thinking that if they do not follow the dispensationalist system then they are rejecting the scripture.

Should scripture be interpreted literally? Well that depends on the intention of the writer in the passage. There are some parts of scripture that should be interpreted literally and others parts which should not. Every language has poetry with its traditional methods of understanding and interpretation. We have phrases, idioms and metaphors that may not be intended to be literal, but carry a different meaning well understood within that culture. For example, to say I am “bending over backwards” to help someone understand the scripture, would mean I am doing by best. Unless you were acquainted with such an idiom you would not understand the meaning of it.

In the Hebrew language, especially in the prophets, we have many symbols that are employed to give emphasis and understanding. For example, the scriptures say God’s arm is not short that it cannot save. This does not mean that God has a literal arm as a human, but that He is ever present and close by in time of need. Many symbols like this are employed in the prophets, especially for such things as impending judgement upon a nation – where symbols of clouds, storms, lightening, earthquakes, and stars falling, and the heaven and earth being removed are often employed. We will see more on this later.

Jesus often used phrases that carried a distinctive meaning in the Hebrew culture that a literal translation into another language cannot appreciate. For example, when Jesus described the fall of Jerusalem as a day of tribulation “such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no nor ever shall be” (Matt 24:21), He was not making a literal statement. In the Old Testament it is said of two kings that they both served God more than any king before or after them. Literally this is not possible. The statement is a Hebrew device for emphasis. It just means that they served God with all their heart.

Statements like God owns “the cattle on a thousand hills” are not literal. In the Western culture we would count the cattle on a thousand hills and then keep God off any hill over one thousand. But in Hebrew one thousand is a number used for emphasis. It is not literal. It just means that “the earth is the Lord’s and the fulness (in this case cattle) thereof”. It all belongs to God. Interpreting the Bible with a Western mindset is wrong. It was not written by Westerners.

Those who know the Hebrew language of those days could give hundreds of examples like this. This is especially important for understanding the book of Revelation. It is filled with symbols that are employed from the Hebrew language style and from the Old Testament. Many scholars concur that the Revelation is essentially a Hebrew document in its content and style, though it may have been originally written in Greek.

Symbolism is also often employed in the Old Testament to represent Christ and His church. Here we see types and shadows being used, such as the tabernacle. The book of Hebrews explains many of these types and symbols in the light of the now finished work of Christ. They all pointed to the work of Jesus. Even names of Old Testament characters are used in the prophets to represent Christ, such as David for Jesus on His throne, or Zadok for Jesus as priest, or Elijah for John the Baptist. In the same way Israel and Jacob are often used for the elect in Christ’s kingdom.

Symbols such as peaceful rest in the land, bountiful farms, fountains, God being our sun and moon, Jacob all of God’s elect, the Levite, Sabbath, Zion and Jerusalem for worship in the church and the new heaven and new earth for the new covenant are employed to depict the blessings of redemption under Christ, in Revelation as throughout the New Testament. For example, the verses below use a peaceful evening village setting to depict deliverance from sin and judgement in Christ and His government within our own nature and life:

And He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up their

sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid . . . Mic 4:3-4

Pre-millennialism depicts this as a reign of Christ in Jerusalem on earth for 1,000 years, but pre-millennialism as a doctrine is not known or developed in the scripture. The above passage shows the blessings of obedience to Christ's government in our lives through His Spirit. We would be better to aspire to these things in our nations now rather than, in hopelessness, relegate them until after the resurrection. Such is the amazing negativity and destructive nature of dispensationalism. Where are the Christian activists today?

The above text in Micah is also found in Isaiah chapter two. Justin Martyr (AD 100-165) said concerning Is 2:3-4, "And that it did so come to pass, we can convince you. For from Jerusalem there went out into the world, men, twelve in number, and these illiterate, of no ability in speaking: but by the power of God they proclaimed to every race of men that they were sent by Christ to teach to all the world the word of God; and we who formerly used to murder one another do not only now refrain from making war upon our enemies, but also, that we might not lie or deceive our examiners, willingly die confessing Christ." (The First Apology of Justin, Ch XXXIX)

Likewise Irenaeus (AD 130-200), "But from the Lord's advent, the new covenant which brings back peace, and the law which gives life (i.e. the law of Christ), has gone forth over the whole earth, as the prophets said, 'for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; and He shall rebuke many people; and they shall break down their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, and they shall no longer learn to fight.'" (Against Heresies Book IV, Chapter 34, brackets added.)

And Tertullian (AD 160-225) adds, "Among us who have been called out of the nations – 'and they shall join to beat their glaives into ploughs, and their lances into sickles; and nations shall not take up glaive against nation, and they shall no more learn to fight.' Who else, therefore, are understood but we, who, fully taught by the new law (law of Christ),

observe these practices,—the old law being obliterated, the coming of whose abolition the action itself demonstrates?” (An Answer to the Jews, Chapter III, brackets added.)

The Reformer/Puritan Richard Sibbes preached a sermon: *The Touchstone of Regeneration* (in *The Works of Richard Sibbes*, Banner of Truth Trust 2001, Vol. 7, p 129), concerning Is 11:6-9 (the wolf and lamb lying down together):

Many things already have been particularly handled out of this text; as,

1. First, from the condition and natural estate of men, wherein they may be called beasts, lions, serpents, &
2. And secondly, of that change Christ thereafter makes in us, which indeed is a miraculous change . . . That in every soul which shall come to heaven there must be a change . . . I have shewed upon whom this change was made – look verse 9; it is made upon the church of God in this world, which in my text is called God’s holy mountain. So also, Heb xii. 22, the church is called the mountain of God . . . by whom this change was made; even by the spring-head of all. From the God of grace it cometh, and floweth to us by Jesus Christ our Lord, who was ‘God manifested in the flesh’ . . .

Dispensationalism has brought a meaning to such biblical passages discussed above, which was known but rejected by Spirit filled revivalists such as George Whitfield. All these passages were seen as depicting Christ’s rule in our lives today, and fulfilled in His kingdom today, not in a reign in an earthly Jerusalem. The lamb lying down with the wolf depicts the removal of the violent and beastly nature of man in Christ (Is 11:6). Isaiah chapter eleven depicts the ministry of Christ, the gospel going throughout the nations, removal of hostility between Judah and Ephraim in Christ: “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain” (His church). The power of these passages is lost when they are relegated to the future, rather than to our current experience in Christ. Instead, many have “confessed” a new birth without such an inward transformation.

“Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.” (Is 9:7) Christ rules today as He exercises judgement over nations and gathers in His harvest, which will continue until He presents the complete church to the Father at the end (1 Cor 15:24). There is no reign in earthly Jerusalem in the interim. His government must rule and increase in our natures today, or it will be said “I never knew you”. “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given . . .” (Is 9:6) He must be born within our heart and nature.

Symbols are an effective poetic device (like Jesus’ parables) for depicting things that are spiritual and eternal, by using things that are a part of our everyday lives. To not recognise this when reading the prophets, and instead reading them too literally, would be to go against the mind of God in the passages. “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?” (Luke 24:25-26) So, according to Jesus, this is what the prophets spoke of by symbols: His redemption and church. This is the testimony of the Spirit concerning the meaning of scripture.

To interpret symbolic references in the prophets literally would be contrary to the intended meaning of scripture and witness of the Holy Spirit, whose witness throughout the Bible was of the gospel. Jesus often made this point; that the witness of the Old Testament was to His day and to the gospel church. He is the manna (bread of life), the lamb, the rivers of living water, the temple, the land (Matt 5:5) and the sure mercies of David (Is 55:3).

Scripture itself tells us how we are to interpret these Old Testament passages and how they have been fulfilled:

To whom (the Old Testament prophets) it was revealed, that not to themselves, but to us (the church) they did minister the things, which are now reported to you by them (the apostles) that have preached the gospel to you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, which things the angels desire to look into. 1 Pet 1:12

So the interpretation of the prophets and the language and symbols they used, is to be seen in the work of Christ through the gospel, as preached by the first apostles. According to the Spirit through Peter, the prophets did not write concerning some still future kingdom, but the kingdom we enter when hearing and believing the gospel today. This is the witness of scripture itself. Just as the Revelation said; “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit (theme) of prophecy” (Rev 19:10). The whole of scripture centres round the testimony of Jesus and has its fulfilment and interpretation in His gospel.

So when we look into the book of Revelation, a lot of what we are seeing is this gospel and work of Christ portrayed by using Old Testament symbols. Many times Bible interpreters have used a pagan or Western system of interpreting these symbols, often taking them literally. For example, when Revelation speaks of the new Jerusalem coming down, we think of that as a literal city descending onto the earth, but it is speaking of the church (Heb 12:22). This literal way of interpreting events, such as the millennium in Revelation, and other symbols taken to be cataclysmic cosmic episodes, results in concepts similar to ancient Eastern myths, passed down by the Greek influence on Western culture. In most cases this approach does not align us with the Hebrew meaning of the texts.

There are two important issues when we interpret scripture and they are both to do with basic common sense:

1. We interpret scripture in the way that that passage intends us to interpret it. If the passage in question is meant to be literal then we interpret it literally. If the passage is obviously using symbolic or poetic devices then we interpret them in the way scripture uses them.

There are different types or genre of scripture. There is historical narrative, such as Genesis, or Acts. There are plain teaching passages such as the epistles. These are taken more literally. There are poetic passages in the Psalms and Proverbs. There are symbols in the prophets, and especially in more dramatic prophets such as Daniel, Ezekiel and Revelation.

Sometime the literary types are mixed, so that one book may have some obviously historical narrative and some symbolic language, such as in Isaiah and Jeremiah.

The obvious way to interpret scripture is with honesty. If the plain intent is a literal one, we take it literally. If the plain intent is symbolic, we look for the symbolic meaning in the scripture and take that. When we take scripture literally when that is not intended then we are wrongly interpreting it. When we take it symbolically when that is not intended then we are interpreting it wrongly.

We do not force a system onto scripture and say we must interpret everything literally. Even dispensationalism does not do this consistently. They often spiritualise texts and give them symbolic meaning, when scripture does not intend it. For example, in Revelation they say the seven churches are symbolic of seven periods of church history from the day of the early church until the second coming of Jesus. But there is nothing in the Revelation or in other scripture that indicates this. The Revelation tells us they were the seven literal churches that were in Asia at that time. Some forms of dispensationalism allegorise the seven days of creation to mean seven dispensations of history between creation and the second coming and then earthly millennium of Christ, but this is not stated anywhere in scripture. Dispensationalism has spiritualised and allegorised countless passages, such as Isaiah chapters fourteen and fifty-eight, Ezekiel chapter twenty-eight, as well as most of the parables of Jesus. (There are correct and incorrect allegories. We are obliged to follow the intent of scripture.)

2. The second important point in interpreting scripture is to take it as the original recipients took it. We ask questions such as who was it written to, what was their situation, what was the author saying to them in their context, what did that mean to them in their culture and history at that time? The books of the Bible were not written to twenty-first century Evangelical

or Pentecostal Westerners. We must think like those who first received the text and ask how they understood the text at that time. We must “put ourselves in their shoes” (metaphorically speaking!). If we do not do this then we are not reading God’s word, but putting our own word into the text.

Once we have interpreted the text then we apply it to our own time in the nation where we live. This is the application stage and it is very important, so that we live out what the Bible teaches in our lives. But application is always the second step. First find out what the Bible meant in the day it was written, and then apply the lessons and principles to our time, family, work place and ministry.



Ruth Hodge teaching at the *All Nations For Christ Bible Institute International*, founded by Archbishop Benson Idahosa. Kent Hodge led this college for many years, and with supporters helped to finance the college and scholarships to train 8,000 pastors who have planted thousands of churches around the world. The Hodges served there from 1986 to 2006.



Kent & Ruth Hodge joined Archbishop Idahosa's ministry in 1986, in Benin City, Nigeria. Idahosa became as a father to the Hodge family as they worked closely together. Idahosa was a very open and accessible person, who cared selflessly and deeply for others and raised up countless leaders. God used Idahosa tremendously in expanding His kingdom in Nigeria and in many other nations. Early evangelism saw as many as one million people attending a single meeting to hear the gospel and see genuine signs and wonders being done in the name of Jesus. In thirty years 30 million new people joined churches in Nigeria. Idahosa established thousands of churches, over one hundred schools, hospitals and a government accredited university. Through God's Spirit he had a big impact on the government of the nation, though he was never involved in politics.

The Destruction of Jerusalem

The Opening of Revelation

The opening verses of Revelation give us the key to the book. As one would expect, the key is in the door, the entrance into the book. The first three verses provide us with three key pointers. These are: the general genre or type of literature being used, the general time of fulfilment and the people to whom the book was written.

The genre or type of literature being used is shown in the opening verse:

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to Him, to show His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John. Rev 1:1

The words “show” and “signify” in the Greek mean to communicate by the use of symbolic representation. This is a common form of writing in the Hebrew Scriptures. We can see it in Ezekiel, Daniel and in some sections of other prophets and in passages like Matthew chapter twenty-four. This genre is called apocalyptic: meaning to communicate and to unveil by the use of symbols. This shows us two things about the Revelation. First, it used symbols such as animals and numbers to signify unfolding events and truth. Second, as an unveiling, these events and truths were no longer hidden, but were to be understood by the readers in their time.

Thus some translations of the New Testament give the book the title Apocalypse. This means to unveil what is to take place by the use of symbols. This does not mean all the language of the book is symbolic. The symbolic language is encased within real events to take place within actual history.

Because it was an unveiling, the truths were no longer locked up or hidden. This meant that the events the symbols referred to were about to take place. They were not representative of some far distance events. Daniel was told to keep things sealed because the events were still far off (Dan 12:9). John, on the other hand, was told not to seal these things, for the time was then at hand (Rev 22:10).

This brings us to the second point in the opening verse. The events which the Revelation was unveiling were of “things which must shortly come to pass”. The Greek word used here for shortly means just that. When Revelation was written it was expected that the things spoken of would soon take place.

This is shown again in the third verse:

Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand. Rev 1:3

If we read the opening of the Revelation with common sense, the meaning of this verse is clear. It means that the people, who first received the book, when it was written, were blessed because they were forewarned by it. The verse states “for the time is at hand”. The blessing was that the readers would understand the warning and be prepared to act—take the action God commanded them: not to be part of the sins and plagues of the beast (Rev 18:4).

This brings us to our third point: Who were the people to whom the Revelation was written? It is common for people to pick up the book of Revelation today and assume that it was written to us, in our time. This is a mistake. The book was written some two thousand years ago. It is common sense, that if we want to understand something the right way, we first ask, “What did this mean to the people to whom it was first written?” After we know the answer to that, we can ask, “What does it mean to us who live today?”, or, “How can we apply the message to our time?”

John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be to you, and peace from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come, and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne. Rev 1:4

Revelation begins as any epistle begins. Revelation is an epistle. It was a letter written to specific people. The epistle begins like any of Paul’s epistles, “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ to the saints at Ephesus, or Corinth, or Philippi,” etc.

John was told to write the things he saw in a book (scroll) and send it to seven specific churches (Rev 1:11). These seven churches were in Asian Minor and were all started by Paul and his ministry team. If you followed the Roman road there at that time, you would have come upon these cities in the same order they are listed in Revelation chapters two and three.

So clearly, reading the Revelation with common sense, we see from the opening that it was in fact an epistle sent to seven specific churches which existed at that time. The letter was read out to each of the churches. As members of the churches heard the letter being read, coming events were unveiled in such a way that their meaning was understood and the believers were able to prepare. In any normal language, this means that the people were to expect the Revelation to be fulfilled in their own life time. It also means that the people were not confused about the meaning of the epistle, as many today are.

It is clear that this is how God addressed the churches to which this epistle was sent. This means, that unless there is unambiguous evidence to the contrary, we are compelled by the opening of the epistle to interpret the Revelation in this way. The opening three verses state that the fulfilment of the Revelation was relevant to the time of the people that John sent the epistle to. We must therefore read the epistle as they would have read it then, in their century, and not as though it was written to people in our century today.

The above should not have to be stated. It should be obvious. It is how we address any epistle written in the New Testament: i.e. "What did the epistle mean to its intended audience?" But often today this obvious point is not considered when people open the Revelation, and that is wrong.

In our next section we consider the theme of Revelation, as presented in Rev 1:7.

The Theme of Revelation

Behold, He comes quickly; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced Him, and all tribes of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen. Rev 1:7

There is a lot in this verse, so we are going to take it one part at a time. First, the lordship and sovereignty of Jesus Christ. Second, what does it mean “He comes quickly”? Third, who are they that see Him and who wail because of Him?

King of kings & Lord of lords

Matt 21:42 states that the stone that the builders rejected has become the head stone. This refers to Jesus Christ. The one that Israel rejected and crucified is now Lord of all. He is the one who sits on the right hand of glory and who comes on the clouds of heaven. The central theme of the Revelation is the sovereign power and reign of Jesus Christ.

Before His death Jesus had declared that He would come in this manner:

Again the high priest asked Him, Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven. Mark 14:61-62

What does this statement of Jesus mean? In terms of Hebrew Scriptures and understanding this statement means that Jesus is the one vested with heavenly authority. “Coming on the clouds of heaven” means that He is Lord and that He shall appear as judge. Jesus told the priest that he would see this coming. This could not be referring to something which was to occur thousands of years later. In the context of the generation Jesus was speaking to, this statement must refer to the judgement of Jerusalem, which happened in their lifetime.

The priest knew the relevant text from Dan 7:13-14. One like the Son of man ascended and came on the clouds of heaven to the Father and was given dominion and an everlasting kingdom. Jesus was telling them He would judge them.

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. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom,

that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him.
Dan 7:13-14

Jesus had spoken about His coming to the disciples:

But when they persecute you in this city, flee into another:
for truly I say to you, You shall not have gone over the cities
of Israel, till the Son of man be come. Matt 10:23

Jesus told His disciples that they will not have preached the gospel in every village of Israel before He comes. Some people have said that Jesus was speaking here of His second coming at the end of the world, at the resurrection, and that He was mistaken, because we have had plenty of time to reach every village in the land of Israel. But Jesus was not mistaken. He has just been misunderstood. He was not speaking here of His “second coming”.

J.W. McGarvey, Albert Barnes, F.F. Bruce, D.A. Carson, R.C.H. Lenski, Theodor Zahn, W.W. How and J. Barton Payne are among the many commentators who claim that the “coming” in Matt 10:23 is the *Roman invasion of Palestine*, which occurred in AD 67-70.

Again when Jesus was speaking to His disciples, He made another similar statement about His coming:

Truly I say to you, There are some standing here, which shall
not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in His
kingdom. Matt 16:28

Jesus said that some He was speaking to would not die before He would come. Some people have said that Jesus was referring to His glory seen on the Mount of Transfiguration. But the Mount of Transfiguration occurred a few days after Jesus said this and none of those had died. Other people have said Jesus was referring to His glory coming at Pentecost, but that also was only a short time after Jesus said this, and none of them had died except Judas.

The normal meaning of this statement of Jesus is, “Among you lot standing here, many will have died in the normal course of events, but some of you will still be alive.” This is about the time of one generation, or forty years. To interpret this some other way is to change its natural meaning. Jesus clearly said that He would come before that generation had all expired and He was not mistaken. In terms of Hebrew understanding the meaning of what He said is clear.

Revelation chapter one declares that Jesus Christ is Lord and He is coming on the clouds of heaven in judgement.

Behold, He Comes Quickly

The coming of the Lord is derived from the Greek word “parousia”. It means to come or to be present. It is most often used in the Old Testament in regards to judgement against a nation. There are hundreds of examples, but we cite just a few below.

He bowed the heavens also and came down: and darkness was under His feet. And He rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yes, He did fly upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness His secret place; His pavilion round about Him was dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. At the brightness that was before Him His thick clouds passed, hail stones and coals of fire . . . yes, He sent out His arrows and scattered them; and shot out lightening and discomfited them. Ps 18:9-14

Here we see the term “came down”, which is the “coming of the Lord” in judgement. David is speaking about God delivering him from the hand of his enemies. The darkness under His feet refers to storm clouds. Black clouds represent tempest, and destruction. It was most often fulfilled by an army coming against a nation. The reference to God riding upon the cloud means that the army is brought against the people by God. In examples like this in the Old Testament we see similar phrases and words to those Jesus used in Matthew chapter twenty-four, when the disciples asked Him when He would come to judge Jerusalem.

It is clear that these phrases are symbolic. The cloud and lightning represents the judgement. God did not literally come on a cloud, but it was His judgement that came through the army that He sent. No one questions the symbolic use of these phrases in the Old Testament prophets.

The burden of Egypt. Behold, the Lord rides upon a swift cloud and shall come into Egypt . . . Is 19:1

In the above verse we see the announcement of God's judgement upon Egypt. The same symbolic prophetic language is used. The "burden of Egypt" means that judgement is coming against them.

The burden of Babylon . . . Behold the day of the Lord comes, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger . . . For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine . . . Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth will remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts . . . Is 13:1, 9, 10, 13

The symbolic language to describe the judgement against Babylon is intense. The stars, sun and moon are removed. Heaven and earth are shaken. These represent the powers of Babylon, i.e. the leaders, kings, princes, judges and priests. They are above the people, as the stars are above the earth. This passage is saying that the judgement against Babylon will be so complete that all its rulers shall fall and the nation shall be swept away. The "earth will remove", means that the entire old world (dominion of Babylon) will be wiped out.

This same language is used in the New Testament, particularly in the Revelation. When used in the Old Testament nobody said it was literal. All recognised the symbolic meaning of Hebrew prophetic literature. Peter used these terms about the sun and the moon (quoting from Joel) in Acts chapter two, yet some people today suggest Peter's words were literal. This would be to depart from the Hebrew meaning, to a pagan source of interpretation. Joel, Peter and several other Old

Testament prophets were speaking about the destruction of Jerusalem (of which John the Baptist had also warned).

And all the hosts of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their hosts shall fall down . . . For My sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of My curse, to judgement. Is 34: 4-5

Here we see God's pronouncement of judgement against Idumea. Idumea was utterly removed as a nation, along with all its leaders. The heavens being "dissolved" and "rolled up as a scroll" mean that the nation would completely vanish as a power. There was to be a complete destruction. God's sword would "come down" against them. This is the same "coming of the Lord", or "parousia" declaration. This judgement against Idumea was fulfilled in the Old Testament time.

For, behold, the Lord comes forth out of His place and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall melt under Him and the valleys shall cleft as wax before the fire . . . Mic 1:3-4

Here again God "comes" down (parousia). He treads upon the high place of the earth. God did not literally come down and walk on the mountains. This means He carries out His judgement against the rulers ("high places") of the nation. The announcement that the mountains and valleys shall melt describe the intense fire with which the armies shall burn Jerusalem (Micah 1:4). Similar language is used in Revelation, e.g. "all mountains fled away". We will see what this means later in this book.

Every Eye Shall See Him

We are looking at the opening of Revelation and the introduction given, regarding the theme of the book. Our verse is Rev 1:7. As we will see below, Rev 1:7 is actually a quote from Zech 12:10.

Behold, He comes quickly; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced Him, and all tribes of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen. Rev 1:7

We have considered who it is who comes quickly (the Lord Jesus Christ) and also what the nature of this coming is (judgement). Now we look at who it is who shall see His coming. The term “every eye” does not mean every person on the planet. Dispensationalists give the passage this literal meaning, which is false. For example, it was said in Acts chapter two, on the Day of Pentecost, that people were present from “every nation under heaven”. This means every nation within the range of the Roman Empire, not every nation of the world. It is also a common figure of speech of that day, rather than a literal statement. This is common use of language and must be interpreted as the context clearly intends.

The Greek for the above verse says, “and every eye shall see, even those who pierced Him.” The KJV says “*and* those who pierced Him”, while the Greek has “*even* those who pierced Him”. Translations in French and some other English translations, for example, have “*even*” rather than “*and*”. So those who see Him coming are those who pierced Him. Zech 12:10 says “they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced”. “Every eye shall see Him” refers to those who pierced Him.

It is clear that those who pierced Him were the Jews. The apostles repeatedly stated this in the book of Acts (e.g. Acts 2:23, 2:36, 3:13, 5:30). Israel demanded that Rome crucify Him, even though Pontus Pilate did not wish to. There is a prophecy of Christ’s crucifixion in Zechariah, where Christ is asked about His wounds:

And one shall say to Him, What are these wounds in your hands? Then He shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends. Zech 13:6

There is no doubt in the scripture that by “house of My friends” Jesus means Israel. “He came to His own and His own received Him not.” (John 1:11) So, the ones who pierced Him are those who see Him in His coming, as mentioned in Rev 1:7.

Rev 1:7 continues by saying that all the “kindreds” (KJV) of the earth shall wail because of Him. The Greek word used here for “kindreds” is “phulbe”, which means tribes. This is referring specifically to the tribes of Israel, as is a common theme in the Revelation. (Before the tribes of Israel are judged, God gathers out “12,000” from each tribe into His bride. We speak of this later.) The word used in Rev 1:7 is not “ethnos”, meaning Gentile tribes or people groups, but “phulbe”, which is the term used for the tribes of Israel.

Rev 1:7 continues, saying “all the tribes of the earth”. The Greek word used here for earth is “ge” and this word means land or a region of earth and is also commonly used to refer to the land of Israel. (See Zechariah where the similar term from Hebrew is used for the land of Israel: “For behold the stone (of sacrifice symbolic of Christ’s death) . . . I will remove the iniquity of that *land* in one day.” Zech 3:9) So, Rev 1:7 is referring to the tribes of Israel. They are the ones who see Him at His coming and wail for Him, meaning they come under His judgement.

Rev 1:7 is actually derived from the Old Testament; from Zechariah chapter twelve and the recipients of the epistle would have recognized this:

And I shall pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as in the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddo. Zech 12:10-11

This passage first speaks of the blessing poured upon that generation of Israel, at Pentecost – the giving of the new covenant after Christ rose from the dead (see also Zech 13:1 for this). Zech 12:10-13 then speaks of the judgement upon the tribes of Israel in that same day, for those who pierced Him and did not repent. It says they shall mourn bitterly. The passage says that this occurs in Jerusalem and calls it Megiddo. Megiddo was a valley, in which an historic battle took place

and Israel suffered a great loss. Megiddo was then used as a symbol for great tribulation and bloodshed, e.g. the blood shall “come up unto the horse bridles” (Rev 14:20) is not a literal statement, but a symbol for a brutal slaughter.

So, Zechariah calls this judgement upon the tribes of Israel in Jerusalem “Megiddo”. This shows again that the Armageddon mentioned in Revelation (Rev 16:16) is God’s judgement against Jerusalem, those who pierced Him, from the twelve tribes of Israel. Armageddon literally means “Mount of Megiddo”. In Revelation it is a play on words, a joining of metaphors. The historic plain of Megiddo in Israel is not a mount, but a valley. Megiddo became a term used for God’s judgement and in Revelation that judgement is coming against Jerusalem and the temple mount (see Matt 24:1-3). The temple mount is now called mount-Megiddo, or Armageddon. It is now a mount of abomination.

Let’s continue by looking at further links between Rev 1:7 and Jerusalem. When Jesus was going to the cross, women of Jerusalem followed Him, “bewailing and lamenting” Him. Look at what Jesus said to them:

Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the breasts which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us’; and to the hills, ‘Cover us’. Luke 23:28-30

Jesus said the women and their children will experience terrible sorrow. He meant it would occur in that generation. Jesus used this language in Luke when speaking about the armies of Rome circling Jerusalem in that generation. He said to the disciples, “Woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck” (Luke 21:23, Matt 24:19). History shows that the Roman invasion of Jerusalem in AD 67-70 was its most brutal attack ever. They spared no one (man, woman or child) and showed no mercy.

Jesus also said to the women who cried for Him that they and their children would cry out, “Mountains fall on us, hills cover us.” Jesus said this would be in Jerusalem. This phrase is quoted in Revelation when referring to Armageddon:

And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. Rev 6:16 (See Rev 9:6, Is 2 & 3.)

So, according to Jesus’ statement to the women of Jerusalem, this passage in Revelation is referring to the tribes of Israel in Jerusalem, when the judgement of the Lamb of God shall come upon them. Why do they say “hide us from the wrath of the Lamb”? Because “Lamb” speaks of the shedding of His blood when He was pierced. This also refers to Zech 12:10. Those that pierced Him cry out to be hidden from his wrath. They mourn with great sorrow and bitterness. There is no doubt that this passage in Revelation and Armageddon are referring to God’s judgement on Jerusalem.

Rev 1:7 is therefore depicting the theme of Revelation as the judgement of the Son of God, coming against the tribes of Israel in Jerusalem. This then is what the book of Revelation is about.

Adam Clarke’s commentary:

Behold, he cometh with clouds—This relates to his coming to execute judgment on the enemies of his religion; perhaps to his coming to destroy Jerusalem, as he was to be particularly manifested to them that pierced him, which must mean the incredulous and rebellious Jews.

And all kindreds of the earth—Πασαι αι̅ φυλαι της γης: All the tribes of the land. By this the Jewish people are most evidently intended, and therefore the whole verse may be understood as predicting the destruction of the Jews; and is a presumptive proof that the Apocalypse was written before the final overthrow of the Jewish state.

John Gill's commentary:

Behold he cometh with clouds, John carries on the account of Christ in his kingly office, one branch of which is to execute judgment; and describes him by a future coming of his, which cannot be understood of his coming to take vengeance on the Jews, at the time of Jerusalem's destruction, though that is sometimes expressed in such language, and with such circumstances, as here; see Matthew 24:30; because if this revelation was made to John, in the latter end of Domitian's reign,

Here, Gill agrees the sense of the text in Rev 1:7 describes the judgement of Jerusalem in AD 70 (as Gill claims Matt 24:30 does), but he concludes that in Rev 1:7 this cannot be the case due to the presumption Revelation was written after AD 70. Subsequent to Gill's commentary a lot more research has been done on the date of Revelation (see below).

Jay Adams, *The Time is at Hand*:

The Revelation was written to a persecuted church about to face the most tremendous onslaught it had ever known. It would be absurd (not to say cruel) for John to write a letter to persons in such circumstances which not only ignores their difficulties, but reveals numerous details about events supposed to transpire hundreds of years in the future during a seven year tribulation period at the end of the church age.
The Time is at Hand, p. 49

The Date of Revelation

Here we discuss the likely date the Revelation was written.

Kenneth Gentry's book, *The Day Jerusalem Fell*, details comprehensive research on the date of Revelation, concluding on a date prior to AD 70. Gentry names 145 other authors who favour the early date of Revelation: including the famous church history researcher Philip

Schaff, Jay Adams, Greg Bahnsen, F.F. Bruce, Alfred Edersheim, John A. T. Robinson, Milton Terry and many more.

In *The Last days According to Jesus*, R.C. Sproul wrote:

If the book of Revelation was written after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, it seems strange that John would be silent about these cataclysmic events. Granted this is an argument from silence, but the silence is deafening. Not only does Revelation not mention the temple's destruction as a past event, it frequently refers to the temple as still standing. *Last Days*, 147-149

If Revelation was written before AD 70, it is more likely it had a "near" or "soon" coming application to events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. If it was written after AD 70, say around AD 95, it presents us with the problem, "What application did it have then to the seven churches of Asia in AD 95?" What would those who first received the letter thought it was referring to? Emperor Domitian, who reigned at the end of the first century, killed some Christians, but mainly those he felt were a threat to his position. Fair research shows he did not hold a policy of persecution towards Christians in his empire. So if there is no historical application of Revelation for the AD 95 church, then how would they have understood its message if it was written to them?

In Peter's second epistle (dated before AD 70) we see that there was already a tradition of New Testament scripture which included the Gospels and Paul's epistles. Recent scholars have revised earlier mistakes concerning the late dates of these books, including John's Gospel and John's Epistle. Old Testament content and Hebrew phrases (translated into Greek) in the four Gospels and John's Epistles show they were written in the temple era. It is now generally accepted that Hebrew was widely used by Jews in the first century. None of the New Testament books mention the destruction of the temple in AD 70, yet many of these books prophesied about it. The temple's destruction is certainly relevant to almost every book of the New Testament, so it is doubtful they would have failed to mention it if it had occurred. Early

church fathers (such as Barnabas) who wrote soon after AD 70 did mention the destruction of the temple and spoke of its significance for the church.

We know that Revelation was written when John was banished to the isle of Patmos because of the gospel (Rev 1:9). We also know that Nero, emperor of Rome until AD 68, strongly persecuted the Christians in the last three and half years of his reign and banished some of them to Patmos. Nero is the only Emperor who persecuted Christians as a policy in the first century of the church. Thus the oldest Syriac Bibles have in their introduction to Revelation: "The Revelation which was made by God to John the evangelist in the island of Patmos, into which he was thrown by Nero Caesar."

We can also consider the age of John. If he wrote the Revelation in the AD 60's, before the temple of Jerusalem was destroyed, John would have been in his 60's. Another theory is that John wrote Revelation in the AD 90's, during the reign of Emperor Domitian. This would make John over 90 years old at the time and some have taught that John died a natural death in old age. However, Jesus said John would be martyred (Matt 20:20-23). The very early church father Papius and the ancient Syriac church calendar both claimed John was martyred by the Jews prior to AD 70.

When we consider the date of Revelation we look at the external and internal evidence. The external evidence means the testimony of church fathers or historians. For the date Revelation was written, the external evidence is not conclusive. Phillip Schaff claims Tertullian and Jerome both point to a date prior to AD 70. Clement (AD 150-215) claimed all apostles died before AD 68. Epiphany (AD 315-403) claimed Revelation was written during Nero's reign. However, Irenaeus (second century) made an ambiguous statement which many have interpreted to mean Revelation was written during Domitian's reign. Rome followed this interpretation. Irenaeus made some wrong statements, such as Jesus was about fifty years old when He died (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book 2), so we can't base too much on one ambiguous statement among some other wrong statements.

On the matter of the internal evidence there is much more to say. Internal evidence means the evidence within the book of Revelation that may indicate when it was written. We know several things from reading the Revelation, of which we will state a few here:

1. Revelation was written when the Roman Empire was killing many Christians. This is shown by John's introduction and in Revelation chapter thirteen, where it says that the Roman Empire persecuted the church for three and a half years—which Nero did for the last three and a half years of his life (Rev 13:5-7). History shows that in the first two hundred and fifty years of the church, Nero was the only Roman Emperor who fits this description. He burnt Christians as street lights in Rome or slaughtered them in the Coliseum. Upon the advice of his Jewish wife, he blamed the Christians for the burning of Rome and thus began an empire wide policy against them.
2. Revelation was written when the Jews were killing many Christians. This is shown throughout the Revelation (e.g. Rev 2:9, 3:9, 11:7-8, 17:6). The Jews were the main persecutors of the church before the temple was destroyed. History shows that the Jewish persecution of the church ceased when the temple was destroyed in AD 70. See also 1 Thes 2:15-16. Factors like this show that Revelation could not have been written after AD 70.
3. Revelation chapter eleven makes it clear that the temple in Jerusalem was still standing when Revelation was written (Rev 11:1-2). It says that the temple would be trodden under foot by the Gentiles for three and a half years, which was fulfilled by the Roman army from AD 67-70 (Rev 11:2). The Roman army laid siege against Jerusalem in AD 67, which lasted for three and a half years exactly, when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed.
4. Revelation chapter thirteen and seventeen describe the seven heads of the beast as seven kings, saying that at the time John was writing Revelation, five kings had fallen, the sixth was then

reigning and the seventh would reign for only a short while (Rev 17:10). Secular and Jewish authors of that time said Julius Caesar was the first king of Rome and Nero was the sixth. Though Julius wasn't called king, he was the first in the Roman Empire to rule as a sovereign king and was given the title "dictator for life". His adopted son Augustus became the next ruler and thus Julius began the Caesar dynasty, of which Nero was the sixth. When Nero died the seventh king was Galba and he reigned for only seven months. This fits with Nero being king when John received the Revelation.

5. Revelation chapter thirteen claims that when the Revelation was written, the recipients of the epistle would be able to identify the beast by the number of his name, i.e. the beast was clearly alive then. The Hebrew and Latin alphabets gave a numeric value to each of the letters. In Hebrew "Caesar Nero" adds up to six hundred and sixty-six. In the early Latin translation of Revelation, Rev 13:18 reads "six-hundred and sixteen", which is the value of Caesar Nero in the Latin alphabet. The number six hundred and sixty-six cannot refer to a man alive today, because John said the people he was writing to in the first century would identify him by that number in their own life time (Rev 13:8). Nero fits this.
6. Rev 13:3 describes the mortal wound of the beast and its subsequent healing, which best fits the death of Nero and what looked at the time like the end of the Roman Empire. The empire was thrust into civil war and great upheaval for some years. Nero was the last of the Julius Caesar family line of kings. Commentators at the time believed it was the end of Rome. The world was shocked when Vespasian was able to stabilize the empire once again and worshipped the beast – referring to the emperor worship.
7. The wealth of Babylon and the scarlet and purple colours (Rev 17:4-5) best describe Jerusalem and the priests at that time. Jerusalem was at its peak in wealth and trade amongst the nations. The colours and stones describe the priest's garments.

Jerusalem was described as the second beast, or false prophet, which rode upon the back of the first beast (Rome). The second beast had lamb horns showing it was supposed to represent God, but was a harlot, meaning it had fallen away from Him (Rev 13:1, 17:5). “Beast” describes the true nature of the people.

There is a theory that John wrote later than the other apostles. Some say the Gospel of John was written more to a Greek or Gnostic audience. However, the content of the Gospel draws heavily on Old Testament passages and themes. The destruction of the temple is so significant to much of the content of the Gospel, that it is hard to believe John didn't mention it if he wrote after AD 70. After AD 70 and the dispersion or destruction of the Jews, the audience for church writings was more the non-Jewish or Greek thinkers. Similarly, the Hebrew grammatical style and Old Testament content in Revelation is significant evidence of early writing. This is the case with all the Gospels: their Hebrew grammatical style makes it impossible that they were edited by Greek Church fathers, as latter date theorists claim.

Both the external and internal evidence suggest that John wrote the Revelation before AD 70, when Nero was emperor of Rome and the priests were still functioning in the temple in Jerusalem.

The Warnings of Jesus

All the Old Testament prophets spoke about a coming judgement upon Jerusalem. Malachi said Elijah (John the Baptist, Matt 11:14) shall come before the “great and dreadful day of the Lord” (Mal 4:5). Daniel said the temple and the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed and called it the “abomination of desolation” (Dan 9:26-27). See also Is 2 & 3, Joel 2:31, Micah 1:1-4, Zech 14:1-2. Micah said Jerusalem shall be ploughed as a field, depicting its complete fall (Mic 3:12). Emperor Hadrian ploughed Jerusalem with oxen in AD 135.

The prophets spoke as lawyers, tabling witnesses from the law and pronouncing God's verdict. Isaiah announced many woes against Jerusalem and Judah, whom he called the Lord's vineyard (Is 2, 3, 4, 5). Jesus followed this pattern of prophecy against Jerusalem. Before

God carried out the prophets' verdict, He sent His Son as the final inspector. He "suddenly (came) to His temple" to refine and purge Israel (Mal 3:1-3). John the Baptist reiterated this purpose in Christ's coming (Matt 3:12). In the last period of His ministry, Jesus spoke of the judgement coming against Jerusalem in that generation.

After inspecting the temple Jesus gave parables about a fig tree that He cursed (Mk 11:14, Matt 21:19), about a fruitless tree that should be cut down (Luke 13:6-9), about the vineyard that would be given to another nation (Matt 21:33-46, see also Is 5:1-7), about the unfaithful son (Matt 21:28-32), about the unfaithful steward (Luke 16:1-13), and about the wedding feast with those invited (Israel) refusing to come (Matt 22:1-14).

In Matthew chapter twenty-three we see Jesus taking the part of the Old Testament prophets. He gathered His witnesses against Israel and delivered God's judgement against that generation. Matthew chapter twenty-three gives the seven woes of Jesus against the scribes and Pharisees. These seven woes correspond to the seven plagues, seven bowls, seven seals and the seven trumpets of Revelation. Each of these seven is against the sin of Jerusalem.

Revelation is a follow on from Jesus' pronouncements in Matthew chapter twenty-three. He announced the judgement before His crucifixion and then rose and went to heaven to carry it out. Apart from the gospel, Revelation is the next word that generation hears from Him. It is the same message He left them with when He came to the temple, but this time it is spoken from heaven, where Christ is in the glory of His kingdom.

The seven woes of Matthew chapter twenty-three are against the harlot church. Those in Jerusalem were the church of that day, the representatives of God's kingdom on earth. But instead of righteousness, they brought forth greed, covetousness and hypocrisy. As a harlot, they had apostatised against the faith. A harlot means unfaithfulness, and here it depicts one who was in relationship with God, but who then became unfaithful. It is spiritual adultery and often comes in terms of covetousness and lusts of other things (which Jesus

spoke concerning Israel in the parable of the Sower – Mk 4:14-20). Thus the harlot of Revelation is Jerusalem.

After announcing the seven woes in Matthew chapter twenty-three, Jesus gave the judgement against Jerusalem in that generation. Jesus was very clear that this judgement would come in that generation:

That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of the righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachias, whom you slew between the temple and the altar. Truly I say to you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . behold your house is left to you desolate. Matt 23:35-38

“Desolate” here refers to the prophecy of Daniel against Jerusalem, in Daniel chapter nine. In the next chapter (Matthew chapter twenty-four) Jesus uses the term from Daniel “the abomination of desolation”, claiming it would be fulfilled in that generation when the temple would be destroyed by Rome (Matt 24:15). This is the “great tribulation”, which occurred in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Revelation is an expanded description of Matthew chapter twenty-four, and Matthew chapter twenty-four is an expansion of Daniel chapter nine.

After passing this judgement against that generation in Jerusalem, Jesus and the disciples departed from the temple and His disciples pointed out the beauty of the temple. Jesus answered that the temple would be destroyed. The disciples then asked Jesus, “Tell us, when shall these things be and what shall be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?” (Matt 24:3)

The disciples only asked one question here, though Matthew gives it in three parts. Donald Hagner (*Fuller Theological University*) claimed in his *Matthew Commentary*, “The conceptual unity of the Parousia (coming) and the end of the age is indicated by the single Greek article governing both (Sharp’s Rule). The disciples thus were unable to separate the two events in their minds: the destruction of Jerusalem must entail the end of the age and the Parousia of Jesus . . .”

Mark and Luke both cite the same question as, “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?” (Mk 13:4, Luke 21:7) But let’s take the Matthew version. What were the disciples asking Jesus?

First, we have to look at the context. Jesus had just finished detailing the judgement against Jerusalem. He gave the parables, followed by the seven woes, followed by the announcement against that generation. Then He said the temple would be destroyed. So the disciples were asking when the temple would be destroyed, or more largely, “When is this judgement against Jerusalem and how will we know when it is at hand?”

The disciples used the word *parousia*, in the Greek. We saw earlier that in every Old Testament (Septuagint) passage *parousia* means the judgement of the Lord against a city or nation. Nowhere does the word mean the second coming of Jesus. In fact the disciples didn’t know anything about the second coming when they asked Jesus this question. At that time the disciples didn’t even know Jesus was dying for sin, rising again and ascending to heaven. Although He had told them, they didn’t understand. (Luke 24:25-26) So it was impossible for them to have been asking Jesus about His second coming.

The disciples were asking Jesus, “When shall the destruction of Jerusalem take place, what shall be the sign of Your coming judgement and of the end of the age?” This is not the end of the world. The Jews in Jesus’ time were expecting the coming of Messiah to set up a new age. By “last days”, they meant not the end of the world, but the transition from one age to the next. The Essene community, of Jesus’ day, were trying to hasten this by their frequent baptisms, fasting and spiritual warfare. They supposed that when the Messiah came He would conquer the Romans in Jerusalem. But instead He came as a child in Bethlehem and they didn’t recognize Him.

The apostles used the terms “end of the world” and “last days” in this sense. Peter said the Holy Spirit was poured out in the “last days”, now almost 2,000 years ago (Acts 2:17). Paul said the “ends of the world” had come in his day (1 Cor 10:11). The author of Hebrews

said Jesus' first coming was in the "last days" and at the "end of the world" (Heb 1:2, Heb 9:26). By these terms they meant literally "the consummation of the ages", the transition from the old to the new covenant. In the perspective of Israel's Mosaic history, they were certainly the "latter" or "last days". Peter said Christ came in the "last times" (1 Pet 1:20) and that the "end of all things is at hand", in his life time (1 Pet 4:7). In the wider sense the whole world is still in the "last days", as it remains under the wrath of God until Christ's second coming.

So in Matthew chapter twenty-four, Jesus speaks about the signs before the destruction of Jerusalem. He speaks of false Christ's, famine and earthquakes, all of which came to pass in that generation: as the Book of Acts and other authors from that period show us (see especially, *The Works of Flavius Josephus*). Then Jesus spoke about the clouds of judgement and lightning (Matt 24:29-30). We have already seen several passages from the Old Testament showing that, in the disciples' minds, Jesus was referring to His judgement against Jerusalem. There is no reason why we should interpret this language any differently today.

Jesus said that the end would come (i.e. the end of Jerusalem and temple) after the gospel had been preached in all the world (Matt 24:14). The word He used here for "world" means the Roman world (*oikoumene*); see also Luke 2:1, where "all the world" (Roman world) was taxed. Jesus' prophecy was fulfilled. After the gospel had gone out to the whole of the Roman world and reached all the Jewish Diaspora, then the end came. Paul confirmed the gospel had reached all the Roman world in that generation (Rom 1:8, Col 1:6, 23).

After describing all these things, including His coming against Jerusalem, Jesus concluded by saying "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." (Matt 24:34) There is no way that this can be misunderstood. He was speaking to His disciples and told them that their generation would not pass till all He spoke about had come to pass. Some commentators in our time have tried to make "this generation" mean something else, but that can't honestly be done. Others have said that Jesus was simply mistaken: but He wasn't.

Jesus said all this in the year AD 30 and by the year AD 70 all of it had come to pass. God gave the Jews one generation to hear the gospel and repent (fulfilling Luke 13:6-9), before He brought the judgement spoken by Christ and the prophets. But out of this judgement came blessing to the nations: believers dispersed around the world with the gospel message: “And He shall send His angels (messengers) with a great sound of the trumpet (gospel), and they shall gather in the elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (the whole world).” (Matt 24:31)

Occupy

As Isaiah said before, when detailing this judgement against Jerusalem that was to come, “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house (His family in Christ) shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it.” (Is 2:2) This is the age we are living in now – the gospel to the nations, and though the heathen rage and imagine a vain thing, Christ shall build His church and possess the nations. (Ps 2)

Rome’s final assault against Jerusalem was with balls of fire, according to Josephus, each weighing one talent (Rev 16:21). They burnt the city so terribly that today evidence of melted rocks is still there (Mic 1:4). Misunderstanding Matthew chapter twenty-four has been the cause of most of the false theories and speculations about end-times, none of which have come to pass, because the chapter has already been fulfilled. In our time, this misunderstanding has been one factor in causing the church to withdraw when we are called to occupy.

John Owen, speaking to the British parliament in the seventeenth century, put forward a vision for world gospel harvest and commented on Matt 24:29:

*Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened and the moon shall not give her light and the stars shall fall from heaven and the powers of heaven shall be shaken. **The Judaic state, in all the height and glory of it, was utterly consumed; so that all flesh, all the Jews, were***

in danger of utter destruction. (Referring to AD 70). John Owen, Sermon to the British Parliament: *The Advantage of the Kingdom of Christ in the Shaking of the Kingdoms of the World*

Many commentators in church history held this view of Matthew chapter twenty-four. John Gill, Evangelical commentator and mentor of Charles Spurgeon, wrote much on these matters. On Mark 13:26 Gill said:

And then shall they see the Son of man, etc. Not in person, but in the power of His wrath and vengeance; of which the Jews then (in AD 70) had a convincing evidence. *Commentary on Mark*

The well known Evangelical commentator Adam Clarke said on Matt 24:30:

Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man. The plain meaning of this is, that the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70) will be such a remarkable instance of divine vengeance, such a signal manifestation of Christ's power and glory, that all the **Jewish tribes** shall mourn and many will, in consequence of the manifestation of God, be led to acknowledge Christ and his religion. By '**land**', in the text, is evidently meant here, as in several other places, the **land of Judea** and its **tribes**, either its then inhabitants, or the Jewish people wherever found. *Commentary on Matthew*

Instead of Matthew chapter twenty-four speaking of the end of the church or end of the world, it introduces a great new epoch in which the church and gospel are no longer localised in Jerusalem, but begin to go out to all nations of the whole world. This Great Commission is emphasised in the end of each of the Gospels, where Jesus instructs that the gospel be taken to the whole world (Gr; *kosmos*) and this looks well beyond the Roman world (*oikoumene*). In the Great Commission, "age" denotes the new kingdom age in which the gospel goes to the entire world (Matt 28:20).



In 2006 the Hodges, along with several of their trained leaders, shifted their location to Jos, in northern Nigeria, where they co-founded a new college to reach out to the Islamic populations with the love of Jesus. Since then the college (Christian Faith Institute/CFI) has grown quickly, in the midst of very heavy persecution, burning of churches and loss of life. Many new churches are being established and the gospel is greatly expanding in this region. Pictured above is one the classes. Students and lecturers at CFI are from all Christian denominations.



In 2009 CFI held a pastors conference in Jos, with over 2,000 pastors attending. These came from all denominations and it was the first time such an event had taken place in this part of the nation. The purpose of the conference was to promote missions in the north and encourage and equip those already working in church planting. Delegates at this conference came from all over the northern states of Nigeria and from other neighbouring sub-Saharan (Sahel) nations.

The Birth of the Church

Old Out & New In

In this chapter we get to the main content of the Revelation. It describes the judgement of the old system and people who won't repent and the outworking of the new system in Christ, which then goes out to the nations.

This was spoken of by all the prophets. Hebrews quoted Haggai saying:

Once more I will shake not the earth only but also the heaven. And this word, *Yet once more*, signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and fear. Heb 12:26-28. (See also Hag 2:6-7.)

Back in Haggai's day, the Jews were discouraged when they returned from Babylon and the temple they rebuilt was scanty compared with Solomon's which had been destroyed. The Spirit said through Haggai that the temple that is coming in Christ is much more glorious and shall include all nations. Through Haggai, the Spirit told those of the old covenant, "Yet once, it is a little while, I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of the nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory says the Lord of hosts." This term *shake once more* (Hag 2:6 & Heb 12:26), refers to the new covenant. God shook the earth the first time when He established the old covenant (Ex 19:16-19):

And the Mount Sinai was altogether on smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked (shook) greatly. Ex 16:18

So the book of Hebrews follows Haggai's meaning when it indicates that this *second shaking* represents a *second covenant*, by which He

supersedes and removes the first covenant (Heb 10:9). This second shaking is spiritual, of which the first shaking was the earthly shadow: the second shaking representing the finished work of Christ, but also the removal of the old forms through judgement.

In this second shaking we have the second, or new, covenant, which shakes not only the earth, but also heaven; meaning this second covenant is better, superior, and effectual, everlasting, and that Jesus took His blood into heaven and cleansed the heavenly tabernacle. The blood of bulls and goats in the Old covenant never did that, and Aaron never entered heaven for us. The old covenant was earthly and dependent upon the flesh (human performance under the law) and was therefore weak. The new covenant is eternal, established by our High Priest in heaven. To think that God could actually do this: cleanse man's sin to the point that he can sit in heaven in the presence of God! This is what He did in Christ. This is truly earth (and heaven) shattering! Our dullness in hearing this only reveals the present state of our heart.

The shaking of heaven and earth also means a complete removal of the old system and a complete renovation of all things related to our relationship with God. The shaking of earth and heaven means a complete change of the old order. All the prophets spoke of this renewing to come in the new covenant.

John Newton (author of the hymn *Amazing Grace*) wrote concerning Hag 2:5-7:

But the language of prophecy is highly figurative . . . heaven and earth are used to denote the religious and political establishment of Israel; or, as we say, their constitution in church (worship) and state (kingdom). This, without doubt, is the primary sense here. The appearance of Messiah shall be connected with the total dissolution of the Jewish economy. The whole of their Levitical institution was fulfilled, superseded, and abrogated by Messiah, which was solemnly signified, by the rending of the vail of the temple from the top to the bottom at his death. And, a few

years afterward, the temple itself was destroyed; by which event, the worship of God according to the law, of which the temple service was an essential part, was rendered utterly impracticable. *The Works of John Newton* Vol. 4, sermon: *The Shaking of the Heavens and the Earth*, The Banner of Truth Trust 2007, p. 34-35. Brackets added.

Noting the proof of Moses and the prophetic scriptures in their fulfilment in the destruction of Israel's civil state, Newton goes on to say that God will in like manner shake heaven and earth, dissolve the frame and nature, and execute His threatened judgements upon all those who do not receive and obey the gospel (p.35). This, if you like, is one application we may take from the first century fulfilment of the scriptures; i.e. God's continued vindication of His church. And the dissolving of the earthly covenant (an earthly city, temple and priesthood, etc) does signify the destruction of this natural, earthly (i.e. sinful) age and all who cling to it (Gal 1:4, Eph 2:1-5). Thus, Christ shall "change" (Strong's #236, "to change, to exchange one thing for another, to transform") the heavens and the earth in Heb 1:12, relating to creation (Ps 102:25), where the same word is used by Paul in 1 Cor 15:51-52 to transform our physical bodies from corruption to in-corruption (see also Phil 3:21).

But in Heb 1:10-12, the author alludes to a change of covenant: "that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, you are my people." (Is 51:16) Albert Barnes comments on Is 51:16, "It refers to . . . the introduction of the new economy under the Messiah, and to all the great changes which would be consequent on that. This is compared with the work of forming the heavens, and laying the foundation of the earth. It would require almighty power; and it would produce so great changes, that it might be compared to the work of creating the universe out of nothing. Probably also the idea is included here that stability would be given to the true religion by what God was about to do permanency that might be compared with the firmness and duration of the heavens and the earth." The *Targum* (Aramaic translation of Old Testament) renders it: "In the shadow of my power have I protected thee, that I might raise up the people of whom it was said, that they should be multiplied as the

stars of heaven.” Christ’s finished work is the preeminent focal point of creation and history: from which all enemies and corruption shall be put under His feet.

Thus when both Haggai and Hebrews speak of this second shaking and harvest of souls in all nations they are not speaking of Christ’s second coming, but of His first coming. In showing the fulfilment of Hag 2:5-7, Heb 12:26-28 claims that the things shaken are removed, i.e. the “things that are made”: the old covenant tabernacle, garments, tabernacle furniture, incense, holy water and all the physical elements of worship and shadows of things to come. (See Albert Barnes’, Adam Clarke’s and John Gill’s commentaries as examples of many who claim the term “things that are made” refers to the Old Covenant.) The things to come are the eternal things, the substance of Christ, His indwelling Spirit and His eternal body, the church. The doing away of the old makes way for the new. Now in Christ, we receive a kingdom that is everlasting. This is a main theme of Hebrews, and of Revelation.

He takes away the first that He might establish the second.
Heb 10:9

In that He says, A new covenant, He has made the first old.
Now that which decays and waxes old is ready to vanish
away. Heb 8:13

Hebrews was written before the temple system in Jerusalem was destroyed. Some Hebrew Christians were going back to the old forms of worship, and the author of Hebrews warned them that the old forms were empty and about to vanish. Christ put an end to the old covenant by dying for sin and brought in the new covenant by His resurrection and giving His Spirit at Pentecost. God followed, bringing judgement on the unrepentant and destroying the old system in Jerusalem. Through Christ He made all things new.

The old system, or old covenant, is represented by the old heaven and old earth: the old order of things. The new heaven and new earth is the new covenant. It means all things are new in Christ. He is the “new and living way” (Heb 10:20). The new heaven and new earth are

not established at Christ's second coming, but at His first coming, by His shed blood. Christ comes again at the resurrection, but the new covenant, new order of our relationship with God in Christ, is already in effect.

Behold I will do a new thing . . . I give waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My people, My chosen. This people I have formed for Myself . . .
Is 43:19-21

. . . That I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say to Zion, you are My people. Is 51:16

For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered . . . Is 65:17

For as the new heavens and new earth, which I shall make, shall remain before Me, says the lord, so shall Your seed and Your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another (meaning newness of worship in Christ), and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh (all people groups) come to worship before Me, says the Lord.
Is 66:22-23

Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. Jer 31:31

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you . . . Ezek 36:26

Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are new. 2 Cor 5:17

As said earlier, when the prophets spoke of the new covenant they expressed its blessing using earthly symbols, such as the Levites representing the priesthood of all believers in Christ, the sabbath representing the worship of Christ by all Gentile nations (as it is today),

the blessings in the land representing the fullness of His Spirit, the long years of life representing the eternal nature of these blessings, the wiping away of our tears representing the taking away of our sorrow and the wolf and the lamb eating together representing our changed natures (see Is 65, 66). We know this is describing the true church because God calls it His holy mountain (Is 65:25):

For you are not come to a mount that can be touched (the old earthy one) . . . but you are come to mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn . . . Heb 12:18, 22-23

Mount Zion and the heavenly or new Jerusalem are the new work of God in Christ. The old or former work was the shadow, the lesson. Christ's work is now the fulfilment and eternal state.

When we fail to consider the Hebrew genre of scripture and intent of the Spirit in the prophets we misunderstand the biblical symbolism of the new heaven and new earth as the new covenant in Christ. These terms are not speaking of the removal of physical forms in creation. For example, "And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found" (Rev 16:20, Is 34:3) means the severity of the punishment and the removal of the old order when Jerusalem was judged. Dispensationalism claims this means literally all mountains of the earth vanish (such as Everest, etc.). But Dispensationalism also claims Jesus will reign after this on Mount Zion in Jerusalem for one thousand years. How can He do that when there are no mountains?

Revelation is about the putting away of the old bride, the old temple, the old Jerusalem in judgement; and the taking of the new bride, new temple and the new Jerusalem in Christ. Thus, even Jesus words that heaven and earth shall pass away, but His words will not pass away (Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33), were spoken in the context of the destruction of Jerusalem and the absolute sureness that what He had said would come to pass in that generation. It was a very solemn warning.

These promises were . . . to have their full accomplishment in the gospel church, militant first and at length triumphant. *The Jerusalem that is from above is free and is the mother of us all.* In the graces and comforts which believers have in and from Christ we are to look for this new heaven and new earth. It is in the gospel that *old things have passed away and all things have become new*, and by it that those who are in Christ are *new creatures*, 2 Cor 5:17. It was a mighty and happy change that was described Is 65:16 that *the former troubles were forgotten*; but here it rises much higher: even *the former world shall be forgotten and shall no more come into mind.* John Gill, Commentary on Isaiah 65:17-25

The new heavens—The new state of the church to be raised up under the Messiah. *Remain*—As I intend that shall abide, so there shall be a daily succession of true believers for the upholding of it. John Wesley, Commentary on Isaiah 66:22

The Bride

Revelation depicts two brides. One is the harlot, or unfaithful bride. The other is the virgin or chaste, faithful bride. Throughout the Old Testament we see the prophets relating to Israel in this marital sense. The northern tribes of Israel are given a bill of divorcement, and yet after this Jerusalem's sins are said to be worse (Jer 3:8). Judah divorced herself (Isa 50:1). So Ezekiel declares that God will judge Judah and Jerusalem as a woman that breaks wedlock (Ezek 16:38). God will bring all Judah's lovers against them to destroy their city (Ezek 16:37). History shows when Rome came against Jerusalem, kings of other nations from the Euphrates joined to help Rome. There was a confederacy of nations involved.

Hosea utilizes the bride theme, showing that though Israel and Judah have become harlots, yet God will take them back in a new covenant and once again be called their husband. Also those who are not a people (from the nations of the Gentiles) will be joined to His bride:

And in that day, says the Lord, you shall call Me Ishi (husband) . . . and I will betroth you to Me forever . . . and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them that were not My people, you are My people; and they shall answer, You are my God. Hos 2:16:23

Hosea also explains how this salvation of Israel will come about. He will not send a great leader or armed deliverer, as they were expecting. It will not be by a great battle in the “last days” of Jesus returning to smite the Arab nations. The expectations people have today of God saving through war are no different to the misconceptions the Jews had in Jesus’ day, that the Messiah would overthrow Rome:

But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen. Hos 1:7

The Messiah saves by His cross and by faith. He saves by a gospel and Lord that the proud cannot see. This is what Israel stumbled at and still today causes Zionists to stumble.

In the days that Jesus came, Israel was expecting this new age, the new covenant when God would once again become their husband. But they were expecting a soldier Messiah. Nevertheless, Jesus came as the promised bridegroom. John the Baptist declared Him the bridegroom (John 3:29). Jesus acknowledged He was the bridegroom and the celebrations had already begun (Matt 9:15, John 2:1-11). The wedding feast is the new covenant, consummated by the Spirit at the day of Pentecost. The wedding feast of Revelation is not something to come after this life (Rev 19:7). We are already eating of His flesh and drinking of His blood (John 6:53). We are already the bride of Christ.

The Exodus

In Revelation Jerusalem is consistently identified as the whore, the unfaithful bride (Rev 17:1, 5, 15, 16, 19:2).

And the dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. Rev 11:8

Sodom, Egypt and Babylon are names given to Jerusalem because of its spiritual adultery. But before God passes judgement upon Jerusalem, He calls out His people. "Hurt not the earth (land) . . . until we have sealed the servants of our God . . ." (Rev 7:3) The same thing was done in Ezek 9:4; God's judgement was held back until God's people had been sealed.

12,000 were sealed from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. This is not a literal number, but it represents completeness; none of God's people are lost (John 10:27-29). These 144,000 represent the firstfruits of the church; that is from the tribes of Israel (Rev 14:4). Salvation started with the Jews (John 4:22). After the firstfruits, the bride includes those from every nation, kindred, and tongue, and people (Rev 14:6).

These 144,000 are the new bride. They were faithful to God and follow the Lamb wherever he led (Rev 14:4). They didn't follow their own plan, careers or desires. They sought to do the will of the Father, as Christ also did. They sing a new song, which means their new life in Christ (Rev 14:3). They spread the gospel to the nations (Rev 14:6). The first apostles were among these first Jewish Christians.

The 144,000 are called out of Babylon:

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her My people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues. Rev 18:4

This term "come out" in the Greek refers back to the Exodus from Egypt. The new bride is called out of spiritual Egypt, the city of Jerusalem. Then the seven plagues of Egypt come upon Jerusalem. Notice that all the plagues listed in Revelation use the exact plagues of Egypt as symbols (Rev 15:1 onwards). So the new covenant bride comes out of Egypt and sings the song of Moses:

And they sang the song of Moses the servant of God . . . Rev 15:3

The song of Moses was the victory song Israel sang when they passed through the sea and escaped God's judgement upon Egypt (Ex 15:1). In Revelation the history of Israel comes full circle. God brought the first church (mixed multitude, Ex 12:38) out of Egypt, and now He brings His new bride out of Israel. Israel had committed the same sins as Egypt, and if God didn't judge Jerusalem He would have to apologize to Egypt. But He is righteous and so now Jerusalem receives of Egypt's plagues.

But the bride of the Lamb is redeemed by God and is given pure garments because of the Lamb and instead of the plagues, partakes of Christ in eternal relationship (Rev 19:7-9).

The Temple

Revelation deals with God's judgement against the old temple of Jerusalem, and then in the closing chapters describes the worship of God's people in the new temple of His body. The book brings the curtain down on the old and raises the curtain on the new church age. Revelation is God's judgement against the temple in Jerusalem and the presentation of the new temple in Christ.

In the Gospels Jesus declared that He was the temple and that He would replace the temple in Jerusalem after it was destroyed:

Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again. John 2:19

Stephen also stated that God does not dwell in a temple made of hands (Acts 7:48). The apostles declared that the tabernacle of David is today's church (Acts 15:16). Paul said that the church is the temple of God (Eph 2:21). Peter said new covenant believers are built up into a spiritual temple in Christ (1 Pet 2:5).

And the Jews' Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And

when He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables: And said to them that sold doves, Take these things away; make not My Father's house an house of merchandise. John 2:13-16

And He taught saying to them, Is it not written, My house shall be called by all nations the house of prayer? But you have made it a den of thieves. Mark 11:14

Here is the testimony against the church of that day. They were supposed to have sensitivity towards the Lord and towards the nations, in being a true witness of God's love and salvation. But instead they grew familiar with holy things and began to think more of their profit and business. We could easily say the same thing about the "church" of our own time today. This is one of the main lessons of Revelation for us.

The first beast of Revelation was Rome (Rev 13:1). The second beast was Jerusalem (Rev 13:8). This beastly nature is the exact opposite of the nature of Jesus and was present in the brutality of Rome and the religious people of Jerusalem, especially evident by the hard yokes they put on people, without caring for their needs and by the false trial of Jesus (Matt 23:4, Mark 3:1-6). They had no contrition of heart, not as the publican who "smote his breast" (Luke 18:13). This beastly nature is exactly what Jesus came to take out of us, or our religion is vain (Matt 12:14-21, James 1:27).

Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian writing to inform his Roman masters, described the debauchery of that day. The priests in the temple killed one another to get positions of influence and to control the immense riches that flowed through the temple. This is common beastly behaviour. We have it today when we betray one another for personal advantage or for the "common good", when we put the "vision" ahead of the person. Jerusalem had "horns like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon" (Rev 13:11). He (the beast) pretended to be holy, but inside had the nature of a serpent. It got much worse after Jesus left. They slew each other to control the trade in skins from the animal sacrifices and their offices were controlled by finances, politics and by agreements with Rome.

At this time also Jerusalem was not just under siege from Rome, but it was devastated by its own civil wars. There were many factions in Jerusalem and each had an army and they destroyed the provisions of the other so that they weakened Judah as a whole and made Rome's job much easier. Many Jews were brutally killed in the decade leading up to AD 70. Josephus describes all this in *The Wars of the Jews*. Josephus claimed the fall of the temple was a direct fulfilment of the words of Daniel and of Christ:

These men, therefore, trampled upon all the laws of man and laughed at the laws of God; and for the oracles of the prophets they ridiculed them . . . for there was a certain ancient oracle . . . that the city should be taken and the sanctuary burnt, by right of war, when a sedition should invade the Jews and their own hand should pollute the temple of God. Now while these zealots disbelieved these predictions, they made themselves the instruments of their accomplishment. Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, Book 4, Ch. 5. Sec. 3

Accordingly, the multitude of those that therein perished exceeded all the destructions that either men or God ever brought upon the world. B. 6, Ch. 9, Sec. 4

Jesus spoke about the Roman siege against Jerusalem and coming destruction of the temple:

In patience possess your souls (*regarding Jerusalem which persecutes you*). And when you (*that generation*) shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Jerusalem flee to the mountains . . . For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. Luke 21:19-22

"All things" refers to the writings of the prophets about the destruction of Jerusalem: these prophecies have been fulfilled in AD 70. We are not waiting for the abomination and armies against Jerusalem in our own

time. We should not be eager to go to war against Iran because of these prophecies today. There may be security issues governments respond to, but promoting war because of someone's subjective interpretation of prophecy is crazy! When the church does this it makes us like our enemies: war mongers.

And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall be trodden under foot for forty-two months (the three and a half year Roman siege). Rev 11:1-2

So Revelation chapter eleven refers to the temple in Jerusalem under siege for three and a half years and then destroyed by Rome, which was historically fulfilled. John's measuring of the temple (Rev 11:1) corresponds to Ezekiel measuring a temple of different dimensions, which is the new temple (church), out of which flows rivers of living waters to the nations of the world (Ezek 47:8-12, Hag 2:9, John 7:37-39). Of this new temple Zadok (the priest of David's tabernacle and who represents Christ – Acts 15:16) is the eternal high priest (2 Sam 20:25, Ezek 44:15, 1 Sam 2:35). This shows Christ's mission to the world through the church today.

Behold, the day of the Lord comes . . . For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken . . . And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem . . . Zech 14:1, 8

The glory of this latter house (temple) shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts, and in this place I will give peace . . . Hag 2:9

Here the old temple is taken down by Rome, their legions from nations all over their empire and their allies, and the new temple is established through Christ, and through Pentecost and the 144,000 the gospel goes out to the nations of the world.

During the lead up to the destruction of the temple God gives power to His two witnesses, (Rev 11:3) who are clothed in sackcloth, the clothing of prophets. The two witnesses are the law and the prophets, the two Old Testament witnesses to Christ (Rom 3:21), continuing in the ministry of the Jewish church. Two witnesses are required by law to establish a testimony (Deut 17:6) against the shedding of blood, but these witnesses represent the true Israel, the believing Jews, who gave their lives for the gospel.

They prophesied for one thousand two hundred and sixty days, which represent the days of persecution against them. True Israel (the woman or faithful bride) is also mentioned in Rev 12:6, where she was persecuted for one thousand two hundred and sixty days. This represents the three and a half year persecution of Nero, but also more generally the persecution of Jerusalem, the second beast and false prophet, against the church (Rev 13:11-12).

Here again we see the distinction made between the harlot and the true bride. The harlot is earthly Jerusalem who persecutes the true heavenly Jerusalem (see Gal 4:24-31 and especially vs. 29). The true bride are those who are faithful: the word witness and the word martyr come from the same Greek word: it means faithfulness unto death – Rev 12:11. The two witnesses are the two olive trees and candlesticks, which are the church (Rom 11:24, Rev 1:20, 11:4). The church is given the power of signs and wonders to preach the gospel. Heaven hears their prayer (Acts 4:23-31). The signs are expressed in terms of the signs given to the prophet and lawgiver Moses during the plagues of the first Exodus (Rev 11:6).

The witnesses are slain in the streets of Jerusalem, as Stephen was, and James son of Zebedee, James the Lord's brother and thousands of others. Three days (Rev 11:11) represents the resurrection: although all the power of the two beasts comes against the church it still lives and flourishes, ministering in the power of Christ's resurrection: it cannot be stamped out though the powers of hell come against it. At the end of their witness the temple in Jerusalem is destroyed and those who shed the martyrs' blood are brought into judgement according to the law (Deut 17:6).

Wherefore, behold, I send to you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them you shall kill and crucify; and some of them you shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city. Matt 23:34

Who (the Jews) killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us: and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sin always; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost. I Thess 2:15-16

So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast . . . And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, decked with gold and precious stones . . . And I saw the woman (harlot) drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus . . . Rev 17:3-4, 6

The harlot is the second beast and she rides upon the first beast, which is Rome, from whom she takes license to kill Jesus and persecute the saints. Rome is scarlet coloured, their colour of royalty, but the harlot was also purple and scarlet coloured, the colours of the priestly garments of the ephod, the turban and sash; and the precious stones of the ephod, and the temple filled with gold. Rev 17:18 calls the harlot “that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth” (land, referring to the rulers, princes and priests of Israel—see Daniel, where princes of Israel refers to priests; also see Rev 11:8 where that “great city” is Jerusalem).

Therefore I say to you, the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. Matt 21:43

The temple is shifted from earthly Jerusalem to heavenly Jerusalem. The nation bringing forth the fruits is not another nation of man, but the church, the new race or creation, born on the day of Pentecost: “Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in a day? Or shall a nation be born at

once? For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children” (Is 66:8, Gal 4:19, 1 Pet 2:9).

After the old temple is destroyed, the new temple is seen at the end of chapter eleven, and the ark in heaven, both ark and temple represent Jesus. This means we live by the heavenly realities in Christ, and no longer by the shadow of these things in old Jerusalem.

Which was a figure for the time then present . . . but Christ being come as a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building. Heb 9:9, 11

Revelation repeats its themes throughout the book, unfolding the events with more details. Details, like Rome’s devastation of the trees in Israel to build its war machines, show how the land was completely ruined (Rev 8:7). Rev 16:16 describes once again the attack of Rome and its allies against the temple in the battle of Armageddon and the temple’s destruction. Rome’s allies were from many nations, but included kingdoms on the Upper Euphrates (Commagene and Emesa; an Arabian sheik).

And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared . . . And He gathered them together into the place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. Rev 16:12, 16

As explained earlier Armageddon refers to the temple mount in old Jerusalem. It is a Hebrew word meaning mount of Megiddo. Megiddo was a valley, a battlefield where Israel and Judah fought many battles and a place of Judgement, but “mount” is used in Revelation to symbolise the temple mount. As Jesus had earlier said, the mount was now a mount of abomination, a den of thieves.

In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as in the morning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddo. Zech 12:11

Hadadrimmon was where Judah held a national day of weeping for the slaughter when King Josiah was killed trying to stop the Egyptians. Armageddon is therefore against the Jews of Jerusalem (2 Chron 35:22-25), a symbol of judgement, mourning and weeping in Judah and one of the main themes of Revelation. Hadadrimmon is the name of two Syrian idols, so it also describes the pollution of the Jerusalem temple and “church”.

As history shows, Rome reigned down fire stones on the temple, each one weighing one talent, fulfilling Rev 16:21. The siege took place during the feast of Passover, so the temple area was filled with people from all nations. This added to the size of the slaughter and Rome killed them all.

And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great. Rev 16:21

After this, Revelation describes the new temple, especially in the last two chapters. The meaning of the symbolism in these end chapters relates to the eternal church redeemed by Christ’s blood. The end chapters repeat much of the symbolism of Isaiah, describing the eternal blessings of our current fellowship in Christ’s body.

In the new covenant there is no temple made with hands. Because sin has been put away, access to God through Christ is now open. The existence of a temple testifies that sin remains and therefore ceremony must continue to signify that one day sin shall be removed (Heb 9:8). But now our sins have been put away as far as the east is from the west and will be remembered no more and we have direct access to the Father through Christ:

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh . . . let us draw near . . . Heb 10:19-22

In the new Jerusalem there is no temple building:

And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. Rev 21:22

Jerusalem

The Revelation is not separate to the rest of the Bible. It follows the prophetic flow of the Old Testament concerning Jerusalem. It follows the teaching of the apostles and of the book of Hebrews, in identifying the end of the old covenant era and the new Jerusalem, who is Christ, for all nations.

In this vein Jesus said, “For where two or three are gathered, . . . there am I in the midst of them.” Jesus claimed that worship was no longer located in the geographical centre, but in Him. Again to the woman at the well, Jesus said, “Woman, believe me, the hour comes, when you shall worship the Father neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem . . . but the hour comes when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth . . .” (John 4:21, 23)

Jesus came that we would be with Him in the Father, in union and fellowship. He was not speaking of a geographical place. In John chapter fourteen Jesus said that by His death and resurrection He was preparing a place for us in God’s family, so that we would be where He was. He meant that He is in the Father. He said, “I am the way” to the Father (John 14:6). “Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?” (John 14:10)

Yet a little while, and the world will see Me no more, but you shall see Me. Because I live, you shall live also. At that day you shall know that I am in the Father, and you in Me, and I in you. John 14:19-20

Pentecost! The gift of the Spirit! Rivers in the wilderness! Union with Him and the Father! Fellowship! Family! This is why Jesus came, to shed His blood, to bring us into the fellowship He has with the Father, through the gift of His Spirit who comes to dwell within us. “That

which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.” (1 John 1:3)

We go wrong with Revelation when we do not see it as a Revelation of Jesus and our union with Him, but instead see it as describing a future geographical event. The whole book of Revelation reveals the sovereign rule of Christ over sin, over the beastly Adamic nature of man and the world. It reveals the victory of the gospel over Satan. Satan didn't fall from heaven in a pre-creation rebellion. His “fall from heaven” is symbolic of a fall from power over man, due to Jesus redeeming us from the law. The “war in heaven” is symbolic of the victory of the cross:

And that great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceived the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of the brethren has been cast out, which accused them before God day and night. Rev 12:9-10

Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances (law) that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross. And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Col 2:14-15

John the Baptist and Jesus came, preaching, “Repent, for the kingdom is at hand.” It was at hand for Israel and about to come upon all nations. So when the one who deceived the nations was cast down, the gospel went out to the whole world and millions of Gentiles began to flow into the kingdom. The cross of Christ shifted the kingdom from Jerusalem to encompass all nations.

Thus when Jerusalem falls, Rev 11:15 says, “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ” . . . “Ask of me

and I shall give you the heathen for your inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession” (Ps 2:8). Heb 1:6-9 describes the coronation of Christ after His ascension to heaven, as Zechariah declares, “And the Lord shall be king over all the earth” (Zech 14:9), and the Gentiles come into His kingdom.

This is the focus of Revelation, just as it is of the book of Acts: a widening of the mission and sovereignty of the Son of David from Jerusalem to all the kingdoms of the earth. This is why our missionary endeavours are so blessed today, and why we expect much more blessing in the days ahead.

Even before this missionary endeavour began among the nations, Jesus said it to be the reason He came:

But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. Luke 11:20

And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject to us through your name. And He said to them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Luke 10:17-18

Now is the judgement of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth (on the cross), will draw all men (all nations) to Me. John 12:31-32

So this is the subject of the Revelation. And this is heightened in the last few chapters, which reveal in symbolic form the person of Jesus, the tree of life. The last chapters of Revelation reveal who Jesus is today. He is the new Jerusalem, the healing of the nations. Jesus accomplishes what the old Jerusalem failed to do; to bring His salvation to embrace all the nations He loves.

For he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker was God. Heb 11:10

But they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God

(because they grieve for the sin of the earthly Jerusalem);
for He has prepared for them a city. Heb 11:16

But you are come to mount Zion and to the city of the living
God . . . to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant and to
the blood of sprinkling . . . Heb 12:22-24

Jesus is that city with foundations. He is the subject of the Revelation. He is the sovereign King of kings and Lord of lords, and the city of the new Jerusalem. The new Jerusalem is the substance, of which the old Jerusalem was the shadow. We are never going back to the shadow: “Therefore leaving the (beginning) principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection . . .” (Heb 6:1), meaning leaving the shadow of the old covenant, let us embrace the fulfilment of it in the person of Christ.

Thus all of the apostles, in their Gospels and epistles, show us that the gospel starts with the Jews, with the 144,000, and then flows out to the whole world. Therefore, all the Gospels end with the Great Commission, to all nations of the world. All of the prophets also have this flow. Zechariah (13 & 14), for example, finishes as Isaiah does, with the crucifixion of Jesus and then the new covenant going out from the destroyed Jerusalem, to all nations of the earth. Here the mount of Olives represents the new covenant (Ezek 11:19-23), the coming of the Lord with His saints (angels, not the church), also represents the new covenant (see His coming with His saints on mount Sinai for the old covenant—Deut 33:2, Ps 68:17, Dan 7:10, Mark 8:38, Acts 7:53, Gal 3:19, Heb 2:2, Rev 5:11, 9:16).

Not Replacement Theology

In preaching the new Jerusalem we are not preaching “replacement theology”: we are not preaching that the Gentiles or church replaced Israel. The first apostles taught “inclusion theology”, where the Gentile believers are included in the commonwealth of Israel, as joint heirs. According to Paul, this inclusion was the mystery now revealed – “mystery”, meaning the message of the prophets now fulfilled in Christ (Eph 2:11-13, Eph 3:3-7). It’s no longer a mystery awaiting fulfilment.

The concept that true Israel represents the elect of God and not the whole physical seed or nation, is not a new covenant innovation. The main thrust of Paul's teaching in Romans chapters nine through eleven is to show that the concept of the true Israel, or true church, was always God's way right from Abrahamic times, and that God has not cast off Israel, but included them in the new covenant, to keep and fulfil His promises to them ("the sure mercies of David"), but He has also grafted the Gentiles in.

Ho! Everyone that thirsts, come to the waters . . . and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies (promises to) David . . . Behold, you shall call a nation that you did not know, and nations that did not know you shall run to you . . . Isaiah 55:1-5

The promises to Israel are everlasting in Christ. They will never pass away, and Israel shall always be a nation before God, albeit in Christ. That is why the twelve Jewish apostles today sit upon thrones in the new Jerusalem. They reign with Him. Christ is their head and He sits on the throne of David now in heaven to fulfil His promises. And Isaiah says that the Gentile nations also flow in.

So we are not speaking of the casting off of Israel, but the fulfilment of their promises in Christ. All the prophets said that God would judge Israel and Jerusalem, but also that He would restore them to Himself through Christ: i.e. through the gospel and church. God does not have two separate people, but one race in Christ in the church. This is what the apostles taught concerning the message of the Old Testament prophets (Eph 2:14).

Babylon

And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying Babylon the great is fallen . . . Rev 18:2

Revelation, although apparently written in Greek, as a Hebrew document in its authorship, its grammatical style and its constant drawing on the

Old Testament prophets, could not have been concerned with any other city than its own Jerusalem. “Babylon” in Revelation refers to Jerusalem, just as Revelation said Egypt and Sodom were Jerusalem (Rev 11:8). It was common in the Old Testament to call Jerusalem after the name of other sinful cities. There are countless parallels between Babylon in Revelation and Jerusalem in the prophets, and it is not possible to go through all here. We will just choose a few.

Babylon had a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and fornications (Rev 17:4). John the Baptist, Jesus, Paul, Peter (1 Pet 4:7, 4:17, 2 Pet 3:10-13) and Jude (Jude 14) had all said that the cup of Jerusalem was full and that judgment was about to come upon the city. Ezekiel had spoken in much detail about the abominations and demons in Jerusalem. Ezekiel and Jeremiah described the temple as being full of idols and demons (Ezekiel 8 & 9, Jer 32:34). Nothing changed despite the many reprieves from judgment.

We have already described the colours of Babylon in Revelation, to be those of the Hebrew priestly robes (Ex 28:5-6, 33, Rev 17:4). The combination of words used in Revelation to describe the colours of the harlot, are identical to those in the Septuagint Old Testament in describing the priests’ colours. The same colours are also found in the tapestry of the tabernacle. In Rev 17:16 the beast makes the whore desolate and naked. In Ezek 16:35-41 judgement upon the harlot Jerusalem will make her naked and in Matt 23:38 judgement will leave her house (temple) desolate.

In Jer 3:3 Judah is said to have a whore’s forehead. In Rev 17:5 it reads, “And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery Babylon the great, the mother of harlots . . .” Is 1:21 identifies Jerusalem and her rulers as the harlot. In Rev 17:16 it is said that Rome hates the whore and makes her desolate, naked and eats her up. So Babylon can’t be Rome, but rather it describes Rome destroying Jerusalem. Rev 18:2 again says Babylon is full of demons, and this was the judgement of Jesus in Matt 12:38-45 when concluding it shall be filled with demons: Jesus said Jerusalem was cleansed by God, but by unfaithfulness it became worse than other nations.

Speaking of Babylon, Revelation says “the light of the candle shall no longer shine in you” (Rev 18:23). This is a quote from Jer 25:10, where it refers to Jerusalem. It means the kingdom (light) is taken from Jerusalem. Revelation continues, saying, “and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in you” (Rev 18:23). This is a quote from Jer 7:34 and 16:9, and once again refers to Jerusalem. It means the bride of Christ is now the heavenly Jerusalem.

Revelation calls Babylon “that great city” and the city that killed the saints, both terms Revelation used for Jerusalem (Rev 11:8). In speaking of that great city the nations of the earth bewail, Revelation chapter eighteen means Jerusalem. This is a reference to Jer 22:8: “And many nations shall pass by this city, and they shall say every man to his neighbour, Why has the Lord done this to this great city?” The terms used in Revelation chapter eighteen are from the prophets, where they refer to Jerusalem. Compare also Rev 17:16 with Lam 1:8 and Ezek 16:41.

It is possible that Babylon was a term the church used for Jerusalem. Peter wrote, “the church that is at Babylon . . . salutes you” (1 Pet 5:13). Peter was an apostle of Jerusalem, as Paul mentioned (Gal 1:18), and so he was most likely sending greetings from Jerusalem. There is no mention in the scriptures of Peter ever being in Rome or in the region of old Babylon. The early church did not refer to Rome metaphorically as Babylon, nor was Rome a major trade centre as Revelation depicts “Babylon”. Jerusalem was. Paul’s team members (probably Priscilla and Aquila) started the Roman churches, which is why Paul wrote the epistle of Romans.

Revelation chapter eighteen describes the immense wealth of Babylon, and the merchants, and ships. When Jerusalem fell it was at its richest state ever in its history, according to Josephus and others. Its trade as a religious centre brought it immense wealth from all over the Roman Empire. Jesus testified to this trade in the temple. It increased much more after His time. The Diaspora brought wealth to the city at every one of the religious feasts. Its temple was full of gold, especially as the war approached. Josephus said the priests also hid their personal

gold in the rooms of the temple, hoping Rome would not destroy it. Jerusalem was a trade centre for the Eastern Mediterranean shipping. The writings and records from that time show that Jerusalem was very rich in all the products listed in Rev 18:12-19.

And in her was found the blood of the prophets, and of the saints,
and of all that were slain upon the earth (land). Rev 18:24

It was Jerusalem that killed the prophets of the Old Testament and the believers in Christ.

New Jerusalem

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. Rev 21:1-3

With the removal of the old Jerusalem, Revelation goes into a more detailed look at the new Jerusalem, the church of Jesus Christ. The first heaven and first earth had passed away. This is the old covenant. It was the cross of Jesus that fulfilled and finished the old covenant. Revelation looks at the outworking of that in the birth of the church, the fall of Jerusalem and the old covenant worship and the mission of the church to the world.

“No more sea” speaks of the tumultuous nature of unregenerate man, out of which the beast came. That nature is transformed by Christ.

The new Jerusalem coming down from heaven is the church, a whole new way of worshiping God, where the Jewish and Gentile believers are one (“and they shall be His people” – Rev 21:3, Jer 31:34, Hos 2:23, Rom 9:26). It took the early church a long time to grasp and understand this. They were still clinging to the old, which is why the

book of Hebrews and much of Romans and Galatians were written. With the removal of the temple, a whole new understanding came and the church was for the first time free of its identification with Judaism.

And He said to me, It is done. I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to him that thirsts, of the fountain of the water of life freely. Rev 21:6 (See also Is 55:1)

This is the new covenant, where we receive the Spirit. When John the Baptist sent messengers to ask if Jesus was the Messiah, Jesus answered from Isaiah chapter thirty-five, which speaks of the messianic rivers in the wilderness. That Jesus had already fulfilled the signs of the messianic kingdom then, was proof of who He is:

Go and show John again those things which you hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. Matt 11:4-5

These are the signs of the kingdom, and they still are today. The whole gospel of John speaks of this water for those who thirst: the kingdom age in which we now live. "But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (hadn't yet ascended to the Father), (John 7:39).

The wilderness and the solitary place (those in need under the law) shall be glad for them: and the desert (those without spiritual life) shall rejoice, and blossom as a rose . . . then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, then shall the lame man leap . . . and streams in the desert . . . And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called a way of holiness; and the unclean shall not pass over it . . . no lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast . . . The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs of everlasting joy and gladness and sorrow shall flee away. Is 35:1, 5-6, 8-10

This is all in Revelation chapters twenty-one and twenty-two. We are not waiting for this to be fulfilled, unless we are not yet known by Christ.

All the prophets said that God would purify and cleanse Israel. Zechariah, writing in apocalyptic style, says that no Canaanite shall enter the new Jerusalem, but it shall be holiness to the Lord (Zech 14:20-21). This is not literal Canaanites, for Jesus said they would come from the east and the west into His kingdom. It is a metaphorical term for the unclean. In some translations “traders” is used instead of Canaanite. Jesus cleansed the temple of the traders, (Mark 11: 15-17, John 2:13-17) who were making merchandise of God’s house, when it is to be a house of prayer. This relates to profiteering in today’s church just as much. Peter and Jude said the same of the church then.

When we speak of the church in Revelation, we are not speaking of the institutional church, but the true body of Christ. Only those cleansed by the blood of Christ enter the church. This was made clear by the Holy Spirit when the church began, in cases such as Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11).

And you that were before alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet He has now reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblemished and unreprouable in His sight. Col 1:21-22

There are no unclean in His church. No one who is not washed in His blood enters His body.

Blessed are they that do His commandments that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without (*outside His body*) are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loves and makes a lie. Rev 22:14-15

This is not speaking about entering heaven, but entering the new Jerusalem and partaking of the tree of life and the Spirit of God by faith, being in the church. It is speaking about our current fellowship

with the Lord and eating of His flesh and drinking of His blood. We transfer the meaning of these chapters to heaven when we don't understand the reality of His presence now.

Revelation chapter twenty-one goes on to describe the city of the new Jerusalem, with its foundations and walls. These are not literal. The walls are about five times higher than today's space shuttles fly. And in heaven you don't need walls because there are no thieves outside. The walls speak of our security in Christ. Every aspect of the description of the new Jerusalem has relevance for who Jesus is to us today.

But these things don't stop in this life. The church is eternal. Though even now our sorrow is truly taken away in Christ, and though even now the curse is taken away in Christ, when Christ comes at the end of this world, at the resurrection, death and corruption shall be swallowed up. What we already have in Christ, in this new heaven and new earth of which we are already a part, takes on its final phase, as Christ puts the last enemy under His feet.

Here the *world to come* is not that which we hope for after the resurrection, but that which began at the beginning of Christ's kingdom; but it will no doubt have its full accomplishment in our final redemption (resurrection).

Calvin, *Commentary on Hebrews 2:5*

At that point He presents the kingdom, the church, to the Father. After the harvest of the nations is finished and complete, He presents the church, His bride, to the Father without spot or blemish in His blood, as the culmination of history. So the new heaven and new earth also represents this final state, with corruption and death taken away.

Our doctrine is Jesus, not a time-chart or series of prophetic events. We preach the new covenant and His change in our hearts and natures. This gospel of renewal is the subject of all the books of the Bible. It may not tickle ears in evangelistic meetings, but the truth in Christ is far more exciting, and the church needs to get back to the basics and power of the gospel, which only makes us new. That is why we write on Revelation. Revelation should be used in the pulpits today, not in a

speculative end-times way, but so the power of Christ, in transforming His people, may be known. Open the book of Revelation to preach Christ's salvation from sin.

The Millennium

From Revelation chapter nineteen to the end of Revelation we see the shift from old Jerusalem, the old bride, kingdom and temple, into the new Jerusalem, new bride, kingdom and temple, in somewhat more detail. Christ destroys Jerusalem and takes up the kingdom in His church. Chapter nineteen begins with the hymns of the redeemed, praising God for His righteous acts in judging Jerusalem: "the great whore" and He "avenged the blood of his servants at her hand". (Rev 19:2) In Rev 19:7-9 the new bride is seen, who is ready for the marriage, having the spotless garments provided by the Lamb. This depicts Jesus' statement, that many shall come and sit with Abraham (eat at Christ's table by faith) from the east and the west, while the children of the kingdom will be cast out. (Matt 8:11-12)

Then John records a series of "And I saw . . ."s (beginning in Rev 19:11). There are eight in all: visions which detail Christ's reign over the nations. These visions are not completely chronological, but each one depicts some aspect of His kingdom. In the first vision, Christ is seen coming on a horse, which indicates judgement and war. The imagery of Ezekiel is employed, where Gog and Magog, who came against God's people, were offered instead to the birds of the air, which ate their flesh. (Ezek 39:17-18) God's people in Revelation are His church, and those who come against Christ and His church are Jerusalem and Nero. The death of Nero, civil war in the Roman Empire, civil war in Israel, the death of several high priests, and then the destruction of Jerusalem, leave millions of people dead and taken into slavery. This was the worst judgement Israel had ever known.

The second vision regarding Christ's kingdom is the millennium. (Rev 20:1-10) Literally it means 1,000 years. It depicts the reign of Christ over the nations. This vision overlaps the first vision: as Christ's reign began before Jerusalem's fall, and martyrs are seen already reigning with Him. Satan is said to be bound by Christ's conquest: "that he

should deceive the nations no more.” (Rev 20:3) This is the evangelical motif of Christ’s kingdom. Satan’s power is taken from him by Christ on the cross, to initiate a worldwide harvest of souls. “No man can enter into a strong man’s house and spoil his goods, unless he will first bind the strong man.” (Mark 3:27) “Having spoiled principalities and powers . . .” (Col 2:15)

One thousand is not a literal period of time, but a Hebrew figure of speech meaning a long period and represents the full sovereignty of Christ’s reign. This “1,000 years” is not mentioned anywhere else in scripture, but only here in this highly symbolic book. To make a doctrine of a literal millennium from this one mention does seem precarious. God owns “the cattle on a thousand hills” (Ps 50:10). This common Hebrew expression in this case means, “The earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof” (Ps 24:1). It is inaccurate to interpret such phrases in a Western sense, claiming that the number is literal and that for any hill over the number 1,000, God does not own those cattle. It means God is Lord over all. In Revelation, it means Christ is Lord of all and exercises full sovereignty over all things, including Satan.

It is also good to refute the claim that the early church fathers (after the first apostles) were pre-millennial. We don’t have space here to list all the fathers, but the earliest document, the Didache, was not pre-millennial, neither was the Epistle of Barnabas, Clement of Rome, the Pastor of Hermas, Ignatius or Papias (all around the turn of the first century). We advise you do proper research into this matter yourself: we list some of the early church fathers’ comments on the millennium later in this book (see the section *A Vision of Christ’s Kingdom*).

Revelation chapter twenty depicts the reign of Christ, where great numbers from the *Gentile nations* (the *sea* in Ezek 47:8-9) flow into His kingdom. In the new covenant Satan is no longer able to keep them deceived in their sin. What was present in the Old Testament as a shadow (Gentiles Rahab, Ruth and others coming into God’s true Israel) is now fulfilled on a massive scale. Christ, through the gospel, becomes healing to the nations (Ezek 47:12).

In the next vision John shows the millennium in more detail. Those who are born again (the first resurrection) reign with Christ in his church/bride. The second death, after the final judgement, has no power on these. (Rev 20:4-6) Revelation here speaks of two resurrections, the first being from spiritual death at new birth, and the second the bodily resurrection at the end of the world, at the second coming of Christ. Jesus speaks of both of these resurrections in John 5:25-29, and Paul speaks of the first in Eph 2:1-5 and the second in First Corinthians chapter fifteen.

The next part of the vision describes Gog and Magog. They are the enemies of God and His people. In Rev 19:17-18 (see Ezek 39:17-18) they are the beast and false prophet. After their demise, John uses Gog and Magog as a symbol of the enemies of the church (“the beloved city”, Rev 20:9) through the millennium ages: i.e. church history. Gog and Magog don’t appear just once at the end of church history. They were depicted in chapter nineteen as Rome and Jerusalem. There have been many enemies since. The prophets were clear that Christ’s kingdom expands during the ongoing presence of His enemies, though Satan is bound in any effective power in stopping the harvest (“the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”). Revelation depicts the sum of the prophets’ message: though Satan is active he has no authority in Christ’s sovereign reign.

The “Psalm two scenario” relates to the millennium: *millennium* being a symbolic term for Christ’s kingdom. Psalm two is a coronation Psalm. In the psalm “the heathen rage against the Lord and His Christ”. This had its fulfilment in Acts 4:25-26, where it is quoted by Peter, after Christ’s ascension and coronation, when the rulers of Jerusalem tried to prevent Christ’s rule over them (see also Luke 19:14). This is Gog and Magog. But God says “yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion” (heavenly Jerusalem). The outcome is that God laughs and has them in derision (Ps2:4): He discomferts them from heaven with His wrath, (v5) and “breaks them in pieces with a rod of iron” (v9): rains fire down from heaven (Rev 20:9). As Christ’s reign extends to the ends of the earth, Psalm two is a warning to all those are drawn out by Satan against Him.

Many pre-millennialists, a-millennialists and post-millennialists have seen these visions in a strict chronological sense, believing Gog and Magog appear only once after Christ's reign, and then the new heaven and new earth in Rev 21-22 occur after that and are not related to our current church experience. However, in all the prophets the themes that are in Rev 21-22 spoke of the church, both now in Christ reaching the nations, and also its eternal state after the resurrection. Jesus Himself said this, in interpreting Ezekiel's temple imagery as our current experience in the church, and Isaiah's eternal city imagery as fulfilled in Jesus' ministry. (John 7:36-39 – Ezek 47, Luke 7:22-23 – Is 35) To hold a strict chronology instead of allowing Revelation to deliver up its themes, results in a preoccupation with forcing events into "time-line" charts, rather than the intended pastoral message about Christ's sovereignty. There are many interpreters who see Gog and Magog symbolically.

The intended meaning in Revelation of Gog and Magog is drawn from Ezekiel. Ezekiel spoke of Gog and Magog coming against Israel when they dwelt in their land in peace and security. The message of Ezekiel as a whole was about the judgement of old Jerusalem and the restoration of true Israel through a new Jerusalem: the same theme as Revelation. Ezekiel lived during the Old Testament captivity in Babylon. His message of restoration had two parts. Firstly, Israel was to be gathered from Babylon, the land of their captivity, in type: their real captivity being their sin. They rebuild the temple, reinitiate the priesthood and mark out the land according to their tribes and dwell safely: all of which point to the priesthood, reign and inheritance of Christ through His church, from where rivers of living water issue out to heal the nations. (Ezek 47:1-12, John 7:37-39, Eph 2:21-22, 1 Pet 2:5-9)

After captivity in Babylon, Israel's restoration to their land seemed shaky: "Will God continue to stand by us and protect us?" God brought Gog, Magog and their allies against Israel, and He then defeated these enemies to give Israel this assurance. (Ezek 38-39) Commentaries locate these groups as existing then north of Israel and identify this battle as occurring during the Intertestamental period: i.e. prior to the birth of Christ. God defeated Gog and Magog in a complete rout, demonstrating His promise to deliver true Israel through His coming

Son. By the defeat of Gog and Magog, Israel was assured God had a restoration plan for them, which Ezekiel showed symbolically was to be fulfilled through Messiah and His church: "So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day forward." (Ezek 39:22) i.e. from the day He defeated Gog and Magog as an assurance of His coming redeemer.

So in Revelation, God is shown bringing Gog and Magog against His people to illustrate His intention to deliver and build His church. This is the stated theme in Ezekiel and so the symbol of Gog and Magog has the same intention as employed in Revelation. The release of Satan depicts God using him in this manner. It is not a once off event at the end of history, but symbolic of God's continued protection of His people throughout church history and the eternal nature of that security. Zech 14:3, 12 refers to restored Israel, where God fights against those nations (Gog and Magog) and defends and builds His church. In every generation people have tried to identify Gog and Magog and claim the end is near. Luther believed they were the Turks; lately it was believed they were the Russians. They do not refer to any one specific group of people.

The last two of John's visions in this section, beginning with "And I saw", relate to the eternal judgement at the end of the world. By showing the final outcome of these visions concerning the reign of Christ, culminating in the last great judgement and lake of fire, the Revelation both comforts and warns the readers concerning which side they are on throughout this church age.

Rev 21-22 continues with themes from Ezekiel's restoration of true Israel. Ezekiel showed a new temple which had a river of life going out to the nations. Jesus said this temple is anyone who believes on Him and receives His Spirit. Ezekiel showed a new priesthood and the land divided up equally between the twelve tribes, in details which cannot be literal, but which rather represents our rich and everlasting inheritance in Christ. Much of the book of Ezekiel is of the apocalyptic/symbolic Hebrew literary genre, just as the Revelation is. The links between Rev 21-22 and the Old Testament prophets relating to our current life in Christ and eternal fellowship are rich and full and deserve a lot of time in reflection.

The new heaven and new earth, in which God makes all things new, symbolises the church in our current age and into eternity after the resurrection. It does not necessarily mean there shall be a new physical earth. No Old Testament text clearly speaks of God destroying or replacing this physical universe. These terms are always used in relation to the establishment of the new covenant and doing away with the old. The terms ultimately mean a state in which Christ's kingdom has its final expression of no sin, no death, no curse, no Satan and no wicked. This condition is so unknown to man, that terms such as "all things new", and other metaphors, are the only way it can be expressed to us. No man on earth today would know what heaven on earth would be like, or be able to explain it any better than this.

The Feasts

Revelation was written to show the seven churches of Asia that Christ Himself is their feast, to encourage them as they saw God's judgement coming upon old Jerusalem. Revelation assured them that God had not forsaken His people, or His promises to Israel and the nations, but these are fulfilled through the gospel. They were also able to see what was happening on earth in their day from the heavenly perspective.

In Revelation God shows that the feasts He gave Israel when He brought them out of Egypt have come into fulfilment in Christ. The feasts of Israel portrayed both their redemption from Egypt and God's work among them as a people. These were the spring feasts: Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits and Pentecost, and the autumn feasts: Trumpets, Day of Atonement and Tabernacles.

The Old Testament feasts pointed to the finished work of Christ when He would come. In the new Exodus, God takes His bride out of "Egypt" and fulfils the feasts in His church. As feast typology was given at the start of the old covenant, the feasts symbolism in Revelation show the establishment of the new covenant.

Because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, has the Lord brought you

out with a mighty hand and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Deut 7:8

The old covenant Exodus depicted the future work of Christ, when He would come to save His people from their sin (Matt 1:21). When He came, Christ redeemed us from our sin by His death, burial, resurrection and His ongoing high priestly work in heaven. We are brought out of “the house of bondage”; not from literal Egypt or any other political power, but out of our own sin.

Our Exodus begins with our new covenant “Moses” and God’s Firstborn, Jesus, coming out of Egypt:

And (Jesus) was there (in Egypt) until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called My Son. Matt 2:15 (See also Hos 11:1)

The Revelation depicts Christ’s work in the heavenly tabernacle, just as the book of Hebrews explains that Christ fulfilled this old covenant typology. Revelation depicts Christ’s heavenly work symbolically, with many references to the tabernacle, prayer censers, and incense, as Christ now officiates in the heavenly tabernacle for His people. Revelation shows Christ as our High Priest in the presence of God.

Revelation also depicts all of the feasts being fulfilled in Christ. The book often portrays Christ as our Passover (blood/Lamb), our Unleavened Bread (purity, 1 Cor 5:8), Firstfruits (His resurrection and the 144,000) and our Pentecost (fullness of the Spirit, the olive trees), Rev 11:4. It also portrays Christ in the feast of Trumpets (a call to repentance before judgement upon Jerusalem, and the gospel going out to the nations), our Day of Atonement (salvation from sin) and Tabernacles (the One who dwells in His church).

So as Christ fulfils all old covenant Exodus typology and brings us out of the house of bondage, He becomes the feasts to His new covenant Israel. All of this was fulfilled by His finished work on the cross and the birth of the church on the day of Pentecost.

It is common for people to break up these feasts and to claim that Christ fulfilled the spring feasts when the church was born, but He fulfils the autumn feasts at His second coming. They claim that the church age is slotted in between the two sets of feasts. However, scripture does not say this. It is also wrong to be over rigid with the feasts. There is a fluidity of symbolism and relationships between the feasts. We don't interpret them legalistically, saying this particular feast represents one thing, or does not relate to the other feasts. They all represent Christ's work.

We see that the spring and autumn feasts aren't separated by a long church age gap, because Christ fulfilled the autumn feast of the Day of Atonement when He ascended into heaven. Christ, as our High priest, entered the holy of holies, which is seen in Rev 11:19. Hebrews states the Day of Atonement was fulfilled in Christ's ascension and coming at Pentecost. In Hebrews chapter nine Christ is contrasted to the old covenant high priest. The old covenant high priest went into the holy of holies once a year on the Day of Atonement, to offer blood for the sins of Israel. The worshippers waited outside the tabernacle for the high priest to return. If his offering was accepted by God, the high priest would come out and show himself to the people. There would be rejoicing because his coming would indicate God's acceptance of the offering, i.e. their salvation.

When Christ at His ascension entered into the heavenly tabernacle, His blood was accepted for us by the Father. He told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father (Acts 1:4). The acceptance of Christ's blood in heaven is the seal/gift of the Spirit to the church (Eph 1:13-14). On the Day of Pentecost, Christ returned to the church out of the heavenly tabernacle, in the Person of His Spirit, with salvation. Salvation is God adopting us as His children through the gift of His Spirit in new birth.

Therefore being at the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has shed forth this which you now see and hear. Acts 2:33

. . . but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself bears witness with

our spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children then heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. Rom 8:15-17

To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore, you are no longer a servant (in the house of bondage), but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. Gal 4:5-6

Christ came out of the heavenly tabernacle to the church with salvation/adoption on the Day of Pentecost, as He said: "If I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am there you may be also" (John 14:3). He prepared a place for us by going to the Father as our High Priest. He would come again to us, that we might be with Him and with the Father in fellowship, i.e. by His Spirit. There is no doubt this is what He meant: "I (as your High Priest) will pray the Father, and He shall give you another comforter that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth . . . I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 14:16-18).

Here we see the trinity working at Pentecost: The Father accepts Christ's blood and sends His Spirit, as our Spirit of adoption into His household/family. Christ comes to the church; the new Israel, taken out of "Egypt" by His blood, as He came upon Mount Sinai to give the law. This time the law is written upon our heart. Pentecost is our High Priest coming out of the heavenly tabernacle to us, without sin (i.e., with our sin atoned), to bring salvation. When the old covenant high priest came again out of the holy of holies, because the blood of the offering was accepted, he came out "without sin". This is what Christ did on the Day of Pentecost:

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the types of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entered

into the holy place every year with the blood of others (animals) . . . so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many; and to them that look for Him (those tarrying in the Upper Room before the Day of Pentecost) shall He appear the second time without sin to salvation. Heb 9:24-25, 28

This is not just for the first one hundred and twenty disciples in the Upper Room. But to anyone who believes the gospel, our High priest comes with the Spirit of God bringing salvation.

It is clear Revelation depicts the feasts of the old covenant: Passover and Unleavened Bread, Rev 12:11, Rev 5:12; Firstfruits, Rev 14:4; Pentecost (Christ taking His bride), Rev 19:7-8; Trumpets, Rev 8:2, Matt 24:21, Rev 14:6; Day of Atonement (Christ in the holy of holies), Rev 11:19; and Tabernacles, Rev 21:3. There are many associations with the feasts in Revelation which merit further study for those more interested.

In interpreting these we know they depict Christ's high priestly work in the birth of the new Israel, because He said that all of the old covenant was fulfilled in this very work:

O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? . . . These are the words which I spoke to you, while I was with you (before His crucifixion), that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, convening Me. Luke 24:25-26, 44

So Christ fulfilled the law, including the typology of the tabernacles and the feasts, in His death and ascension as High Priest. This is the testimony of Hebrews (which doesn't mention Christ's second coming) and also of the Revelation. It describes the birth of the church which now tabernacles (lives) with God.

To whom (the old covenant prophets) it was revealed, that not to themselves, but to us (the church) they did minister the things, which are now reported to you by them (the

apostles) that have preached the gospel to you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven . . . 1 Pet 1:12

All that the old covenant prophets said about Christ (including Moses in the feasts) is fulfilled by Christ's work in the church, born at Pentecost and living today throughout the world. Peter claimed the prophets' message is fulfilled in Christ's work in the church. That is the way the first apostles saw their ministry of the gospel. The good news is that when we declare the gospel we are declaring the finished work of our Lord who is now in heaven for us. In other words, we must preach a full gospel, declaring all Christ has done.



The governor of Plateau State (where the city of Jos is located), His Excellency Jonah Jang (a graduate of a Bible seminary) attended CFI's pastors conference in 2009. He spoke in one of the sessions for two hours from 1st and 2nd Timothy in the Bible. His theme was: "Love God; love His word; love His people." It was excellent ministry that blessed all the pastors.



CFI holds a one-hour weekly radio program that goes out to 80 million people in the Islamic Sahel region of Africa. CFI also outreaches through a weekly television broadcast. Pictured here are Kent Hodge on the left and Rev. Emmanuel Razack on the right: the provost of CFI. Kent & Emmanuel have worked together for twenty years and Emmanuel has been instrumental in leading the team to establish the new base in Jos, for the purpose of expanding mission into the Islamic frontiers. Pictured right is Pastor Tunji Adewuni: CFI's media consultant and broadcaster.



CFI's gospel outreach into the Middle East. Pictured here is CFI's pastors conference in a Middle Eastern nation. Pastors attended who lead churches and others who reach out as missionaries throughout the Middle East. CFI is planning to establish a Bible College in a Middle Eastern nation.



CFI establishes churches in northern cities and missions stations in unreached rural areas, where schools are also set up. Some of these churches have been attacked, burnt and then rebuilt better than before. Many people from pagan and Islamic backgrounds have come to know Jesus. Some people have to be taken out of their area to save their lives, and these are disciplined and equipped vocationally in “safe houses”. Pictured above is a gift from CFI’s supporters of eleven new motor cycles to the various mission stations.

Some Applications

Here we look at a few applications that come to mind. Once we have read the Revelation as the seven churches in Asia would have read it, i.e. what the message meant to them in the day it was written, then we may draw some principles or applications to the situations we face in our own day.

Interpretations of Revelation

It is common for people to skip the first step, i.e., they don't consider the Revelation from the perspective of those who first received it. Some read the Revelation as though it was written last week, and then rush down to the local store and buy the newspaper. They then put the newspaper alongside the Revelation and match recent stories with the visions of John. We call this the, "This is That Ministries", matching "this" from Revelation with "that" in the newspaper.

There is some sort of default in the human psyche that does this, especially when excited by enthusiasm. It is difficult to understand how we overlook all the warnings Jesus gave and all the tribulations of the first century, and think that what Jude (the Lord's brother) said, "Behold the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints", means Jesus is coming with His raptured church in the days of a Russian led attack on Israel, rather than Jesus is coming with His angels in His judgement against Jerusalem and the sinners Jude was addressing in his epistle.

People also often read the Old Testament prophets this way: "They are all fulfilled in our generation today. What are these nations that are about to attack Israel? It must be Iran and its allies. Quick, we must destroy them first, (in the name of God!)"

In such cases, whoever is the evil leader of the day gets branded with the title "antichrist" and a date is set for the Lord's return. This has happened for over one thousand years, and all dates and predictions have failed. We don't say this to scoff at the scripture or at Bible prophecy, but to call for sobriety in our vain speculations.

Around the turn of the first millennium after Christ, there was a lot of speculation about Jerusalem and the former land of Israel. Crusades from Europe were partially successful and people noted it was about one thousand years after Christ's first coming. This heightened end-times speculations. People thought Christ would come since the "church" had captured Jerusalem from the Muslims. You would have been a brave lad in those days to have denied what looked to be so "clear". But in time these speculations came to nothing and generally the Crusades ended up a vain hope.

The truth is old Jerusalem may well have nothing to do with Bible prophecy anymore. The current situation in Israel may end up being just as vain as the hope of the Crusaders. We do not know yet, as history has not yet run its course. It's best to put our hope in Christ! The question is not how something looks, or how popular an expectation may be, but what the scripture intends. And when we consider what the scriptures say, we must consider it in its original intended meaning, not as we may hear it from others today, or twist it ourselves to suit our ideas.

Many of the Reformers felt that the Roman church of their day was the beast of Rome and the Pope was the antichrist. Some of the Popes certainly were enemies of the gospel and of the church and the Reformers certainly had cause to apply Revelation to their struggles in their day. Many in the Roman church behaved much like the priests in Jerusalem during the early church times. However, we cannot say that "Babylon" in Revelation was initially intended to be the Roman church, or that the Pope was intended by the Revelation to be the beast with the number six hundred and sixty-six. How would the Reformers' interpretations of the Revelation have helped the seven churches who first received the letter from John? Clearly that was not the original intent.

Similarly, any speculations regarding the number six hundred and sixty-six today are fruitless. It is not a superstitious number. As far as prophetic significance is concerned the number has passed its "used by date". It was fulfilled in Nero. And incidentally, Revelation doesn't actually use the term "antichrist". In John's epistles "antichrist" is any

doctrine contrary to God's main teachings on Christ. It is not a term used for one particular person only.

In the 1980's it was commonly preached that the European Union was the beast of Revelation and antichrist was about to appear. People stored toilet paper and cans of baked beans in their homes, getting ready for the Great Tribulation; but then someone emphasised a "pre-tribulation rapture", so we didn't need the toilet paper anymore! And what use are these arm-chair speculations to the hundreds of thousands per year who are still dying for the gospel, without escaping in a rapture? People are concerned about their own personal safety, but how much effort is made to stand with those persecuted?

Some speculations are self-fulfilling: Christians are warned to withdraw from the evil empire and the resulting lack of "salt and light" (Christian led influence) when they withdraw, relegates the government and society to all forms of corruption and ungodliness. Europe has been almost totally de-Christianised in this last generation of beast-searching, rapture-ready, pre-millennial believers. It is not fair to put all the blame for Europe's decline in faith at the door of pre-millennialism, but this self-centred preoccupation has contributed. Pre-millennialism has served to encourage evangelism in other nations, but it's the churches in those nations that ignored the pre-millennial precepts that have "occupied" and influenced their nations and the generations to follow.

When it comes to beastly empires, the USA is a good contender of our times. It was founded by a mixture of Christian and pagan influences. Washington is filled with pagan emblems on its monuments, many put there by the Masons who still have a strong desire for world government. And Zionists still ride upon the beast (the US government), influencing a considerable amount of its foreign policy, and de-Christianising the nation by secularism in the schools, court houses and family life. The US government is filled with corruption, unfaithfulness and ungodliness. This is not to single out the US, but to show that the "beast" is not referring to the traditional modern era enemies of the West. We normally characterise our cultural enemies

in biblical terms and end up being hypocrites. But the Revelation is not directly addressing the US either.

Some apply Revelation as depicting the ongoing struggle between light and darkness, between the church and its enemies, between the sovereignty of Jesus and Satan, and between the inward sinful nature of man and Christ's victory over that on the cross. All of these are valid applications, but still the Revelation sets these in the historical context of the first century church. It describes and encourages the church in the days of its first struggles, and allows us to apply those principles to our own time.

Others see the Revelation as depicting God's final judgement of the world at the time of the second coming of Christ. "Babylon" in this case would be the world system, not a particular city as stated. Phrases such as "all the kings of the earth" are seen as referring to the whole world, rather than to the land of Israel or the regions of the Roman Empire, as the phrases meant then. But Revelation addressed the seven churches of Asia and told them "here is wisdom", which in that day meant, "Here is the interpretation" (Rev 3:18, 17:9), i.e. John showed the meaning, claiming that the beast was an entity and a man living in their own day. We cannot impose a meaning or time frame upon Revelation that could not have been understood by the people to whom it was written.

Still others propose a type of double meaning to the Revelation: "Could Revelation (and Matthew chapter twenty-four) have had a fulfilment in Christ's coming to judge Jerusalem, which serves as a type for us living at the end of the world, when Christ comes to judge all nations in His second coming?" The problem with this is it is guessing. The Bible doesn't anywhere state or even imply that prophecy, Matthew chapter twenty-four, or the Revelation, have two or multiple fulfilments. Once we allegorise the scripture to refer to something the Bible doesn't actually state, we can make the scripture mean anything we want it to mean. We can then preach any imagination we like from scripture.

In conclusion, the main part of Revelation is not about the time leading up to the second coming of Christ and does not furnish us with material

in predicting or speculating on events related to His second coming. Revelation does speak on events around the first century destruction of Jerusalem, principles of which we can apply for direction and encouragement to any generation in our church age.

The Harlot Church

What is really important about Revelation is not speculation about end-times, but God's charge to the church of that day. He warned them to come out of the false church; i.e., being in the church by name, but not reflecting the nature of our Lord Jesus. Some say because we are believers in Jesus the call to repentance in Revelation, directed to the Pharisees and Jews of Jerusalem, doesn't apply to us. The Jews thought they were saved, because they believed in God. We must not make the same mistake as Christians. The call to repentance applied to the seven churches of Asia, which is why the Lord starts Revelation by warning them.

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out from her, My people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you do not receive of her plagues. Rev 18:4

This doesn't mean we leave all our churches. It means that we make sure Jesus works in us to bring us out of a nominal faith that doesn't change our heart and life. The big deception of religion and church is that we may call ourselves Christians, while there is no real difference between us and the way the rest of the world lives. The harlot church is as real and present danger today as it ever was. The message of Revelation is: "Make sure you are not part of the harlot church, but that Jesus is truly Lord of your life and you truly follow Him".

These were they that were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men . . . Rev 14:4

Virginity is a symbol for faithfulness and genuine devotion to the Lord. They followed the Lord. This is in contrast to religious people in Jerusalem who followed their desires, ambitions and greed. There

is much of this in today's churches, where doctrines of covetousness operate to fleece believers, while preachers live in luxury. Don't follow these people, or doctrines, that make Christianity a means of gain, of getting God to do what you want; a means to fulfil your personal path. A great deal of preaching today is about self-actualisation, in the guise of Christianity, speaking what people like to hear. It is false and those who follow it are not following the Lord. When we love the Lord we follow Him, without consideration of the cost to ourselves.

But none of these things move me, neither do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my course with joy (being faithful to the Lord) . . . Acts 20:24

This is where true joy comes from, but the false gospel won't tell you this.

Jesus described a faith that was very different to the religious practice of people of His day. They went to the "church" of their time; the synagogue, and read the Old Testament scriptures we read today. The parable of the Prodigal Son should really be called the parable of the Unforgiving Brother, as Jesus spoke the parable to address those angry that He was eating with sinners who were responding to the gospel. The religious leaders were harsh and uncaring shepherds, caring mainly for their own welfare.

The parable of the Good Samaritan revealed an "enemy" perspective often apparent within religious circles. The one that helped the Jewish man who fell among thieves was the enemy Samaritan. The enemy behaved in a neighbourly way and cared for the person who wasn't of his faith. This is about genuine love we are to show to others, not a false love that is present only when we have use for people. The love of the world is conditional. Jesus didn't treat people according to the party, denomination, or race they were from. He was very different to the people of His day.

James has a lot to say to this harlot church and shows us the nature of religion before judgement came on that generation. They called themselves believers, but walked in sin. They thought their riches gave them security. They treated people with partiality, according to what

favour they could obtain. They were even murderers, whether actually or meaning their life styles harmed others. The people James wrote to, from among the tribes of Israel, weren't genuine believers. They had a mixed heart of unfaithfulness. So James calls them to repentance before judgement comes:

Cleanse your hands you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded. James 4:8

You adulterers, and adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity against God . . . James 4:4

If there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring, in rich clothing, and there come in a poor man in bad clothing, you have respect to him that is rich . . . (paraphrased) James 2:2-3

Then James spoke to the rich of Jerusalem, where he was pastor. This was not long before they killed him, and it describes well the situation in the city at that time:

Go rich men and weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments (and faith) are moth eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. You have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold the hire of the labourers . . . which you kept back by fraud cries . . . into the ears of the Lord of the Sabbath . . . be patient therefore, brethren, to the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth . . . Be patient and establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draws near. James 5:1-4, 7

According to Eusebius and Josephus, this is what James said when they killed him in Jerusalem; that the Lord was about to come on the clouds to judge Jerusalem. Josephus claimed that when Rome's fire balls weighing a talent each eventually fell on the temple, those trapped inside cried out, "The Son comes", probably in mockery of the warning of Jesus and the Christians. It is likely that the reason we

get the strongest judgement themes in the epistles of James, Peter and Jude is that these all pastored in Jerusalem close to AD 70 and all wrote to the Jews.

According to tradition James died, praying, "I beseech you, Lord God our Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do". James taught us not to hold "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons" (James 2:1) Church is not to become a club for people like us. We don't mix the gospel with political parties or with nationalism. Some forms of end-times teaching claim God is on the side of certain nations and against other nations. This isn't true.

We used a church building once for a pastors' conference, and had thousands of pastors attend, mainly from Islamic cultures. On the stage behind the pulpit we saw flags erected: A Nigerian flag with Australian, British, American and Israeli flags. Adding nationalism to the love of Jesus is a bad witness, as it is aligning Jesus with the wrongs committed by our nations, and it is inferring, "If you don't believe that Jesus loves you, we will bomb you." At least that is how it is seen by others. We must love our enemies, as Jesus loved us. We are the church! Somebody said, "The only time we pray for the Muslim is when they are attacking us".

We tend to think that we are better; that our cultures and nations are better and we become blind to the corruption and paganism in our nations, we don't know what God is doing in other nations and we don't see the value in other cultures. Jesus alone is our righteousness. All the rest we hold onto is filthy rags. How many Christians today are ready to show the love of Jesus by reaching out to our enemy? Do we care about the Palestinians, who raise children with no hope for their future, and many of them are Christian brothers and sisters?

This pretty well describes the church (synagogue) of Jesus' time. They were shocked by the Sermon on the Mount and still today this is one of the most challenging passages of scripture:

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for

righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God . . . You have heard it said (by the religious leaders of that day), "You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy". But I say to you, Love your enemy, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that you may be children of your Father which is in heaven . . . Matt 5:9-10, 43-45

How else will we win the enemy to Christ if our life is not different to theirs? If we don't live the life of the Son of God, as He lived, then how can we claim to be His children? The early church won their enemies and converted much of Europe and Far-East Asia of that day, by loving them and continuing to reach out to them with the gospel, at the cost of their own lives; and this is why we have the gospel today.

James' teaching to the harlot church of Jerusalem followed the teaching of Jesus, just before His death. This is how Jesus described the harlot church and what He said needs to be kept in mind by us and passed onto others in our day. We are saying this not to condemn others, but to exhort ourselves:

They bind heavy burdens on others . . . Matt 23:4 (They use the flock for their own goals and religious purposes.)

All their works they do to be seen of men . . . Matt 23:5 (They give an appearance of holiness in public places so they can use the flock.)

But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. Matt 23:10 (Instead of lording it over others, the leaders must serve.)

You shut up the kingdom . . . Matt 23:13 (They preached works to control others, rather than the gift of God through Jesus.)

You devour widows' houses . . . Matt 23:14 (They take money from people who need it to look after themselves.)

Whoever shall swear by the gift . . . Matt 23:18 (They make false doctrines to get people to give money.)

You make clean the outside of the cup . . . Matt 23:25 (Hypocrisy.)

These were some of the issues Jesus had concerning the unfaithful church and we can see they are very present in our own day. The issue for us is not to condemn others and become perpetual critics of the church; that is a wrong spirit. The issue for us is that “we come out” of this ourselves and repent. The Revelation is a warning to us all. This is what we should take from the book.

Our Deliverance

Another main application we can take from Revelation is our deliverance. God shall deliver the church from its enemies, and continue to establish the church throughout history. Of this we can be sure, “I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Revelation depicts Satan poised, ready to cut off the church in its infancy, just as he was when Christ was born in Bethlehem:

And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, to devour the child as soon as it was born.
Rev 12:4

When the church was born at Pentecost, Satan was ready with his cohorts, the Jews of that day, to kill the believers, stop the gospel and swallow up the church before it could stand and cover the earth. Jerusalem was the first organised enemy against the church in our history.

Jesus of course was aware of this before it began and He comforted the believers before He left, with assurances that He would keep them and bring the church into victory. He said they should be patient and be established in their faith, for the tribulation of that day would not last too long, but would have an end.

And except those days be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Matt 24:22

Jesus spoke about the persecution that would come to them. They would be dragged into the synagogues and before the Jewish rulers. Jesus said the Jews would condemn them by false trials and kill some of them. Reading the book of Acts we can see many instances where these words of Jesus came to pass. Saul is one example of this; he dragged believers out of their houses before the magistrates to have them condemned (Acts 8:3, 9:1-2).

. . . they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake . . . and some of you shall be put to death . . . In your patience possess your souls (establish your heart). And when you see Jerusalem compassed by armies (Rome) know that its desolation draws near . . . for these are days of vengeance . . .
Luke 21:12, 16, 19-20

Before Jesus departed He told the disciples, "In patience possess your souls". This meant that these persecutions from the Jews will not be perpetual. They would soon come to an end. The believers should be patient. "Possess your souls" means keep your faith; look to the Lord, stay in His will and keep His commandments until the persecutions pass.

Jesus also told the disciples that the days of vengeance would come upon Jerusalem in their generation. This vengeance would be the disciples' deliverance; relief from persecution, vindication of faith and the emancipation of the church.

When all these things begin to come to pass (the armies encircle Jerusalem), then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draws near. Luke 21:28

Redemption implies the application of Christ's atonement, the deliverance of His people; in this case from Satan's attacks through the Jews. Here Jesus

consoled the believers, that when they see the devastation of Jerusalem approaching, they should know that it is not the end of their lives and hopelessness, but the dawn of a better state and era for the church.

It should not be unexpected to see the same message in the epistles of the New Testament, especially from those who knew the Lord and what He said; those who were close to Him, and from those who pastored in Jerusalem. James, the Lord's brother and pastor of Jerusalem, wrote to the Jews of his day and called them to repent for killing innocent people, who were believers in Christ. James then told the believers to be patient and allow the Lord a little time for their persecutors to repent. James then said the Lord would judge their persecutors and give the church relief. As James wrote this to the twelve tribes (not just to the believers) just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, and could see the day approaching and knew the Lord's prophecy before He left, it becomes apparent this is what James was referring to:

You have condemned and killed the just: and he does not resist you. Be patient therefore, brethren, to the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it, until he receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient, establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draws near. James 5:6-8

This is not some general encouragement to believers of latter generations, but a specific promise applicable to the believers to whom James wrote. It was fulfilled in that day. Peter also wrote to the believers of his day in this way; not a general encouragement to the church thousands of years in the future, but a time-specific promise to the church he wrote to then. It was fulfilled in that generation. To apply "futurism" as a default to Peter's epistle disregards the context and audience.

Peter also pastored in Jerusalem at this time and wrote shortly before its destruction. He was very aware of the Olivet Discourse where Jesus spoke of these things and he told the believers to remember the commandments of the Lord and not to be disturbed by those who denied the Lord's warnings that judgement was approaching. Peter

echoed Jesus, James and Revelation, saying the delay was only so the gospel could reach all in that generation first.

The Lord is not slack concerning His promises, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering (patient) toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 2 Pet 3:9

Peter used apocalyptic language to describe the judgement against Jerusalem. Many read Peter's words in this passage according to Eastern ideas on the end of the world. That is the way we have been taught by Western cultures. But as we have already seen, Peter was not writing to Greek philosophers but to Jews. Thus the language Peter used is identical to the Old Testament prophets, who several times made the exact same statements to describe God's coming judgement on a city or nation.

When speaking of the judgment Peter addresses those in Jerusalem in his own day:

But it has happened to them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. 2 Pet 2:22

Peter exhorted the believers not to follow those who scoffed at the coming judgement the prophets and Jesus warned of, but to prepare for what was coming and the relief that would follow. He wasn't speaking to some future generation, but to the church then: "looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God" (2 Pet 3:12—English Revised Version). In the prophets "the day of the Lord" is His judgement against Jerusalem. Peter echoed Jesus' warning concerning the fall of Jerusalem: "seeing you know these things, beware lest you also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness" (2 Pet 3:17).

See John Owen for details on 2 Pet 3:

On this foundation I affirm that the heavens and earth here intended in this prophecy of Peter, the coming of the

Lord, the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men, mentioned in the destruction of that heaven and earth, do all of them relate, not to the last and final judgment of the world, but to that utter desolation and destruction that was to be made of the Judaical church and state; for which I shall offer these two reasons, of many that might be insisted on from the text:

(1.) Because whatever is here mentioned was to have its peculiar influence on the men of that generation. He speaks of that wherein both the profane scoffers and those scoffed at were concerned, and that as Jews, some of them believing, others opposing, the faith. Now there was no particular concernment of that generation, nor in that sin, nor in that scoffing, as to the day of judgment in general; but there was a peculiar relief for the one and a peculiar dread for the other at hand, in the destruction of the Jewish nation; and, besides, an ample testimony both to the one and the other of the power and dominion of the Lord Jesus Christ, which was the thing in question between them.

(2.) Peter tells them, that after the destruction and judgment that he speaks of (vers. 7-13), "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth,' etc. They had this expectation. But what is that promise? Where may we find it? Why, we have it in the very words and letter, Isa. lxxv. 17 (Is 65:17). Now, when shall this be that God shall create these new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness? Saith Peter, "It shall be after the coming of the Lord, after that judgment and destruction of ungodly men, who obey not the gospel, that I foretell." But now it is evident from this place of Isaiah, with chap. lxxvi. 21, 22, that this is a prophecy of Gospel times only; and that the planting of these new heavens is nothing but the creation of Gospel ordinances to endure for ever. The same thing is so expressed Heb. xii. 26-28 . . . (*The Works of John Owen*, Vol. 9, *The Sermons to the Church*, The Banner of Truth Trust 1998, p. 134-135. (Is 65:17 added for Roman numerals lxxv:17.)

Those who were obstinate were scoffing and persecuting the Christians, who were warning all men and women concerning what Christ said was coming. Peter told the believers to be patient, as the Lord wished to reap of harvest of souls before He brings the believers deliverance from their persecution. This persecution served to strengthen their faith, and thus the gospel spread even more.

And take heed to yourselves . . . for they shall deliver you up to the councils; and in the synagogues you shall be beaten . . . and you shall be hated by all men for My name's sake; but he that endures to the end shall be saved. Mark 13:9, 13

When we turn to the Revelation we see the same discussion going on as we saw in the Olivet Discourse with Jesus, and as we saw in the epistles. Saints are being persecuted and killed. They ask the Lord how long is it until He gives them relief. The Lord answers, a little while longer only.

And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, do you not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the land. And white robes were given to every one of them, and it was said to them, that they should rest for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. Rev 6:10-11

They were asking, "When are the days of vengeance that Jesus spoke of in His Olivet Discourse?" Then after a little while the days of vengeance came:

For true and righteous are His judgements: for He has judged the great whore, which did corrupt the land with her fornication, and has avenged the blood of His servants at her hand. Rev 19:2

Revelation depicts Satan as the one behind the Jews and the attacks on the church. It says that Satan knows that his time is short; he knows that God will soon act against Jerusalem and free the church from

its persecution. Satan will soon lose his first main cohort against the church and miss his chance to cut the church off in its infancy.

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved their lives not unto the death. Therefore rejoice, heavens, and you that dwell in them. Woe to you inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil is come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time. Rev 12:11-12

When the devil saw that Christ had defeated him on the cross he came against the church (Rev 12:13). He knew that God would soon act against Jerusalem and therefore his time of using Jerusalem against the church was short. In desperation to slay the church, he put all types of malice and envy in the hearts of the people, resulting in great destruction in the land (all of which Josephus detailed: people eating each other and brutality, he said, never before known among men).

Revelation chapter twelve describes Satan's activity in the context of the birth of the church, saying Satan first came against the Christ child. We know he did this in the days of Herod, who slew all the children of Bethlehem. The passage continued, saying when Satan saw that he had failed with Christ, he went after the church. He tried to stop the church from being established and Jerusalem was his cohort in achieving this. But he knew this opportunity would not last long.

Other texts from the New Testament can be seen in this way, such as, "the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." (Rom 16:20). Here is a promise of vindication for the believers, of deliverance from persecution and rest to the church. It isn't that Satan has power, but he is allowed to function with his cohorts until God's purposes are fulfilled. The church, in the mean time, is exhorted to patience and holiness, that we not be partakers of the plagues.

The church historian, Philip Schaff, comments on the consequences of the destruction of Jerusalem in the deliverance of the early church:

The awful catastrophe of the destruction of the Jewish theocracy . . . was . . . a great benefit to Christianity . . . a vindication and emancipation . . . God himself destroyed the house, in which He had thus far dwelt . . . but in so doing He cut the cords which had hitherto bound . . . the infant church to . . . Jerusalem as its centre . . . the heathen could no longer look upon Christianity as a mere sect of Judaism, but must regard and treat it as a new, peculiar religion. The destruction of Jerusalem . . . marks that momentous crisis at which the Christian church . . . burst forth . . . from the chrysalis of Judaism . . . took its independent stand before the world. *The History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 1, Ch. 5, Sec. 39

The first century church father Barnabas, soon after the destruction of the temple, described its effect on the church:

Moreover I will tell you likewise concerning the temple, how these wretched men being led astray set their hope on the building, and not on their God that made them . . . So it came to pass; for because they (rebelled) it was pulled down by their enemies . . . For the scripture said; “And it shall be in the last days, that the Lord shall deliver up the sheep of the pasture and the fold and the tower thereof to destruction.” *Epistle of Barnabas* 16

Notice that Barnabas interpreted “last days” as the days of the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. The significance of this to Barnabas was that it was a vindication in demonstrating who the real people of God were:

Now let us see whether this people (believers in Jesus) or the first people (Jerusalem) have the inheritance, and whether the covenant had reference to us or to them. *Epistle of Barnabas* 13

The destruction of the temple made it clear to the early church who the true Israel was. It was a total vindication and a testimony from God that His true temple was His body in Christ. Not that this allows us to

boast against the unbelieving Jews of that day. Paul warns us rather to learn from their judgement and take heed that we stand in the true faith of God in His Son, Jesus Christ (Rom 11:18-22).

Behold both the goodness and severity of God: on them that fell severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness, otherwise you also shall be cut off. Rom 11:22

In Revelation we see God's judgement upon the enemies of the church and the emancipation of the church into days of growth and expansion in the world. From this we can take the application that God will also act in justice in our own time and after He has completed His purpose, shall again protect and deliver the church and fulfil His promises of grace through the preaching of the gospel to all nations. We can be assured of this in our own time.

Upon this rock I will build My church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Matt 16:18

How do we apply this to our time? The church of the first century asked for boldness when they were persecuted (Acts 4:29). They focused on reaching those around them with the gospel. They continued to love their enemies – which means they continued to reach them with the gospel message. They eventually converted their enemies and turned the whole region to a Christian one. Today we must reach those who are against the church. We must reach them with the gospel.

Everlasting Punishment

Another lesson we can take from Revelation is that the teaching on judgement matches that of Jesus in the Gospels. In our day it is often taught that there isn't a hell, or a lake of fire and that punishment is not everlasting and ultimately everyone will be saved, or be annihilated. People struggle with the idea that a God of love can punish the wicked. This is evaluating God by the culture of our day. It is not what scripture teaches. This is human reasoning and requires much twisting of the scripture to hold such a position.

And if your eye offends you, pluck it out: it is better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell (Gehenna) fire. Where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched. Mark 9:47-48

There is no hint hell is metaphorical. Jesus speaks of hell as very real. Jesus' teaching is that whatever it takes to follow the Lord we should ensure we do it; we should value God's favour above any other thing in life. We are not to take judgement and salvation as a light matter, but make careful inquiry into our life and the scripture to ensure we walk according to God's will. We are to be diligent and watchful in the matter. Above all, we are to believe His words and keep them.

Jesus also described the punishment as hell fire. He says the worm does not die, which is another metaphor meaning hell fire continues on without end (Is 66:24).

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. Matt 25:46

Some people relate Jesus' statements on hell to the judgement of Jerusalem, claiming *sheol* from the Old Testament doesn't refer to punishment in afterlife, but to nations vanishing in judgement. Likewise, it is claimed the word Gehenna (Hebrew *ge-hinnom*), for the valley of fire outside of Jerusalem (Jer 7:31-32), was used by Jesus to warn of Israel's national judgement, as the place their bodies would be thrown by the Romans, which Josephus said came to pass. This interpretation of the lake of fire has difficulties for hyper-preterists, because Revelation says Satan himself is cast there. They must claim Satan had his final demise in AD 70. But for Jesus, it was the judgement after death (or second death, Rev 20:6) that was to be feared most and this is what Gehenna represented.

All the themes Jesus spoke about concerning this evil age, gospel blessings, the resurrection and eternal judgement point to the culmination in His second coming (John 11:24-26, 12:48). Jesus said Capernaum would be cast into sheol (*hades*), just as Old Testament nations were judged. But Jesus' warnings extended beyond this life

to a judgement in afterlife. It was judgement after the resurrection that Jesus was mostly concerned about (Matt 22:31). He said at that judgment it would be more tolerable for Sodom than for Jerusalem (Matt 11:24). Sodom had been judged long ago, but another judgement remained for them at the time Jesus spoke this. Jesus also said the people should not fear those who kill the body only, but He who can destroy both their soul and the body in Gehenna (Matt 10:28, Luke 12:4-5). So Gehenna was symbolic for eternal judgement. Jude and Peter were also clear in their epistles that the judgement they spoke of was eternal (2 Pet 2:17, Jude 13).

Eternal judgement is one of the foundation doctrines of faith (Heb 6:2). "It is appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgement." (Heb 9:27) This shows that judgement occurs after this life. There are many who escape judgement in this life, but justice follows afterward. Jesus also said that judgement *follows* death (the grave or sheol, John 5:27-29), as Daniel said (Dan 12:2), and Jesus showed with the story of Lazarus and the rich man that there is punishment in the grave (Luke 16:19-31). In the Old Testament the grave is seen as a place of continuing judgement (Ps 49:15, 19). Sheol is temporary, prior to the "lake of fire" – sheol gives up the dead for final judgement (Rev 20:13-14).

But even today the serpent says, "You shall not surely die" (Gen 3:4, including spiritual death, eternal separation from God). Unbelievers flatly deny judgement, while some others who claim to believe scripture say that because Christ died for all then all will be saved. Nowhere does the scripture teach this. People sometimes misuse Paul's writings to teach Christ saves all, but Paul himself did not teach this. The first couple of verses below well describe those in Revelation who would not repent:

Do you despise the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leads to repentance? But after your hardness and impenitent heart you treasure up to yourself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgement of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds. To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for

glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But to them who are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that does evil . . . Rom 2:4-9

Revelation follows the teaching of Jesus and the epistles:

And the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God . . . and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone . . . and the smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever. Rev 14:10-11

This is referring to all who take the mark of the beast, meaning those who align themselves with the world and deny Christ. Their torment is forever and ever. In Greek the word means eternal. It can be translated “age” and can refer to a long time. It can mean “forever”, as we understand the term in English. Its meaning depends on its context. The term is also used for the eternal nature of God. In the Hebrew custom when the word is used twice, by emphasis it means everlasting or eternal, “without end”. There is no reason to assume that everlasting in this context means anything other than that.

And the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God . . . and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone . . . and the smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever. Rev 14:10-11

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever. Rev 20:10

The phrase “day and night” here means without a break; continuous, with no reprieve. This is not a Roman Catholic tradition that is being outlined here (the earliest church fathers taught this), but the meaning of the text.

And whoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. Rev 20:15

Some have said that the term “lake of fire” is only symbolic. It is difficult to understand why people take such risk, gambling with their eternal destiny by rejecting the plain meaning of the text. This seems very foolish. Denying the reality of eternal damnation, of hell, takes away from the church the fear (respect) of the Lord and is a step in the erosion of society before its fall.

If the lake of fire is a symbolic term from Revelation, then what does it symbolise? Fire brings intense pain, punishment and suffering. If it isn't literal then it is used to describe something that is equally horrific. If symbolic, the reality symbolised could only be something as disturbing as the descriptions of hell in the Gospels, epistles and Revelation. Though Revelation is symbolic, its prophetic implications are fulfilled in history. The meaning of lake of fire would be equal to its description, which is why Jesus also employed these terms.

A theme of Revelation is no matter the opportunity given, the wicked will not repent. It doesn't matter if they are given more time, or another chance, or more grace, or more wrath, or the number of vows they make to change, their heart disposition is set and they will reject the claims of God.

Neither did they repent of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts. Rev 19:20-21

Revelation teaches us that “salvation” without repentance from sin is not salvation.

Revelation shows us that if judgement occurs in this life, that is not the end of it. After the wicked were judged and punished in Jerusalem and died, their punishment continued in the “after life”.

An application of Revelation for our time is that the church must not forsake the truth of the everlasting punishment of the wicked and the

command to call all to repentance. The love and grace of God through Christ, rather than fear, changes the heart, but all the truth of scripture is essential and important in God drawing people to salvation. In preaching the gospel there must be a call to repentance from all sin, not only a call to believe.

The Mark of the Beast

In this section we look at the mark of the beast in Revelation. We interpret it in relation to the earlier use of the imagery in the book of Daniel, and in regard to the teachings of Jesus and the apostles concerning the events of that generation in the early church. The beast of Revelation had an historical fulfillment in the Roman Empire, but refers also to the nature of man and here is the application for us today. The mark is the serpent's ("beast of the field") nature in man following the fall (Gen 3:1, 7-10, Rev 12:9).

The mark of the beast is not a physical external mark. It refers to those who align themselves with the god of this world, i.e. self-advancement (Rev 13:16-17); as did Eve, and as Jesus was tempted to do. "Right hand and forehead" have to do with what we do and think. These are to be aligned with God by regeneration (Ex 13:16, Deut 6:8, 1 Pet 1:3, 2:23-25). A friend said, "The mark is the beast's nature, the carnal mind, and the works of the carnal mind, which is enmity with God." In Ezek 9:4, the angel's mark on their forehead is clearly not literal in apocalyptic scripture. There are always speculations about a future physical mark, such as a barcode or microchip: things in which there is nothing inherently evil, but may be used to limit liberty. But these take our mind off the real issue; "It's what flows out of the man that defiles him."

In Daniel "beast" refers to world powers: in chapter seven the bear is Persia and the leopard is Greece. In chapter two Nebuchadnezzar dreamt of an image representing these powers. In chapter three he built the image and people bowed down to it when they heard the music. The music is the tune the world plays and bowing to the image of the beast is receiving its mark—compromise. The beast is fallen human nature which functions through these world powers, dominating others and doing the will of the serpent. Daniel depicts

Jesus as the stone smiting the image and it became chaff, which He did on His cross, crushing the serpent's head in our nature; and His kingdom fills the earth as He reigns in His people (Dan 2:34-35).

Jesus came to take the beast out of our nature. This is one of the main themes of Revelation. Is 8:14-15, Luke 2:34, Matt 21:44 all speak of Jesus as the stone in relation to Israel's judgement. "Whoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder (chaff)." Israel thought the Stone only smote Gentile powers. Revelation deals with the bride, those broken by the Stone and healed, and those crushed by the Stone in judgement. Whether to heal or to crush, He comes against the beast: that old serpent and dragon. In those He heals, He takes out the image of the beast and transforms us into the image of Christ (2 Cor 3:18).

The mark of the beast in Revelation had to do with Roman Emperor worship and following the code of conduct and beliefs of the world in those days. The high priest of Israel was aligned with Roman politics and had Emperor worship within the temple area. Revelation chapter thirteen shows the false prophet (Jerusalem) led Israel to worship Rome and the fashion of the world. Jesus had taught "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and to God the things which are God's". To secure the praise of men, and not be put out of the synagogue, to get jobs with good pay ("buy and sell") people would betray the truth and betray one another. Jesus pointed this out several times, e.g. the parable of the Unfaithful Steward, who deceived his master to improve his personal circumstances (Luke 16:1-13, "no servant can serve two masters"). "Away with Him . . . We have no king but Caesar." (John 19:15)

Jesus spoke several times about betrayal and said its occurrence would increase towards the days in which Jerusalem would be sacked. With the coming of Nero and civil wars in Israel this is what happened.

In the Olivet Discourse Jesus said:

And you shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren,
and relatives, and friends: and some of you shall they cause

to be put to death. And you shall be hated by all men for My name's sake. Luke 21:16-17

And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.
Matt 24:12

People would become self-centred, betrayers and covenant breakers. This behaviour is emphasised throughout the records of Josephus. These betrayals would be similar to that of Judas, where each would be after their own agenda, "every man at his price". Jesus warned the disciples they would experience the same (John 13:18, 15:20).

Moving from the Olivet Discourse to Paul's epistles, we find the same statements. Paul is speaking of the "last days" as those days he and Timothy were living in, and exhorted Timothy on his own conduct:

Know this also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, covenant breakers, fierce, despisers of those things that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power of it: from such turn away. 2 Tim 3:1-3

This is a clear description of the beastly nature. What could the statement "last days" mean here? It can't refer to a short period at the end of the world, before the second coming, because Paul said he and Timothy were living in those days. The most natural way of understanding this is that Paul was referring to the last days of Jerusalem and attendant perils, as spoken of by Jesus. This is how Paul knew these things would happen in the "last days": because Jesus said so. Paul was just repeating what Jesus said. Paul knew the sayings of Jesus and used them often in his epistles.

We see this also in John's epistles. He spoke of the "last time" and said "even now there are many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." (1 John 2:18) The term "antichrists" refers to false

christs and false prophets (false teachers). Warning His disciples, Jesus specifically said that these would arise before the sacking of Jerusalem, “Behold, I have told you before” (Matt 24:5, 25).

Little children, it is the last time: and as you have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby you know that it is the last time. 1 John 2:18

Paul, Peter and Jude warned about these false prophets and teachers (1 Tim 4:1, 2 Pet 2:1, Jude 3-4). The apostles were repeating what Jesus had said about the coming days, that the apostles were then living and writing in. Many false prophets appeared in the churches then: (Acts 20:29, 2 Cor 11:13) and were mentioned in Revelation (Rev 2:2, 2:20). It is well documented that many rose up in those days, claiming to be the Messiah and led people out to the desert, as the scriptures said (Matt 24:23, 26, Acts 5:36-37, 21:38). This was one of the reasons Rome sacked Jerusalem. Josephus mentioned many such Messiahs appeared prior to the fall of Jerusalem.

So, what is the implication for us today? We live in the same type of world. When Paul said Christ, “gave himself for our sins, that he may deliver us from this present evil world” (Gal 1:4), he was not speaking about a world that would end at AD 70. This present evil world goes on until the second coming of Christ, and we are living in it now, though if Christ dwells in us then we are not of it.

This worldly living regards choices people make, to follow the Lord or to compromise for what they perceive to be their own advantage (1 John 2:16). These choices arise in professional careers, and in day to day relationships. People are betrayed by work colleagues, supposed friends and by politicians. It is the nature of man and more so in times of persecution, as in Revelation. It sadly occurs in the church. People deny friends and deny the truth for popularity. Betrayal of covenant in marriage is widespread. People today are commonly covenant breakers. Churches and society often accept these things as normal.

This is the nature of the beast, and those who receive his mark: “lovers of their own selves, covetous . . . unthankful, unholy, without natural

affection, covenant breakers, fierce, despisers of those things that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.” (2 Tim 3:2-4) Jesus asked, “What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” He said He would deny such people when He came to judge that sinful generation (Mark 8:34-38).

There is a way back to the Lord. This is genuine repentance and change of heart and life. Repentance is necessary. Sins of betrayal are often committed by Christians without a sense of conscience, because they think their life style doesn't matter, since they are “born again”. Betrayal in marriage, betrayal of colleagues and betrayal of truth are common because people think they have grace in the matter, but grace is given to us to change.

John exhorted the believers of his time not to follow this worldly nature, but to follow the nature of Jesus. John spoke of the nature of this false church and how we would identify it, to avoid the deception of it. John called this deception the spirit of antichrist.

He that says that he abides in Him, ought himself to walk, even as He walked. 1 John 2:6

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 1 John 2:15

And the world passes away, and the desires of it, but he that does the will of God abides forever. 1 John 2:18

Little children, let no man deceive you: he that does righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that commits sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifest, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 1 John 3:7-8

But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need any man to teach you. 1 John 2:27

By this last statement, John was not saying we don't need teachers, but we will know deceivers and false teachers. When a teacher or prophet comes making various claims, as many do today, we will know the truth by what is manifest: the fruit. No one who says they are from God is telling the truth if they do what is wrong.

These false teachers, and those who follow them and live the same lives, are those who partake of the plagues of the beast:

And many shall follow their pernicious ways . . . whose judgement . . . lingers not, and their damnation slumbers not . . . But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed . . . 2 Pet 2:2-3, 12

Revelation teaches us that instead of taking the mark of the beast, we should be marked by the nature of Christ in our lives:

For even to this are you called, because Christ suffered for us, leaving for us an example, that we should follow His steps, who did not sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judges righteously. Who in His own self bare our sin in His own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin, should live to righteousness, by whose stripes you are healed (i.e. our nature is healed, renewed transformed, made as it should be). For you were as sheep going astray, but are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. 1 Pet 2:21-25

Those who received the mark of the beast would receive judgement. They may not be ready when it would come. "Two shall be in a field and one shall be taken". (Matt 24:40) Some claim this phrase refers to the church taken by the rapture, but Jesus did not say so. There is no indication in the context that this is what Jesus meant. It means, as two people go about normal daily events, one would be taken in death suddenly, without expecting it: as it was with Noah's flood. Jesus was referring to the period of tribulation that generation would pass through, warning them not to be taken unawares like they were in Noah's time. Many people died unexpectedly and after that faced God's eternal judgement.

Who then is that faithful and wise servant, whom the lord has made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom the lord when he comes shall find so doing. Matt 24:45-46

Jesus told His disciples to be about their Master's business in a faithful manner. This was the theme of James, Second Peter and Jude: contrasting the faithful with the unfaithful servant heading to judgement. The apostles' plain task was simply to reiterate in their epistles what Jesus had told them. They had no *new word* to share. We must also apply this warning to our own lives in the service of others today, rather than give heed to self-serving doctrines that are prevalent. The beast serves self. The anti-beast is a faithful servant. This is Jesus: He serves His Father.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse: and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True . . . Rev 19:11

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness . . . Rev 1:5

What is our doctrine and teaching today? Do we teach to gain a following, or to be faithful to the Lord and His word? Each one of us will be judged in this regard (Phil 2:1-13, 1 Cor 3:11-19).

Hyper Preterism

Preterism comes from a root word meaning past. It means that some of the prophecies of scripture have been fulfilled in the past. Revelation is partly preterist in that much of it describes the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. It is also partly historicist, in that it describes Christ's ongoing millennial reign throughout the current history of the church. Revelation is also partly futurist, in that it describes the resurrection and judgement at the end of the world at the second coming of Christ, as well as the eternal nature of the church in immortality.

Revelation is also idealist, in that it presents themes on the sovereignty of Christ and His victory over sin, the beast and the harlot in whatever form they manifest in our lives or nations. Revelation contains themes related

to the kingdom of God, which repeat themselves throughout the church age. Revelation does not directly prophecy of these events, in a form of double or multiple fulfilment, but as the nature of man, Satan and God remain the same throughout the ages, similar events will occur. Revelation therefore serves as an encouragement to the church in all generations, so long as people do not go too far and use it as speculative tool.

It is necessary near the end of this book to give a warning concerning hyper preterism. Hyper preterism has two major faults. First, it holds that AD 70 saw the fulfilment of all Bible prophecy. It denies the future bodily resurrection, final judgement and second coming of Jesus. It forces all scripture concerning these themes into its AD 70 framework. It denies that scripture can mean different things about terms such as “last days”, “evil age”, “coming or appearing of the Lord”, “judgement” and “resurrection” according to their context. It reaches conclusions that are both unscriptural and also foreign to the early church creeds, which were carefully put together to combat heresy.

The second fault of hyper preterism is even worse. It sees the destruction of the temple in AD 70 as the event that ended the old covenant and began the new covenant, while scripture shows us that when Christ died on the cross “it was finished” and the veil into the holy of holies was torn from top to bottom. Hebrews teaches that Christ’s sacrifice on the cross put an end to sacrifice, fulfilled and thus ended the old covenant forever. The scriptures also teach us that Pentecost, and not AD 70, was the beginning of the new covenant, when the church was born. Jews were coming into resurrection life in Christ many years before AD 70. AD 70 had no direct relationship to the finished work of Christ which Christ alone finished in His death, resurrection and ascension.

Neither Revelation, nor Jesus, nor the apostles, taught that the new covenant in any way depended on the events of AD 70. To say that our salvation is related to AD 70 and not to the finished work of Christ, is a non-Christian position that is contrary to the gospel and diminishes the finished work of Christ. Hyper preterism is thus an anti-Christ doctrine.

Revelation teaches us that Jerusalem was judged by God, according to the prophets, for its many centuries of turning against Him, from which

they did not repent, even when God sent them His only beloved Son. It shows the fulfilment of the parable of the Vineyard. Revelation also presents many themes related to the work of Christ in His atonement for sin and priestly work, as the new covenant was inaugurated at Pentecost and God called out His bride from the Jews and all the nations of earth. This is the time we are living in at present; when God is still making up His bride from all peoples on earth today, and He will continue to do so until He comes.

Revelation is the fulfilment of Christ's prophecy in the Olivet Discourse. John Gill described that Discourse as follows:

But of that day and hour knows no man . . . Which is to be understood, not of the second coming of Christ, the end of the world, and the last judgment; but of the coming of the son of man, to take vengeance on the Jews, and of their destruction; for the words manifestly regard the date of the several things going before, which only can be applied to that catastrophe, and dreadful desolation: now, though the destruction itself was spoken of by Moses and the prophets, was foretold by Christ, and the believing Jews had some discerning of its near approach; see Heb 10:25, yet the exact and precise time was not known. John Gill's, *Exposition of the Entire Bible*

Revelation depicts the birth of the church, the coming down from heaven of the new Jerusalem, which is our state in Christ now and also that which continues on into eternity after the resurrection:

Here the *world to come* is not that which we hope for after the resurrection, but that which began at the beginning of Christ's kingdom; but it will no doubt have its full accomplishment in our final redemption (resurrection). Calvin, *Commentary on Hebrews 2:5*

What's Next?

Apart from the many applications we may draw from Revelation, in this section we briefly zero in on what still remains unfulfilled.

The Old and New Testaments drew a distinction between what was close at hand and what would unfold over a longer time. The first was known in the Old Testament as the “last days” and referred to the end of the Israeli theocracy, and the second is the long period known as the kingdom of Christ.

Many passages, such as the second Psalm depict this long era; “Ask of me, and I shall give you the heathen for your inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession.” This is the long gospel harvest age in which we now live. And after the twenty-second Psalm depicts Christ’s sufferings, it likewise shows the glory that would follow: “All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; and all the tribes of the nations shall worship before you. For the kingdom is the Lord’s; and he is the governor among the nations.”

And Ps 110:1, “Sit at My right hand till I make your enemies your footstool”. The right hand is the place of rule and dominion, which is Christ’s kingdom. It goes on for a long time. This doesn’t mean that Christ doesn’t already rule over all his enemies. His rule is already complete and sovereign, but God allows and employs the enemy as He brings in the harvest from the nations. Rom 8:19-21 claims He brings His sons to glory, using the vanity of this evil age as one of the catalysts (where the word for “creature” in Hebrew thought referred to the Great Commission to the Gentiles).

The book of Hebrews was written to encourage Jews not to go back to the Old Covenant, in which they expected a Messiah to appear in Jerusalem, to place all Israel’s enemies under their feet. In this context the author says, “You have put all things in subjection under his feet . . . But we do not yet see all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour . . .” (Heb 2:7-9) God hid His work in a child born at Bethlehem, to reveal it to the meek He chose (Matt 11:25-27), and this was the secret in the prophets no one understood. The author meant Christ’s church and harvest is the kingdom.

When the harvest is complete Christ hands the kingdom to the Father. This is stated in Paul’s passage on the resurrection of the body (1 Cor

15:20-28, see also John 5:28-29). There is no indication in this passage that this event is at hand or soon. This handing of the kingdom to the Father doesn't mean that Christ ceases to reign, but the church is presented to the Father when the harvest from the nations is complete. Paul gives no indication of when this will be or of any time span or historical event that would herald it. The passage is clear that the kingdom of Christ the prophets spoke of is *now*, before the resurrection: He reigns *before* death is put under Him.

While on the subject of Paul's writings, it does appear to some authors that in his epistles to the Thessalonians, Paul spoke of two things: a bodily resurrection at some future time not stated; and an apostasy in the temple in Jerusalem in their generation, and on this apostasy Paul specifically warned the believers alive in his own day. Paul must have meant the temple then standing, because he indicated nowhere that another temple would be built, nor did Jesus or any of the New Testament apostles.

In the parable of the Talents in Matthew chapter twenty-five, Jesus spoke of going away for a long time, in language distinct from His earlier warnings of nearness (Matt 25:19). This judgment regards how we have served Christ in His kingdom age, which we know to be when the gospel goes to all nations. In the same chapter He spoke of a judgement reminiscent of the Great White Throne judgement. It is indicated that this occurs at the end of the harvest, or a long time in the future; all that have lived are gathered before Him, i.e. all nations including (*ethnos*) Gentiles. He separates the sheep from the goats, meaning true from false believers.

The task for us in the scripture is to determine from the context those texts which specifically refer to the recipients of that day, and those passages which refer to the whole church community throughout Christ's kingdom in the church age. From this process it becomes clear that at a time the Father determines that the gospel harvest among the nations is complete, the dead from all ages and nations shall be raised and judged. At that point all enemies, including death and the curse on creation shall be swallowed up and ended. This is what we know as the second or final coming of Christ, and it is not the same event as the coming described in Matthew chapter twenty-four.

A Vision of Christ's Kingdom

One point we have not discussed is whether the kingdom of Christ is amillennial or postmillennial. The former meaning that all things go on pretty much as they are now till the end, where Christ reigns now to draw out His harvest; and the latter where the kingdom grows and becomes more and more glorious in the earth. A case for the latter could be made in the prophets and in the teachings of Jesus (the kingdom likened to leavened bread, Luke 13:20-21) and could possibly be made from church history so far to date:

It would be easy to show that at our present rate of progress the kingdoms of this world never could become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. Indeed, many in the Church are giving up the idea of it except on the occasion of the advent of Christ, which, as it chimes in with our own idleness, is likely to be a popular doctrine. I myself believe that King Jesus will reign, and the idols be utterly abolished, but I expect the same power which turned the world upside down once will still continue to do it. The Holy Ghost would never suffer the imputation to rest upon His holy name that He was not able to convert the world. Charles Spurgeon, *Paradise Restored*

It is clear that the promises of the prophets metaphorically represent new life in Christ. Some church fathers have seen their final fulfilment after the resurrection, while others in an advancement of His kingdom before His return. While we don't know the seasons, it is certain we are to do all God enables us in spreading the gospel and kingdom influence. The gospel has shaped our nations, and though there are periods of decline, we have every reason to expect greater blessing worldwide in the days ahead.

We must forget the self-fulfilling negativism of pre-millennialism, where it is believed no further transformation will come to our nations until Jesus "reigns on earth". Studies show all nations have been reached with the gospel. There is evidence that even in the first millennium, most if not all the inhabited world was reached. It would be presumptive to claim God will not again take a large harvest from all nations in the years ahead.

It is clear that many of the early church fathers didn't see the end as imminent. They saw a long period of Christ's kingdom where the gospel would continue to go out to all nations:

The *Didache* of around AD 97 did not teach of a near second coming of Christ, but of an age of gospel outreach to the ends of the earth. The Epistle of Barnabas around AD 98 declared an age of dominion for the church in the entire world. Clemet of Rome about AD 99 declared the same, as did the *Pastor of Hermas* in AD 100, Ignatius in AD 107 and Papias in AD 145.

In AD 150 we see pre-millennialism (Christ's return to establish a millennial kingdom) in some of the writings of Justin Martyr, a converted Greek philosopher, where in other passages he spoke against it. In AD 165 Tatian was strongly anti pre-millennial, as was Athenagoras in AD 183. Iranaeus in AD 185 was pre-millennial in some parts of his writings, but not in other parts. Clement of Alexandria in AD 190 and Caius of Rome in AD 210 were strongly anti pre-millennial. The most consistent expectation of these fathers was a prolonged reign of Christ throughout the world in current history.

We should expect Christ to reign and build His church more gloriously, and follow Christ's command to "occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13). Jesus made this statement in the parable of the pounds, to address His coming to judge Jerusalem in that generation. The details are different to the parable of the talents already discussed. For us today the implications of "occupy till I come" are the same. Jesus will come at a time the Father has determined: our task is to be busy for His kingdom. It is unfaithfulness to speculate on "end-times" and withdraw from kingdom usefulness in this world. Whether Christ's second coming is soon, or prolonged, the issue is the same, that by His grace we are found serving Him and His people faithfully. If His coming is prolonged it doesn't mean we can take our ease, for none of us know when it is appointed for us to die and face the judgement.

There have been different ideas concerning the *kingdom of God*, or *kingdom of heaven*. Some have said the kingdom of heaven is distinct

and comes when Christ returns to “reign in Jerusalem”. Jesus used the terms interchangeably, since heaven describes God’s seat of rule. When John the Baptist and Jesus preached, they both said the kingdom of God was at hand then. They meant the fulfilment of the prophets: the promised gift of the Spirit. See Jeremiah: “I will write my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; . . . I will be their God, and they shall be my people” and Ezekiel: “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.” (Jer 31:33, Ezek 36:26-27)

The gospels announce the beginning, not the delay of Christ’s kingdom: the Stone not made with human hands, which triumphed in resurrection and now reigns with all authority in heaven and in earth (Dan 2:32, Matt 28:18). Jesus said the kingdom does not come with observation; it is not an event in Jerusalem. But rather, “the kingdom is within you” (Luke 17:20-21).

Reflecting the metaphors of the prophets, Jesus described the spirit of this kingdom in the Sermon of the Mount, where God rules in the hearts of His people; and in His own life He displayed it: “A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench . . .” (Matt 12:20, Is 42:3, the Prophet like Moses, the meekest on all the earth.) Mahatma Gandhi longed for this when he saw the hypocrisy of the British and Indians in the politics of his day. He read the Sermon on the Mount and said, “Christianity looks like a good idea. Somebody should try it.” In the book of Acts we see this kingdom does not come by fulfilling a set of principles, but by the gift of His Spirit to our hearts.

There is to be such a revival in our nations that His Spirit reigns within our hearts and transforms even the corridors of political power. This is to be our fervent prayer and desire, rather than escapism: “Your kingdom come” (Luke 11:2). God will certainly do this in our nations yet again. As Isaiah says, “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end” (Is 9:7). This takes place firstly in our own heart, and then through us in our homes, work places, governments, nations and world missions. When the “kingdom” is earthly, about buildings, power and budgets, it becomes corrupted. That is not the kingdom: His kingdom is new birth in each individual.

Peter's epistles have a strong kingdom perspective. Christ becomes our healer and Shepherd of our souls through the gospel (1 Pet 2:24). The church is a "holy *nation*", called in particular to demonstrate His attributes – so that He calls all out of darkness into light. Peter then describes the fall of Jerusalem and says, "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. Wherefore beloved, seeing you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found in him in peace, without spot and blameless." (2 Pet 3:13-14)

Peter's themes mirror those of the book of Hebrews. Noting the corruption and decay of this present world, we are to look for Him to reign in our heart and affairs, that He might be the healing of the nations. Out of the church, the new Jerusalem, goes the living water of the gospel to heal the nations (Ezek 47:9, Rev 22:1).

Whose voice then shook the earth: but now He has promised, saying, Yet once more I will shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifies the removal of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire. Heb 12:26-29

Here Hebrew speaks of the judgement coming in that day against the old covenant city, while God's people look to a city with foundations, whose builder and maker is God. The text refers to the time God shook Sinai in establishing the old covenant (Hag 2:6-7): now, in the writer's day, He shakes earth once more, and heaven: i.e., makes a new covenant. This covenant is an everlasting kingdom not made with hands; not an earthly tabernacle built by man, but a Stone cut out without hands, a heavenly church. This kingdom cannot be moved. It is everlasting.

Then Hebrews describes the graces of God's people, as we look away from that which is corruptible to His heavenly reign; not to escape this world, but to partner in the new world which He is now building

through His church. This is what our church forefathers did for us. Take just one of so many examples: John Bunyan, in prison for the gospel, wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*, through which God has blessed millions, many of whom over the years have entered government. God will do this again through us, for the generations to follow, as His gospel continues to be the healing of the nations:

In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manners of fruit; and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. Rev 22:2

A Post-millennial Vision

Post-millennialists usually hold that the millennium is a special period of unspecified duration just prior to the second coming of Jesus, in which the church prevails in the world at all levels, in the spiritual and social life of people in all nations, to the glory of Christ and His kingdom. Here, we look briefly at a biblical basis for post-millennial blessings, not with regard to a specific period at the end of this age, but as an ever increasing phenomenon throughout the church age. Though there is much strife in the nations still, there is much better reason to believe in and embrace the prospect of God's plan prevailing over any plan of the devil, even in our current world.

This view presents themes from the prophets, Jesus and the apostles. Abraham was told that through his seed (Christ), God would bless all the nations of the earth. (Gen 22:18) This may indicate God's plan, not just of a harvest taken out of these nations, but of a further promise to bless all the nations through the grace of gospel government. In the Psalms the kingdoms of the world are given to Christ, rather than to any of His enemies. Similarly, Jesus said that this promise (God's kingdom) is likened to a seed, which while small when sown, becomes bigger than all the trees of the field and the birds of the air come into it for shelter. (Mark 4:30-32) Paul showed the outworking of this, firstly through Christ's victory on the cross (Eph 1:20-22) and then made manifest in the earth by Christ working in the church. (Eph 3:10, 1:10)

The striking thing about scripture is that this kingdom doesn't come after these enemies are put down, but it grows during the age of these enemies, i.e. during our current time:

Ask of Me, and I shall give You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for Your possession. Ps 2:8

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord: and all kindred of all nations shall worship before You. For the kingdom is the Lord's and He is the governor among the nations. Ps 22:27-28

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies . . . Ps 23:5

The Lord said to my Lord, sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies your footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion: rule in the midst of Your enemies. Ps 110:1-2

Arise shine for Your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon You. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people, but the Lord shall arise upon You, and His glory shall be seen upon You. And the Gentiles shall come to Your light, and kings to the brightness of Your rising. Lift up Your eyes roundabout and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to You: Your sons shall come from far . . . the forces of the Gentiles shall come to You . . . and I will glorify the house of My glory. Is 60:1-7

For He must reign UNTIL He has put all enemies under His feet. 1 Cor 15:25

Many of the church fathers who laboured in the past had this view of Christ's kingdom, though sometimes different in the details, and left much blessing in terms of revival, science, government and biblical social improvement. Jonathan Edwards was one of these,

whose post-millennial view inspired his work, helping to transform pre-independent America and fashion it as a Christian nation that has helped bring the gospel and aid to the world. We desperately need this positive vision and Spirit empowered labour today.

Peter was an apostle to the Jews and wrote from Jerusalem in the time leading up to the destruction of the entire Old Testament system and nation. He spoke of the trials of those days and noted that while that material, earthly kingdom was fading; those Jews who embraced Christ were becoming heirs of a new eternal kingdom. Old Covenant Israel was clinging to the natural emblems and physical kingdom in Jerusalem, of which the book of Hebrews said they were passing away. There was a clear distinction between a natural and a spiritual inheritance (Esau and Jacob; Joseph and his brothers; Jesus and the rulers of Israel). In Peter's day there was the choice between the old earthly Jerusalem and its selfish desires, and the desire to please the Father in heaven in the new Jerusalem.

Peter's epistles are kingdom epistles. The old kingdom of natural Israel and symbolic faith through the earthly tabernacle was passing away (representing this carnal world with its lusts and fashions) and the new spiritual kingdom had come through the gift of the Spirit and reign of Christ in our hearts, who will also appear from heaven to judge the nations as He builds His church. We rely on this promise throughout our current ages, until His final return and final judgement.

The King is Jesus: a stone of stumbling that crushes the disobedient. We are planted into His spiritual kingdom and spiritual tabernacle by new birth and become members of this new nation. We show forth the praises of Him that called us, and His kingdom becomes a blessing to all nations on earth.

Living in the kingdom means that we follow the King. We follow the example and life style that Jesus lived and spoke about in His sermons. Peter reiterates the main points of Christ's messages in his two epistles, showing that because we have been redeemed by the incorruptible blood of Christ, then this is the value we put on our redemption (holiness) in our daily attitudes and interactions with others.

The scriptures are a heavenly vision for earthly good. They remind us we are not of this world: we live by the values of Christ. And they give us a vision of the reign of Christ's spiritual kingdom in this earth and the blessing it brings to people and nations through the gospel.

Peter presents the new kingdom spoken of by the prophets, "When it testified beforehand of the sufferings (passion) of Christ, and the glory that should follow." (1 Pet 1:11) This is the kingdom we have entered, in which we are now citizens of the new building: "Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone . . . you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (1 Pet 2:6, 9)

There are various possibilities in interpreting the Old Testament prophets, as they spoke about what was then the future coming of Christ's kingdom. Peter said they spoke of the things which Christ must suffer in His passion and the glories that would follow. What then were these glories He spoke of and when would they follow?

It seems clear enough by the plain meaning of "follow", that these glories were not to follow a long time after His passion. Peter meant the kingdom they were then inheriting as he wrote. By new birth they were ushered into this incorruptible inheritance, ready to be revealed in the "last time" (1 Pet 1:3-5), i.e. the time that Peter wrote (1 Pet 1:20): the days of consummation, where the *shadow* of the old passed into the *substance* of Christ's passion and kingdom. (See also Heb 1:2, 9:26, 1 Cor 10:11) Jesus also spoke frequently of the imminence of His kingdom, preaching prior to His passion. John said in his Gospel we would enter this kingdom by being born of the Spirit, after Jesus would be glorified: i.e. would enter His glory in His ascension to the Father.

Daniel said Christ would ascend to heaven at the beginning of His kingdom (Dan 7:13-14): the Son of man would ascend to the Father and "be given dominion and glory and a kingdom". That is, His kingdom began at His ascension. (Heb 1:8) It does not begin at His second and final coming at the end of the world: but rather in His second coming He presents His kingdom, the church, to the Father. Dan 2:35 says

that this kingdom, beginning as a stone following Christ's passion and resurrection (when He crushed the beast/serpent), would then become a mountain and fill the entire earth. Similarly, Hab 2:14 said in this kingdom, "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea".

Jesus spoke of the progress of the kingdom, in a similar way to the passage of Daniel chapter two. He said His kingdom is like a woman who put leaven in dough and the leaven grew until the whole dough was fully leavened. (Luke 13:20-21) This speaks of the slow, but certain progress of the kingdom, until it prevails through the whole. The dough that the woman makes into bread, going about her normal daily life, speaks of the daily social affairs of people and societies that the kingdom eventually permeates.

All the prophets of the Old Testament spoke of the extent of Christ's reign. It will extend to the ends of the earth and to all races of people, and will do so even while His enemies try to prevent it. Christ's rule will prevail in the presence of His enemies, not after His enemies have been put down: i.e. His kingdom grows and extends through our nations during our present ages. We can easily witness this growth through the past periods of church history and according to scripture we have reason to expect this growth to continue: "That in the ages to come he might show us the exceeding riches of His grace". (Eph 2:7) That is, His plans for the nations through the expanding blessings of Christ's rule, unfold during the current ages (meaning periods of history) in our current world. The reign of Christ prevails during our current age more and more until its objectives have been completed, i.e. until His dominion from heaven is fully apparent on earth through grace.

We can view the glories of the kingdom of Christ the prophets spoke of in various ways. They represent the riches of our new life in Christ, His government increasing in our hearts after receiving new birth, ever transforming us into His image. Further than that, they represent the impact of our transformed lives upon society. His law of grace and His knowledge are passed through the lives of His people to society and their influence spreads like leaven. From the time of Christ's first

coming there is a steady increase in the effects of His government among our nations. From the time that *stone, seed, leaven* was first sown into the earth; the favour of God through Christ's grace began to prevail. A Child is sown into our hearts, nations and cultures, from where His government increases:

For to us (both Jew and Gentile) a child is born, to us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder . . . of the increase of His government and peace their shall be no end, upon the throne of David (the eternal kingdom promised to David's seed, Christ: 2 Sam 7:13), and upon His kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgement and justice from henceforth even forever . . ." Is 9:6-7

We should never look to a political leader or party to save our nations. To do so is to deny His government and to desire another king. (1 Sam 8:7) Curses and destruction come to those who trust in man. We should look to Jesus ("looking unto Jesus", the only redeemer and saviour) and pray for our governments as the scripture says: that Christ would help them to act rightly. This is better than partisan political groups constantly at loggerheads and hating one another.

Another option in interpreting these glorious passages in the prophets is to hold that the glories to follow represent His personal reign in earthly Jerusalem after His second coming, while in our present ages all we see is decline and the victory of darkness. This does not seem congruent with the prophets as it necessitates a long gap between His passion and kingdom, which gap is not spoken of in scripture. Also, in this view His kingdom does not grow gradually, but instantly in His second coming, and does not spread in the presence of His enemies, but afterwards, in their absence. This does not harmonise with Christ's teaching, or with the Old Testament prophetic vision.

Agreeing with Charles Spurgeon, it does seem spurious that the leaven of Christ redemption could not prevail in men's hearts and societies in this current world, and that the devil's darkness and anarchy would continually have the upper hand until the end. It does seem doubtful that God would not provide Himself with an outcome of His Son's victory

and conquest in the hearts of men in our current ages. Indeed, all the prophets seem to indicate that this is exactly the scenario we should expect. This does not mean we will not witness more evil on earth: it is allowing this evil to turn us from the values of Christ's kingdom that we must reject. "Now abide faith, hope and love." (1 Cor 13:13)

We can get very excited about God's word and expect that it may be fulfilled in this or that way and by this or that time; but we have no indication of the timing at all. The only indication we have in scripture is that the leaven slowly spreads and does it work. We have no idea how slow or quick that is, or when God has planned for it to be completed. While we are full of hope for that which is not yet seen, we don't become disparaged in the present. Looking at news broadcast, one would never catch a vision of Christ's rule, and there could very well be worse things ahead. But looking at Christ we do catch this vision and are filled with His joy. We are certain His purposes prevail and His reign is absolute. Whatever the case of the present day, we know God's kingdom is righteous, and we live by that faith and the values it produces: shining forth as His children of light, reflecting His characteristics and spiritual nature through Christ. This is His kingdom in us today.

You have put all things under His feet. For in that He put all in subjection under Him, He left nothing that is not put under Him. But now we see not all things put under Him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He should by the grace of God taste death for every man (lit': for every *thing*). Heb 2:8-9

His death brought into reconciliation every thing, meaning all authorities in heaven and on earth (see Eph 1:19-22 and Col 1:20). These were under His power before His incarnation, but now as son of David, by the blood of His cross He brings all things under the power of His church, of which He is the head. He takes dominion over all things for us, as our redeemer and high priest, *for the seed of Abraham*: the father of all those with faith. (Heb 2:16, Rom 4:11) It is completely against scripture to read this as *ultimate reconciliation*,

meaning Christ *saved* all things. This is speaking of Adam's loss of dominion and Christ regaining that dominion on behalf of Abraham's seed: Christ and His church.

Hebrews chapter two is written in the context of Israel trying to hold onto their natural kingdom, looking for a conquering Messiah. The author states God has placed all things under the feet of Jesus, but not the way the Jews expected. His is a spiritual kingdom, which has its outworking through His church in the ages to come. In the meantime we do not look at the enemies that have not yet bowed their knee to Him, but we see Jesus who conquered death, ascended and now reigns in heaven over them all. We see *the son of man*, who is in heaven for us.

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Phil 2:11

This speaks of Christ's complete dominion in heaven, earth and under the earth, which is already given Him and which He already exercises on earth with full sovereignty, in accordance to His Father's will. (Matt 28:18). Having this power, Christ then mandated the church to go forth and disciple all nations. "Go THEREFORE and teach ALL NATIONS . . ." (see Matt 28:19-20). It is the outcome of this Great Commission, of this gospel, that the powers of hell on earth (already defeated and bound in regard to any effective power) are subdued, and the blessing and redemption of Christ fully manifest in the nations of earth. All this is in the timing of God and is not something we demand at our own will.

So in scripture as a whole we see a vision of the expanding influence of Christ's kingdom before His second and final coming at the resurrection and final eternal judgement. We may mistake this view of the prophets as a chance for us to have a kingdom ourselves: to reign and to have power and wealth. Rather we are to reign under Christ, as He reigns: as a servant. He came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. And though Lord, He took the towel of the housemaid and washed the disciples' feet and

told us to do the same to others. In addition to this, the kingdom of Christ's glorious reign is always offset by His cross. The two go "hand in glove". The kingdom is based around His cross, not that He is still suffering, no: but once that cross is forgotten the pride of man takes control.

This is the type of kingdom we have entered by faith, where we all continually humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God and follow Christ's example to us: in integrity, truth and faithfulness to the Lord and to those around us. We are not the leaders of this kingdom ourselves, but we follow Christ's leadership over us and do His will, caring for one another. Peter called it being an "under-shepherd": serving on the flock's behalf. (1 Pet 5:1-4)

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We conclude with John Calvin's statement (quoted previously) in his commentary on Hebrews, which is also a good summary of Revelation. Revelation, like Hebrews, describes the end of the old covenant and the beginning of the new covenant, when Christ rose and His church was born on the day of Pentecost. The church is that temple described in Revelation and Christ is the wedding feast that we partake of today, but which also passes on into eternity after the final coming of Christ, resurrection and final judgement:

Here the *world to come* is not that which we hope for after the resurrection, but that which began at the beginning of Christ's kingdom; but it will no doubt have its full accomplishment in our final redemption (resurrection).
Calvin, *Commentary on Hebrews* 2:5



CFI has purchased 30 acres of land on the outskirts of Jos, for its permanent site. Pictured here, students work to erect a fence around the site. We believe that in the years ahead the college and a church hall will be situated on this land, along with junior, secondary and vocational education facilities for the local population and all those from the mission outreaches, along with media facilities for outreach, and areas for farming. We pray God will use this to greatly expand the blessings of His kingdom in the whole region north of us and into the Middle East.



Guests come to visit CFI. Some work in different areas: such as teaching in the college, setting up online computer systems for the student's research, or building book shelves for the expanding college library (currently holding 4,000 modern resource books from around the world). We trust other guests will come to work on the new site. Pictured here, the guests visit the governor's chapel service and take part in the worship. They also visit tourist sites such as villages, waterfalls and hand craft shops in the area.

Further Reading

Louis Berkhof, a respected church theologian of the last century, wrote:

Present day critical scholars (as in an exegetical and historical critique, not *criticism*) are generally inclined to adopt . . . the view that the Seer (John) was limited to matters within his own historical horizon, and that the book (of Revelation) refers principally to the triumph of Christianity over Judaism and Paganism, signalized in the downfall of Jerusalem and Rome. On this view all or almost all the prophecies contained in the book have already been fulfilled. Louis Berkhof, *New Testament Introduction*

There are many authors; however below we list just a few if you would like to begin further research . . .

Jay Adams, **Lorraine Boettner**, Adam Clarke, Andrew Corbett, Gary DeMar, Kenneth Gentry, John Gill (mentor of Charles Spurgeon), Philip Schaff, Bishop John Lightfoot, John Owen, R. C Sproul.

- For a discussion on the various views see R. C. Sproul, *The Last Days According to Jesus*. Sproul is the founder of Ligonier Ministries in the USA and a highly respected teacher in the Reformed tradition.
- For a detailed verse by verse audio commentary on Revelation see Kenneth Gentry's website. This is highly recommended for a detailed and simple to understand commentary on Revelation. Gentry is a well respected teacher in the USA in the Reformed tradition. He has a wealth of teaching resources available on the internet.
- For detailed research on the date Revelation was written, see *The Day Jerusalem Fell*, by Kenneth Gentry.
- Gary Demar is a teacher in the Reformed tradition and the president of American Vision, promoting the biblical

perspective “that the world is not ending tomorrow and that Christ’s Kingdom will be victorious on the earth”. He has many resources and books available on the internet. Two books which deal with exegetical issues are *Last Days Madness* and *End Times Fiction*.

- Jay Adams is a highly respected Evangelical leader in America and has authored many excellent books on pastoral theology. He has also written on Revelation in his books *The Time is at Hand* and *Preterism – Orthodox or Unorthodox?*
- See Andrew Corbett’s online books: *The Most Embarrassing Verse in the Bible* (A commentary on Matthew chapter twenty-four), and *The Most Embarrassing Book in the Bible* (a verse by verse commentary on Revelation). Corbett is a Pentecostal pastor and apologist in Australia and the President of AOG’s ICI Theological College Australia. He has many helpful articles available on the internet.
- See Bishop John Lightfoot (seventeenth century), using the Hebraica in his New Testament commentary. Lightfoot was one of the drafters of the Westminster Confession and he wrote much on interpreting the New Testament in the Hebraic literary context.
- See John Owen’s commentaries and sermons for notes on Matthew chapter twenty-four and Second Peter chapter three, available on the internet. In the seventeenth century Owen was Vice Councillor of Oxford University and today he is considered by many the greatest English speaking theologian of history. He wrote in the Puritan Reformed tradition.
- *The Works of John Newton* (and the works of any of the main Puritan fathers, published by The Banner of Truth Trust), for an appreciation of the Old Testament prophets pointing to the supremacy and work of Christ in the New Covenant and our renewed Christian life. These are among the best gospel presentations from scripture available to the church.

