

**Eschatology: A Course in the Study of Last Things**  
**What Does the Bible Teach About the End?**  
**Steve Paulus**

**What is Eschatology?**

Scripture verses for this section: (*Current nature of the last days*) Acts 2:16-17; I Cor.10:11; II Tim. 3:1; Heb.1:2; James 5:3; I Peter1:20; II Peter3:3; Jude 18. (*Concept of a definite end*) Matt. 24:3,14; Matt.28:20; John 6:44. (*Present nature of the kingdom*) Mark 1:14-15; Luke 10:10-11; 17:20-21; Col. 2:14-15. (*Present and future nature of the kingdom*) I Cor.15: 22-28; Rom. 8:18-25; Heb. 6:4-5; I John 3:1-3. (*Future nature of the end*) Matt.13:24-30; 36-43; 47-50. Matt. 25:31-46, Rev. 20:11-15. (*Universal nature of the kingdom*) Daniel 2:44-45; Daniel 7:13-14.

Word Studies for this section (see below): Kingdom of God (or kingdom of heaven); end (*telos*), end (*eschatos*); )age (*aionos*); world (*kosmos*); nations(*ta ethne*); coming (*parousia*).

**A. Introduction**

Eschatology is the study of last things -- doctrines relating to the final events of the age, the fulfillment of world history, or the completion of God's plans for the present world. The word is taken from the Greek *eschaton* which means 'last.' "The writers of the Bible frequently refer to an eschatological complex of events as the climax of world history, the resolution and the consummation of world history" (James Buswell, "What is Eschatology," in *Readings in Christian Theology, Vol. III*, p. 419, Millard J. Erickson, ed.).

Eschatology refers to the last things for individuals as well as for the world or universe at large. Thus it addresses questions of individual life after death, judgment, intermediate state, and resurrection, as well as issues relating to the end of the world and God's ultimate plan for the human race and creation itself. "The biblical concept of time is not cyclical ... or linear... it envisions rather a recurring pattern in which divine judgment and redemption interact until this pattern attains its definitive manifestation. Eschatology may therefore denote the consummation of God's purpose whether it coincides with the end of the world (or history) or not, whether the consummation is totally final or marks a stage in the unfolding pattern of his purpose" (F.F. Bruce, "Eschatology" in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 362, Walter Elwell, ed.). We will examine this concept of partial consummation when we look at Jesus' prophecies regarding Jerusalem and Israel.

Jesus' teaching on last things is evident in his teaching on the kingdom of God. He came to announce the kingdom, but also made clear that the kingdom's consummation was in a future time. This "already, not yet" aspect of the kingdom of God is sometimes difficult to understand. Jesus' teachings speak clearly of the present power of the kingdom, yet

there is a future fulfillment at a later day. So he uses terms like “on that day,” or “in the last day.”

There are various views on all eschatological questions. Our church and other churches of Grace Presbytery tend to embrace a Reformed view of eschatology. We will explain what this means during the course. Some churches make a certain view of eschatology a test of fellowship. As a pastor I hold to certain views of the last things, but I don't make my own views a test of fellowship, neither do we as a church or a Presbytery make a specific view of last things a requirement for cooperation. My own views on eschatology are strongly influenced by my teacher, J. Rodman Williams, author of *Renewal Theology*, and professor of Systematic Theology at Regent University in Virginia Beach, VA.

## **B. Words and Concepts**

A number of concepts are important in the study of eschatology. Doctrinally, eschatology covers the areas of

- 1) *the intermediate state* (what happens to us, or where do we go immediately after death and before the final resurrection?)
- 2) *the day of the Lord* (a time or series of events resulting in the completion of the age)
- 3) *the second coming of Christ* (the teaching that Jesus will return to earth in glory)
- 4) *the parousia* (the aspect of Christ's second coming in which he takes or raptures the church unto himself)
- 5) *the rapture*
- 5) *the antichrist* (a ruler who is the embodiment of evil and who establishes dominion over the earth in the last days)
- 6) *the tribulation* (a seven year period at the end of the age in which the rule of the antichrist is established and judged)
- 7) *the millenium* (a thousand year period in God's plan mentioned in the book of Revelation)
- 8) *the judgments* (where believers and unbelievers are assigned their eternal destinies)
- 9) *heaven and hell*, and the new heavens and the new earth.

## **C. Did Jesus and the Apostles Teach about Last Things?**

In the course of our studies we will see that Jesus often addressed all of the categories mentioned above. Issues such as the last day, the resurrection of the dead, the consummation of the age, the last judgement, heaven and hell, his second coming and even the tribulation were consistently part of his teaching. In the synoptic gospels, Mark 13, Luke 21, and Matthew 24 are referred to as the little apocalypses. In these passages Jesus speaks in detail about last things. Peter, John, James and Jude all make reference to the return of Christ and other matters relating to last things.

Paul, because of the volume of his writings, makes mention more than the others of eschatological themes. Peter says of Paul's writings, "*His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the*

*other scriptures to their own destruction*” (II Peter 3:16). Doctrines regarding the end times are particularly difficult to understand, but Paul does not for that reason avoid them. Unfortunately, many of us today do avoid them.

One indication of the place of eschatology in Paul’s teaching is indicated in his Thessalonian correspondence. According to the book of Acts, Paul spent only several weeks there. Yet, in his letters he deals with the theme of the second coming and what we refer to as the rapture, explaining that this was an integral part of his teaching to the new converts there. Early in the first letter he states, *“They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead – Jesus who rescues us from the coming wrath”* (I Thess.1: 9-10). Again, *“Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep ... According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who are fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air”* (I Thess. 4:13, 15-17). In his second letter, Paul explains a detail of the return of Christ and then asks, *“Don’t you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things?”* (II Thess. 2:5). Last things were very much a part of apostolic teaching even to new converts.

#### **D. Some Cautions about Eschatological Themes**

Peter said that Paul’s writings on the return of Christ were difficult to understand. Paul warned the Thessalonians, *“Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, do not become easily unsettled or alarmed...”*(II Thess. 2:1-2). Jesus repeatedly warned of false Christs, false Messiahs, and confusion regarding endtime events. *“Watch out that no one deceives you”*(Matt. 24:4), He said. He even denied that He Himself knew the time of His return.

Concerns regarding the study of end-time events are threefold: 1) they are easily misunderstood, 2) many try to determine dates and times, and 3) frankly, every goofball, flake, and cult has some bizarre but seemingly convincing ideas about end-time prophecy. History is replete with examples:

*Montanism (second century):* Though Montanism, named after Montanus of Phrygia, is considered to have been beneficial for the church by some, its excesses led to its being discredited. Montanus and two female disciples, Prisca and Maximilla, were “believed to be prophets, mouthpieces of the Holy Spirit. The three taught that the Spirit had revealed to them the early end of the world, and that the New Jerusalem would come down out of heaven from God, as had been foretold in the Revelation of John, and that it would be fixed in Phrygia .... Not far from the time of Montanus at least two bishops, one in Pontus and one in Syria, were expecting the early return of Christ. The one declared that the last judgment would come in two years and those who believed him ceased to cultivate their fields and rid themselves of houses and goods. The other led his flock into

the wilderness to meet Christ” (Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity, Vol. I, Beginnings to 1500*, pp.128-129).

*The Munster Anabaptists (1533-1535)*: “(Melchior) Hoffman had predicted that after his imprisonment and death he would return, in 1533, with Christ in the clouds of heaven, that the wicked would be judged, and the New Jerusalem be set up in Strasburg. The year 1533 passed, Hoffmann was still in prison, and the end of the age had not come. Outstanding among the immigrant Anabaptists was Jan Matthys, a baker from Haarlem, in Holland, who believed himself a prophet and who was convinced that Munster, not Strasburg, was to be the site of the New Jerusalem where the saints would reign. Another was Jan Beukelssen, a tailor of Leiden. The Anabaptists obtained control of Munster and there attempted to organize what they believed to be a Christian society....” (Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity, Vol II, Reformation to the Present*, pp.783-784). Some of these men practiced polygamy and required community of goods of their followers. Many of these enthusiasts ended up being executed for treason.

*The Millerite Adventists (1843-1844, Precursors to the Seventh-Day Adventists)*: “The great second advent movement which swept the United States in the 1840’s stemmed largely from the activities of this William Miller, who confidently taught in the year 1818, that in ‘about’ twenty-five years, i.e. 1843, Jesus Christ would come again...

Miller further wrote,

I believe the time can be known by all who desire to understand and to be ready for His coming. And I am fully convinced that some time between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844, according to the Jewish mode of computation of time, Christ will come and bring all His saints with Him; and that then He will reward every man as his work shall be.” (Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, p. 361).

Miller later wrote “I confess my error and acknowledge my disappointment” (Martin, p. 362).

*Jehovah’s Witnesses (1914)*: “The times of the Gentiles extend to 1914. And the Heavenly Kingdom will not have full sway till then, but as a ‘stone’ the kingdom of God is set up ‘in the days of these Kings’ and by consummating them it becomes a universal kingdom – a ‘great mountain and fills the whole earth’ (Watchtower Reprints, Vol. I, March 1880, p. 82)

Charles Taze Russell also stated that the world would see ‘the full establishment of the Kingdom of God in the earth at A.D. 1914, the terminus of the times of the Gentiles’ (C.T. Russell, *Thy Kingdom Come*, 1891, p. 126)” (Quoted in Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, *Hanbook of Today’s Religions: Understanding the Cults*, p. 75)

*Other Examples:*

In the late 1970’s Jim Jones led his followers to Guiana to a utopian community where he demanded complete loyalty and obedience. Nearly the entire community committed mass suicide at the direction of their “prophet.” He had

previously gained the confidence and endorsements of city leaders in San Francisco.

The Peoples Temple was initially structured as an inter-racial mission for the sick, homeless and jobless. He assembled a large following of over 900 members in Indianapolis IN during the 1950's.

*"He preached a 'social gospel' of human freedom, equality, and love, which required helping the least and the lowliest of society's members. Later on, however, this gospel became explicitly socialistic, or communistic in Jones' own view, and the hypocrisy of white Christianity was ridiculed while 'apostolic socialism' was preached."* (<http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~remoore/jonestown>, Keven Hozak)

. . . When a government investigation began into his cures for cancer, heart disease and arthritis, he decided to move the group to Ukiah in Northern California. He preached the imminent end of the world in a nuclear war; Esquire magazine listed Ukiah as one of nine in the U.S. that could survive a nuclear attack. They later moved to San Francisco and Los Angeles. After an expose during the mid 1970's in the magazine *New West* raised suspicions of illegal activities within the Temple, he moved some of the Temple membership to Jonestown, Guyana. The Temple had leased almost 4,000 acres of dense jungle from the government. They established an agricultural cooperative there, called the "*Peoples Temple Agricultural Project*." They raised animals for food, and assorted tropical fruits and vegetables for consumption and sale.

Jones developed a belief called *Translation* in which he and his followers would all die together, and would move to another planet for a life of bliss. Mass suicides were practiced in which his followers pretended to drink poison and fell to the ground. ([www.religioustolerance.org/dc\\_jones.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/dc_jones.htm), accessed on 6/18/08)

*But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep (II Peter 2:1-3 ESV).*

“Even in the ‘enlightened’ twentieth century such alarms can be persuasive to many people. In the summer of 1988 a former rocket scientist with impressive academic credentials circulated a booklet claiming that Jesus would return on September 12, 1988, and tens of thousands of copies of the book found their way around the United States and to various parts of the world. I was surprised to find that some otherwise sober Christian friends had read it and were alarmed, and to hear that some Christians in our community had pulled their children out of school in order to be together as a family when Christ came back. When the prediction failed, the author, Edgar Whisenant, revised his prediction, saying his calculations were one year off and Christ would return instead on

September 1, 1989 (or one day earlier or later), or, if not then, on Rosh Hashanah 1990 or 1991 or 1992, or at the latest, September 15-17, 1993. Of course, those predictions failed. But many lives were disrupted and many people had false expectations aroused and then dashed by the publication of this book and its sequel” (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, p. 1094).

Many of us still remember the extreme predictions concerning the turn of the millenium also known as the Y2K phenomenon. Many Christians hoarded, moved away from their homes out into the country, and even formed communities of similarly deceived believers. I have yet to hear one of the false prophets admit the error of their ways.

Such examples should make us wary of being dogmatic about eschatology. But we must not “throw out the baby with the bathwater.” The Bible does speak infallibly and authoritatively. Our misinterpretations often cause trouble. As Peter said, “*Ignorant and unstable people distort (the truth) to their own destruction*”(II Peter 3:16). God has given us a great deal of revelation about the end, but He has withheld some things according to His own design and purpose. We can never be dogmatic about times, dates and seasons.

In light of this we remember that Daniel was told of his revelation “*the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end*” (Dan. 12:9). Jesus taught, “*No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father*” (Matt. 24:36). The resurrected Lord told His disciples, “*It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority*” (Acts 1:8). Paul taught that “*We know in part and we prophesy in part ... Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror*”(I Cor. 13:9,12). He taught the Thessalonians, “*Now, brothers, about the times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night*” (I Thess. 4:1-2). John provides the counterbalance to this in Revelation, however, “*Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near*” (Rev. 22:10).

Our role is to carefully study the scriptures, obey the light we have, and always be humble about our interpretations concerning last things. Avoid manipulations of false prophets who want to usurp your place of priesthood.

## **E. Our methods for this course**

For this course, we will spend some time in each session understanding the theological terminology of a given area of doctrine. Then we will explore how the scriptures handle that given topic. We will also study how the church has traditionally interpreted various passages and doctrines, making ourselves aware of as many views as possible. Each student should then come to a place of decision about how to view various elements of the Bible teaching on eschatology.

## F. Word Studies

1. **Kingdom of God or Kingdom of Heaven** (*Basileia tou Theou*): This term refers to the rule of God. Specifically it refers to the establishment of God's reign on the earth. "Many have defended that the *basileia* is the 'eschaton' – the final eschatological order... the Hebrew word (*malkuth*) has the abstract dynamic or idea of reign, rule, or dominion" (Ladd, p. 63). The kingdom of God carries the idea that the final order has "invaded" the current, fallen order of things. It is Jesus who introduces this kingdom through his earthly ministry, death, and resurrection, and who will bring in its fullness at his glorious return. The term Kingdom of Heaven is used in Matthew. Most commentators see this as Matthew's deference to Jewish readers who are offended by any profane use of the name God and who prefer the euphemism "heaven" in its place.
2. **end** (*telos, sunteleia*): This term refers to a limit or the final outcome or fate of a thing. It refers to a fulfillment or the final issue of a matter, a destiny. It could mean a final or mature state. It may refer to the last in a series. *Sunteleia* means the completion or consummation. (Based on W.E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, Vol. II*, pp. 26-27).
3. **end** (*eschatos*): "Last, utmost, extreme" (Vine, p. 28).
4. **age** (*aion*): "An age, era, signifies a period of indefinite duration, or time viewed in relation to what takes place in the period. The force attaching to the word is not so much that of a period, but that of a period marked by moral or spiritual characteristics." It carries the sense of indefinite duration. It is sometimes translated "world." (Vine, Vol. I, p.41).
5. **world** (*kosmos*): "Primarily order, arrangement, ornament, adornment, is used to denote a) earth, b) earth in contrast with heaven, c) the human race or mankind, d) Gentiles as distinguished from Jews, e) the present condition of human affairs, in alienation from and opposition to God, f) the sum of temporal possessions, g) metaphorically, of the tongue as "a world (of iniquity)" (Vine, Vol IV, p. 233)
6. **nation, nations** (*ethnos, ta ethne*): This usually carries the concept of an ethnic group. It can mean a nation or people, or refer to foreigners. Its sometimes carries the concept of a morally or religiously inferior people, such as the term heathen. (Based on Bauer Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, Second Edition*, p. 218).
7. **race** (*genos*): Family, kindred or race. Does not signify country, but denotes parentage. (Vine, Vol II, p. 291).
8. **kingdom** : an earthly government or civil government distinct from nation (*ethne*) or race.
9. **coming** (*parousia*) This means a presence with. It indicates a coming, but also an abiding presence. "When used of the return of Christ, at the Rapture of the Church, it signifies, not merely His momentary coming for His saints, but His presence with them from that moment until His revelation and manifestation to the world" (Vine, Vol. I, p. 209).

**Bibliography for this section:**

- Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, Second Edition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.
- F.F. Bruce, "Eschatology" in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Walter Elwell, ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984. pp. 362-4.
- James Buswell. "What is Eschatology," in *Readings in Christian Theology, Vol. III*, Millard J. Erickson, ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House. pp. 419-427.
- Millard J. Erickson. *Contemporary Options in Eschatology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977. pp. 17-51.
- Wayne Grudem. *Systematic Theology, An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1994. pp.1091-1165.
- George Eldon Ladd. *A Theology of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974, pp.193-210.
- Kenneth Scott Latourette. *A History of Christianity, Vol. I, Beginnings to 1500*. New York: Harper and Row, 1953,1975. pp.128-129.
- \_\_\_\_\_ *A History of Christianity, Vol II, Reformation to the Present*. New York: Harper and Row, 1953,1975. pp.783-784
- Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*. Mineapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1965. p. 3
- Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, *Handbook of Today's Religions: Understanding the Cults*. San Bernardino: Here's Life Publishers, 1983. p. 75.
- Robert H. Stein. *The Method and Message of Jesus' Teachings*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978.
- W.E. Vine. *Expository Dictionary of New testament Words*. Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H Revell, 1940.

## II. The Intermediate State

Scripture verses for this section: (*Death for the Christian*) John 11:11-14, I Thess. 4:13, Acts 7:60, II Peter 1: 13-14, II Tim. 4:6-8, Phil. 1:21-23, II Cor. 5:1-10, Heb. 12:22-24; Rev. 6: 9-11; (*Resurrection of the just*) John 5:24-27, 6:38-40, John 11: 21-27, I Cor. 15:20-27, Rom. 8:18-23, I John 3:1-3; (*Resurrection of the just and the unjust*) Daniel 12:2-3, Matt. 25:31-46, John 5:28-29, Rev. 20:11-15; (*Resurrection in the Old Testament*) Job 19:25-26, Ps. 16:9-11, 49:15, 73:24-26, Ps. 85:13, Is. 26:19-21; (*Judgment*) Matt. 11:20-240, Rom. 2:14-16, I Cor. 3: 10-15, 4:3-5(*Sheol*) Job 10:20-22, 17:13-16, Prov. 30:15-16; Prov. 15:24; (*Intermediate state*) Mark 12:18-25, Luke 16:19-31, Heb. 9:27-28; (*Heaven*) Rev. 21:1-5, 9-27, 22:1-5.

### A. What happens when we die?

One of the great questions all peoples everywhere ponder is “What happens when we die?” or, “Is there life after death?” Our concern is to examine what the scriptures have to say about this issue. Both the Old and New Testaments have quite a lot to say about what happens when we cross the threshold of death. This is a big mystery for most people, but one we need to explore in order to get a grasp of Christ’s teaching on the afterlife as well as the Bible’s message as a whole.

The New Testament has more to say about this matter than the Old Testament. This is because it was Jesus “*who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*”(II Tim. 1:10). Nevertheless there are references to the afterlife in both Old and New Testaments. The New Testament references clarify the insights offered by the Old. The study of what happens between death and the resurrection is known in eschatology as the study of the intermediate state.

The intermediate state is “(t)he period between death ... and the final judgment and consummation. If Christian thought held to no final state of affairs for all creation, then perhaps one’s final situation could be conceived as being settled at death, as in Greek philosophy. However, Christian creeds have always affirmed the resurrection of the body, the judgment of the living and the dead, and life everlasting. To affirm that each individual’s destiny is caught up in the triumph of God in Christ has created the distinct possibility of reflection upon the individual’s situation between death and that future event”(S.M. Smith, “Intermediate State” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 562).

#### 1. Old Testament view of the afterlife:

The Old Testament does not speak in great detail about the intermediate state. As we have said Jesus addresses this with greater clarity. The Old Testament speaks of the grave (*qeber*) and Sheol (see below), but does not go into great detail specifically about what happens to the dead in the afterlife. Several views have become prominent: 1) the Old Testament teaches a kind of two-tiered afterlife for the righteous and the wicked in

Sheol; or, 2) Sheol is a dark and gloomy place for all the dead; or, 3) Sheol is a synonym for *qeber*, the grave. (Based on Harris, Archer and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. II, pp.892-3). We will examine this and other concepts further in the scripture study portion of the lesson (listed above).

Job speaks of the grave (*sheol*) in his discourses:

*Are not my few days almost over? Turn away from me so that I can have a moment's joy before I go to the place of no return, to the land of gloom and deep shadow, to the land of deepest night, of deep shadow and disorder, where even the light is like darkness (Job 10:20-22).*

*If the only home I hope for is the grave, if I spread out my bed in darkness, if I say to corruption, 'You are my father,' and to the worm, 'My mother' or 'My sister', where then is my hope? Who can see any hope for me? Will it go down to the gates of death? Will we descend together into the dust? (Job 17:13-16)*

In the first case Job sees *sheol* simply as the grave, a lifeless place. In the second he struggles with the question of what happens after death. He later finds solace in his confession of faith, an expression of confidence in a final resurrection of the dead.

*I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me! (Job 19:25-27).*

In an unusual Old Testament glimpse of the underworld, the king of Babylon is recognized and reviled by other kings of the earth.

*The grave below is all astir to meet you at your coming; it rouses the spirits of the departed to greet you—all those who were leaders in the world; it makes them rise from their thrones—all those who were kings over the nations. They will all respond, they will say to you, "You also have become weak, as we are; you have become like us." All your pomp has been brought down to the grave, along with the noise of your harps; maggots are spread out beneath you and worms cover you (Isaiah 14:9-11).*

The Old Testament does clearly declare the blessed state of the believer after death. But there are no clear statements about the intermediate state. There is an indication that the state of blessedness is reserved for the time of the resurrection. *Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave (Sheol), nor will you let your holy one see decay. You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand (Ps. 16:9-11).*

## 2. New Testament views

Pre-resurrection view: There are several references to the nature of the afterlife before the resurrection of Christ in the New Testament. The first is in a parable or story Jesus tells about the rich man and Lazarus. *“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell (hades) where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’ But Abraham replied ‘...now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us’”* (Luke 16:19-26).

Unlike the Old Testament view where we do not glimpse any sense of blessedness beyond the grave with the exception of isolated verses (such as Proverbs 12:28, *In the way of righteousness there is life; along that path is immortality*). This New Testament parable shows distinct stations in *sheol* prior to the final resurrection – *hades*, a place of torment, and Abraham’s bosom, a place of relative contentment.

Finally, Jesus tells the thief on the cross, *“I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise”*(Luke 23:43). This either indicates that there is a paradise in the pre-resurrection scheme or that Jesus is referring to the coming resurrection event of his resurrection. Admittedly, these verses are difficult. In some ways they pose more questions than they answer.

Another unusual glimpse of the intermediate state is in Revelation – the blood of the martyrs cries out for justice:

*When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow-servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed* (Rev. 6:9-11).

A study of Bible doctrine relating to the afterlife will necessarily cover certain areas including heaven, hell, resurrection and judgment.

## 3. Heaven and hell (*gehenna*)

“Although some, like Plato, imagine heaven to be a disembodied state where naked minds contemplate the eternal, unchanging ideas, in the Bible this is not so. According to Paul the whole person survives. Even the body is raised again, so that, if it is no longer flesh and blood (I Cor. 15:50), it nevertheless has a continuity with the present body, a sameness in form if not in material element” (J.K. Grider. “Heaven” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 500).

As there is an intermediate state of condemnation (*hades*), there is an intermediate state of blessedness. This is a picture of the heavenly court prior to the final resurrection.

*But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel (Heb. 12:22-24).*

*Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad (II Cor. 5:1-10).*

“On the other hand, final punishment is pictured as outer darkness (Matt. 8:12, 22:13, 25:30). This suggests that both fire and darkness are metaphors used to represent the indescribable. ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers’(Mt. 7:23); ‘Truly I say to you, I do not know you’(Matt. 25:12. Exclusion from the presence of God and the enjoyment of his blessings – this is the essence of hell.”

## **B. The resurrection**

The doctrine of the resurrection is clearly stated throughout the Old and New Testaments. There are two types of resurrection in the Bible – temporal and eternal.

### **1.Resurrection in the OT: Examples and Doctrine**

Two examples of temporal resurrection in the Old Testament are found in the ministry of Elijah and Elishah. Each of the raised a child from the dead. Elijah raised the widow’s son from the dead (I Kings 17:17-24) and Elishah also raised a child from the dead (II Kings 5:32-37. These are called temporal because both of these boys would later die, they did not receive eternal life at this time. The same is true with Lazarus in the New Testament.

Job 19:25-27 and Psalm 16:9-11 quoted above are examples of the Old Testament teaching on immortality, or eternal resurrection.

## **2. Resurrection in the NT: Examples and Doctrine**

There are several examples of temporal resurrection in the New Testament in the ministries of Jesus, Peter and Paul. Jesus raised the widow of Nain's son, Jairus' daughter, and Lazarus (Matt. 8, Mark 5, John 11), Peter raised Tabitha (Acts 9), and Paul raised Eutychus from the dead after he had fallen asleep in a lengthy church service (Acts 20). The doctrine of eternal resurrection is expressed in the resurrection accounts of Jesus and discussed in detail in Paul's epistles.

*And who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God, by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 1:4).*

*I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned (John 5:24-27).*

*And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:38-40).*

Paul most clearly states the doctrine of the resurrection in his epistles. I Corinthians 15 is the most detailed treatment.

*So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven (I Cor. 15:42-49).*

The resurrection event also speaks of the final redemption of all things in addition to our mortal bodies:

*The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8:19-23).*

### **C. The judgment**

There are temporal judgments and eternal judgments. Temporal judgment is expressed by Paul in Galatians, “*Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life*”(Gal. 6:7-8). We also find the concept of temporal judgments addressed in I Corinthians.

*For anyone who eats and drinks without recognising the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world (I Cor. 11:29-32).*

*When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord (I Cor. 5:4-5).*

“The kingdom of God is like a great drama. It moves forward to a climax. All the apparently loose ends of the development are slowly combined and gathered together. The unity of the whole is seen only in the final outcome. Without the climax the drama is meaningless. It is mere motion without progress. The book of revelation, as obscure as it is in some ways, is nevertheless an expression of the dramatic principle in the moral kingdom. And it is an expression which cannot be misunderstood. Evil takes many forms. Subdued in one form, it returns in another. The beast, the false prophet, the evil woman, the wicked city, appear from stage to stage. The end is victory, the overthrow of evil, the judgment and separation of the good and bad, the descent of the New Jerusalem, the habitation of God with men” (Edwin Yoder, “New Life in Future Extension” in Erickson, Vol. 3, p. 482).

The New Testament contains clear scenes of the final judgment:

*Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned (John 5:28-29).*

*When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me (Matt. 25:31-36)*

*Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me (Matt. 25:41-43).*

*Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life (Matt. 25:46).*

*Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15).*

#### **D. The New Heavens and the New Earth**

*But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness (II Peter 3:13).*

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will*

*inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death (Rev. 21:1-8).*

## **E. Word Studies**

**Sheol:** “*The grave, hell, pit.* The KJV uses ‘grave’ thirty-one times, ‘pit’ three times. The ASV and RSV translate as ‘Sheol’ ... the word obviously refers in some way to the place of the dead “(Harris, Archer and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. II, p.892). In the Old Testament “the intermediate state and the destiny of the wicked get less emphasis. Resurrection for the righteous is clearly and repeatedly expressed. One problem with Sheol is that both good men and bad men go there” (TWOT, p. 892). It’s primary meaning, according to Harris, is “the grave.” “Darkness, gloom, forgetfulness, and distance from God are also implied in the word (Ps. 6:5; Isa. 38:18)”(R. P. Lightner. “Hell” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 506).

**Paradise** (*paradeisos*): “Is an oriental word first used by the historian Xenophon, denoting the parks of Persian kings and nobles. It is of Persian origin ... to the Oriental mind it expressed the sum total of blessedness.” (W.E. Vine. *Expository Words of the New Testament*, p. 158). The thief on the cross is promised transport into paradise (Luke 23:43). Paul spoke of one who was caught up into paradise (II Cor. 12:4). And the tree of life is found in the paradise of God in the Revelation of John (Rev. 2:7). Its original meaning in Hebrew as received from the Persian is “a park or enclosed garden” (Harris, Archer and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, p. 1809). Through the Septuagint (Greek) translation of the Old Testament the word paradise came to refer to the garden of Eden.

**Heaven** (*ouranos, epouranios*; Hebrew, *shamayim*): Of the physical heavens, but also the abode of spiritual beings sometimes referred to as principalities and powers. It is also used of God’s abode and of the abode of the holy angels. (J.K. Grider. “Heaven” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, pp.499-500). “What pertains to or is in heaven...where Christ sits at the right hand of God...of those whose sphere of activity is above or in contrast to the earth” (Vine, Vol. II, p. 209).

**Shamayim** “falls into two broad categories, 1) the physical heavens, and 2) the heavens as the abode of God. Under the first category, heaven includes all that is above the earth, and any given passage may include all or merely a part of the whole. Heaven and earth together constitute the universe...The physical heavens tell of the glory of God (Ps. 19:1), declare His righteousness (Ps. 50:6), and praise him (Ps. 65:34). As grand as they are, they merely point to the Creator and are not to be worshiped (Ex. 20:4; Jer. 44: 17-25). Though the heavens are his throne, they will one day vanish like smoke (Is. 51:6) and be rolled up like a scroll (Isa. 34:4). Then God will create a new heaven and a new

earth, unmarred by the effects of sin (Is. 65;17;66;22). The joy and glory of completed redemption will be reflected in all creation” (TWOT, Vol. II, p.935-936).

**Hell** (*Hades*): “Generally speaking the word ‘hell’ is used in Scripture to refer to a place of future punishment for the wicked dead. However, there are other meanings also. There are times when the word is used to refer to the grave, or to the place of the dead.” In addition to the other two Greek words it was believed to be “below Hades, where divine punishment was endured comparable to that in Hades” (R. P. Lightner. “Hell” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 506).

**Hell** (*Geenna*) (II Kings 16:3; 21:6; Jer. 7:32; 19:6, Mark 9:43,48, Matt. 10:28; Matt. 13:42,50, 25:41): “Gehenna, from the Greek *geenna*, is the eternal abode of the wicked. Whereas Hades is the intermediate state, Gehenna is eternal hell. Wherever it is used in the NT, it always means the place of eternal damnation. The scriptural teaching of hell goes beyond these three words, however. Frequently, especially in the gospels, hell is seen as ‘unquenchable fire’ (Matt. 3:12 cf. 5:22; 18:9) ‘damnation’ (Matt. 23:33), ‘furnace of fire’ (Matt. 13:42,50), ‘blackness and darkness’ (Jude 13), a ‘lake which burneth with fire and brimstone’ (rev. 21:8) a place ‘prepared for the devil and his angels’ (Matt. 25:41)” (R. P. Lightner. “Hell” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 506).

## **Bibliography for Section II:**

Harris, Archer and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Vol. II*, p.892

E.F. Harrison. “Soul Sleep,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Walter A. Elwell, ed., p.1037.

E.F. Harrison. “Spirits in Prison,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Walter A. Elwell, ed., p.1042.

Wayne Grudem. *Systematic Theology, An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1994. pp.810-827.

William G.T. Shedd. “Intermediate State,” in *Readings in Christian Theology, Vol. 3*, Millard J. Erickson, ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979, 443-461.

S.M. Smith. “Intermediate State,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Walter A. Elwell, ed., p.562-564.

### III. Understanding Apocalyptic Literature: The Day of The Lord

Scripture verses for this section: (Old Testament) Isaiah 13:9-13, Dan. 7:2-14, 19-27, Joel 1:15-20; 2:31; 3:14-18, Amos 5:18-20; 9:11-15, Ob. 15-17, 21, Zephaniah 1:14- 2:3; 3:16-19., Zechariah 14:1, Mal. 4:1-3; (New Testament) John 5:24-29; 6: 38-40, Matthew 23:37-24:51; Mark 13:1-36; Luke 19:41-44, 21:1-36, I Corinthians 1:8; 5:5, II Cor. 1:14, Philippians 1:6, 10; 2:14-16; 3:20-21, I Thessalonians 4:13- 5:3, II Thess. 2:1-5, I Peter 1:10-12, II Peter 3:1-13, Rev. 1:7, 12:1-9.

#### A. Apocalypse and “The Day of the Lord”

Apocalyptic is a specific kind of literature in the Bible. It has a certain style and characteristics. It is found throughout the scriptures, especially in the prophets. One of the great themes of apocalyptic is “the day of the Lord.” As we look at the scriptures we will see that the day of the Lord is an event or a series of events which result in cataclysmic judgment as well as a great experience of blessing and salvation. The theme of the day of the Lord emerges in the prophets and continues throughout the New Testament.

The day of the Lord is “a day of judgment or blessing. Hence, the meaning of this idea entails all of prophetic eschatology. Similar expressions are ‘in that day’ (*bayyom hahu*) which can refer to ordinary expected events or can be eschatological and ‘after those days’, or ‘the latter days’ (*‘ayarit hayyamim*) which can refer to events in the general future or to the eschaton” (Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Vol. I*, p. 854).

#### B. Interpreting prophetic scripture

When interpreting prophecy it is important to remember the concept of prophetic perspective. “This means the prophet’s point of view. He was, so to speak, looking spiritually into the distance, seeing various future events as God revealed them to him. His experience was similar to looking at the Himalayan mountains from a long distance. A person sees several peaks, and from this vantage point they seem to be close together. If he goes near them, however, he sees that they are far apart. Likewise the prophets saw two great ‘peaks’ – the first and second comings of Christ, his suffering and triumph – and spoke of them together, as if they are close in time. They are logically close, yet in time they are far apart, as we know now” (T. Norton Sterrett, *How to Understand Your Bible*, p. 140-141). “We should note at the outset that the prophetic books are among the most difficult parts of the Bible to interpret or read with understanding... It should be noted, of course, that some of the prophecies of the near future were set against the background of the great eschatological future, and sometimes they seem to blend... the Bible regularly sees God’s acts in temporal history in the light of his overall plan for human history. Thus the temporal is to be seen in light of the eternal plan.” (Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, p. 149).

*Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things. (I Peter 1:10-12).*

The NIV Study Bible gives four views of interpreting the book of Revelation (and other apocalyptic and eschatology in general). These views also describe differing approaches to interpreting other prophecy as well:

- “1. *Preterists* understand the book exclusively in terms of its first-century setting, claiming that most of its events have already taken place.
2. *Historicists* take it as a describing the long chain of events from John’s [experience on] Patmos to the end of history.
3. *Futurists* place the book primarily in the end times.
4. *Idealists* view it as symbolic pictures of such timeless truths as the victory of good over evil.

Fortunately, the fundamental truths of Revelation do not depend on adopting a particular point of view. They are available to anyone who will read the book for its overall message” (NIV Study Bible, p. 1924).

### **C. What is apocalyptic literature?**

Apocalyptic is a form or genre of literature. In the canon, parts of Daniel and Revelation are the most prominent examples. There were other apocalyptic writings in both the biblical and inter-testamental periods. Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 all carry the marks of apocalyptic literature and are sometimes called the little apocalypses. The word literally means the unveiling. Generally in apocalyptic “the eschatological future is envisaged in terms of direct divine intervention, a universal judgment of the nations and a new age of salvation, in which the cosmos will be radically transformed. This transcendent eschatology is the central core of apocalyptic belief...In literary terms, apocalyptic is a highly stylized form of literature with its own conventions, of symbolism and terminology, continually feeding on OT sources. It is a literature of dreams and visions, often centered on a vision of the heavenly throne room.” (R.J. Bauckham, “Apocalyptic” in *The New Bible Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, p.53).

Apocalyptic usually contains five elements or traits:

- 1) highly symbolic language,
- 2) written about future events,
- 3) written to and for believers in order to encourage and strengthen those facing times of persecution,

- 4) declares the sovereignty of God and His ultimate victory over evil and the opponents of God and believers in general.
- 5) usually speaks of cataclysmic future events.

## 1. Old Testament Examples

Daniel and the other prophets contain segments of apocalyptic writing:

*Daniel said: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea. "The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a man, and the heart of a man was given to it. "And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, 'Get up and eat your fill of flesh!' "After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard. And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule. "After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns. "While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully.*

*"As I looked, "thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened. "Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire. (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.) "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.*

*Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying, with its iron teeth and bronze claws—the beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell—the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced*

*judgment in favour of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom. "He gave me this explanation: 'The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time. " 'But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed for ever. Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.' (Dan. 7:2-14, 19-27).*

*See, the day of the LORD is coming—a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger—to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless. I will make man scarcer than pure gold, more rare than the gold of Ophir. Therefore I will make the heavens tremble; and the earth will shake from its place at the wrath of the LORD Almighty, in the day of his burning anger (Isaiah 13:9-13).*

## **2. New Testament Examples: The Synoptics and Revelation**

Matthew, Mark and Luke are termed the synoptic gospels. The word synoptic is based on two root words which mean “to see together.” In other words these three gospels cover much of the same material giving a slightly different view of the same events. We will compare the synoptic record of Jesus’ teaching on the Mt. of Olives (known as the Olivet discourse). These passages are found in Matt. 24, Mark, 13 and Luke 21.

*Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Barakiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"*

*Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said,*

*"when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"*

*Jesus answered: "Watch out that no-one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth-pains. "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation', spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand— then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no-one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no-one in the field go back to get his cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equalled again. If those days had not been cut short, no-one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time. "So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather. "Immediately after the distress of those days "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.*

*"Now learn this lesson from the fig-tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. "No-one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man (Matt. 23:34-24:39).*

*"When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (Luke 21:20-28).*

You can compare the synoptic apocalypses by reading Matthew 23:37-24:51; Mark 13:1-36; Luke 19:41-44, 21:1-36.

The Revelation of John is also a prime example of apocalyptic in the New Testament; in fact revelation is also called "The Apocalypse."

*And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast. Men worshipped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshipped the beast and asked, "Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?" The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling-place and those who live in heaven. He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world. He who has an ear, let him hear (Rev. 12:1-9).*

## **D. The Day of the Lord**

### **1. Old Testament References**

As we look at the day of the Lord in the Old Testament we must realize that it may have an eschatological or non-eschatological meaning. Indeed, through the principle of multiple fulfillment it may carry both a meaning within time and at the end of time. In Old and New Testaments it seems to refer to a complex of events.

a. The day of the Lord – near at hand, afar off

*Alas for that day! For the day of the LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty. Has not the food been cut off before our very eyes—joy and gladness from the house of our God? The seeds are shrivelled beneath the clods. The storehouses are in ruins, the granaries have been broken down, for the grain has dried up. How the cattle moan! The herds mill about because they have no pasture; even the flocks of sheep are suffering. To you, O LORD, I call, for fire has devoured the open pastures and flames have burned up all the trees of the field. Even the wild animals pant for you; the streams of water have dried up and fire has devoured the open pastures (Joel 1:15-20).*

*And afterwards, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the survivors whom the LORD calls (Joel 2:28-32).*

b. Cataclysm

*"The great day of the LORD is near—near and coming quickly. Listen! The cry on the day of the LORD will be bitter, the shouting of the warrior there. That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness, a day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the corner towers. I will bring distress on the people and they will walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD. Their blood will be poured out like dust and their entrails like filth. Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the LORD's wrath. In the fire of his jealousy the whole world will be consumed, for he will make a sudden end of all who live in the earth."*

*Gather together, gather together, O shameful nation, before the appointed time arrives and that day sweeps on like chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD comes upon you, before the day of the LORD's wrath comes upon you. Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the LORD's anger (Zeph. 1:14-2:3).*

c. Contrast between the righteous and the wicked

*Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine. The LORD will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem; the earth and the sky will tremble. But the LORD will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of*

*Israel. "Then you will know that I, the LORD your God, dwell in Zion, my holy hill. Jerusalem will be holy; never again will foreigners invade her.*

*"In that day the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water. A fountain will flow out of the LORD's house and will water the valley of acacias. But Egypt will be desolate, Edom a desert waste, because of violence done to the people of Judah, in whose land they shed innocent blood.( Joel 3:14-18).*

*On that day they will say to Jerusalem, "Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands hang limp. The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing." "The sorrows for the appointed feasts I will remove from you; they are a burden and a reproach to you. At that time I will deal with all who oppressed you; I will rescue the lame and gather those who have been scattered. I will give them praise and honour in every land where they were put to shame. At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honour and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes," says the LORD. (Zephaniah 3:16-20)*

#### d. Universal

*The day of the LORD is near for all nations. As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head. Just as you drank on my holy hill, so all the nations will drink continually; they will drink and drink and be as if they had never been.*

*But on Mount Zion will be deliverance; it will be holy, and the house of Jacob will possess its inheritance. Deliverers will go up on Mount Zion to govern the mountains of Esau. And the kingdom will be the LORD's. (Obadiah 15-17; 21).*

#### e. Jerusalem, Armageddon

*A day of the LORD is coming when your plunder will be divided among you. I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city. Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. (Zechariah 14:1-5).*

#### f. Israel – literal or spiritual?

*These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of*

*Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother (Galatians 4:24-26).*

*And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree! I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins." As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. (Rom 11:23-29).*

## **2. New Testament References**

The day of the Lord is often referred to as the day of Christ or the day of Jesus or that day in the New Testament.

### **a. The common expectation of believers**

*Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. (I Cor. 1:7-8).*

*[B]eing confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ. (Phil. 1:6, 10).*

*But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body (Phil. 3:20-21).*

*Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. (I Thess. 5:1-2).*

### **b. Related to a sequence of events**

*Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come.*

*Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendour of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness (II Thess. 2:1-12).*

*But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.*

*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.*

*Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. (II Peter 3:8-13).*

#### E. Thoughts on temporal judgments

Albert Mohler in his book *Culture Shift* writes about the tsunami of December , 26,2006:

Christians must seize opportunities to confront natural disasters with the life changing power of the gospel of Jesus Christ, Christians are to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, and clothe the naked in the name of Christ. This is a powerful testimony, but acts of compassion must be accompanied by words of conviction. Our answer to the reality of unspeakable tragedy must be to witness to the gospel of unfathomable power – the power to bring life out of death.

Furthermore, we must indeed point to natural disasters as only a hint of the cataclysm that is yet to come – the holy judgment of God. On that day, the tidal waves of December 26, 2004, will be understood to have been one of the warnings all humanity should have heeded (*Culture Shift*, Albert Mohler, Multnomah Books, 2008, p. 135)..

#### IV. The Tribulation Period

Scripture Verses for this section: (*Antichrist*) Ps. 2:1-6, Dan. 7:8,11, 8:9-13, 23-25, 11:36-37, II Thes.2:3-4, 7-12, I John 2:18,22, Rev. 13:1-8; (*Abomination of desolation*) Dan. 9:27, Matt. 24:15-16; (*False Prophets*) Matt. 24: 23-26, Mark 13:22,Rev.13: 11-17; (*The Beast*) Dan.7:2-8,11-12, Rev. 11:7, 13:1ff., 14:9-11, 15:2, 16:2,10-14, 19:19-20, 20:4,10; (*Evil and Apostasy*) II Thes. 2:3-4, II Tim. 3:1-5; (*Tribulation*) Dan. 9:24-27 , Dan. 11:31-35, Matt. 24:21-22, Mark 13:19-25, Rev. 12:6, 11:2, 13:5; (*Israel restored*) Luke 21:20-24, Rom. 9:1-9, 30-33, 10:1-4, 11:11-32; (*Rapture*) I Thess. 4: 13-18

##### A. Excursus: Summary thoughts on eschatology as a test of fellowship:

It's a good time to pause and recall our discussion up to this point. While Christians differ on eschatology, there are some issues where there must be complete agreement. These include the return of Christ at the end of the age, the dead will be raised – some to eternal life others to eternal judgment, and that this age will experience a consummation; it will end introducing the age to come. Those who trust in the Lord will receive eternal life and transformed resurrection bodies.

No matter what their differences on the details, all Christians who take the Bible as their final authority agree that the final and ultimate result of Christ's return will be the judgment of unbelievers and the final reward of believers, and that believers will live with Christ in a new heaven and a new earth for all eternity. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit will reign and be worshipped in a never ending kingdom with no more sin or sorrow or suffering. We will discuss these details more fully in the following chapters. . . Nevertheless, Christians differ over specific details leading up to and immediately following Christ's return. Specifically, they differ over the nature of the millennium and the relationship of Christ's return to the millennium, the sequence of Christ's return and the great tribulation period that will come to the earth, and the question of the salvation of the Jewish people (and the relationship between Jews who are saved and the church)... It is important to affirm the genuine evangelical standing of those who have differing positions on these questions. .. Their differences concern the interpretation of various passages relating to these events, but their differences on these matters should be seen as matters of secondary importance, not as differences over primary doctrinal matters (Grudem, pp.1094-1095).

Several things seem to be generally agreed upon by evangelicals:

##### 1. *The Return of Christ.*

All evangelicals agree that the scripture predicts a visible, physical, bodily return of the Lord Jesus. The doctrine of the return of Christ is a non-negotiable. This truth is taught by Jesus, proclaimed by the apostles, and affirmed by all major creeds of the church

regardless of when they were written. “He shall come again to judge the living and the dead.”

### *2. The day of the Lord – Blessing and Judgment.*

Believers can agree that there is a future time or “day of the Lord” in which the events of the consummation of the age take place. This will be a day of judgment and cataclysm for unbelievers and a day of blessedness and redemption for believers.

### *3. Final State.*

All who have lived on the earth will come before God in a final judgment which will determine their final state for eternity. They will rise to everlasting life or everlasting shame and contempt (Dan. 12:2; John 5:27).

*Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt (Daniel 12:2).*

## **B. The Tribulation**

A seven-year period of tribulation is spoken of in the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation. It is a time of triumph for the antichrist spirit and system, of suffering and persecution for believers, the world-wide triumph of evil, and the final judgment of the Satanic forces and their allies which brought this system into being.

### *1. Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week*

Daniel was given a prophetic vision while in Babylon which told of a seventy week period affecting his people of Israel, and the city of Jerusalem for which he was praying.

*Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, O Lord, look with favour on your desolate sanctuary. Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name (Daniel 9:17-18a).*

*While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and making my request to the LORD my God for his holy hill— while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. He instructed me and said to me, "Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the message and understand the vision: Seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens’, and sixty-two ‘sevens’. It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.*

*After the sixty-two 'sevens', the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven'. In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him (Daniel 9:20-27).*

*At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered (Daniel 12:1).*

*The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time. 'But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed for ever (Daniel 7:24-26).*

*One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?" The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand towards heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives for ever, saying, "It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed" (Daniel 12:6-7).*

## *2. New Testament references*

*So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation', spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand— then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no-one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no-one in the field go back to get his cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equalled again (Matt. 24:15-21).*

*Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of*

*lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendour of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness (II Thess. 2:3-12).*

*Men worshipped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshipped the beast and asked, "Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?" The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling-place and those who live in heaven. He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation (Rev. 13:4-7).*

### *3. Babel and the antichrist spirit*

*a. one-world spirit.* A common theme in the tribulation period is the universal dominion of evil as manifested in an individual (the antichrist), a political system, and a spiritual system.

The earliest mention of the potential for universal evil – all mankind united in resistance to God – is recorded in the events leading up to the tower of Babel.

*Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth."*

*But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel— because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth (Genesis 11:1-9).*

*But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge (Daniel 12:4).*

A traditional interpretation of the spirit of Babel is that a time will come when the elimination of language and communication barriers through the development of world-shrinking technology, humanity will be able to unite once again in rebellion against God. One manifestation of the world- rebellion is a universal one-world government. Some interpreters look to a revived Roman Empire (ten horns or crowns) to be the seat of an antichrist one-world system.

One website provides pictographic evidence of the Tower of Babel being an artistic inspiration for an official poster and government building of the European Union.

*b. the False Prophet:* Revelation foretells a false prophet figure who gives supernatural support to the beast or antichrist system.

*Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honour of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed (Rev. 13:11-15).*

*c. The Beast and his mark:* One of the primary traits of the antichrist system will be a mark which universally controls the ability to buy or sell, effectively enslaving the population to the policies of the antichrist system.

*He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no-one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name. This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666 (Rev. 13:16-18).*

*d. The Woman in purple riding the beast:* The book of Revelation depicts the existence of a woman clothed in scarlet who rides the beast and is drunk with the blood of the saints and prophets. She is referred to as Babylon. She has been interpreted to be a false religious system such as apostate Christianity in league with the one-world spirit but opposing true believers and the true church.

*One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries." Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was dressed in*

*purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. This title was written on her forehead: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus. When I saw her, I was greatly astonished (Rev. 17:1-6).*

*e. Armageddon: A final battle waged before the return of Christ, either leading into the day of the Lord, or prior to the end of the millennium. The nations of the world will gather to oppose Israel's existence.*

*The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty. "Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed." Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon (Rev. 16:12-16).*

*f. Ezekiel 38-39: In this prophecy a re-gathered Israel is surrounded by enemies who attack the land and are annihilated through divine intervention.*

*Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal; prophesy against him and say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. I will turn you around, put hooks in your jaws and bring you out with your whole army—your horses, your horsemen fully armed, and a great horde with large and small shields, all of them brandishing their swords. Persia, Cush and Put will be with them, all with shields and helmets, also Gomer with all its troops, and Beth Togarmah from the far north with all its troops—the many nations with you. "'Get ready; be prepared, you and all the hordes gathered about you, and take command of them. After many days you will be called to arms. In future years you will invade a land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate. They had been brought out from the nations, and now all of them live in safety. You and all your troops and the many nations with you will go up, advancing like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land (Ez. 38:2-9).*

*This is what will happen in that day: When Gog attacks the land of Israel, my hot anger will be aroused, declares the Sovereign LORD. In my zeal and fiery wrath I declare that at that time there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. The fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, every creature that moves along the ground, and all the people on the face of the earth will tremble at my presence. The mountains will be*

*overturned, the cliffs will crumble and every wall will fall to the ground. I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Sovereign LORD. Every man's sword will be against his brother. I will execute judgment upon him with plague and bloodshed; I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulphur on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him. And so I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD' (Ez. 38:18-23).*

There are similarities between this prophecy and the post-millennial battle in Revelation chapter 20.

*When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them (Rev. 20:7-9).*

4. *The Antichrist spirit in history:* Many see a partial fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy in the coming of Antiochus Epiphanes to Jerusalem in 168 B.C. He desecrated the temple with an image of *Zeus Olympios*, and sacrificed an unclean animal on the altar. Jesus' prophecy, of course, came after this time. Some interpreters see its fulfillment in the advance of the Roman army against Jerusalem, the presence of the idolatrous Roman eagle insignia in the temple courts and the subsequent desecration of the temple by Roman troops. Most commentators expect a final fulfillment at the end of the age.

### C. Word Studies

**Abomination of Desolation:** This term, or some form of it, is found in Daniel and again in Matt. 24:15, and Mark 13:14. Each prophesies the presence of an abomination in the temple of God. The phrase “stands for that which is foul disgusting and hateful ... that which desecrates or destroys what is good... The phrase therefore stands for that which utterly desecrates a holy thing or place...the word *bdelygma* refers to that which causes nausea and abhorrence”(E.F. Kevan, “Abomination of Desolation” in EDT, p.3-4). Many see a partial fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy in the coming of Antiochus Epiphanes to Jerusalem in 168 B.C. He desecrated the temple with an image of *Zeus Olympios*, and sacrificed an unclean animal on the altar. Jesus' prophecy, of course, came after this time. Some interpreters see its fulfillment in the advance of the Roman army against Jerusalem, the presence of the idolatrous Roman eagle insignia in the temple courts and the subsequent desecration of the temple by Roman troops. Most commentators expect a final fulfillment at the end of the age.

**Antichrist:** The term carries the idea of one who opposes Christ. The prefix *anti* also means “instead of.” Thus the antichrist not only opposes Christ, but in some way attempts to replace Him. Opponents to God and his people are seen throughout the Old

Testament, but find specific expression in Daniel chapters 7 and 8 as a “little horn” which speaks boastful words. In chapter 9 a reference is made to a prince to come who will oppose and be opposed by the Messiah. Jesus does not refer specifically to the antichrist but does mention the abomination of desolation. Daniel relates this term to the activities of an antichrist figure. Paul refers to a “man of sin (lawlessness)” and one who seeks to be honored as God or a god. This kind of worship has often been demanded by temporal rulers throughout history, especially in the Roman Empire, but even more recently in our own day. John refers to antichrist, “many antichrists” and the antichrist spirit.

**The Beast:** Based on the images expressed in Daniel’s apocalyptic dream/visions of beasts or animals rising out of the sea. He clearly refers to world powers whose existence affects the destiny of the people of Israel. In the Revelation reference is made to two beasts who are either systems or “Antichristian potentates who are destined to control the affairs of the nations with Satanic power in the closing period of the present era”(Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, Vol. I*, p. 103).

**666 or The Mark of the Beast:** A mark on the right hand or forehead which controls a person’s ability to buy or sell. The numbers 666 are generally believed to refer to a name using the Hebrew or Latin letter equivalents for numbers. Another interpretation is that 666 is the mark of human perfection but falling short of the divine (777).

**Daniel’s 70 weeks:** An angelic revelation given to Daniel to instruct him regarding the fate of the holy city Jerusalem and its temple. The weeks refer to weeks (heptads or sevens) of years and are not necessarily a continuous period. The 70<sup>th</sup> week is a stand-alone period and is generally equated with the period of the great tribulation.

**False Prophet:** Jesus warns against the false prophets who will arise deceiving many. In eschatology, the term false prophet refers to a figure who is linked with the first beast of Revelation 13. This second beast arises out of the earth and has two horns like a lamb but speaks like a dragon. “He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast ... and he performed great and miraculous signs”(Rev. 13:11-13).

**Great Tribulation, Tribulation:** The concept of a seven-year tribulation period at the end of the age is introduced in the book of Daniel. This is the last or 70<sup>th</sup> period of sevens of Daniel’s vision in chapter nine in which “the prince who is to come” gains power and is ultimately destroyed. Elsewhere in Daniel reference is made to “Time, times and half a time” which many interpreters understand as a three and a half year period. This period is understood as one-half of the seven-year period and is referenced in Revelation leading to speculation about the importance of the middle of the tribulation period. Jesus refers in Matthew 24 and Mark 13 about a period of great tribulation in the context of his coming.

**Israel:** The people of Israel, also known today as the Jews, are the descendants of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and are considered to be heirs of the promises made to them. These promises relate to their status as a covenant people, and their claim to the

land promised to Abraham. Israel's restoration is considered an important development in the unfolding of end-time events.

**Rapture:** This term refers to the transformation of living saints and the resurrection of the dead believers at the return of Christ. While the term rapture is not found in the Bible, it is taken from the Latin *rapio* which means "caught up." A great question in eschatology regards when this event (referred to in I Thes. 4) actually takes place in relation to the tribulation period. Some espouse a pre-tribulation or secret rapture of the church, others a mid-tribulational view, still others a post-tribulational view.

#### **D. What are the Signs of Christ's Return?**

*1. Proclamation to the nations:* Jesus said in Matt. 24 that the gospel of the kingdom would be preached to all nations and then the end would come. The word nations is taken from the Greek root-word *ethne* from which we get our word ethnic. Every distinct people group will here the gospel, end then the end will come.

*2. Evil and Apostasy:* The Bible tells of a time when evil and apostasy will increase before the end. Though the gospel will be preached to all the world, iniquity will continue. "Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked"(Dan. 12:10). "Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy" (Rev. 22:11). II Thes. 2 and Rev. 13 distinctly state that many will be deceived and led into falsehood by the man of sin and the second beast rising out of the earth. Jesus also warned that false prophets would deceive many.

*3. Israel:* One of the signs leading to the unfolding of end-time events is the restoration of the nation of Israel. Jesus spoke of the budding of the fig tree as a sign of the end. Generally, the fig tree if seen as the nation of Israel, its reappearance is viewed as a sign of approaching redemption. Israel became a nation, a homeland for the Jewish people in 1948. I find the following excerpt from the memoirs of Clark Clifford adviser to U.S. Presidents very interesting. Clifford speaks of President Truman's attitude toward the formation of the state of Israel in 1948. "(H)e was a student and believer in the Bible since his youth. From his reading of the Old Testament he felt the Jews derived a legitimate historical right to Palestine, and he sometimes cited such Biblical lines as Deuteronomy 1:8: 'Behold, I have given up the land before you; go in and take possession of the land which the Lord hath sworn unto your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob'"(Clark Clifford, *Counsel to the President: A Memoir*, New York: Random House, 1991, p7-8). Jesus stated that Jerusalem would be trodden down by the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles should be fulfilled. The Roman legions destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 70 A.D. It was restored to Jewish control at the conclusion of the Six-Day War in 1967. Paul speaks in detail in Romans 9-11 of the Jewish people and uses the simile of the olive tree to describe a restoration of Israel to their place in God's economy.

4. *False Prophets*; There will be powerful manifestations of false spiritual power both in the days prior to the destruction of Jerusalem and in the last days (Matt. 24, II Thess., Rev. 13).

5. *Antichrist*: A great sign of the end is the rise of a figure or system (discussed above) which gains total authority and demands the allegiance of the peoples of the earth. This figure will control the economic, political and military systems of the world, be empowered supernaturally (by the dragon), and will persecute the saints of the Lord.

6. *Universal dominion of evil*: The figure and system mentioned above will actually hold universal dominion so those who seek to be faithful to God will be in conflict with the prevailing system. (Daniel 7; Rev. 13)

#### 7. *Great tribulation*

a. *Suffering and the Christian*: Nowhere in scripture are Christians promised an exemption from suffering. In fact, "All who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (II Tim. 3:12). Daniel depicts an antichrist figure who will wage war against the saints. Persecution is not a biblical reason to believe that believers will be spared the tribulation period.

b. *Suffering and the world*: The most convincing argument for the exemption of the church from the tribulation period is the fact that God's judgment will be poured out on the beast and his kingdom. It is rightly pointed out that believers are not subject to the wrath of God (I Thes. 5:9). This leads some to support the view of a mid-trib rapture. Others say that the antichrist cannot come to power until the Holy Spirit in the church be "taken out of the way" by the rapture. But this does not explain how Jews and others will be saved during the subsequent tribulation period. The ministry of the Spirit is essential to salvation

8. *Signs in the heavens*: Jesus and the prophets spoke of signs in the heavens such as the sun not giving its light, and the moon turning to blood, the powers of the heavens shaken and the stars falling. Some of this discussion may be figurative, apocalyptic language. But it also appears to be a literal description of events at the time of the end.

#### **Bibliography for Section IV**

W. H. Baker. "Tribulation" in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Walter A. Elwell, ed., p. 1110-1111.

James O. Buswell. "'What is Eschatology?'" in *Readings in Christian Theology, Vol. 3*, Millard J. Erickson, ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979

R. G. Clouse "Rapture of the Church" in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Walter A. Elwell, ed., p. 908-910.

Millard J. Erickson. *Contemporary Options in Eschatology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book

- House, 1977.
- Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982.
- Wayne Grudem. *Systematic Theology, An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1994.
- D.A. Hubbard. "Antichrist" in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Walter Elwell, ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984, p.55-56.
- E.F. Kevan, "Abomination of Desolation" in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Walter Elwell, ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984, p.3
- George Eldon Ladd. *A Theology of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974
- T. Norton Sterrett. *How to Understand Your Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977
- W.E. Vine. *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1940.
- J Rodman Williams. *Renewal Theology: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1996

## V. Four views of the Millennium

Scripture verses for this section: II Peter 1:19, I Cor. 13:2 (*Amillennialism*) Rev. 20:1-10, Matt. 12:28-29, Luke 10:18, Col. 2:14-16; John 5:28-29, Acts 24:15; Dan. 12:2; (*Premillennialism*) Ps. 72:8-14, Is. 11:2-9, 65:20, Zech. 14: 6-21, I Cor. 15:23-28, Rev. 2:27, 12:15, 19:15. (II Cor. 4:4, I John 4:3, 5:19, Rev. 12:9, Matt. 7:13-14, Luke 18:8, II Thes. 2:3-4) (*Present Millennialism*) Eph. 1:3, 2:6, Rom. 5:17, Col. 2:15.

### A. What is the millennium?

“The word ‘millennium’ is derived from the Latin for a thousand (at times the word ‘chiliasm’ taken from the Greek and meaning the same thing is used). It denotes a doctrine taken from a passage in Revelation (20:1-10) in which the writer describes the devil as being bound and thrown into a bottomless pit for a thousand years. The removal of Satanic influence is accompanied by the resurrection of the Christian martyrs, who reign with Christ during the millennium. This period is a time when all humankind’s yearning for an ideal society characterized by peace, freedom, material prosperity, and the rule of righteousness will be realized. The vision of OT prophets who foretold a period of earthly prosperity for the people of God will find fulfillment during this era” (Clouse in *EDT*, p.714-715).

*And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations any more until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years. When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever (Rev. 20:1-10).*

“For purposes of analysis and explanation Christian attitudes toward the millennium can be classified as pre-millennial, postmillennial and a-millennial. These categories involve much more than the arrangement of events surrounding the return of Christ” (Clouse in *EDT*, 715)

“Before examining the arguments for these three ... positions, it is important to realize that the interpretation of the details of prophetic passages regarding future events is often a complex and difficult task involving many variable factors. Therefore the degree of certainty that attaches to our conclusions in this area will be less than with many other doctrines. Even though I (Wayne Grudem) will argue for one position (classical pre-millennialism), I also think it is important for evangelicals to recognize that this area of study is complex and to extend a large measure of grace to others who hold different views regarding the millennium and the tribulation period” (Grudem, p. 1114).

“Discussions of the millennium or of any theme of biblical prophecy require a humble approach. The prophetic word is a lamp shining in the darkness until the day dawns and the full light of God’s accomplished purpose breaks upon us. (II Peter 1:19). Prophecy is a light to keep men in the Way through the darkness of This Age until the light of Christ’s coming dispels the darkness forever. This suggests that we should not look to prophecy for pre-written history or for a blueprint of the future. Prophecy’s primary purpose is to *give light* for our present journey, not to satisfy our curiosity. Since we do not have the full light and our knowledge is admittedly partial (I Cor. 13:12), we may not expect complete unity of interpretation among God’s servants in prophetic truth... Therefore, humility and charity in such study is more important than perfect agreement” (Ladd in *Readings in Christian Theology, Vol. 3*, p. 515).

“It hardly needs saying that the question of the Millennium has been one of the most perplexing biblical and theological issues in the history of Christendom. So it is in all humility that I will set out a pattern of interpretation that I hope will be of value. I will be straightforward while at the same time mentioning some of my differences with other interpretations” (Rodman Williams in the opening of his chapter on the millennium in *Renewal Theology*, p.421)

Historically pre-millennialist interpretation of scripture has precedent in numerous church fathers including Papias, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Hippolytus during the first three centuries. Montanists’ false predictions of the return of Christ cast pre-millennialism into a bad light for some. In the fifth century Augustine, Bishop of Hippo popularized the a-millennial interpretation of scripture. Munster Anabaptists who also falsely predicted Christ’s return were pre-millennialists. They fell into disfavor with the reformers Calvin and Luther who continued to hold to an a-millennial view. Pre-millennialism gained widespread acceptance in the nineteenth century. John Nelson Darby (1880-1882) who was born in London was the primary proponent of eschatology known as dispensationalism and the “secret rapture.” It is said that the pre-tribulation, secret rapture concept is based on a prophecy given in a Plymouth brethren meeting. Before this time pre-millennialism had many adherents, but pre-trib, pre-millennial views were unheard of.

Many of Darby’s teachings were developed further by C.I. Scofield (1843-1921), an American Congregationalist pastor born in Mississippi and trained in law. His most influential publication was the Scofield Reference Bible (1909). It continues even today

to be one of the most influential teaching tools of the dispensationalist, pre-trib, pre-millennial school of eschatology. The teachings of Darby and Scofield inspired the eschatological interpretation featured in the very popular Left Behind Series authored by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins.

Millennial views can be diagrammed the following ways:

### **A-millennial**

Church Age -- Return of Christ  
Resurrection of just and unjust/judgment/ new heaven/new earth ----- Eternal State

### **Post-millennial**

Church Age/ Millennium ---- Return of Christ  
Resurrection of the just and unjust/judgment ---- new heaven/new earth / Eternal State

### **Pre-millennial**

Church Age ----- Return of Christ --- Millennium ---- Last Judgment -----Eternal State  
(Resurrection of Believers) (Resurrection of unbelievers  
final judgment of all)

(Above Based on Grudem, pp. 1109-1111)

“In addition to the pre-millennial, a-millennial and post-millennial interpretations, there have been groups such as the Shakers, the Seventh-day Adventists, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, and the Latter-day Saints (Mormons) who tend to equate the activities of their own sect with the coming of the millennium. There are also movements including the Nazis and the Marxists who teach a kind of secular millennialism when they speak of the Third Reich or the classless society” (Clouse in *EDT*, p.718).

### **B. Pre-millennialism**

“Pre-millennialism is generally recognized as the proper name for that system of biblical interpretation which places the second advent of Christ as preceding and introducing his future reign on earth for one thousand years” (Walvoord in *Readings in Christian Theology, Vol. 3*, p. 520).

“This view makes it possible to believe that Christ could come at any moment (his coming before the tribulation) and yet that many signs must be fulfilled before he comes (his coming after the tribulation, when the signs will be fulfilled)” (Grudem, p. 1132).

“The pre-millennialist believes that the kingdom of Christ will be inaugurated in a cataclysmic way and that divine control will be exercised in a more supernatural manner than does the postmillennialist. The pre-millennialist believes that the return of Christ will be preceded by signs including wars, famines, earthquakes, the preaching of the gospel to all nations, a great apostasy, the appearance of Antichrist, and the great tribulation. These events culminate in the second coming, which will result in a period of peace and righteousness when Christ and his saints control the world. This rule is established suddenly through supernatural methods rather than gradually over a long period of time by means of the conversion of individuals. The Jews will figure prominently in a future age because the pre-millennialist believes that they will be converted in large numbers and will again have a prominent place in God’s work. Nature will have the curse removed from it, and even the desert will produce abundant crops. Christ will restrain evil during the age by the use of authoritarian power. Despite the idyllic conditions of this golden age there is a final rebellion of wicked people against Christ and his saints. This exposure of evil is crushed by God, the non-Christian dead are resurrected, the last judgment conducted, and the eternal states of heaven and hell established. Many pre-millennialists have taught that during the thousand years dead or martyred believers will be resurrected with glorified bodies to intermingle with the other inhabitants of the earth” (Clouse in *EDT*, p.715).

“First Corinthians 15:21-24 designates three stages in God’s redemptive purpose. First is the resurrection of Christ, the first-fruits of the resurrection (vv. 21,23). Then will occur the resurrection of those who are Christ’s at his coming. ‘After that (the literal meaning of the Greek particle) comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father’(v. 24). Here is the third stage, which is the Age to Come. Then, ‘the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him that God may be all in all’ (v. 28).

The Age to Come after ‘The End’ is the age of the Father’s all-encompassing dominion. The Church age – the era between the Resurrection and the Parousia -- is the age of the Son’s hidden rule. The millennium will be the age of the manifestation of Christ’s glory when the sovereignty, which he now possesses but does not manifest, and which he will give over to the Father in the Age to Come, will be manifested in glory in the world. God has a glorious destiny for the race which will be accomplished by the Son when he comes to reign in glory” (Ladd in *Readings in Christian Theology, Vol. 3*, 518).

### **C. Post-Millennialism**

“When we speak of post-millennialism, we mean that view of the last things which holds that the kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through the preaching of the Gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit, that the world eventually is to be Christianized, and that the return of Christ will occur at the close of a long period of righteousness and peace, commonly called the millennium.

This view is to be distinguished from that optimistic, but false, view of human progress and betterment which holds that the kingdom of God on earth will be achieved through a natural, rather than a supernatural, process by which mankind will be improved and

social institutions will be reformed and brought to a higher level of culture and efficiency. The latter view regards the kingdom of God as the product of natural laws in an evolutionary process and represents only a spurious or pseudo-post-millennialism” (Boettner in *Readings in Christian Theology Vol 3.*, p. 507).

“(P)ostmillennialists emphasize the present aspects of God’s kingdom which will reach fruition in the future. They believe that the millennium will come through Christian preaching and teaching. Such activity will result in a more godly, peaceful and prosperous world. The new age will not be essentially different from the present, and it will come about as more people are converted to Christ. Evil will not be totally eliminated during the millenium, but it will be reduced to a minimum as the moral and spiritual influence of Christians increased... This period is not necessarily limited to a thousand years because the number can be used symbolically. The millennium closes with the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the last judgment” (Clouse, *EDT*, 715).

“In response to the argument that the world is becoming more Christian, it must be said that the world is also becoming more evil. No student of history or modern society will argue that mankind has made much progress through the centuries in overcoming the depth of perversity and the extent of immorality that remains in people’s hearts. Indeed, modernization in western societies in the twentieth century has often been accompanied not by moral improvement but by an unprecedented level of drug abuse, marital infidelity, pornography, homosexuality, rebellion against authority, superstition (in astrology and the New Age movement) materialism, greed, theft, and falsehood in speech”(Grudem, p. 1123-1124).

#### **D. A-millennialism**

“In favor of the a-millennial view, the following arguments are advanced:

1. When we look through the whole Bible, a-millennialists will say, *only one passage* (Rev. 20:1-6) appears to teach a future earthly millennial rule of Christ, and that passage itself is obscure. It is unwise to base such a major doctrine on one passage of uncertain and widely disputed interpretation” (Grudem, p. 1114).

A-millennialists say that the scripture predicts only one resurrection, not two, and they see all the major events yet to come, such as the return of Christ, destruction of evil, resurrection of the just and the unjust, final judgment, new heavens and new earth and eternal state as all one collective future event.

“(A)millennialism states that that Bible does not predict a period of the rule of Christ on earth before the last judgment. According to this outlook there will be a continuous development of good and evil in the world until the second coming of Christ, when the dead shall be raised and the judgment conducted. A-millennialists believe that the kingdom of God is now present in the world as the victorious Christ rules his church through the Word and Spirit. They feel that the future, glorious and perfect kingdom

refers to the new earth and life in heaven. Thus Rev. 20 is a description of the souls of the dead believers reigning with Christ in heaven” (Clouse in *EDT*, p. 715).

### **E. Present Millennialism**

Rodman Williams espouses a view of the millennium that is akin to a-millennialism, but which he terms present millennialism. He views Rev. 20:1ff. As a recapitulation and expansion of events in chapter 19. For Williams the New Testament teaches that Satan is a defeated foe in the present age (Col. 2:15), that the believer has received every spiritual blessing in Christ (Eph.1:3), that we reign in life with Christ, that we have been raised with him and are seated with him in the heavenly places (Eph.2:6). He holds to the standard a-mil belief that Jesus’ return introduces the final resurrection, judgment, new heavens and new earth, i.e. the final state. Satan is presently bound, the gospel will prevail among the nations and except for the brief period of the great tribulation, believers share in a glorious victory in Christ in the present age, to be fully established at the second coming.

### **Bibliography for Part V**

- Lorraine Boettner. “Christian Hope and a Millennium,” in *Readings in Christian Theology, Vol. 3*, Millard J. Erickson, ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979, pp. 507-510.
- R.G. Clouse. “Millennium, Views of the” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Walter A. Elwell, ed., p.714-718.
- Millard J. Erickson. *Contemporary Options in Eschatology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977.
- W.J. Grier. “Christian Hope and the Millennium” in *Readings in Christian Theology, Vol. 3*, Millard J. Erickson, ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979, pp. 511-514.
- Wayne Grudem. *Systematic Theology, An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1994.
- W.A. Hoffecker. “Darby, John Nelson,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Walter A. Elwell, ed. p. 292-3.
- W.N. Kerr. “Scofield, Cyrus Ingerson,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Walter A. Elwell, ed., 988-9.
- George Eldon Ladd. “The Revelation of Christ’s Glory” in *Readings in Christian Theology, Vol. 3*, Millard J. Erickson, ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979, pp. 515-518.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *A Theology of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974
- John Walvoord. “Dispensational Premillennialism” in *Readings in Christian Theology, Vol. 3*, Millard J. Erickson, ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979, pp.519-524.
- J Rodman Williams. *Renewal Theology: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1996

## VI. The Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple

Scripture verses for this section: Matthew 23:37-24:51; Mark 13:1-36; Luke 19:41-44, 21:1-36, Dan. 9:20-22, 25-27

The following is a digest of excerpts from historical sources and theological comments on the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 A.D.

### A. The Temple of Herod the Great:

Some statements of Josephus regarding Herod's Temple:

“And now Herod in the eighteenth year of his reign...undertook a very great work, that is to build of himself the temple of God, and to make it larger in compass, and to raise it to a most magnificent altitude, as esteeming it to be the most glorious of all his actions, as it really was, to bring it to perfection, and this would be sufficient for an everlasting memorial of him...

Now the temple was built of stones that were white and strong, and each of their length was twenty-five cubits, their height was eight and their breadth about twelve; and the whole structure as also the structure of the royal cloister, was on each side much lower, but the middle was much higher, till they were visible to those that dwelt in the country for a great many furlongs, but chiefly to such as lived over against them, and those that approached to them.

He also built a wall below, beginning at the bottom, which was encompassed by a deep valley ...till it proceeded to a great height, and till both the largeness of the square edifice and its altitude were immense, and till the vastness of the stones in front were plainly visible on the outside ...the middle was much higher than the rest, and the wall of the front was adorned with beams, resting on pillars that were interwoven into it, and that front was all of polished stone, insomuch that its fineness to such as had not seen it, was incredible, and to such as had seen it was greatly amazing”(Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XV, xi, 1,3,5).

“The whole body, however, of the church at Jerusalem, having been commanded by a divine revelation, given to men of approved piety before the war, removed from the city, and dwelt at a certain town beyond the Jordan called Pella. Here, those that believed in Christ, having removed from Jerusalem, as if holy men had entirely abandoned the royal city itself, and the whole land of Judea; the divine justice for their crimes against Christ and his apostles, finally overtook them, totally destroying the whole generation of these evildoers from the earth”(Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book III, v).

“An ‘abomination’ in Old Testament idiom is an idolatrous affront to the true worship of God, and the reference in Daniel was to the pagan statues which Antiochus Epiphanes set up in the temple in Jerusalem in 167 BC, thus ‘desolating’ the worship of the temple.

Jesus thus looks for a repetition of this act of sacrilege” (France, *Matthew* in Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1985, p. 340).

“Such a crisis (v.23-25) will be a golden opportunity for the sort of Messianic pretenders already predicted in v. 5; in the urgency of Israel’s need they will be eagerly welcomed as God’s answer to her problems. Often in the church’s history (and sometimes today) a period of crisis leaves God’s people wide open to plausible perversions of the truth, particularly if they are accompanied by *great signs and wonders*. ‘Miraculous’ activity is, in the Bible, by no means always the work of God” (France, p. 342).

“The way in which these options are described helps to give more concrete meaning to ‘being ready’; it is not to sit quietly waiting, but to provide for the *household* (vv. 45-46) – *i.e.* it is in service to others that we prepare for the parousia. In contrast, unpreparedness consists in selfish exploitation of to others (v.49). So, to watch means an active, laborious, responsible service (France, p. 349).

The Siege of Jerusalem:

“Thus did the emissaries of the Jews grow worse and worse every day, and the seditious were still more irritated by the calamities they were under, even while the famine preyed upon themselves, after it had preyed upon the people. And indeed the multitude of carcasses that lay in heaps one upon another was a horrible sight, and produced a pestilential stench, which was a hindrance to those that would make sallies out of the city, and fight the enemy: but as those were to go in battle array, who had already been used to ten thousand murders, and must tread upon those dead bodies, as they marched along, so were they not terrified, nor did they pity men as they marched over them: nor did they deem this affront offered to the deceased to be any ill omen to themselves; but they had their right hands already polluted with the murders of their own countrymen, and in that condition ran out to fight with foreigners...”(Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book VI, chapter i,1)

“Now there was a certain woman that dwelt beyond Jordan, her name was Mary...She was eminent for her family and her wealth, and had fled away to Jerusalem with the rest of the multitude, and was with them besieged therein at this time...while the famine pierced through her very bowels and marrow...She then attempted a most unnatural thing; and snatching up her son ...she said, ‘O thou miserable infant! For whom shall I preserve thee in this war, this famine and this sedition? As to the war with the Romans, if they preserve our lives, we must be slaves! This famine will destroy us even before that slavery comes upon us; yet are these seditious rogues more terrible than both the other. Come on, be thou my food, and be thou a fury to these seditious varlets and a bye-word to the world, which is all that is now wanting to complete the calamities of the Jews.’ As soon as she had said this she slew her son; and then roasted him, and ate the one half of him, and kept the other half by her concealed” (Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book VI, Chapter iii, 4).

The destruction of the temple:

(A)nd as they were crowding in on the temple together, many of them were trampled on by one another, while a great number fell among the ruins of the cloisters, which were still hot and smoking, and were destroyed in the same miserable way. With those whom they had conquered: and when they were come near the holy house, ...they were everywhere slain, and everywhere beaten; and as for a great part of the people, they were weak and without arms, and had their throats cut wherever they were caught. Now, round about the altar lay dead bodies heaped one upon another; as at the steps going up to it ran a great quantity of their blood, whither also the dead bodies that were slain above (on the altar) fell down...And now the Romans, upon the flight of the seditious into the city, and upon the burning of the holy house itself, and of all the buildings lying round about it, brought their ensigns to the temple, and set them over against its eastern gate; and there they did offer sacrifices to them, and there they did make Titus imperator, with the greatest acclamations of joy”(Josephus, Book VI, v, 3, vi,1).

The destruction of Jerusalem “certainly spelled the end of a crucial redemptive-historical epoch. It must be viewed as the end of some age. It also represents a significant visitation of the Lord in judgment and a vitally important “day of the Lord”.” Whether this was the *only* day of the Lord about which Scripture speaks remains a major point of controversy among preterists” (Sproul, *The Last Days According to Jesus*, p. 203).

“Thus there was a star resembling a sword, which stood over the city and a comet that continued for a whole year. Thus also ... when the people were come ... to the feast of unleavened bread ... a great light shone around the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day time; which light lasted for half an hour. This light seemed to be a good sign to the unskillful, but was so interpreted by the sacred scribes, as to portend those events that followed immediately upon it” (Josephus, quoted in Sproul, *The Last Days According to Jesus*, p. 122).

“The history on which I am entering is that of a period rich in disasters, terrible with battles, torn by civil struggles, horrible even in peace. Four emperors fell by the sword; there were three civil wars, more foreign wars, and often both at the same time. There was success in the East, misfortune in the West. Illyricum was disturbed, the Gallic provinces wavering, Britain subdued and immediately let go. The Sarmatae and Suebi rose against us; the Dacians won fame by defeats inflicted and suffered; even the Parthians were almost roused to arms through the trickery of a pretended Nero. Moreover, Italy was distressed by disasters unknown before or returning after the lapse of ages. Cities on the rich, fertile shores of Campania were swallowed up or overwhelmed; Rome was devastated by conflagrations, in which her most ancient shrines were consumed and the very Capitol fired by citizens’ hands ... the sea was filled with exiles, its cliffs made foul with the bodies of the dead. In Rome there was more awful cruelty...

Besides manifold misfortunes that befell mankind, there were prodigies in the sky and on the earth, warnings given by thunderbolts, and prophecies of the future, both joyful and gloomy, uncertain and clear. For never was it more fully proved by awful disasters of the

Roman people or by indubitable signs that the gods care not for our safety, but for our punishment” (Tacitus, quoted in Sproul, p. 123).

### **Bibliography for Section VI**

- R.J. Bauckham, “Apocalyptic” in *New Bible Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996, p.53
- Eusebius. *Ecclesiastical History*, transl. by Christian Frederick Cruse. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1955.
- Josephus. *Antiquities of the Jews*, transl. by William Whiston. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1963
- R.T. France. *Matthew* in *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1985.
- R.C. Sproul. *The Last Days According to Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996.