

The Lord's Second Coming

A message from the author

Dear Reader,

This Bible study is the sixth in a series designed to teach you the basics of the New Testament. It is our prayer that it will fit into its proper place and accomplish its purpose.

The conclusions reached in this study are as follows:

1. Jesus is coming soon.
2. He is coming in the clouds and every eye shall see Him.
3. No one knows the day or the hour of His coming; He will come like a thief in the night.
4. At His coming all the dead (good and bad) shall rise.
5. The present heaven and earth will be destroyed by fire at His coming.
6. The judgment will begin at His coming.

We also examined pre-millennialism (which presently is the commonly accepted system of thought concerning the Lord's return) and compared its teachings to the Bible. We reached the following conclusion: Pre-millennialism is based on a false method of interpreting the Bible. The covenant which God made with Abraham was the Christian covenant. The temple prophesied in the Old Testament was the church of Christ. Christians have already experienced the first resurrection in Christian immersion, and are reigning with Christ in the 1000 years (which merely means a long period of time). When Jesus comes again, it will be to judge the world, not to establish His kingdom.

And Jesus' second coming motivates the Christian to be alert, ready and anxious for the Lord's surprise return.

We remind the reader that the author of this booklet is a human being subject to error, ignorance, and misunderstanding. You yourself must study "to see if these things are so."

The New American Standard Version of the Bible was used in preparation of this study and is quoted throughout.

Your servant,

Jay Wilson

"The Bible only... makes Christians only..."

INTRODUCTION

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

Make no mistake about it - Jesus is coming again. That second coming is something that will be known and visible to everyone, and terrifying to some.

Not only that, Jesus is coming especially for those who are *eagerly* awaiting Him. One of the purposes of this study is to present the facts about Jesus' second coming as they are expressed in the Bible in such a way as to motivate you to be eagerly expecting Him. The apostle John wrote: "And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming." ([I John 2:28](#)). When we eagerly expect Him, our lives are soon placed in order, so that when He does appear we will not shrink back in shame - we will look forward to His telling us, "Well done, good and faithful slave" ([Matthew 25:23](#)).

In this study we will also be examining the widespread doctrine of pre-millennialism and comparing it to Bible teaching. Not only is it important to study and understand pre-millennialism in its connection with Jesus' second coming, but an understanding of these other items is also at stake:

1. Basic principles of Bible interpretation.
2. The interpretation and understanding of much of the Old Testament, especially the prophets.
3. Understanding the New Covenant and the kingdom of God.
4. The relationship of the Jews to Christ.
5. The importance of Christ's church in God's plan.

The purpose of this study is to stir up hope in those Christians who truly labor and slave in full knowledge of the truth, and to revive among us the rallying cry of the early Christians: "Maranatha [O Lord come]!" ([I Corinthians 16:22](#)).

Even so. Come, Lord Jesus!

OUTLINE

This study consists of three major sections:

1. Basic teachings concerning Jesus' second coming.
2. An examination of pre-millennialism
3. The effect of the second coming on the lives of Christians

I. BASIC TEACHINGS CONCERNING JESUS' SECOND COMING

INTRODUCTION

In this particular section we are going to discuss six basic points about Jesus' second coming. It is important that we fix each of these basic points in our minds, so that when we proceed deeper into the study, we have some fixed reference points to look back to. We all need some basic reference points in our minds, and it is from these that we are able to examine and analyze further teaching. This is particularly true in understanding Jesus' second coming.

JESUS IS COMING SOON

It is written: "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly.' " ([Revelation 22:20](#)). One of the central points of the Bible is that Jesus' second coming is *soon* - Jesus is coming *soon!* The same point is stressed in James: "Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand" ([James 5:7,8](#)). And Jesus told the church at Philadelphia, "I am coming quickly; hold fast to what you have, in order that no one take your crown" ([Revelation 3:11](#)). Once again, the Bible emphasizes that Jesus is coming quickly and we are to hang on to what little faith and achievement we have in the Lord, to endure until He comes.

HE IS COMING IN THE CLOUDS AND EVERY EYE SHALL SEE HIM

"Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of earth will mourn over Him" ([Revelation 1:7](#)). It is very obvious here that when Jesus comes back in the clouds every eye shall see Him; not only those who are alive, but also those who are dead - for even those who pierced Him will see Him.

In [Acts 1:9-11](#), Luke records Jesus' ascension. Jesus gathered His apostles together for some last minute instructions. "And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a *cloud* received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them; and they also said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.'" The apostles' watching Jesus ascend into heaven would be much like our watching a jet airplane take off. In the same way as an airplane lifts off the earth and suddenly disappears through the clouds, so did Jesus in the presence of these eleven men of Galilee. And just as an airplane returns by suddenly dropping through the clouds and becoming visible, so Christ also, when He makes His return soon, will drop through the clouds and suddenly become visible to all of us.

Paul adds to our knowledge: "...when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire..." ([II Thessalonians 1:7](#)). When Jesus does become visible - revealed - He will be with His mighty angels in flaming fire.

When Jesus comes again, it is not going to be something secret! It is going to be something everyone knows about. When He comes through the clouds, every eye shall see Him, even those who pierced Him.

NO ONE KNOWS THE TIME OF HIS COMING

Jesus makes it very clear in [Matthew 24:35-44](#) that no one knows the day or the hour of His coming; He will come like a thief in the night. Not even the angels in heaven, *nor the Son Himself*, knew the time of His return.

It is always interesting to me that people always want to know when Jesus is coming again. The Bible reveals answers to many questions - what must I do to be saved?; what kind of life should I live?; should I work with a local congregation in doing the Lord's work? But there is one question which the Bible does not answer - when is Jesus coming again? So what is the one question that everyone wants an answer to?

You guessed it - when is Jesus coming again? Jesus Himself did not know when He was coming again. No one knows the time of His coming!

"But of that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone" ([Matthew 24:36](#)). "Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" ([I Thessalonians 5:1-3](#)).

Some have given the mistaken impression that early Christians such as Paul expected the Messiah to return shortly after the church began; and when He didn't come, they gradually changed their story. However, Paul makes it clear in II Thessalonians (which is one of the oldest books in the New Testament) that he knew - and wanted Christians then to understand - that the Lord would not return until there was a general falling away, or *apostasy*, from the original faith. "Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him, that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the *apostasy* comes first..." ([II Thessalonians 2:1-3](#)).

Finally, we are warned by Jesus: "Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his garments, lest he walk about naked and men see his shame" ([Revelation 16:15](#)). Jesus warns us that He is coming like a thief and He wants us to be ready.

AT HIS COMING ALL THE DEAD SHALL RISE

Paul informed the church at Thessalonica, "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord, and thus we shall always be with the Lord" ([I Thessalonians 4:15-17](#)). Paul makes it very clear that when Jesus returns, He will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus - those Christians who have died a physical death on earth. Then we who are so fortunate as to be alive and remain at His return shall be caught up together with them in the clouds. The main point here is that the Christian dead will be resurrected at Jesus' return.

In connection with Jesus' second coming, John informs us: "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is" ([I John 3:2](#)). When Jesus comes back, we Christians shall be changed. We don't know what we shall be changed into for it has not appeared as yet what we shall be but we know that we shall be like Jesus when He comes. Paul makes the same point: "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will *transform the body of our humble state* into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself" ([Philippians 3:20,21](#)). Our bodies will be changed, if we are Christians, to be like His when He returns.

In his gospel account, John quotes the Lord Jesus with regard to the resurrection from the dead: "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming in which *all who are in the tombs* shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds, to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment" ([John 5:28,29](#)). Not only are the Christian dead going to be resurrected at the Lord's return, but all who are in the tombs. And Jesus said this would occur in an hour."

Knowing this, the words of Paul to the Corinthians take on a meaning not clearly indicated in their context: "Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall *all be changed*, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and *the dead* will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality" ([I Corinthians 15:51-53](#)). Paul here does not qualify the dead as he did in writing to the church at Thessalonica; here he indicates (consistently with the teaching of Jesus in [John 5:28,29](#)) that all the dead will be raised - Christian and non-Christian - when the last trumpet sounds. Those whom Jesus calls "good" live in a resurrection of eternal life; those whom Jesus said did "evil" live in a resurrection of eternal judgment. This will occur when Jesus returns and the earth is destroyed.

THE PRESENT HEAVEN AND EARTH WILL BE DESTROYED BY FIRE AT HIS COMING

Peter wrote: "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up" ([II Peter 3:10](#)). When the day of the Lord comes - and the day of the Lord of which he is speaking is the one which comes like a thief in the night - in that day the heavens and the earth will be destroyed by fire.

Jesus is not coming to set up an earthly kingdom. When He comes, everything on this earth - everything in this universe - is going to go up in smoke.

There have always been those who have not believed God's warnings about destruction. But this is especially true in our day of uniformitarian thought - when the great body of scientists believe that the Flood never occurred, that the face of the earth was shaped by the same gradual, continuous forces which are at work today. In this same passage Peter lets us know what to expect: "Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep *all continues just as it was* from the beginning of creation.' For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men" ([II Peter 3:3-7](#)).

The writer of Hebrews compares the destruction of the earth to the giving of the Law of Moses on Mt. Sinai. On that day the people were terrified when the earth shook at the voice of Him who uttered the Ten Commandments. The writer then warns us: 'See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven. And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "*Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven*"' ([Hebrews 12:25,26](#)).

These scriptures make it clear that both the heavens and the earth will be destroyed on the day of the Lord which comes like a thief, which Peter calls the "day of judgment" ([II Peter 3:7](#)).

THE JUDGMENT WILL BEGIN AT HIS COMING

"And about these also Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, 'Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of his holy ones, *to execute judgment upon all*, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.'" ([Jude 14,15](#)).

When the Lord comes back with His many thousands of holy ones, His angels, He is coming back to execute judgment, to initiate the Day of Judgment.

The same point is made in II Thessalonians: "...when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven *with His mighty angels* in flaming fire, *dealing out retribution* to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed..." ([II Thessalonians 1:7-10](#)). Paul makes it very clear here that on the day when Jesus comes to be marveled at among His saints - when He is first seen by those who are Christians - at the same time He is coming to execute judgment. He is going to deal out punishment to those who do not know God or obey the gospel. On that same day He is going to be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire.

In [Matthew 13:36-43](#), in the parable of the sower, when Jesus interprets it, He makes it clear that at "the end of the age," at the end of *this age*, is when the harvest is going to occur. "Therefore just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear." The same point is made in [Revelation 14:14-20](#) that, at the end of the age, the harvest of the earth will be reaped.

A picture of that judgment is given in [Revelation 20:11-15](#). God sits on the great white throne and the dead are judged according to what is written in the books. And if a person's name is not written in the book of life, he is thrown into the lake of fire.

In Acts 17, in a lecture to the citizens of Athens, Paul offers proof of the coming Day of Judgment: "Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, *because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness* through a Man whom He has appointed, *having furnished proof to all men* by raising Him from the dead" ([Acts 17:30,31](#)).

The judgment will begin at Jesus' second coming, and that judgment will be just as sure as Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

CONCLUSION

Jesus is coming soon to claim His saints, destroy the earth, and initiate judgment. The day of His coming is not known - He will come like a thief in the night - but when He does come, He will come in the clouds and every eye shall see Him. At His coming all the dead - Christian and non-Christian - shall be resurrected.

II. AN EXAMINATION OF PRE-MILLENNIALISM

INTRODUCTION

In Revelation 20, a 1000-year reign of Christ is mentioned. The Latin word for 1000 years is *millennium*; hence, the reign of Christ is referred to by Bible commentators as the *millennial* period.

Pre-millennial refers to events *before the millennium* (*pre* - means *before*). Pre-millennialism is a system of thought in which Jesus' second coming occurs before the 1000-year reign of Christ begins.

In examining pre-millennialism, we first want to consider its teaching and its perspective of the scriptures. Then we want to examine the base on which pre-millennial thought rests from a Biblical point of view.

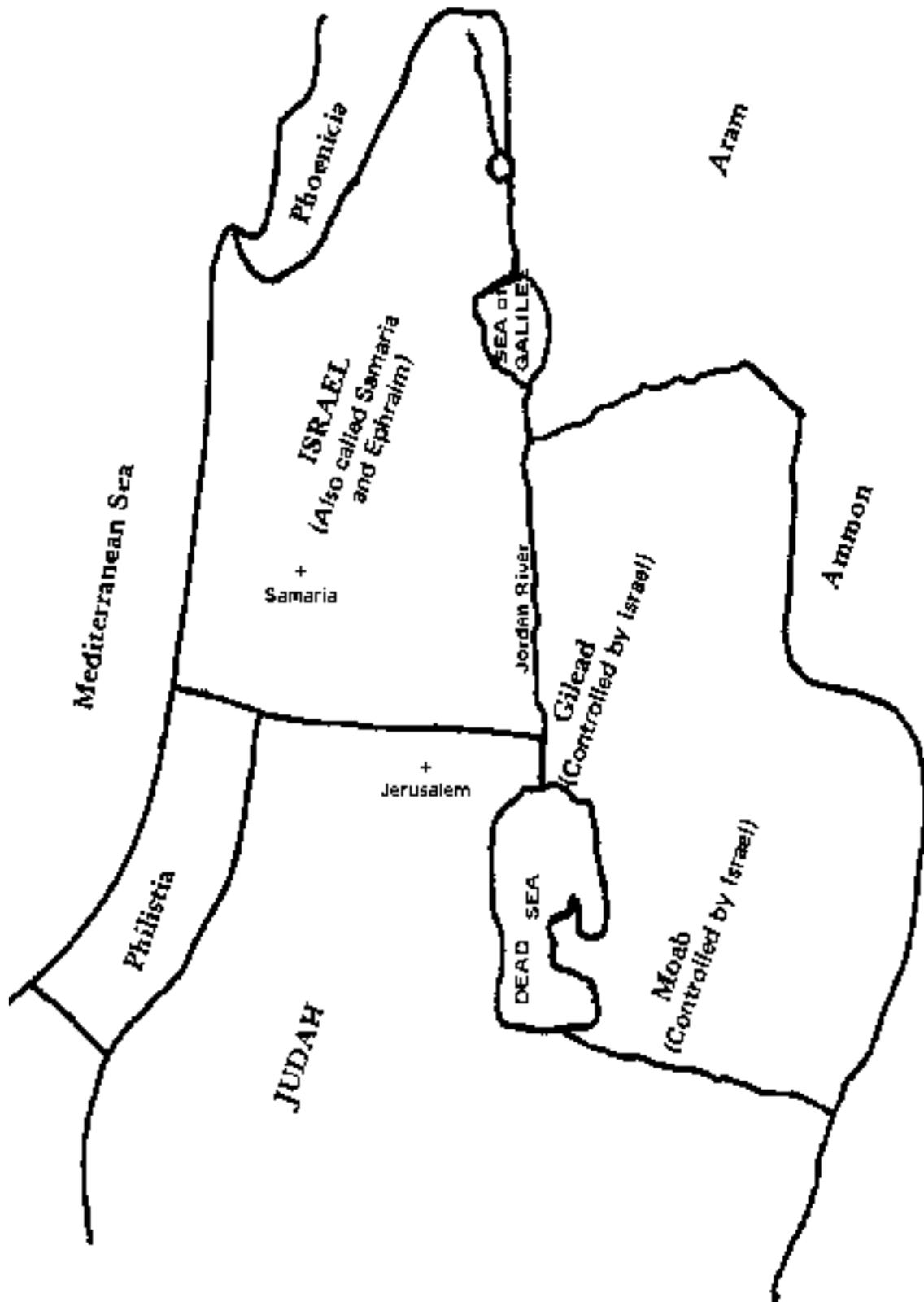
BASIC OUTLINE OF PRE-MILLENNIALISM

History of Israel

In order to understand pre-millennialism, and the significant prophecies in connection with its viewpoint of the Lord's return, it is absolutely necessary to understand the general history of the nation Israel. Below is a brief outline of Israel's history as recorded in the Bible [dates added], accompanied by a sketch of the area and an explanation of the points in the outline.

1. Covenant with Abraham - 1876 BC
2. Crossing the Red Sea, Law of Moses - 1446 BC
3. Entering Canaan - 1406 BC
4. David becomes king - 1010 BC
5. Kingdom splits - 930 BC
6. Northern kingdom (Israel) destroyed - 722 BC
7. Southern kingdom (Judah) nearly destroyed - 605-585 BC
8. Remnant of Judah returns - 536 BC
9. Judah rejects the Messiah - 30 AD
10. Jerusalem destroyed - 70 A

THE KINGDOMS OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL IN 850 BC



There is some dispute as to the dates listed above, especially for the first five, but these are generally accepted as being "in the ballpark" by conservative scholars.

1. In approximately 2000 BC, God made a special covenant with Abraham regarding his seed (the covenant was renewed with Isaac, and then with Jacob in 1876 BC. In Galatians 3:17, Paul emphasizes that the covenant with Abraham came 430 years before the Law. A date of 1446 BC for the Law of Moses gives the date of 1876 BC.) This covenant will be discussed at some length in the following sections.
2. In 1446 BC Moses led the people of Israel out of Egypt, crossed the Red Sea, and gave the people the Ten Commandments (and all the other Old Testament laws) at Mt. Sinai.
3. At the death of Moses, the leadership passed to Joshua. For years the people of Israel had wandered in the wilderness, and all but two men of those who were more than 20 years old at the crossing of the Red Sea were destroyed during that period. Under the leadership of Joshua, the new generation of Israelites crossed the Jordan River and took possession of the land of Canaan. The land of Canaan was then apportioned out to the twelve tribes, each tribe receiving a certain section of land which was to be theirs for as long as Israel existed.
4. For roughly 350 years the nation of Israel was governed only by men and women who were called judges. These were those whom God raised up to maintain law and order in the land in the absence of any central authority. The people began to clamor for a king, however, in order to be like the other nations around them, so God grudgingly let them have a king. When the first king, named Saul, went bad, God appointed David to be king. When David officially became king in 1010 BC, a subtle split between the tribe of Judah and the other tribes of Israel began to develop because David, being of the tribe of Judah, tended to favor Judah.
5. Solomon, David's son, taxed the people heavily. At his death, ten of the twelve tribes broke away, leaving only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin under the rule of Solomon's son Rehoboam. The ten tribes which broke away retained the name of Israel, while the two remaining tribes took the name of Judah, since the tribe of Judah was by far dominant. Israel's capital city was eventually established at the city of Samaria, while Judah's capital was at Jerusalem.
6. When Israel broke away, it also broke with divinely established worship, and began to worship idols. Because of idol worship, and because of the extreme immorality of the people, God had the Assyrians destroy the northern kingdom (also called Ephraim and Samaria by this time) in 722 BC.
7. Although Judah retained an outward form of worship of God, she also lapsed into idolatry and immorality. In 605 BC God allowed Babylon to conquer Judah, and a number of residents were carried captive into Babylon. In 585 BC, the Babylonians completely destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple of God; and, basically, the only people of Judah who remained were those who were captive in Babylon or scattered elsewhere.
8. In 536 BC, in accordance with prophecy which Jeremiah had made some 70 years earlier, the Persians conquered Babylon, and allowed the people of Judah to return and begin to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. This small group that returned was known to the prophets as "the remnant."
9. The last of the Old Testament prophets wrote in 430 BC. Until the coming of John the Immerser, and the Lord Jesus, there was silence from heaven. The Jews, in accordance with Old Testament prophecy, put Jesus to death. With the establishment of the church on the Jewish feast day of Pentecost, 30 AD, a number of Jews repented and were immersed in the name of Christ for the remission of their sins. But large numbers rejected Jesus as the Messiah.
10. In consequence of the Jews rejection of the Messiah, in 70 AD God sent the armies of Rome to destroy Jerusalem. They burned the city, and leveled the Temple.

The Covenant with Abraham

Pre-millennialism is based on what its leading proponents call the "literal method of interpreting scripture." The literal method allows for no figurative or symbolic interpretation of any verse of scripture except in extreme cases.

Pre-millennialism begins with the literal interpretation of the covenant God made with Abraham. In [Genesis 15](#), God confirmed His promise to Abraham that his descendants would be as numberless as the stars in the heavens by passing through two halves of the sacrifice Abraham had prepared for God. As He

passed between the pieces in the form of a smoking oven and a flaming torch, God said to Abraham, "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river Euphrates" ([Genesis 15:18](#)).

Later, in [Genesis 17:8](#), it is written that God said to Abraham: "And I will give to you and your descendants after you, the land of your sojourning, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

The literal interpretation of these promises is that God promised the land of Canaan to the people of Israel forever. "It is evident... that the physical seed of Abraham was promised eternal possession of the land" (J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come*; Zondervan Press, Grand Rapids, MI 49506; p.90).

The reasoning of pre-millennialism begins here - God promised the land of Canaan to Israel as an eternal possession. The promise to Abraham was confirmed to the nation of Israel just before they crossed the Jordan River under the leadership of Joshua ([Deuteronomy 30:1-10](#)). These promises were expanded upon in God's promise to David that his throne would be established forever ([II Samuel 7:16](#)). Someone of David's line would sit on David's throne ruling over the nation Israel in the land of Canaan.

Old Testament Prophecies of Restoration

Following the capture of the land of Canaan, the people of Israel gradually lapsed into idolatry. Never in the history recorded in the Old Testament did they, according to pre-millennial thinking, possess the land from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates River. So the promises given to Israel by God through Abraham were yet unfulfilled when God destroyed Israel in 722 BC and Judah in 585 BC.

Pre-millennialists draw the conclusion that these promises are to be fulfilled in some future history of Israel. Pre-millennialists feel that this conclusion is justified by numerous Old Testament prophecies.

Typical of these is [Jeremiah 31:5,6](#): "Again you shall plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria; the planters shall plant and enjoy them. For there shall be a day when watchmen on the hills of Ephraim shall call out, 'Arise, and let us go up to Zion, to the Lord our God.'"

When Jeremiah prophesied that those living in the northern nation of Israel (here called Samaria and Ephraim) would go up to Jerusalem to worship, the northern nation had long since been destroyed.

Jeremiah's prophecy, according to pre-millennialism, did not begin to be fulfilled until 1948 when the nation of Israel did once again become sovereign, possessing the hills of Ephraim and the vineyards of Samaria.

Another such prophecy is given in [Amos 9:11-15](#). God promised the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David, and the return of the people to the land, from which they would never again be rooted out. (The tabernacle of David is the kingdom of Israel, according to some leading pre-millennialists - see Pentecost, *Things to Come*, pp.110, 111)

The Old Testament also prophesied the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem: "And I...will set My sanctuary in their midst forever" ([Ezekiel 37:26](#)). Although the people have been restored to the land, the Temple (according to pre-millennialism) has not yet been rebuilt. And it must be rebuilt before the Antichrist can come.

Rejection of Christ by the Jews

When God sent His Son - born of a virgin - into the world, the Jews rejected Him, and crucified Him.

With the rejection of Christ by the Jews, God interrupted His program with Israel to interject the church age, designated by the pre-millennialists as the "mystery." "The existence of this present age, which was to interrupt God's established program with Israel, was a mystery" (Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p.135). Furthermore, it is stated that "...this whole age existed in the mind of God without having been revealed in the Old Testament" (*ibid.*, p.137).

One of the purposes of this mystery age is to make the Jews jealous, so that they will come to salvation. "I say, then, they [the Jews] did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them [the Jews] jealous." ([Romans 11:11](#)).

The Rapture

In pre-millennial diction, "the rapture" occurs when Christians are lifted off the earth to meet Christ as described in [I Thessalonians 4:16,17](#). "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who

are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord."

Pre-millennialism makes a distinction between the "rapture" and the second coming of Christ. The rapture is sometimes termed "the translation," and the second coming is described as "the second advent." In the rapture, the church is silently lifted off the earth as described in the bumper sticker - WARNING: IN CASE OF RAPTURE THIS CAR WILL BE UNMANNED. In the second advent, which occurs seven years after the rapture, Christ returns to the earth with the saints to reign over the earth out of Jerusalem.

There are three Greek words which relate to the rapture and the second advent: *parousia*, *apokalupsis*, and *epiphanea*. John F. Walvoord, president of Dallas Theological Seminary, is quoted favorably by J. Dwight Pentecost: "It is the viewpoint of the writer that all three terms are used in a general and not a technical sense, and that they are descriptive of both the rapture and the glorious return of Christ to the earth..." (Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p.156).

The Antichrist

When the church is raptured off the earth, the Antichrist (according to pre-millennial thinking) comes and takes his seat in the Temple. Paul writes, that before the day of the Lord would come, a general falling away would occur, and "the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes, and exalts himself above every so called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God" ([II Thessalonians 2:3,4](#)).

The Antichrist is also referred to as the "abomination of desolation" ([Matthew 24:15](#)) who will stand in the holy place (the Temple). The Antichrist is also sometimes described as the second beast in [Revelation 13](#) (defined as the "false prophet" in [Revelation 19:20](#)) whose number "666" is that of a man.

Many pre-millennialists view the Antichrist as a man who will come back to life ([Revelation 13:3](#)), and who will take his seat in the Temple.

Others, such as J. Dwight Pentecost, are forced by the scriptures to say that "antichrist" refers to a system or philosophy of religion rather than a specific individual. He explains: "The word *antichrist* appears only in the epistles of John... A study of these references will reveal that John is principally concerned with an immediate doctrinal error - the denial of the person of Christ. The emphasis is not on a future revelation of an individual, but rather on the present manifestation of false doctrine..." (Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p.337). He closes out his argument by stating that Satan and the first and second beasts of Revelation 13, "in their corporate unity, culminate lawlessness"; that is, the three operating as a unit constitute the Antichrist philosophy (*ibid.*, p.330).

The Great Tribulation

In pre-millennial chronology, when the Antichrist controls the Temple of God following the rapture of the church, the earth is engulfed in the "great tribulation" ([Matthew 24:21](#)). "...this period is peculiarly the time when God's wrath and judgment fall upon the earth. This is not wrath from men, nor from Satan, except as God may use these agencies as channels for the execution of His will; it is tribulation from God. This period differs from all preceding tribulation, not only in intensity, but also in the kind of tribulation, since it comes from God Himself" (Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p.236, 237).

The tribulation lasts seven years. This is calculated from prophecy given in [Daniel 9:24-27](#). From a pre-millennial perspective, all Old Testament prophecy relates to the physical nation Israel, and there is no prophecy concerning the church since the church constitutes the "mystery age." [Daniel 9:24-27](#) speaks of 70 weeks of years (literally 70 "sevens"). 69 of those sets of seven were fulfilled in the preparation of the coming of the Messiah, the Prince (Jesus Christ). Before the 70th week is fulfilled, there is a gap created by the church age. But when the church is raptured, the mystery age is over and God again begins to implement His program for Israel. With this implementation, the 70th week begins; it is therefore seven years from the rapture until God closes the great tribulation by establishing His kingdom with the return of Jesus.

The New Testament book of Revelation fits into the pre-millennial scheme as follows: Revelation chapter one sets the scene for the message from Jesus. Revelation 2 & 3 describe seven church "ages" beginning with the "Ephesian age" and culminating in the "Laodicean age," the age of the "lukewarm church." Revelation chapters 4 through 18 deal with the events during the "great tribulation," ending with the return of Christ described in Revelation 19.

Pre-millennialists themselves are somewhat divided. There are those who view the rapture of the church as occurring following the tribulation (post-tribulationists); those who view the rapture as occurring at the three and one-half year mark of the tribulation (midtribulationists); and those who view the rapture as occurring before the tribulation (pre-tribulationists). Strict adherence to the terms of "literal interpretation" as defined by pre-millennialists would seem to force the "orthodox" to the pre-tribulationist position. The pre-millennialists' interpretation of Revelation depends upon their individual views of the rapture in regard to its relation to the tribulation.

During the tribulation, Elijah the prophet will come and prepare the nation Israel for the second coming of Christ. "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord" ([Malachi 4:5](#)). "As John the Baptist preached ... to prepare Israel for the first coming, Elijah will preach to prepare Israel for the second advent" (Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p.237).

As a result of Elijah's preaching the good news of the impending kingdom (along with 144,000 sealed Israelites), there is a mass turning of the Israelite nation to Christ. "...a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, 'The Deliverer will come from Zion; He will remove all ungodliness from Jacob.' 'And this is My covenant with them when I take away their sins.'" ([Romans 11:25-27](#)). The "times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24) will be fulfilled at the Lord's return, and this will mark the acceptance of Israel as a nation again in the sight of God.

The Lord's Return

When the seven years of tribulation are completed (according to pre-millennial doctrine), Jesus makes His return as described in [Revelation 19](#). As He returns, He brings with Him the saints who were "raptured" with Him seven years earlier; and He begins the 1000-year reign on earth.

When Christ returns, the saints who lost their lives during the great tribulation are resurrected ([Revelation 20:4,5](#)). This is the first resurrection. (All the Old Testament saints are resurrected at this time also.)

"Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years" ([Revelation 20:6](#)).

With the return of Christ, Satan is bound for 1000 years ([Revelation 20:1-3](#)), preparing the way for the peaceful millennial reign of Christ.

The 1000 Years

At the resurrection of the tribulation saints, and the resurrection of the Old Testament saints at the second coming of Christ, the thousand-year reign of Jesus begins. In the pre-millennial system of thought, this is the fulfillment of many Old Testament prophecies (such as the lion laying down with the lamb, etc.), and the culmination of the plan of the ages. The following are the characteristics of the kingdom:

1. This is the kingdom which was originally offered to the Jews by John the Immerser and Jesus ([Matthew 3:2; 4:17](#)). But (according to pre-millennialist thinking) when the Jews rejected Christ, the offer of the kingdom was withdrawn, and the mystery age of the church was ushered in until the Jews could be prepared to accept the Messiah (Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p.463-466).
2. Because Satan is bound for the 1000 years, the reign of Christ is characterized by peace, holiness, and justice.
3. Although Jesus reigns over the earth, David will reign as king over Palestine (Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p.500).
4. The New Covenant prophesied by Jeremiah ([Jeremiah 31:31-34](#)) now takes effect.
5. Many aspects of Old Testament worship are re-instituted, including animal sacrifices in the Temple. With the exception of the High Priest, the Old Testament priesthood is restored in the sons of Zadok ([Ezekiel 40:46](#)).
6. Resurrected saints, those who lived through the tribulation, and babies born during the millennium all live together. Jerusalem is occupied by those who have been resurrected.

The Loosing of Satan

At the end of the thousand years, Satan is loosed for a little season ([Revelation 20:3-7](#)). When he is loosed, he leads the world in revolt against the theocracy of Christ. This is the final test of those who have been living in the kingdom without possibility of temptation. Pentecost writes: "While those going into the

millennium were saved, they were not perfected. The progeny born to them during the millennial age were born with the same fallen sin nature with which their parents were born and consequently needed regeneration . . . many, whose hearts had not been regenerated, [gave] required conformity to the law of the King. There must be a test to determine the true heart condition of the individuals in the age" (Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p. 549).

"And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever" ([Revelation 20:9,10](#)).

The Great White Throne Judgment

Following the destruction of the rebellious at the end of the kingdom, the great white throne judgment, as described in [Revelation 20:11-15](#) occurs. "And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

From a pre-millennial point of view, all of the lost are resurrected to stand before the throne - none of the saved go to judgment, having been resurrected 1000 years earlier. None of the lost's names are found written in the book of life, and they are thrown into the lake of fire, which is the second death, or eternal separation from God.

When the lost are judged, a new heaven and a new earth are created, as described in [Revelation 21:1-22:7](#), as a home for the saved.

The Scope of Pre-millennialism

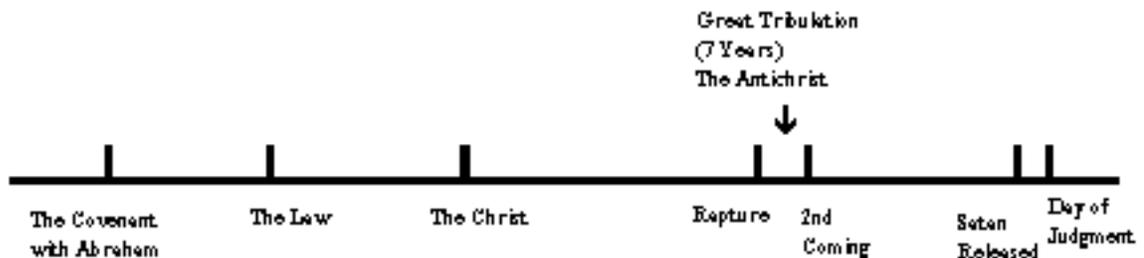


Figure 1. A Chart of Pre-Millennialist Doctrine

A SECOND LOOK AT THE SCRIPTURES

Principles of interpretation

At a casual glance pre-millennialism may seem reasonable, and may even seem to be backed by the Bible. But certain conclusions reached by the "literal method of interpretation" just do not make sense. Among these are:

1. That the New Covenant does not take effect until Jesus comes back. [Hebrews 9:16,17](#) (and all of [Hebrews 8,9, & 10](#)) make it clear that Christ's will or covenant took effect at His death.
2. That there is a distinction between the "rapture" and the Lord's second coming. We have already quoted from pre-millennialist scholars in regard to the usage of the Greek words describing the "rapture" and the second advent (p. 14) and noted that the Bible itself never makes any distinction between the return of Christ for the church (the "rapture") and His second advent.

Because the Bible insists that Jesus is coming back for Christians on the day of the Lord which comes like a thief in the night ([I Thessalonians 4:13-5:3](#)), and that on that same day of the Lord which comes like a thief the universe will be destroyed ([II Peter 3:10](#)), pre-millennialists are left

- no room for their cherished tribulation and 1000-year reign on earth. So at this point they abandon their "literal method of interpretation": "...the term *Day of the Lord* or *that day*, is not a term which applies to a twenty-four hour period, but rather the whole program of events, including the tribulation period, the second advent program, and the entire millennial age" (Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p. 174). In other words, a *day* somehow becomes a period of time in excess of 1007 years.
3. That the church is a "mystery age" of which nothing is spoken in the Old Testament. It can be shown that the church is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the kingdom (see the study [Christ's Church](#), the section dealing with "The Church as the Kingdom"). It can also be shown that the church is the culmination of God's plan to save the Gentiles (see the study [Proof that the Bible is the Word of God](#), the section entitled "The Plan").
 4. That there is more than one general resurrection from the dead. Jesus said that "an *hour* is coming, in which all [both good and bad] who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth" ([John 5:28,29](#)). Jesus also spoke of raising Christians on *the last day!* ([John 6:39,40,54](#)).
 5. That Jesus is coming a second time to establish His kingdom. The Bible insists that He is coming back to execute judgment ([Jude 14,15](#)) and that the judgment will be eternal destruction for the ungodly on the day that Jesus comes to be marveled at among His saints - the day that He is revealed from heaven ([II Thessalonians 1:6-10](#)).
 6. That the sacrifices are again offered in the Temple during Christ's millennial reign. The whole tenor of the New Testament is that the Law made nothing perfect, but that the gospel of Christ, founded upon His perfect sacrifice, did what the Law could not do ([Romans 8:3,4](#)). It seems ridiculous to go back to an imperfect system during the "culmination of the ages" - the 1000-year reign of Christ.

Although we have many other pieces of evidence we could marshal on our behalf, these six questions are sufficient to cast grave doubts upon the "literal method of interpretation" as enforced by pre-millennialists. Now, before some rudely cast us to the winds of heresy, let us state that we believe - more than believe, we know - that the Bible is inspired by God. Every word in the original languages in which it was written is God-breathed; and any translation faithful to the original languages carries the same weight of inspiration as the original.

But the question is: which verses of scripture are to be interpreted literally, and which may have a symbolic meaning? Pre-millennialists insist that terms such as "Judah," "Israel," and "1000 years" are to be interpreted literally, but "day" and "hour" have a broader meaning. In the pages to follow, we are going to insist that, in the passages in question, the reverse is true.

Our first working principle is this: a plain statement of fact in the New Testament is just that - a plain statement of fact. For instance, on the day of Pentecost, 30 AD, when the people asked what they must do, Peter told them to repent and be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins, and they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit ([Acts 2:38](#)). That is a plain statement of fact - repentance *and* immersion are necessary to receive forgiveness of sins. All other scripture (since there are no contradictions in the Bible) must be interpreted in the light of this plain statement in the New Testament.

Our next principle is this: although God uses words in connection with their common usage, He defines key words and concepts by example and His own usage. For example, Jesus defines love for us by dying on the cross. God defines "immersion in the Holy Spirit" by describing for us the events on the day of Pentecost, and the events surrounding the conversion of the household of Cornelius ([Acts 1 & 2; Acts 10 & 11](#)). He defines the meaning of the kingdom of heaven by the manner in which apostles such as Paul used it to describe the church in the book of Acts and the epistles. Once the meaning of one of these key terms can be established by New Testament usage, it is then possible to understand what is meant by the term when it is used in the Old Testament, or in other places in the New Testament where its meaning is unclear.

Our third principle is this: principles for the interpretation of indirect statements, symbolic or figurative language, and parables are given in the New Testament. For example, Jesus gave many parables about the kingdom of heaven. Of these, He interpreted two. From careful study of the manner in which Jesus interpreted the two, we have working principles for interpreting others.

Our fourth principle is this: Old Testament scripture is to be interpreted from principles given in the *New Testament*. The New Testament quotes from the Old Testament in many places, and the Holy Spirit who inspired the New Testament authors certainly knows how to interpret the Old Testament which He also inspired. For example, the first four verses of Hosea 11 seem to be talking about the nation of Israel crossing the Red Sea as they left Egypt. "When Israel was a youth I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son. The more they called them, the more they went from them; they kept sacrificing to Baals and

burning incense to idols" ([Hosea 11:1,2](#)). Matthew, inspired by the Holy Spirit, draws a meaning from this that we probably would not have expected. When Jesus was born, and Herod determined to destroy this rival "king of the Jews," an angel of the Lord told Joseph to take Jesus to Egypt. "And he arose and took the Child and His mother by night, and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, 'Out of Egypt did I call My Son'" ([Matthew 2:14,15](#)). Matthew says that the reference in [Hosea 11:1](#) is not to Israel, but to Jesus. A careful examination of the manner in which the New Testament authors quoted from the Old Testament will give us working principles for interpreting it, and we won't have to lean on our own understanding.

At this point someone will ask, "You mean that those who read the Old Testament without the benefit of the New did not understand what they read? You mean to say that those Old Testament scholars were unable to understand the meaning of their book without the benefit of the New Testament to guide them?" I will go even further than that; I will say that even those prophets who wrote them did not understand many things of which they wrote. "As to this salvation, the *prophets who prophesied* of the grace that would come to you *made careful search and inquiry*, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven - things into which angels long to look." ([1 Peter 1:10-12](#)).

Peter makes two things clear:

1. The Old Testament prophets did prophesy the church age of grace. This wrecks the pre-millennial concept that all Old Testament prophecy relates only to the physical nation Israel.
2. The Old Testament prophets did not understand what they prophesied, even though they made careful search and inquiry. If the literal method advocated by pre-millennialists was the correct one, these Old Testament prophets would have understood what they wrote.

As we begin to re-examine the bases on which pre-millennialism rests, we shall apply the above principles, using the New Testament as our guide to the past, present, and future.

The Covenant with Abraham

In Genesis 15, God made a covenant with Abraham in which He promised to Abraham and his descendants (literally, "his seed") the land of Canaan forever. This covenant was reaffirmed in [Genesis 17](#), and later to Isaac and Jacob. This, on the surface at least, looks like a promise to the nation of Israel, and a promise to be fulfilled physically.

But what does the New Testament say? Paul writes: "Brethren, I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is only a man's covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it. Now the promises were spoken to *Abraham and to his seed*. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'And to your *seed*,' that is, *Christ*. What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise." ([Galatians 3:15-17](#)).

Paul is comparing the covenant with Abraham to the Ten Commandments which were given on Mt. Sinai some 430 years later than His ratifying Abraham's covenant with Jacob. Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, insists that the covenant with Abraham was with Abraham and Christ - not with Abraham and the physical nation Israel! He then adds, "And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise." ([Galatians 3:29](#)).

It is clear from this that the covenant which God made with Abraham was the Christian covenant, and the Law was merely a means of preserving a measure of faith until the time was right for Jesus to come. "Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made" ([Galatians 3:19](#)).

What about the land of Canaan which was promised to Abraham and his seed? The writer of Hebrews gives us some insight into the nature of that land: "All these [Old Testament greats, including Abraham] died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, *they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one*. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them" ([Hebrews 11:13-16](#)). The country for which Abraham sought was not the physical land of Canaan; it was a heavenly country, which we sometimes designate by "heaven." It is to this land we refer

when we sing, "On Jordan's stormy banks I stand, / and cast a wishful eye / to Canaan's fair and happy land / where my possessions lie."

The covenant which God made with Abraham, and His promise concerning the land illustrate God's way of dealing with mankind. He often fulfills promises in a physical way to the nation Israel; but His real meaning is the spiritual application to the church. The church is the true tabernacle; the physical tabernacle of Israel was only a shadow of the church to come ([Hebrews 8:1-5](#)). Christians are the true offspring of Abraham.

Rebuilding the Tabernacle of David

Amos prophesied in 750 BC the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David and the return of Israel to the land ([Amos 9:11-15](#)). Pre-millennialists view this prophecy as the restoration of the kingdom to David and the return of the nation Israel to the physical land of Canaan, which began to occur in 1948, but which will not be fulfilled until Jesus comes again and rules over the earth as David reigns as co-regent in Jerusalem. This prophecy of Amos is quoted in the New Testament book of Acts. How did the inspired leaders in the early church view this prophecy?

In [Acts 15](#) a conference which took place in Jerusalem is recorded. Leaders of the church met to discuss the relationship of Gentile Christians to Jewish Christians in regard to the Gentiles keeping the Law and being circumcised. After men such as Paul spoke, and Peter explained how God showed him that the Gentiles were acceptable to God, James - an elder in the church in Jerusalem - had the final say. "Simeon [Peter] has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from the Gentiles a people for His name. And with this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written, "After these things I will return, and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, and I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, *in order that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord*, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name," says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old" ([Acts 15:14-18](#)).

James quotes this very prophecy from Amos as *already* being fulfilled! The tabernacle of David would be restored before the Gentiles could be saved. Since the church is referred to as the true tabernacle ([Hebrews 8:1,2](#)), and the real temple of God ([Ephesians 2:19-23](#)), it is clear that *this prophecy of Amos was in reference to the church!* The church was established on the Jewish feast day of Pentecost, 30 AD, with those of Jewish background. Some 10 years later salvation was extended to the Gentiles in order that what was spoken by Joel the prophet might be fulfilled: "And it will come about that *whoever* calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" ([Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21](#)). The tabernacle of David was rebuilt on the day of Pentecost, 30 AD, in order that the rest of mankind might seek the Lord.

Revelation 20:1-10

The questions now come: "If all the dead are raised at the second coming of Christ, what is the meaning of the first resurrection of [Revelation 20:5,6](#)? If the church is the kingdom, and is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, then what about the 1000 years? If Jesus is coming to execute judgment, and not to reign 1000 years on earth, what is the meaning of Revelation 20? What is the meaning of Satan's being bound for 1000 years, and being loosed for a little season?"

Let's begin with [Revelation 20:6](#). There are some things in this verse for which there are definite statements in other portions of the New Testament, and we can begin here and work backward. Revelation 20:6 reads: "Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years." This verse speaks of those over whom "the second death has no power." Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, *has eternal life*, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life" ([John 5:24](#)). Christians certainly fit the category of those over whom the second death (which is eternal separation from God) has no power.

John further speaks of those over whom the second death has no power as being priests of God and of Christ. Again, this refers to Christians: "But you are a royal priesthood" ([1 Peter 2:9](#)) "And He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father" ([Revelation 1:6](#)).

Not only is every Christian a priest, but he is also a king. This can be inferred from [1 Peter 2:9](#) where Christians are called "a royal priesthood," and from the statement that Christians are anointed ([1 John 2:27](#)). But it is stated plainly in Ephesians 2:4-6: "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, *made us alive* together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him and *seated us with Him* in the heavenly places in

Christ Jesus." Notice the tense of those verbs - past tense! Christians have already been seated with Christ on the throne. Christians live and reign as kings with Christ *now!*

It is apparent that [Revelation 20:6](#) is describing those who are Christians - who are already priests and who are already reigning with Christ, and who have already been set free from second death. It is affirmed that these who are priests of God, etc., have already had a part in the first resurrection.

What first resurrection have Christians undergone that non-Christians haven't? What does every Christian experience that might be called a "first resurrection"? The answer: **immersion in water!**

But let the scriptures speak for themselves. "...having been buried with Him in immersion, in which you also were *raised up with Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead" ([Colossians 2:12](#)). "Therefore we have been buried with Him through immersion into death, in order that as *Christ was raised from the dead* through the glory of the Father, *so we too might walk in newness of life*. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, *certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection...*" ([Romans 6:4,5](#)).

The great message of immersion is that not only is the old man crucified, but a new man is resurrected - with the capability of being like Christ Himself ([Romans 6:11](#))! So immersion saves us by the resurrection of Christ ([1 Peter 3:21](#)). (For more on this subject, see the entire study booklet [The New Creation](#).)

Having established, then, that immersion in water is the first resurrection, we ask the next logical question: "When did the first 'first resurrections' occur?" Answer: On the day of Pentecost, 30 AD. Question: Have those who were "resurrected" at that time been reigning with Christ since then - for nearly 2000 years? Answer: Yes.

Question: Does this mean that the 1000 years of Revelation 20 is not a literal 1000 years, but refers to the entire church age? Answer: We are forced to that conclusion, are we not?

Question: Satan must be bound now, if we are truly in the 1000 years? Answer: Yes, he must be. Question: How is he bound? Answer: The word *bound* means to be limited, or imprisoned, much as boundaries limit action on a football field, or prison walls limit the range of activity for those incarcerated. Satan is definitely bound. Jude writes: "And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal *bonds* under darkness for the judgment of the great day" ([Jude 6](#)). One of the ways in which Satan is bound is that he is limited by God as to the extent to which he is allowed to tempt Christians. "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, *who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able*, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it" ([1 Corinthians 10:13](#)). One of the greatest elements of the good news is that even though the whole world lies in the power of the evil one, we as Christians have been set free from slavery to corruption. Greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world. But the general thrust of the passage is that Satan's ability to function on earth is limited for the church age, but at the close of the church age, "he must be released for a short time."

Question: The rest of the dead's coming to life mentioned in [Revelation 20:5](#) must be talking about the non-Christians who are resurrected at the end of the church age for judgment? Answer: That is correct. And isn't that consistent with the teaching of the New Testament concerning Jesus' second coming - that all the dead are resurrected at His return, and that He will execute judgment at this time. And listen carefully to the words of Jesus as He spoke to Martha, the sister of Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead: "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" ([John 11:25,26](#)). We who are Christ's shall live even if we die, for we shall be resurrected to life ([John 5:29](#)). And we who are Christ's shall never die, for we have passed out of death into life ([John 5:24](#)). In a sense we will be bodily resurrected if we bodily die; in the other sense we shall never die in that we shall never lose our fellowship with the Father and His Son, for it is better to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. Christians are already alive and resurrected in a sense; non-Christians will not be alive nor resurrected in any sense until Jesus calls them out of their tombs at His coming.

Question: So those who are described in [Revelation 20:4](#) as coming to life and reigning with Christ are Christians, even though some of them have been beheaded in body? Answer: Yes. Those who refuse to follow the course of this world come to life in their immersion, and continue to live beyond the grave, if they overcome in this life on earth.

Question: What about Satan being loosed for a short time at the end of the 1000 years? I thought that the 1000 years ends at the second coming of Christ; how is there room for Satan being loosed even for a short period of time? Answer: That is a difficult question, but I'll do my best to answer it on the basis of the scriptures. What is the "camp of the saints and the beloved city" of [Revelation 20:9](#)? Is it not the church, for

the scripture informs us that we have *already* come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God - the heavenly Jerusalem ([Hebrews 12:22](#)). At the loosing of Satan, the forces of evil come up on the broad plain of the earth and surround the church. Since the church cannot be defined as being in one location, its depiction as being surrounded describes the end of progress for the church - it simply is not able to continue to accomplish its task of seeking and saving the lost. Perhaps this is what Jesus was talking about when He described conditions at His return as it was in the days of Noah ([Matthew 24:37](#)) and in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah ([Luke 17:28,29](#)); and again, "However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?" ([Luke 18:8](#)).

Summary of Revelation 20:1-10: We have established, by beginning from what we did know from plain New Testament teaching and working toward what we didn't know, the following points:

1. Christians are kings and priests who are free from the power of the second death; they live and reign with Christ now.
2. The first resurrection is connected with Christian immersion. When a person is buried with Christ in immersion, he is resurrected to walk in newness of life.
3. Since the first "first resurrections" began in 30 AD with the establishment of the church, we have been in the 1000 years. The one thousand years merely denotes the entire church age.
4. Satan is bound (limited) for the church age.
5. At the close of the church age, Satan will again run rampant, and the church (the camp of the saints and the beloved city) will not be able to make further progress. At that time Jesus will come and initiate judgment.
6. The non-Christians will receive their resurrection to judgment at the Lord's return; Christians' bodies will be resurrected to life at this point, although in their immersions while on earth, they were passed from death to life - they were born again.

Explanation of Matthew 24

In [Matthew 24](#) wars and rumors of wars, famines and earthquakes are mentioned in connection with something Jesus called "the end." Many casual readers of scripture immediately assume that Jesus here is talking about the end of the world, and begin to draw some erroneous conclusions. A study of Matthew 24 and its companion passages in [Mark 13](#) and [Luke 21](#) help to clear up some confusing and difficult portions of the word of God.

As Jesus and His apostles left the Temple one day shortly before Jesus' crucifixion, His disciples began to point out how beautiful and wonderful the Temple buildings were. Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another which shall not be torn down" ([Matthew 24:2](#)).

Later the disciples questioned Jesus privately about this statement. It is important to note that the disciples asked Jesus two questions: 1) When will the Temple be destroyed; and 2) What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age? ([Matthew 24:3](#)). Many people, including pre-millennialists, automatically assume that Jesus begins talking about His second coming, and ignore the first question about the destruction of the Temple. In fact, a comparison with [Mark 13:4](#) and [Luke 21:7](#) indicates that even the apostles' second question (from their perspective) had to do with signs concerning Jesus' judgment upon the Temple and the end of the Jewish era rather than His second coming at the end of the world.

Wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes, etc.: Every time a major earthquake occurs, or war threatens, some preacher somewhere brings out his trumpet and blows that Jesus' second coming is now indeed imminent. I've heard preachers say that reading Matthew 24 is like reading your newspaper - all the bad news is prophesied (they say) in Matthew 24:4-14 about Jesus' second coming. But a careful examination of these verses will show that these are signs referring - not to the Lord's second coming - but to the destruction of the Temple. Even that the gospel of the kingdom would be preached in the whole world before the end (vs. 14) was fulfilled before the destruction of the Temple. Paul writes: "...you...heard...the word of truth, the gospel, which has come to you, just as in all the world it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing..." ([Colossians 1:5,6](#)). Again, "the gospel...was proclaimed in all creation under heaven" ([Colossians 1:23](#)). And again, it is written: "But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have: 'Their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.'" ([Romans 10:18](#)). It is clear that by the time Paul was writing his letters, the gospel was going into all the world. Before the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, the word had gone to the end of the world.

The Abomination of Desolation: Jesus, as recorded in the gospel of Matthew, warns Jews of a time when what He called "the abomination of desolation" would stand in the holy place (in the Temple).

What is an abomination? It is something like breaking a *taboo*. An abomination is something that is forbidden on strictest religious grounds.

The abomination that Jesus was speaking of was something that would stand in the Temple which was not supposed to be there, and something that would make things desolate (abandoned, ruined). Luke describes the abomination in these terms: "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand" ([Luke 21:20](#)). The abomination of desolation is an army which would surround Jerusalem, and which would eventually stand in the holy place of the Temple (where no Gentiles were allowed to go, or even the men of Judea except the priests), and would make the city and the Temple desolate.

By 69 AD the army of Titus of Rome surrounded the city of Jerusalem. After a long siege, Jerusalem was taken, and the city and the Temple were completely leveled, and most of the citizens were killed. Thus the words of Jesus were fulfilled: "... not one stone shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down" ([Matthew 24:2](#)). Had the Jews listened to the words of the Great Prophet, they would have known. "Let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; let him who is on the housetop not go down to get the things out that are in his house; and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak" ([Matthew 24:16-18](#)).

The Great Tribulation: In connection with the coming of the abomination which makes desolate, Jesus said, "But pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath; for there will be a *great tribulation*, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world, nor ever shall" ([Matthew 24:20-21](#)). In 70 AD the Romans made it a point to ruthlessly wipe out every Jew they could possibly get their hands upon. Starvation, famine, and the sword destroyed the Jewish nation; and essentially only those who were scattered elsewhere survived the greatest tribulation that has ever come on the face of the earth. As Jesus said, "And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short" ([Matthew 24:22](#)).

Jesus had warned of the great tribulation in other ways. In [Matthew 22:1-14](#), He had described how the Jews would refuse to come into the kingdom of God (the church). As a result of their refusal, "the king was enraged and sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and set their city on fire" ([Matthew 22:7](#)). In [Matthew 21:33-41](#), Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to a vineyard. When the Jews killed the son of the owner, the owner would "bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine growers, who will pay him the proceeds at the proper season" ([Matthew 21:41](#)).

The entire book of Hebrews was written to encourage Jewish Christians who were about ready to suffer through the great tribulation. The theme of the book is to show the superiority of the entire Christian system over the Jewish system, and to encourage these Hebrew Christians to have faith in the High Priesthood of Christ and His tabernacle rather than the obsolete things of the Old Covenant which was "ready to disappear" ([Hebrews 8:13](#)).

False Christs, and the return of the real one: With the coming of the great tribulation, the only hope that the Jewish nation would have would be in the coming of the long-awaited *Messiah*. The problem, of course, was that the Messiah had come some 40 years earlier, and they had rejected Him. But many false Messiahs would arise during this time of tribulation, and the hopeless Jews would follow them to destruction. As Jesus had said some forty years earlier, "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another shall come in his own name, you will receive him" ([John 5:43](#)). So as Jesus spoke of the destruction of the Temple, He made a "last ditch attempt" to warn the Jews against the false Christs. "Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not believe him. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you in advance" ([Matthew 24:23-25](#)).

For thousands of Christians caught up in this series of circumstances, who believed that the Messiah had come the first time and who now believed in His instant return, there would be a different sort of problem. There would be rumors that "He is in the wilderness," or "He is in the inner rooms" ([Matthew 24:26](#)). But of Jesus' return, He Himself said, "For just as lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be" ([Matthew 24:27](#)).

The soon return of Christ after the tribulation is stressed to those Christians going through the tribulation: "But *immediately* after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with

a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other" ([Matthew 24:29-31](#)).

The passing of "this generation": Jesus' attention is still focused on the events surrounding the destruction of the Temple, although He has talked about His second coming in an effort to make sure that those going through the tribulation are not led astray during this time by false teachings about the return of the Messiah. It is in connection with the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem that Jesus uses the illustration of the fig tree.

"Now learn the parable from the fig tree; when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; even so you too, when you see all these things, recognize that it [alternate reading] is near, right at the door. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place" ([Matthew 24:32-34](#)).

There are no signs of the second coming; He is coming like a thief in the night. But there were to be signs of the destruction of the Temple, and it is to this that Jesus refers in the parable of the fig tree.

In [vs. 33](#), many translations have stated that "He is near, right at the door." An examination of the Greek language in which this was written shows that the word could have been translated *it* rather than *He*. Most translators assume that this passage of scripture is talking about Jesus' second coming rather than the destruction of the Temple, and render their readings accordingly.

The *generation* Jesus refers to is the one which lived in the days when Jesus walked on earth, and all the things concerning the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem would take place before that generation passed away.

The time of the second coming: Having answered the apostles' first question about the destruction of the Temple, Jesus then begins to answer the second: "And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" ([Matthew 24:3](#)). Using the fact that the generation to which He was speaking would pass away as a springboard, He then states that heaven and earth would also pass away, "but My words shall not pass away" ([Matthew 24:35](#)). It is one of Jesus' characteristics that He often used the temporal in contrast to the eternal in order to focus our attention upon the eternal; and this is the technique He uses here.

Then of the passing of heaven and earth, He said, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone" ([Matthew 24:36](#)). When is the Lord coming again, as earth and heaven pass away? The answer is clear - no one knows; not even Jesus in the flesh knew. And Jesus illustrated that there are no signs of His second return in the examples which follow.

As it was in the days of Noah: "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be." ([Matthew 24:37-39](#)).

There are some things in this passage which are easily missed. Let me illustrate by asking a couple of questions. In the days of Noah, who did the Flood take away? Answer: All the unrighteous. Question: Who was left? Answer: Noah and his family. So it shall be at the coming of the Son of Man. "There shall be two men in the field, one will be *taken*, and one will be *left*. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be *taken*, one will be *left*" ([Matthew 24:40,41](#)). Who would be taken, and who would be left? Answer: As it was in the days of Noah, the *unrighteous* will be taken, and the *righteous* left!

Pre-millennialism teaches that the righteous - the saints of the church - will be taken off the earth in the rapture, and the unrighteous left. But all the scripture of the New Testament consistently points to the unrighteous being taken, and the righteous being left. "The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. *Then* the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" ([Matthew 13:41-43](#)). All the parables of the kingdom are consistent in this presentation of events. In the parable of the dragnet for example, the angels are spoken of as taking "out the wicked from among the righteous" ([Matthew 13:49](#)).

Even in the description of the second coming given in I Thessalonians, this thought of the unrighteous being taken and the righteous being left is subtly brought out: "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and *remain* shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord." ([I Thessalonians 4:16,17](#)). Paul has in view the Christian dead as compared to the Christian alive at the Lord's coming, pointing out that the Christian dead shall rise before the Christian alive. But he describes the Christian alive as those who are

"alive and remain!" There were some others who were alive at Jesus' second coming who did not *remain!* The non-Christian alive were taken first, and the Christian alive left as described in Matthew.

So there will be no signs of the Lord's return. People will be eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, doing business as usual when the Lord returns and they are all carried away. The only sign will be that of God's messengers warning them that "the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up" ([II Peter 3:10](#)).

Summary of Matthew 24: The disciples asked Jesus two questions: 1) When would the Temple and Jerusalem be destroyed? and 2) What would be the sign of Jesus' coming, and the end of the age?

In [Matthew 24:1-34](#), Jesus answered the first question. Before the destruction of Jerusalem there would be wars and rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes, etc., and the gospel of the kingdom would be preached in all the world before that destruction. Then the armies (of Rome) would surround the city, would make the city desolate, and would stand as an abomination in the holy place of the Temple. Those who were in Judea were to flee to the mountains, for the great tribulation was the worst that ever was or ever would be (in 70 AD this occurred). During this time, they were not to give up hope, not to be led astray by any false Christs, or any false hope of the return of Jesus. When He came back it would be obvious to the whole world. But His generation would not pass away before these things concerning Jerusalem and the Temple would occur. Then, in [verses 35-51](#), Jesus answered the second question. Of the passing of heaven and earth - the day of the Lord's return - there would be no sign. Just as it was in the days of Noah, those who listened to the message preached, and believed it, would be forewarned of the event, and could be prepared for it. Those who refused to listen or to believe would be unprepared. Just as the unrighteous were taken in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man - non-Christians will be taken, and Christians left. Those Christians are warned to be prepared, for He is coming like a thief in the night.

The Antichrist

Pre-millennialists generally believe that a person called *The Antichrist* in the scripture will come and actually set up his throne in the Temple in Jerusalem, although Pentecost in his book *Things to Come* tends to believe in what he calls an antichrist philosophy, as noted earlier. Pre-millennialism generally teaches that the great tribulation will occur after the church is taken out of the world in the "rapture," and that during the tribulation time which follows the "rapture," The Antichrist will reign over the earth from Jerusalem. That is one of the reasons why many believe that the Temple must be rebuilt in Jerusalem, so that the Antichrist has a temple to reign out of when he comes.

The Antichrist is commonly thought of as the abomination of desolation prophesied in Daniel, and referred to in [Matthew 24](#). This concept of the Antichrist draws upon the teaching of Paul in [II Thessalonians 2:1-12](#) where the man of lawlessness takes his seat in the temple of God, and [Revelation 13:11-18](#) where the second beast has the number "666."

This whole concept of the Antichrist is flawed from the beginning because of the erroneous concept of the great tribulation. What Jesus called "a great tribulation" occurred in 70 AD in the destruction of the Temple; it is not a future event. The physical Temple of Jerusalem is meaningless; the temple of the New Testament is the church.

So what is antichrist? "Children," says the apostle John "it is the last hour; and just as you heard that *antichrist* is coming, even now *many antichrists* have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth. Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the *antichrist*, the one who denies the Father and the Son" ([I John 2:18-22](#)). The scripture does not refer to *The Antichrist*. Even in John's time, which he called the "last hour," many antichrists had arisen, with the characteristic that they came out of the church! They ended up denying that Jesus was the Christ; this is the antichrist.

"Beloved," says the aged apostle in another place, "do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the *antichrist*, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world" ([I John 4:1-3](#)). This refers to the heresy that Jesus did not ever take on a physical body; that is, He did not come in the flesh. This heresy is the antichrist.

"For many deceivers have gone out into the world," John informs us in his second epistle, "those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and *the antichrist*" ([II John 7](#)). Again, *antichrist* is a reference to a false teaching about the nature of Jesus, and not a reference to some specific future person.

The antichrist philosophies are all around us today. Watch out for them; but do not fall into the trap of watching for the rebuilding of the physical temple in Jerusalem as the place for the coming of *The Antichrist!*

The Physical Nation Israel

One of the cardinal points of pre-millennialism is that the people of the physical nation Israel are God's chosen people. Many who are not pre-millennialists are also looking for a mass turning of today's Jews to Christ just before Jesus' second coming. What is the relationship of the current Israel and Jerusalem to God?

Because of the Jews' rejection of Christ, God rejected them. Jesus said, "The kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it" ([Matthew 21:43](#)). In a stagewise process set forth in the book of Acts, the gospel moved from being first directed to the Jews to being specifically aimed at the Gentiles. "Many shall come from east and west," said Jesus, "and recline at the table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" ([Matthew 8:11,12](#)). The Gentiles, described as coming from east and west, would enter the kingdom; but the sons of the kingdom, the Jews, would instead be cast into the outer darkness.

The apostle Paul discussed the plight of the Jew in [Romans 9, 10, and 11](#). The Jews not only rejected Christ, but also became violent persecutors of Christians. In spite of this, the apostle Paul said, "God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be!" ([Romans 11:1](#)). In view of Jesus' comments about the kingdom being removed, and the Jews being cast out into outer darkness, what does Paul mean about God not rejecting His people?

Paul always makes it clear how much concern he personally has for the Jews. He always took the gospel to the Jew first, then to the "Greek" [an expression for the Gentiles]. He was careful to point out that he had great sorrow for the Jews, wishing himself separated from God for the sake of his "kinsmen according to the flesh" ([Romans 9:3](#)), so that they could be saved. He also explained that all the things of God belonged to Israel - the adoption as sons, the covenants, the giving of the Law, and the promises, etc. But, as Paul put it, "For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel" ([Romans 9:6](#)). The Israel that he speaks of as being saved are those Jews who would follow Christ; for the rest, he says, "Let their eyes be darkened to see not, and bend their backs forever" ([Romans 11:10](#)). The Jews who became the real Israel were "the remnant." ([Romans 11:5](#))

The apostle makes the same basic point in his letter to the churches of the Roman province of Galatia.

Comparing the physical nation Israel to Ishmael, Abraham's son by his wife's handmaid (whose name was Hagar); and comparing the church - spiritual Israel - to Isaac, Abraham's son by his wife Sarah, he writes: "But what does the Scripture say? 'Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the free woman.' So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman" ([Galatians 4:30,31](#)). Just as Ishmael was sent away ("cast out") from Abraham so as not to be in competition with Isaac, so physical Israel was sent away from fellowship with God so as not to be in competition with the church.

God gave physical Israel 40 years to recognize the Messiah. As mentioned earlier, the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD was God's "last ditch effort" to reach the Jews. Those who rejected Christ were cut off from God's people. As Peter said, "Moses said, 'The Lord God shall raise up a prophet like me from among your brethren [prophetically referring to Christ]; to Him you shall give heed in everything He says to you. And it shall be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people'" ([Acts 3:22,23](#)). The end of the Temple, the end of the sacrifices, and the end of the priesthood [for it was on the basis of the priesthood that they received the Law - [Hebrews 7:11](#)] signaled the total end of Israel as forecast by the Old Testament prophets, and indicated to them that they had missed the *Messiah*.

"God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be," says Paul. "For I too am an Israelite, a descendent of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew" ([Romans 11:1,2](#)). Paul uses himself as an example. He was at first disobedient, a violent persecutor; then he became a powerful apostle. The Jews, as Paul, were partially hardened and persecuted the church as the fullness of the Gentiles was coming in. But those Jews who were honest enough to see turned to Christ as

God brought His great judgment on in successive stages, and thus all Israel [the real Israel - not just physical - the remnant] was saved!

Physical Israel today means no more or no less to God than Arabia, the Soviet Union, Red China, or the USA. There is no special program for Israel; the people are lost just as the people of the other nations are lost, and desperately need to hear the gospel as set forth in the New Testament proclaimed and explained.

Some General Comments

We have not attempted in this section to refute every minor point propounded by pre-millennialists - it would take a good-sized book to do so. Rather, we have laid out the general ground work of Biblical principles of interpretation, showing that the way to understand the Old Testament is through the eyes of the inspired New Testament authors. With this beginning point, we showed that the covenant with Abraham was with Abraham and Christ, not with Abraham and the physical nation of Israel. The land which was promised to Christ was not the physical land of Canaan, but the promised land of heaven. We next established that the church was indeed the temple or tabernacle prophesied in the Old Testament, and had to come into existence before the Gentiles could be saved as prophesied by Amos.

After examining the things from the Old Testament, we began to try to understand New Testament teaching. In Revelation 20, we showed that the reference to the first resurrection was to Christian immersion, and that Christians actually live and reign with Christ now. From that we were able to establish that the 1000 years is the entire church age, during which time Satan's activity is limited. From Matthew 24, we established that what is considered by many to be the Antichrist yet to come was actually the Roman army in 70 AD. The great tribulation still expected by many was the destruction of the Temple by the Roman army under the leadership of Titus, son of Emperor Vespasian. There is no such thing as *The Antichrist*; antichrist is any anti-Christian doctrine, specifically focused on the denial of Christ physically coming in the flesh in John's epistles. And, finally, we established that physical Israel has now no special part in God's overall plan. With the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, Israel ceased as a nation, and any of the "remnant" who were partially hardened had turned to Christ by that time.

It is clear that the basic teachings concerning Jesus' second coming as emphasized in the first section of this study stand:

1. Jesus is coming soon.
2. He is coming in the clouds, and every eye shall see Him.
3. No one knows the day or the hour of His coming; He will come like a thief in the night.
4. At His coming all the dead (both Christian and non-Christian) shall rise.
5. The present heaven and earth will be destroyed by fire at His coming.
6. The Judgment will begin at His coming.

It is also clear from examining the New Testament that the *day of the Lord* is indeed one literal day (instead of a spiritual day, as pre-millennialists would have it), and that the hour of resurrection for all who are in the tombs is in fact a literal hour (and not with a 1000-year gap as in pre-millennialism). On the other hand, it becomes clear that the 1000 years of Revelation is not a literal 1000 years, but refers instead to a long period of time. And such terms as *Israel* are clearly, from their New Testament application, referring to the church; and the *seed of Abraham* to Christ, and through Christ to those who are His.

The detrimental effects of pre-millennialism are not so important in regard to the second coming as in other things - Christ is coming, and the important thing is to be ready. But pre-millennialism does the following things:

1. It denies the bride of the Lord Jesus the glory that rightfully belongs to her. Pre-millennialism says that the church was only a stop-gap until God could get His program with Israel back into full swing. The scriptures make it clear that Israel was the stop-gap, and that the church was the purpose and plan of God from the beginning.
2. Pre-millennialism makes the Old Testament prophecies closed books. Peter said that the prophets prophesied the grace that was to come to the church ([1 Peter 1:10-12](#)); pre-millennialists would apply all of those prophecies to Israel rather than the church. Hence pre-millennialists view all those prophecies as yet to be fulfilled, whereas the prophecies are in fact being fulfilled now in the church.
3. Pre-millennialism totally messes up the concept of the New Covenant. The literal method as enforced by pre-millennialism (in order to make the scriptures fit into its system) force one to say that the new covenant is not yet in effect, for God was going to make that covenant with the literal

- house of Israel and the literal house of Judah ([Jeremiah 31:31](#)). But according to the New Testament, the new covenant took effect with the death of Christ ([Hebrews 9:16,17](#)), and now we live and are governed under the terms of the new will of Christ.
4. Pre-millennialism confuses much of the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament. Much of what Jesus said was about the kingdom of God, which is the church according to the Bible. But pre-millennialism applies it to the 1000-year reign of Christ which in their context is yet to occur. Hence, to most pre-millennialists, the things which Jesus said do not apply directly as yet. But the teachings of Jesus do apply to the church, and are very important to our understanding of His will.
 5. Pre-millennialism denies the importance of the new creation ([Galatians 6:15](#)). The scriptures make it clear that the purpose of Jesus' dying on the cross was so that the Holy Spirit might come to the Gentiles ([Galatians 3:13,14](#)). The Holy Spirit is the promise spoken of in many scriptures ([Acts 2:38,39](#); [Galatians 3:22](#); and [Hebrews 11:39,40](#), for example), and He is the means by which we become new creations ([II Corinthians 5:17](#)). But pre-millennialism teaches that the Holy Spirit age - the church age - is only something temporary, and a much greater age - the millennium - is yet to come. This in effect says that there is something more than the new creation.
 6. Pre-millennialism denies the importance of Christianity's way of worship. Pre-millennialists are forced by their system of interpretation of the Bible to say that during the millennium animal sacrifices will be reinstated in the Temple. This denies the "new and *living* way" in which Christians worship God in Spirit with clean consciences.

The Bible's Teaching about Jesus' Second Coming

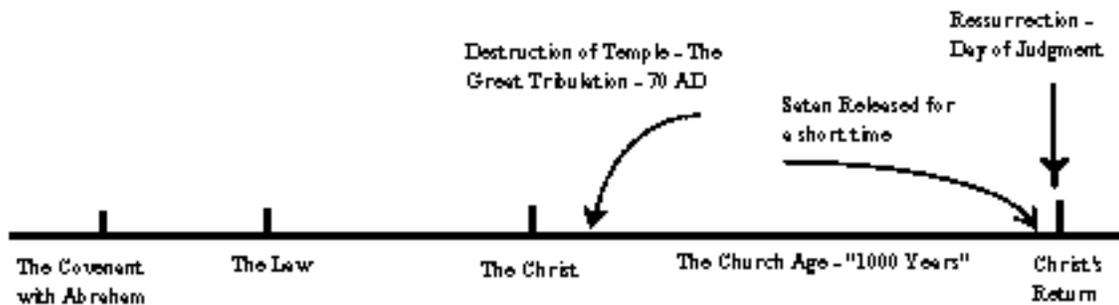


Figure 2. A Chart of Bible Doctrine on the Second Coming

SUMMARY OF THE EXAMINATION OF PRE-Millennialism

Pre-millennialism is based on a false method of interpreting the Bible. The covenant God made with Abraham was the Christian covenant. The temple prophesied is the church of Christ. Christians have already undergone the first resurrection in Christian immersion, and are reigning with Christ in the 1000 years. Satan is bound, or limited. When Jesus comes again, it will be to judge the world, not to establish His kingdom.

III. THE EFFECT OF THE SECOND COMING ON THE LIVES OF CHRISTIANS

INTRODUCTION

The fact that Jesus is coming soon to execute judgment upon all the ungodly, and to reward the righteous should greatly motivate us. There are many sections of scripture devoted to the effect that the second coming should have on our lives.

BE ALERT; BE PREPARED

As Jesus warned the disciples about His second coming, He said, "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming" ([Matthew 24:42](#)). To illustrate the uncertainty of the time, Jesus told a number of parables.

The first was about His coming like a thief in the night: "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. For this reason you be ready too, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will" ([Matthew 24:43,44](#)).

The next parable cautions about giving up all hope. Jesus describes a good slave who was put in charge of all his master's household. If that slave was faithfully discharging his duty when his master returned, he would be put in charge of all the master's possessions. "But if that evil slave says in his heart, 'My master is not coming for a long time,' and shall begin to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, and shall cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; weeping shall be there and the gnashing of teeth" ([Matthew 24:48-51](#)).

Again Jesus told the parable of the prudent (wise) and foolish virgins, who were waiting for the return of the bridegroom. The prudent virgins made sure that they had enough oil for their lamps to last until the return of the groom; the foolish were hoping to get by on a minimum of oil. The foolish did not have enough, and were unable to be ready for the bridegroom. The message for us: Have oil; be prepared for His return no matter what it takes. "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour" ([Matthew 25:13](#)).

Jesus also told the parable of the talents. To one slave was given five talents [approximately 100 pounds each] of silver or gold, to another was given two talents, and to a third slave was given one talent. Those who had the five and two talents, respectively, used their money to make more money for their lord; the third buried his in the ground. When their lord returned after a long journey, he praised the two who had used their money wisely, but to the one who buried his talent, the lord said, 'You wicked, lazy slave' ([Matthew 25:26](#)). The two good slaves entered into the joy of their master, but the other was cast into the outer darkness. The message: be good stewards of the time, money, energy, and the ability God has given us, for we shall give an account at the Lord's return.

Finally, Jesus told about the return of the King, who will separate the sheep from the goats. The sheep are those who fed the hungry, gave the thirsty something to drink, visited the sick and those in jail. The goats are those who did not do such things. At the separation, the sheep go into eternal life; the goats into eternal punishment. The message: be busy doing good for others, for it was for this purpose we were born again, and we must be doers of the word, not merely hearers ([Matthew 25:31-46](#)).

The parables Jesus told about His coming again must motivate us to expect Him at any time. We must be actively involved in doing His work, expending our time and energy for His glory in service to others. If we are found so doing when He returns we shall be rewarded; but if not, it is the outer darkness for us.

BE HOLY

Holiness, or sanctification, is the result of being set aside for God's purposes only. In the Old Testament, holy or sanctified vessels were the only ones permitted for use in the offering of sacrifices, for example. Furthermore, these sanctified instruments were to be used only in the religious rituals, and never for common use. In the New Testament, Christians are to be holy - they are to be set aside for God's use only. "Present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God" ([Romans 6:13](#)). The Lord's impending return should motivate us to be holy.

"Beloved," says John the apostle, "now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is, and everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" ([I John 3:2,3](#)).

We can perform a test upon our spirituality; we can analyze our Christianity. The test is: if we have really fixed our hope on Jesus' glorious return, we are in the process of purifying ourselves. If we are not purifying ourselves, we really do not have our hope fixed on His return. And remember, He is coming for those who *eagerly* await Him ([Hebrews 9:28](#)).

Worldly possessions, desire to keep food on the table for the family, public pressure, and many other things of this world often combine to keep the Christian from being as holy and committed to God as he should be. Peter describes the destruction of this physical universe, and challenges us: "Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening of the coming of the day of God" ([II Peter 3:11,12](#)). Good question: what sort of people ought we to be? The answer clearly is that we should be holy and godly, because all the things that make our mouths water and our lives more comfortable are going to burn anyway.

And Paul instructs us: "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds" ([Titus 2:11-14](#)). We need to consider carefully the words

"instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires." This seems to be the curse of this present age, and keeps us from burning commitment to Christ and His church. And again, we are instructed that our holiness has something to do with looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of our Savior. The second coming of the Lord Jesus should focus our attention on eternal things rather than the things of this world. We are instructed to deny our worldly desires and to live as a special sort of people since this universe is going to burn. The test of whether we really hope for the Lord's return is whether we live holy, pure lives - if we do not, we really do not have our hopes fixed on Him.

KEEP DOING GOD'S WILL AND YOU WILL BE REWARDED

Human beings are motivated by something we call "incentive." From the time we are small children we are offered incentives to make us be good, and to motivate us to clean up our rooms, and so forth. Incentives are used, both positive and negative, because they work.

What kind of incentives does God offer us? He tells us to "keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" ([I Timothy 6:14](#)). But what incentives does He give us to motivate us to keep the commandment?

Paul wrote: "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing" ([II Timothy 4:6-8](#)). Paul knew where he stood with God. He knew that he had run his race, and had qualified for the crown of righteousness. And he looked forward to receiving his reward. That same reward is available to any of the rest of us who will fight the good fight, who will keep the faith, and who will finish the course. If we truly love His appearing, our behavior will show, and we are guaranteed the greatest of all rewards.

But for those of us who do not try to live as we should, who do not respond to the positive incentives for us, there is the negative side also: "And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming" ([I John 2:28](#)). Our goal must be to develop that confidence, so that we know exactly where we stand with Christ. What a terrible thing, to shrink away from Him in shame, like a dog with its tail between its legs, at His return. Incentive? Yes! I'm more than a dog; I am a man; I am a new creation by virtue of the grace of the King, and I intend to be able to act like one of His when He comes!

Christ offers all of us incentive to do what is right because it is right. He offers us the crown of righteousness if we keep the commandment without stain or reproach, but He offers us shame if we do not abide in Him.

THE NEARNESS OF HEAVEN AND HELL

If it matters when Jesus comes, it matters now; if it does not matter when Jesus comes, it does not matter now. Spilled milk is not important; a soul that is starving to death because of lack of spiritual milk is very important. We have a real tendency to get physical things and spiritual things reversed in our priorities because physical things have a way of seeming more pressing. To set our thinking straight we need a vision of the nearness of heaven and hell.

The Bible offers us clear pictures of heaven and hell. We need to fix these pictures firmly in our minds, playing continually on the screens of gray matter inside our skulls.

Jesus is coming quickly ([Revelation 22:20](#)). When He comes, each of us will reap our rewards. "He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away" ([Revelation 21:4](#)). "I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God, and he will be My son. But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" ([Revelation 21:6-8](#)). The rewards of heaven are firmly impressed upon our minds with the pictures of God's concern for us; and the nearness of hell is driven home with the vision of fire and brimstone for cowards, liars, and the like.

The nearness of hell is stressed in the vision of Judgment before the great white throne; the nearness of heaven is emphasized in the vision of heaven as the return to Paradise, the Garden of Eden ([Revelation 22:1-4](#)).

With these visions firmly implanted in our minds, we will be motivated to get on God's side to obey Him in repentance and Christian immersion, and to continue to endure to the end.

SUMMARY

Jesus' second coming motivates a Christian to be alert, to be ready for the Lord's surprise return. He is motivated to live a holy life, in order that he might be rewarded with the crown of righteousness at Christ's coming. Visions of the nearness of heaven and hell are implanted in his mind, that he may overcome the weaknesses of his flesh, and reap the rewards of being a son of God.

IV. SUMMARY OF ENTIRE LESSON

1. Jesus is coming soon!
2. He is coming in the clouds, and every eye shall see Him.
3. No one knows the day or the hour of His coming; He will come like a thief in the night.
4. At His coming all the dead (good and bad) shall rise.
5. The present heaven and earth will be destroyed by fire at His coming.
6. The Judgment will begin at His coming.

We also examined pre-millennialism and compared its teachings to the Bible. We reached the following conclusion: Pre-millennialism is based on a false method of interpreting the Bible. The covenant God made with Abraham was the Christian covenant. The temple prophesied in the Old Testament is the church of Christ. Christians have already undergone the first resurrection in Christian immersion, and are reigning with Christ in the 1000 years (which merely means a long period of time). Satan is bound, or limited. When Jesus comes again, it will be to judge the world, not to establish His kingdom.

Finally, Jesus' second coming motivates the Christian to be alert, ready and anxious for the Lord's surprise return.