

Introduction to Eschatology

I. Definitions:

A. Eschatology — from “eschatos” (“last”) and “logos” (“word” or “subject”)

B. Greek vocabulary for the “coming of Christ”

1. nouns

a. *parousia* — “a presence” (from “para” [with] and “ousia” [being]) trans. “coming”
Of Paul (II Cor.10:10/Phil.1:26/2:12), of Stephanus and Fortunatus (I Cor.16:17), of Titus (II Cor.7:6,7) of the man of sin (II Thess.2:9)
Of Christ (Matt.24:27/I Cor.15:23/I Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23/II Thess.2:1,8/James 5:7,8/II Pet.1:16; 3:4,12/I John 2:28)

b. *epiphaeia* — lit. “a shining forth”
(translated “appearing” - I Tim. 6:14/II Tim.1:10 [of Christ’s first coming];4:1,8/Titus 2:13 and “brightness” at II Thess.2:8)

c. *apokalupsis* — lit. “an uncovering, or unveiling”
(usually translated “revelation” or “appearing” — Rom.2:5/I Cor. 1:7/II Thess.1:7/I Pet.1:7,13;4:13/Rev.1:1)

2. verb

a. *erchomai* — regular generic word for “come” (Matt.10:23/16:28/26:64/Rev.1:7; 22:12)

C. Millennial views

1. *millennium* - from Latin “mille” (“1000”) and “annus” (“years”) mentioned in Rev.20
2. *pre-millennialism* - Christ returns before the 1000 years
3. *post-millennialism* - Christ returns after the 1000 years
4. *a-millennialism* - The 1000 years and subsequent “little while” (Rev.20:7-8) represent the whole time between the first and second comings of Christ.

II. The Modern System (Dispensationalism)

1. *Seven Dispensations* (according to Scofield)

- a. Innocence (Creation till the fall)
- b. Conscience (the fall till the flood)
- c. Government (Post-flood till Abraham)
- d. Promise (Abraham till Sinai)
- e. Law (Sinai till Pentecost)
- f. Grace (church age)
- g. Kingdom (millennium)

2. *Israel’s eternal uniqueness*

3. *Professed commitment to literal interpretation*

4. *Hidden gaps in prophecy*

- a. Isaiah 61:1-2
- b. Daniel 2
- c. Daniel 9:24-27

5. *Seven-year tribulation, pre-trib rapture (two-stage coming)*

6. *Judaic temple-centered millennium*

Interpretation of Scripture

“Hermeneutics is that science which furnishes the principles of interpretation. These principles guide and govern anybody’s system of theology. They ought to be determined *before* one’s theology is systematized, but in practice the reverse is usually true. At least in the awareness of most people, hermeneutics is one of the last things to be considered consciously.” (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p.86)

Alleged difference in general methods of interpretation:

What dispensationalists say about their own hermeneutics:

“Dispensationalists claim that their principle of hermeneutics is that of literal interpretation. This means interpretation which gives every word the same meaning it would have in normal usage, whether employed in writing, speaking or thinking. This is sometimes called the principle of grammatical-historical interpretation since the meaning of each word is determined by grammatical and historical considerations.” (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p.86f)

What dispensationalists say about a-millennial hermeneutics:

“There is a growing realization in the theological world that the crux of the millennial issue is the question of the method of interpreting Scripture. Pre-millenarians follow the so-called ‘grammatical-historical’ literal interpretation while a-millenarians use a spiritualizing method.” (John Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*, p. 59)

What a-millennialists say about their own hermeneutics:

“...conservative a-millenarians interpret the Bible in exactly the same manner claimed to be used by conservative millenarians in each of the other schools! All conservative groups, including the futurist and the dispensationalist, claim to use the grammatical-historical literal method of interpreting Scripture.” (Wm. E. Cox, *A-millennialism Today*, p.14)

“But if we reject the literal method of interpretation as the universal rule for the interpretation of all prophecies, how are we to interpret them? Well, of course, there are many passages in prophecy that were meant to be taken literally. In fact, a good working rule to follow is that the literal interpretation of the prophecy is to be accepted unless (a) the passages contain obviously figurative language, or (b) unless the New Testament gives authority for interpreting them in other than a literal sense, or (c) unless a literal interpretation would produce a contradiction with truths, principles, or factual statements contained in non-symbolic books of the New Testament. Another obvious rule to be followed is that the clearest New Testament passages in non-symbolical books are to be the norm for the interpretation of prophecy, rather than obscure or partial revelations contained in the Old Testament. In other words we should accept the clear and plain parts of Scripture as a basis for getting the true meaning of the more difficult parts of Scripture.” (Floyd Hamilton, *The Basis of Millennial Faith*, pp.53-54)

Dispensationalists put a finer point on the distinction:

“Most pre-millenarians would agree with Hamilton that obvious figurative language or instances where the New Testament gives authority for interpreting the Old Testament in other than a literal sense would be just grounds for the use of the spiritualizing method. Obviously, some Scriptures of the Old Testament have a figurative meaning.” (John Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*, p. 65)

“The a-millennial method of interpreting Scripture is correctly defined as the spiritualizing method. It is clear, however, that conservative a-millennialists limit the use of this method, and in fact adopt the literal method of interpreting most of the Scripture.” (John Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*, p. 62)

“Of course, literal interpretation is not the exclusive property of dispensationalists. Most conservatives would agree with what has just been said. What, then, is the difference between the dispensationalists’ use of this hermeneutical principle and the non-dispensationalists’? The difference lies in the fact that the dispensationalist claims to use the normal principle of interpretation *consistently* in *all* his study of the Bible...He admits that the non-dispensationalist is a literalist in much of his interpretation of the Scriptures, but charges him with allegorizing or spiritualizing when it comes to the interpretation of prophecy. The dispensationalist claims to be consistent in his use of this principle, and he accuses the non-dispensationalist of being inconsistent in his use of it.” (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p.89)

“A-millennarians use two methods of interpretation, the spiritualizing method for prophecy and the literal method for other Scriptures.” (John Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*, p. 63)

“the non-dispensationalist position is simply that the literal principle is sufficient except for the interpretation of prophecy. In this area, the spiritualizing principle must be introduced.” (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p.91)

Ryrie considers it inconsistent to take, for example, Ezekiel 39 non-literally (exchanging the ancient weapons mentioned there with modern counterparts) while being literal in the handling of Micah 5:2 (where Bethlehem is given as Messiah’s birthplace:

“If the Bible says ‘like chariots’ or ‘like Bethlehem,’ then there may be some latitude in interpretation. But if specific details are not interpreted literally when given as specific details, then there can be no end to the variety of meanings of a text.” (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, pp.89-90)

Three reasons for choosing literalist method (according to Ryrie):

1. Philosophically, the purpose of language itself seems to require literal interpretation. Language was given by God for the purpose of being able to communicate with man...

2. ...the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the first coming of Christ—His birth, His rearing, His ministry, His death, His resurrection—were all fulfilled literally. There is no non-literal fulfillment of these prophecies in the New Testament.

3. If one does not use the plain, normal, or literal method of interpretation, all objectivity is lost. What check would there be on the variety of interpretations which man’s imagination could produce if there were not an objective standard which the literal principle provides? To try to see meaning other than the normal one would result in as many interpretations as there are people interpreting. (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, pp.87-89)

“It was shown that the only rule which could be followed by the a-millenarian was hopelessly subjective—the figurative method was used whenever the a-millenarian found it necessary to change the literal meaning of Scripture to conform to his ideas.” (John Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*, p. 71)

What about the literal understanding of Daniel 9:24-27; Matt.16:28; Rev.1:1; 4:1?

The Book of Revelation: proving ground of consistent literalism

1. Henry Morris:

Henry Morris says of his commentary, The Revelation Record:

“I have tried to follow a strictly literal and sequential approach to the events narrated, on the assumption that the *best* interpretation of a historical record is *no* interpretation but simply letting the divine Author of the record say what He says and assuming He says what He means...the student may well find [Morris's commentary] to be the most literal approach he has encountered.”

Of the four horsemen, Morris writes:

“In heaven, the *symbolism of four great horses* and their fearsome riders is employed; on earth, the terrible judgments which they unleash are very literal and real.”(p.108, Italics mine)

...and again...

“These horses, of course, are clearly symbolic. There are no horses in heaven”(p.112).

2. Charles Ryrie:

“How do we make sense of all those beasts and thrones and horsemen and huge numbers like 200 million? Answer: Take it at face value.” (Ryrie, *The Living End*, p.37).

Ryrie’s thoughts about the locusts from the bottomless pit (Rev.9):

“John’s description sounds very much like some kind of war machine or UFO.” (Ryrie, *The Living End*, p.45).

In discussing the angel fallen from heaven to release the locusts from the pit, Ryrie writes:

“Sometimes the word "star" refers to a heavenly body (as in 8:12). But the word is often used to refer to some kind of intelligent creature, usually an angel (cf. 1:20; Job 38:7). *Both meanings are perfectly consistent with plain, normal interpretation.* In English we use this word in the same two ways. Literally, a star means an astronomical entity; and *equally literally, though as a figure of speech*, we use the word to mean a person, like the star of a football game.” (Emphasis mine)

One is tempted to ask whether there is any method of interpretation that would be regarded by such an interpreter as recognizably non-literal, since the use of "a figure of speech" is regarded (when convenient) to be "equally literal" as the ordinary lexical meaning of a word. The applicability of the term "literal" to such usage suggests an almost infinite flexibility in determining what may be called "plain," "normal," and "literal" interpretation.

I have frequently heard teachers claim that, when convenient to their interpretation, "literal" interpretation does not preclude the use of symbolism, parable or figures of speech. I think these people are giving the word a novel new flexibility. I am using the word "literal" as the dictionary and most people understand it, i.e. as meaning "according to the exact meaning; not figurative"...in other words, I am using it literally. (me, in original intro)

When to be literal...

Dispensational suggestions:

1. The law of frequent mention:

“All agree that [the number 1000] is used symbolically in Psalm 50 [v.10], but the phrase ‘a thousand years’ occurs six times within the narrative of Revelation 20.”

The term “the Lamb” occurs 22 times in Revelation, but this does not make it a literal description of Christ.

2. The law of genre:

“This genre [the 1000 years in Rev.20] is not poetic; it is prose nonfiction.” (House & Ice, *Dominion Theology: Blessing or Curse?*, p.325)

2. The law of detailed description:

“That there will be blood sacrifices in the future millennial temple service is set forth in such detail in Scripture that it is not possible to deny their literality. Apparently such sacrifices look back upon the finished work of Christ, as they once looked forward...” (*Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*, p.859, at Jer.33:18)

If this rule works, then we ought to apply it to the graphic description of the seven-headed beast (Rev.13:1-3) or of the Assyrian tree (Ezek.31:3-9). The idea that the sacrifices in Ezekiel are a mere memorial ignores Ezek. 45:15, 17, 20, where the sacrifices are said “to make atonement.”

The a-millennial alternative:

“[Calvin and other a-millennial scholars]...taught the now generally accepted ‘grammatical-historical’ literal interpretation so far as the Scriptures in general are concerned. That they retain the spiritualizing method in expounding many of the prophecies was because they found themselves forced to do so in order to be faithful to the New Testament.” (Albertus Pieters, *Darbyism Vs. The Historical Faith*, in *Calvin Forum*, II, 225-28, May, 1936)

“The Reformed hermeneutic is not literal nor spiritual, but surrendered to the usage, regulation, and amelioration of the infallible in-scripturated Word.” (Crenshaw & Gunn, *Dispensationalism Today, Yesterday, and Tomorrow*, p.38)

Was first-coming fulfillment always literal?

“When we look at the prophecies of Christ’s first coming, we see that they were fulfilled in a literal manner, rather than figuratively...[lists 31 examples]...None of these fulfillments were taken in a figurative way by the New Testament writers.” (*Dominion Theology: Blessing or Curse?*, House & Ice, pp.321-323)

Among the examples listed by the above authors, several are not literal:

#10. Christ would be a stone of stumbling for the Jews—Psalm 118:22 (1 Peter 2:7)

(Though Psalm 118:22 is a Messianic prophecy fulfilled in Christ, this Psalm says nothing about Jesus being a stone of stumbling. The authors apparently were thinking of Isaiah 8:14. Neither passage in the OT use literal terminology)

#11. Christ would be a light to the Gentiles—Isaiah 60:3 (Acts 13:47-48)

(The language is not literal. The OT reference that Paul quotes is not Isaiah 60:3, but Isaiah 49:6. However, neither passage employs literal language)

#14. Christ would be sold for thirty pieces of silver—Zechariah 11:12 (Matthew 26:15)

(This is nowhere literally stated or hinted at in Zechariah 11:12)

#31. Darkness would come over the land—Amos 8:9 (Matthew 27:45)

(On this last example, they write: “In example 31, darkness literally occurred. It may also have symbolized the darkness of sin, but it got physically dark as well.” Apparently, symbolism may be admitted as a secondary meaning, but the literal must never be sacrificed. However, they do not argue that it got physically light with reference to example #11.)

Crenshaw & Gunn list 97 OT prophecies about Christ, identifying the nature of each fulfillment in the NT—finding that only 34 (or 35.05%) were literally fulfilled.(Crenshaw & Gunn, *Dispensationalism Today, Yesterday, and Tomorrow*, pp.16-22)

Examples of NT fulfillment:

Matt.1:23	(Isa.7:14)	literal
2:5	(Mic.5:2)	literal
2:15	(Hos.11:1)	non-literal
2:18	(Jer.31:15)	non-literal
2:23	(???)	non-literal
3:3	(Isa.40:3-5)	part literal/part non-literal
4:15-16	(Isa. 9:1-2)	non-literal

The true crux of literal interpretation controversy: Israel!

“The dispensationalist studies the words [“Church” and “Israel”] in the New Testament, finds that they are kept distinct, and therefore concludes that when the Church was introduced God did not abrogate His promises to Israel nor enmesh them into the Church...all of this is built on an inductive study of the use of the two words, not a scheme superimposed on the Bible. In other words, it is built on a consistent use of the literal, normal, plain method of interpretation without the addition of any other principle that will attempt to give respectability to some preconceived conclusions.” (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, pp.95-96)

The a-millennialist studies the same words in the New Testament and finds just the opposite conclusion:

When is a Jew NOT a Jew? Matt.3:9/John 8:39-40/Rom.2:28-29/ 9:6-8/Rev.2:9; 3:9

When is a Gentile a Jew? John 10:16/ Rom.9:23-26/ 11:16-17/ 1 Pet.2:9-10/ Gal.3:28-29/ Phil.3:3/Eph.2:12-18/ Heb.11:39-40/ 12:22-24

Can the OT Jews' interpretation be incorrect?

New revelation cannot mean contradictory revelation. Later revelation on a subject does not make the earlier revelation mean something different. It may add to it or even supersede it, but it does not contradict it...If this were so, then the Bible would be full of contradictions, and God would have to be conceived as deceiving the Old Testament prophets when He revealed to them a nationalistic Kingdom, since He would have known all the time that He would completely reverse the concept in later revelation. The true concept of progressive revelation is like a building—and certainly the superstructure does not replace the foundation. (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, pp.94-95)

Did the OT Jews understand the scriptures properly? 2 Cor. 3:14-16/1 Pet.1:10-12/1 Cor. 2:14/Luke 24:45

*Old Testament Descriptions of the Messianic Era (the Kingdom Age)
fulfilled in the New Testament*

chart prepared by Steve Gregg

O.T. Passage	Davidic Kingdom	Gentiles Subdued	Exiles return 2nd Exodus Highway to Zion	Peace and Prosperity	Temple Worship	Salvation Restoration	Everlasting duration	N.T. References and allusions
Psalm 72	verse 1	verses 8-11	verse 4	vs. 3, 7, 16	-	vs. 12-14	vs.5,7,17,19	-
Isaiah 2:2-4	-	verses 2-4	-	verse 4	verse 2	-	-	-
Isa. 9:1-7	verses 6-7	—	-	verses 3, 7	—	verse 4	verse 7	Matt. 4:12-17
Isa. 11:1-16	verse 1	vs.13-14	vs.11f, 15f	verses 6-9	-	-	-	Romans 15:10
Isa. 35:1-10	-	-	vs. 8-10	-	-	vs. 1-7	verse 10	Hebrews 12:12 Matthew 11:1-6
Jeremiah 30-33	30:9 33:15, 17, 21-22	30:16	30:3, 10 31:8-10, 21 32:37, 44	30:19-20 33:6	31:14 33:18, 21f	30:7-8, 17 31:11, 34 33:8, 16	32:39-40	Matthew 2:17f Luke 22:20 Hebrews 8:7-13 13:20
Ezekiel 34 and 37	34:23-24 37:24-25	34:28-29	34:11-13 37:21	34:14-16 25-29	37:26-28	34:22 37:23	37:26-28	John 10:11,14 Hebrews 13:20
Joel 2:28-3:21	-	3:4-7	3:1	3:18	-	2:32 3:21	3:20	Acts 2:16-21
Amos 9:11ff	verse 11	verse 12	verses 14-15	verse 13	—	-	verse 15	Acts 15:14-17
Zechariah 14	-	vs. 3, 14, 16-19	-	-	vs. 16-21	vs. 10-11	-	John 7:37-39
Additional Passages	II Sam.7:12ff Isaiah 55:3	Isaiah 66:20	Isaiah 10:21	numerous	Ezek.40:38f 43:18 Isaiah 66:21	Isaiah 45:17 59:20-21 Jer. 23:6	Daniel 2:44 7:13-14	
Fulfilled:	Acts 2:29ff 13:32ff	Romans 15:16	John 11:51f Romans 9:27	John 14:27 16:33/Eph. 2:14-17	Heb. 7:12 10:1-10,18	Romans 11:25-26	II Cor.4:18 Heb.5:9	

The History of Eschatological views:

A. 100-200's pre-millennialism (chiliasm)

Papias (60-130 AD), Polycarp (70-155 AD), Justin Martyr (100-165 AD), Ireneus (130-202 AD),

B. 200's -1700's a-millennialism

Origen (185-254 AD), Eusebius (260-340 AD), Augustine (400) — Luther (1500), Calvin, et al.

C. 1700's-1900's post-millennialism

Daniel Whitby, Jonathan Edwards, B.B. Warfield

D. 1830 - present dispensationalism

J.N. Darby, C. I. Scofield, Lewis S. Chaffer, Walvoord, Ryrie, Lindsey, et al

Was the Early Church Uniformly Pre-millennial?

Justin Martyr (AD 100-165), *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, 80:

[Regarding the hope of the millennial kingdom] I admitted to you formerly, that I and many others are of this opinion, and [believe] that such will take place, as you assuredly are aware; but, on the other hand, I signified to you that many who belong to the pure and pious faith, and are true Christians, think otherwise.

Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 5:31:1) said that there were “some who are reckoned among the orthodox” who did not hold his pre-millennial views.

Dispensationalist, Patrick Allen Boyd, *A Dispensational Pre-millennial Analysis of the Eschatology of the Post-Apostolic Fathers (Until the Death of Justin Martyr)*, Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1977, pp.90-91:

It is the conclusion of this thesis that Dr. Ryrie's statement [i.e. that dispensationalism was the view of the early church fathers] is historically invalid within the chronological framework of this thesis. The reasons for this conclusion are as follows: 1). the writers/writings surveyed did not generally adopt a consistently applied literal interpretation; 2). they did not generally distinguish between the Church and Israel; 3). there is no evidence that they generally held to a dispensational view of revealed history; 4). although Papias and Justin Martyr did believe in a Millennial kingdom, the 1,000 years is the only basic similarity with the modern system (in fact, they and dispensational pre-millennialism radically differ on the basis of the Millennium); 5). they had no concept of imminency or a pre-tribulational rapture of the Church; 6). in general, their eschatological chronology is not synonymous with that of the modern system. Indeed, this thesis would conclude that the eschatological beliefs of the period studied would be generally inimical to those of the modern system (perhaps, seminal amillennialism, and not nascent dispensational pre-millennialism ought to be seen in the eschatology of the period).*

Post-millennialist, Daniel Whitby, *A Treatise on the True Millennium* :

The doctrine of the millennium was not the general doctrine of the primitive church from the times of the apostles to the Nicene council. . . for then it could have made no schism in the church, as Dionysius of Alexandria saith it did.

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* In a footnote, Boyd writes: “[The writer of this thesis] is a dispensational pre-millennialist, and he does not consider this thesis to be a disproof of that system. He originally undertook the thesis to bolster the system by patristic research, but the evidence of the original sources simply disallowed this.”

Epiphanius (315-403), *Heresies*, 77:26 :

There is indeed a millennium mentioned by St. John; but most, and those pious men, look upon these words as true indeed, but to be taken in a spiritual sense.

Eusebius (325 AD), *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:39 :

Papias. . . gives also other accounts which he says came to him through unwritten traditions, certain strange parables and teachings of the Saviour and some other more mythical thing. Among these he says that there will be a period of some thousand years after the resurrection of the dead, when the kingdom of Christ will be set up in a material form on this very earth. I suppose he got these ideas through misunderstanding of the apostolic accounts, not perceiving that the things said by them were spoken mystically in figures. For he appears to have been of very limited understanding, as one can see from his discourses—though so many of the Church Fathers after him adopted a like opinion, urging in their own support the antiquity of the man.

The Earliest Fathers (including Pre-millennial Fathers) interpreted “Israel” as the Church in Old Testament Kingdom Passages

"Papias [AD 60-130] applied much of the Old Testament to the church..."

"Justin Martyr [AD 100-165]. . . claims that the Church is the true Israelitic race, thereby blurring the distinction between Israel and the Church."

—Dispensationalist, Alan Patrick Boyd: *Dispensational Pre-millennial Analysis of the Eschatology of the Post-Apostolic Fathers (Until the death of Justin Martyr)* unpublished master's thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1977, pp.60-61, 62

Possible originator of pre-millennialism: the Gnostic Cerinthus?

W.G.T. Shedd (1820-1894), *A History of Christian Doctrine*, Vol.II, pp.390f:

“ [Millennialism] appears first in the system of the Judaistic Gnostic *Cerinthus*. ”

Alan Patrick Boyd, (*Ibid.*, p.17) calls Cerinthus “the earliest chiliast [millennialist].”

Philip Schaff, *A Religious Encyclopedia: Or Dictionary of Biblical, Historical, Doctrinal and Practical Theology* (1883), Vol.3, pp.1514f :

The ultimate root of millenarianism is the popular notion of the Messiah current among the Jews...It is found in Cerinthus (Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3:28; 7:25), in *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Jud.,ca. 25; Benjam., ca. 10), and amongst the Ebionites (Jerome, *In Jes.*, 40:1; 66:20).

The Millennium in Revelation 20

I. Three schemes

- A. Pre-millennial: Christ comes prior to chapter 20. These events follow His return.
- B. Post-millennial: These events occur at the end of the church age, prior to the 2nd coming.
- C. A-millennial: The chapter is a symbolical representation of the age of the church.

II. Summary of whole chapter:

- A. Revelation 20:1-3 — The Binding of the Dragon
- B. Revelation 20:4-6 —The Thousand-Year Reign
- C. Revelation 20:7-9a —Satan’s Brief Respite
- D. Revelation 20:9b-15 —The Judgment Scene

III. The closing events (vv.9-15) are those associated elsewhere with Christ’s 2nd coming:

- A. Rev.20: 9 Fire from heaven (2 Thes.1:8/2:8)
- B. Rev.20:12-15 Resurrection and Judgment (John 5:28-29/2 Tim.4:1/Matt.25:31ff)
- C. Rev. 20:14 The last enemy, death (1 Cor.15:26), is destroyed at the resurrection of the last day (1 Cor.15:54-55)
- D. Rev.20:11 & 21:1 The destruction of the cosmos, and its regeneration (2 Pet.3:10-13/Rom.8: 18-21/1 Cor.15:24)

IV. Exposition of the chapter:

A. Revelation 20:1-3 — The Binding of the Dragon

1. The “angel”

- a. Jesus called “angel of the covenant” (Mal.3:1) and an “angel” (Rev.10:1).
- b. Could any lesser “angel” manhandle Satan in the manner described here? (cf. Jude 9)

2. The “binding” of Satan

- a. This very metaphor is used by Jesus of what He accomplished against Satan (Matt.12:29) and by the apostles about what was accomplished against the demons (2 Pet.2:4/Jude 6)
- b. The imagery of “binding” in Matt.12:29 is substituted with “disarming” in Luke 11:22.
- c. Compare Col.2:15/Heb. 2:14/1 John 3:8

3. The “thousand years”

The term “1000” is never used elsewhere as a statistical figure, but is frequently used as a figure for an indefinitely large number (cf. Deut.1:11/7:9/32:30/Ps.50:10/84:10/90:4/Eccl.7:28/Isa.30:17/2 Pet.3:8), even as “hundredfold” (Matt.19:29) means “many-fold” (Luke 18:30) and “seventy-times seven” contrasts with “seven” (Matt.18:21-22).

B. Revelation 20:4-6 —The Thousand-Year Reign

1. The enthroned saints—Where? Heaven or earth?

- a. Thrones: All thrones seen previously in Revelation (except the throne of the beast) were seen in heaven, not on earth. What evidence is there for making an exception here?
- b. The souls of the martyrs: This apparently means “disembodied souls”—which can only relate to a time after death but *before* the resurrection at the second coming. The same were seen in heaven in 6:9.
- c. “Lived [still]” (i.e. in heaven) or “lived again” (i.e. resurrected on earth)? v.4 (See accompanying chart)

2. The beast and his mark

The beast is not necessarily an “end-times” figure merely. The figure of the beast has been credibly applied to a person or system in John’s own day or, alternately, with the “world system” in general throughout the age.

3. The “first resurrection”

- a. Since there is only one physical resurrection at the end of the age, which will gather in both the righteous and the unrighteous, this resurrection is the spiritual resurrection of regeneration, thus spoken of by Jesus (John 5:24) and by Paul (Eph.2:1, 5).
- b. This chapter has two deaths (v.15) and two resurrections (vv.5-6). As the second death is not of the same kind as the first death (physical), so the first resurrection is not of the same kind as the second (physical).

4. The “rest of the dead”

The unsaved do not experience resurrection of any kind until the end of the age, when all the bodies of the righteous and of the unrighteous will rise together (John 5:28-29/ Acts 24:15)

C. Revelation 20:7-9a —Satan Again "At Large"

1. Deception of the nations—yet to come, just prior to the end of the age
2. The “beloved city”—the church (Matt.5:14/Heb.12:22-23/Rev.21:2, 9-10)
3. Gog and Magog —mentioned only here and, in a different form, in Ezek.38:2, in connection with a battle usually understood as occurring before the second coming of Christ.

V. Conclusion:

This chapter, found in the most symbolic book of the Bible, and utilizing obvious symbolism, does not invite an overly-literal interpretation. When Scripture is compared with relevant Scripture, it becomes evident that the second coming of Christ is depicted in the closing verses of the chapter—not at the beginning—and that the binding of Satan at the beginning of the chapter is a symbol of Christ’s victory at the cross. The 1000 years in the middle of the chapter thus represents the lengthy period between the first and the second comings of Christ, as interpreters throughout history have suggested.

R e v e l a t i o n 2 0 : 4

“they *lived* and reigned...” or “they *came to life* and reigned...”

The first option supports the a-millennial view that the souls of the Christians, though they had died, *lived on* (i.e. in heaven).

The second option supports the pre-millennial view that the saints *came back to life* (i.e. by resurrection) after death.

“lived” or “came to life” = *ezésan*, aorist indicative active of *záo* (to live), and is found in the same tense in two other places in Revelation:

Rev. 2:8 — “[Christ], who was dead and *ezésan*”

and

Rev. 13:14 — “...the beast who was wounded by the sword and *ezésan*”

— where it is variously translated as follows—

Bible Version	Revelation 2:8	Revelation 13:14	Revelation 20:4
King James	is alive	did live	lived
New King James	came to life	lived	lived
NASB	has come to life	has come to life	came to life
NIV	came to life again	yet lived	came to life
Amplified	came to life again	still lived	lived again
TEV (Good News Bible)	lived again	yet lived	came to life
Jerusalem Bible	has come to life again	still lived	came to life
Revised Standard	came to life	yet lived	came to life again
Revised English	came to life again	yet lived	came to life again

Notice:

1. In Revelation 2:8, all translations except the KJV translate *ezésan* as “came to life” or some equivalent, since the resurrection of Christ is in view;
2. In Revelation 13:14, all translations except the NASB translate *ezésan* as “lived” or some equivalent, since it is the beast that survived the wounding of one of its seven heads;
3. Only the KJV and NKJV (probably following the KJV) translate *ezésan* as “lived,” (reflecting the a-millennial commitments of the KJV translators), while all others (probably reflecting pre-millennial commitments of the translators) translate as “came to life” or some equivalent;
4. Only the KJV and NASB translated consistently in all three passages, though they favored different translations from one another.
5. Since most agree that *ezésan* means “came to life” in Rev.2:8, and “yet lived” in 13:14, it seems clear that the translation in 20:4 could go either way, depending upon one’s eschatological leanings.

A.T. Robertson wrote, on Revelation 20:4 “and they lived”:

“If ingressive aorist, it means ‘came to life’ or ‘lived again’ as in 2:8...If it is constantive aorist here and in verse 5, then it could mean increased spiritual life.”

The second verb “and reigned,” is *ebasileusan* which is also the same aorist indicative active (of *basileuo*), and is, according to Robertson, “more clearly constantive.” (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol.5, p.459)

The Resurrection and Rapture of the Church

I. Distinctives of the Dispensational scheme:

- A. Two phases or stages of “the second coming”: “the rapture” before the tribulation, and “the revelation” after the tribulation.
- B. In first stage, Christ comes *for* the saints; in the second stage, He comes *with* the saints.
- C. The rapture occurs with the “first resurrection” (Rev.20:5-6), that is, the resurrection of the church saints. The lost will be resurrected after the millennium (Rev.20:11ff).
- D. The church is thus removed before God pours out His wrath for seven years on the earth, and is taken to heaven to receive her rewards and to participate in the marriage supper.
- E. Those in the tribulation who become believers, will therefore not be part of the church, having missed the first resurrection.

II. Origins of the two-stage theory of the second coming:

- A. 1812, Jesuit priest Emmanuel Lacunza, wrote that there would be a 45-day interval between the coming of Christ for the saints and His coming in judgment upon the earth.
- B. In 1826-27, Edward Irving translated Lacunza’s work from Spanish and taught something similar, extending the interval from 45 days to three and a half years.
- C. In 1930, John Nelson Darby incorporated the two-stage belief into his new dispensational system, but extended the length of the interval to seven years.
- D. Irving or Darby, or both, may have been influenced by a “prophetic utterance” given by a girl named Margaret MacDonald around the same period.
- E. Today, there are “mid-tribulation rapturists,” who believe, like Irving, in an interval of three and a half years, but most dispensationalists are “pre-tribers,” who follow Darby in making the interval seven years. There is also the view of Marv Rosenthal, called “the pre-wrath rapture,” placing the rapture later in the tribulation than the mid-tribulationists do (21 months later), but still finding an interval between the rapture and the revelation of Christ from heaven.

III. Relevant basic texts: 1 Thess.4:14-18 & 1 Cor.15:51-54

- A. No mention of tribulation in either text.
- B. No mention of interval between two stages of second coming.
- C. Both passages connect the rapture with the resurrection of the saints.

IV. When is the resurrection of the saints?

- A. Are there two resurrections, or only one?
 - 1. Only one? (John 5:28-29 / Acts 24:15 / Matt.25:31ff)
 - 2. Two? (Rev.20:5-6, 12-13)
 - a. “the dead in Christ shall rise first” (1 Thess.4:16)
 - b. “those who are Christ’s at His coming” (1 Cor.15:23)
 - 3. What is meant by “the first resurrection”? (John 5:24-29/Eph.2:1, 5/Col.2:13)
- B. When will the resurrection/rapture be?

1. At the *Parousia* (1 Thes.4:15, 17) [*parousia* = *apokalupsis* (cf. Matt.24:39 with Luke 17:30)]
2. At the last trump (1 Cor.15:52)
3. At the judgment appearing of Christ (2 Thes.1:6-8)
4. At the “day of Christ”/“day of the Lord”/“day of God” (all synonymous: 1 Cor.1:8/ 2 Cor.1:14)
5. On the last day (John 6:39, 40, 44, 54/12:48)

The Case for the *Two-stage* Second Coming Biblically Examined

I. The Arguments—

A. Arguments from interpretation of Revelation:

1. The entire church age is encompassed in the seven letters (Rev. 2-3)
2. John's being caught up to heaven (4:1) represents the rapture of the church.
3. The term "church" found frequently in the first 3 chapters, is not found in Revelation after 4:1.
4. The church is not seen on earth after Rev.4:1, though it is seen in heaven (i.e. in the 24 elders).
5. Rev.3:10 promises the Philadelphian church (representing the faithful church in the last days) that Christ would deliver them out of the tribulation period.

B. Arguments of inappropriateness

1. We are not appointed to wrath (1 Thes.1:10/5:9). The tribulation is the time of God's wrath.
2. The tribulation, "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer.30:7), is not for the church, but for Israel.
3. Jesus told us to pray that we might escape the great tribulation (Luke 21:36)—Jesus apparently thought we don't belong here during the tribulation.
4. Matt. 24:40-41 and Luke 17:34-36, speak of the sudden "taking" of the church, leaving others behind to endure the tribulation.
5. The view that the rapture happens simultaneously with the second coming posits the ridiculous scenario of the church going up, then right down again...like a yo yo!

C. Arguments of impossibility

1. Passages about the rapture (John 14:1-4/1 Cor.15:51-58/1 Thess.4:13-18) do not contain the same details as do those about the judgment coming of Christ (Zech.14/Rev.19/Matt.24:29-31 and parallels)—so the two cannot be speaking of the same event.
2. Christ cannot come "with" His saints (1 Thes.3:13) until He has first come "for" the saints.
3. The rise of the man of sin at the beginning of the tribulation cannot occur until the church is removed (2 Thes.2:6-8). The "falling away" (v.3) may be a reference to the rapture.
4. Jesus likened the time of His coming to the days of Noah and of Lot (Luke 17:26-29). Both persons illustrate the pre-tribulation rapture: The flood and the destruction of Sodom represent the tribulation period. Enoch was "raptured" before the flood (Gen.5:24), and Noah's family (representing the remnant of Israel) were preserved through the flood. Lot (a type of the church) was taken out of Sodom *before* its destruction. God said He could "do nothing" to Sodom until Lot had been safely removed (Gen.19:22).
5. If we must endure the tribulation, the "blessed hope" (Tit.2:13) cannot be blessed, but wretched!

D. Arguments from "imminency" (the teaching that Jesus could come at any time)

1. We are to be "looking," "watching" and "waiting" for the any-moment return of Jesus (1 Thes. 1:10/5:6/ Phil.3:20/Tit.2:13/Heb.9:28). The doctrine of the Imminency of Christ's coming (i.e. that Christ might come at any moment) would be invalid if there were events (i.e. the tribulation) that must occur before Christ returns (Matt.24:48).
2. Jesus will come "as a thief" (1 Thes.5:2-3/2 Pet.3:10), meaning "without warning." This must apply only to the rapture, since there will be signs indicating the time of His coming at the end of the tribulation.
3. That no one knows the day or the hour of His coming (Matt.24:36) also suggests an early rapture, since the exact day of His coming could be calculated from events occurring in the tribulation.
4. The doctrine of imminency is the principal motivator for holy living and evangelism.

II. The Arguments cross-examined—

A. Arguments from interpretation of Revelation

1. This proposition is not stated or implied in Scripture.
2. If John's ascension in 4:1 represents the church's, do the later passages where John is on earth (e.g. 11:1-2/17:1ff) also represent the church back on earth?

3. The term “church” is never used in Revelation of the whole church, but only of individual local congregations, contemporary in John’s day. That they are not addressed after 4:1 is inconsequential to the question of the rapture.
4. That portions of the church are seen in heaven in Revelation does not require a previous rapture to have taken place. There are millions of saints in heaven even now. The church is seen on earth as well as in heaven, because the “saints” (13:7) are identified with “the Lamb’s wife” [i.e. the church] (19:7-8).
5. Revelation 3:10 does not promise a rapture, nor necessarily refer to the tribulation. If the tribulation is in view, the church could be “kept from” (Gr.*ek tereo*) harm without being raptured (comp. John 17:15, where *ek tereo* is also found).

B. Arguments of inappropriateness

1. There is no reason to identify “wrath” in 1 Thes.1:10 & 5:9 with a period of tribulation (Rom.5:9). Besides, no one ever claimed that Christians would suffer God’s wrath, even if they were in the tribulation.
2. Jeremiah 30:7 is not about the tribulation, but about the Babylonian exile (cf. vv.3, 8, 10), but, even if the tribulation were in view, this doesn’t logically argue for the absence of the church from earth.
3. There is no prior mention in Luke 21 of a tribulation at the end of the present age. There is mention of the holocaust at destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD (vv.5-7, 20-23), from which the believers actually did escape (according to Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*).
4. Matt. 24:40-41 and Luke 17:34-36, in context, do not speak of the rapture of the church, but of the destruction of the wicked at Christ’s coming (see Matt.24:38-40/Luke 17:37/Psalm 91:7-8/ Ps. 37:9-11/Prov.2:21-22/Matt.5:5/13:30, 41-43, 49-50). Is the rapture found in the Olivet Discourse? If so, where? Matt.24:31?
5. The word “to meet” (1 Thes.4:17) can refer to the custom of going out to welcome a distinguished guest in order to accompany him on the remainder of his approach (Matt.25:1/Acts 28:15) .

C. Arguments of impossibility

1. By the same reasoning, Jesus must have been born on earth twice (since Matt.2 and Luke 2 give very different accounts) and He must have died and arisen from the dead four times or more, since no two accounts give exactly the same details of these events!
2. Jesus could come “with” His saints, even if He had come “for” them only moments earlier. However, even without the rapture, there are multitudes of saints already with Him, whom He will bring with Him (1 Thes.4:14).
3. 2 Thessalonians 2 :6-7 makes no mention of the removal of the church prior to the appearance of the man of sin, and plainly states that the man of sin must appear before our gathering unto Christ [the rapture] (vv.1-3). Thus “he that hinders” (v.7) may mean any number of things, but it *cannot* mean the church or the Holy Spirit in the church. The *apostasia* [falling away] (v.3) is not the rapture. The word is used elsewhere only in Acts 21:21 of Jews falling away from Moses.
4. The flood and destruction of Sodom are nowhere said to represent a time of tribulation, but they are likened to the judgment of sinners at the second coming (2 Pet.3:4-10/ Jude 7)
5. Titus 2:13 does not equate “the blessed hope” with the rapture, *per se*, but with “the glorious appearing” of Christ. Why would the hope of being raptured *not* be a blessed one to saints in the tribulation?

D. Arguments from “imminency”

1. The doctrine that Jesus “may come at any time” is nowhere taught in the Bible. Paul specifically refutes it in 2 Thes.2:1-8. To wait or watch or look for something does not rule out the possibility that we expect some other things to happen first (see Heb.11:10, 13). The man who said “my Lord delays his coming” was judged for his behavior, not his eschatological beliefs (Matt.24:49).
2. The idea that there will be “signs” indicating the soon-ness of His coming is a proposition resting upon the flimsiest scriptural foundation. The fact that His coming “as a thief” must be only “for the saints” is ruled out by Peter applying it to the end of the world (2 Pet.3:10ff), and Paul applying it to judgment of unbelievers (1 Thess.5:2-3). Paul plainly states that this phrase is not applicable to Christians specially (1 Thes.5:4).
3. Jesus’ admission of His own ignorance, and that of everyone else, applied to the time-frame of His comment. There is no reason to apply it to persons living in some future tribulation period. Nonetheless, attempts at calculating the date of Christ’s return, if made by those living in the tribulation, would not be more likely to be accurate than have the many embarrassing attempts to do the same throughout history.

4. It is not necessary to employ falsehood to motivate to holy living or evangelism. If Jesus is not going to come today, there is no reason for God to wish us to believe He will come today. The imminency of *death and judgment* (to say nothing of love and gratitude to God as motivators!) should be sufficient motivation for all proper conduct (1 Pet.1:17/2 Cor.1:9/5:11)

III. Conclusion—

None of the arguments for a two-stage coming of Christ is valid when the relevant texts are exegeted without a pre-trib bias. It would require stronger evidence than this to overthrow the plain (“literal”) teaching of Christ and the apostles that the rapture and resurrection of the church will occur simultaneously with the judgment-coming of Christ on the “last day” (e.g. Matt.25:31ff/John 6:40, 44, 54/ 2 Thes.1:8/2 Tim.4:1/2 Pet.3:10-13, etc., etc.).

The Case for the *Two-stage* Second Coming Biblically Examined

Chart prepared by Steve Gregg

A. Arguments from the interpretation of Revelation:	
<i>The Arguments—</i>	<i>The Arguments cross-examined—</i>
<p>1. The entire church age is encompassed in the seven letters (Rev. 2-3)</p> <p>“The messages to the seven churches...present an exact fore-view of the <i>spiritual</i> history of the church, and in this precise order.” (C. I. Scofield, 6:1331-32)</p>	<p>1. This proposition is not stated or implied in Scripture.</p>
<p>2. John’s being caught up to heaven (4:1) represents the rapture of the church.</p> <p>“Many Bible scholars believe (and I agree) that John the Apostle, as he is summoned into heaven, represents the church which will be called out of the world and into heaven...” (Stedman, 5:113)</p> <p>“[Revelation 4:1f] appears to be the Rapture of the Church in the Book of Revelation.” (Chuck Smith, 9:18)</p>	<p>2. If John’s ascension in 4:1 represents the church’s, do the later passages where John is on earth (e.g. 11:1-2/17:1ff) also represent the church back on earth?</p> <p>“It is clear from the context that this is not an explicit reference to the rapture of the church...[John] was only translated into scenes of heaven temporarily.” (Walvoord, 4:103)</p>
<p>3. The term “church” found frequently in the first 3 chapters, is not found in Revelation after 4:1.</p> <p>“The singular ‘church’ and the plural ‘churches’ together occur 19 times in the first three chapters...However, there is a strange silence of the term in chapters 4-19.” (Robert Gromacki, 2:355)</p>	<p>3. The term “church” is never used in Revelation of the whole church, but only of individual local congregations, contemporary in John’s day. That they are not addressed after 4:1 is inconsequential to the question of the rapture.</p>
<p>4. The church is not seen on earth after Rev.4:1, though it is seen in heaven (i.e. in the 24 elders).</p> <p>“There is the mention of ‘saints’ in the context (13:7, 10). These saints, however, are those who get saved during the seven years after the true church has been taken into heaven.” (Robert Gromacki, 2:356)</p> <p>“The godly remnant of the tribulation are pictured as Israelites, not members of the church...” (Walvoord, 8:195)</p>	<p>4. That portions of the church are seen in heaven in Revelation does not require a previous rapture to have taken place. There are millions of saints in heaven even now. The church is seen on earth as well as in heaven, because the “saints” (13:7) are identified with “the Lamb’s wife” [i.e. the church] (19:7-8).</p>
<p>5. Rev.3:10 promises the Philadelphian church (representing the faithful church in the last days) that Christ would deliver them out of the tribulation period.</p> <p>“One of the best promises guaranteeing the church’s rapture before the Tribulation appears in Revelation 3:10...The guarantee of rapture before Tribulation could hardly be more powerful. No wonder one writer labeled it ‘a cardinal Scripture.’” (LaHaye, 3:41-42)</p>	<p>5. Revelation 3:10 does not promise a rapture, nor necessarily refer to the tribulation. If the tribulation is in view, the church could be “kept from” (Gr.<i>ek tereo</i>) harm without being raptured (comp. John 17:15, where <i>ek tereo</i> is also found).</p> <p>“This verse neither asserts that the Rapture is to occur before the Tribulation, nor does its interpretation require us to think that such removal is intended.” (G.E. Ladd, 7:86)</p>

B. Arguments from “inappropriateness”

<i>The Arguments—</i>	<i>The Arguments cross-examined—</i>
<p>1. We are not appointed to wrath (1 Thes.1:10/5:9). The tribulation is the time of God’s wrath.</p> <p>“The Tribulation is the time of God’s wrath on the world, not on the church.” (LaHaye, 3:212)</p> <p>“The church is not appointed to wrath...The church therefore cannot enter ‘the great day of their wrath’(Rev.6:17).” (Walvoord, 8:194)</p>	<p>1. There is no reason to identify “wrath” in 1 Thes.1:10 & 5:9 with a period of tribulation (Rom.5:9). Besides, no one ever claimed that Christians would suffer God’s wrath, even if they were in the tribulation. What about the so-called “tribulation saints”? Are they “appointed to wrath”?</p> <p>“<i>1 Thessalonians 5:9 says nothing about the Rapture. . . If the Church is on earth during the Great Tribulation but is divinely sheltered from wrath, this verse is fulfilled. This is all it asserts.</i>” (G. E. Ladd, 7:84-85)</p>
<p>2. The tribulation, “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer.30:7), is not for the church, but for Israel.</p> <p>“It is the ‘time of Jacob’s trouble’ when Israel fulfills its seventieth week (seven years) of Daniel...Why drag the church through that dreadful time?” (LaHaye, 3:212)</p> <p>“None of the New Testament passages on the tribulation mention the church (Matt.24:15-31; 1 Theess.1:9-10, 5:4-9; Rev. 4-19).” (Walvoord, 8:193)</p>	<p>2. Jeremiah 30:7 is not about the tribulation, but about the Babylonian exile (cf. vv.3, 8, 10), but, even if the tribulation were in view, this doesn’t logically argue for the absence of the church from earth.</p>
<p>3. Jesus told us to pray that we might escape the great tribulation (Luke 21:36)—Jesus apparently thought we don’t belong here during the tribulation.</p> <p>“Since [post-tribulationists] maintain that there’s to be no escape for the Church, they make the prayer Christ encouraged us to pray in Luke 21:36 meaningless.” (Chuck Smith, 9::iii)</p>	<p>3. There is no prior mention in Luke 21 of a tribulation at the end of the present age. There is mention of the holocaust at destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD (vv.5-7, 20-23), from which the believers actually did escape (according to Eusebius, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i>).</p>
<p>4. Matt.24:40-41 and Luke 17:34-36, speak of the sudden “taking” of the church, leaving others behind to endure the tribulation.</p> <p>“A man and wife asleep in bed/She hears a noise and turns her head/ He’s gone./ I wish we’d all been ready. . . “There’s no time to change your mind/The Son has come and you’ve been left behind.” (Larry Norman, <i>I Wish We’d All Been Ready</i>, popular song in the 70’s)</p>	<p>4. Matt.24:40-41 and Luke 17:34-36, in context , do not speak of the rapture of the church, but of the destruction of the wicked at Christ’s coming (see Matt.24:38-40/Luke 17:37/Psalm 91:7-8/ Ps. 37:9-11/Prov.2:21-22/Matt.5:5/13:30, 41-43, 49-50). Is the rapture found in the Olivet Discourse? If so, where? Matt.24:31?</p>
<p>5. The view that the rapture happens simultaneously with the second coming posits the ridiculous scenario of the church going up, then right down again...like a yo yo!</p> <p>“As a matter of fact, it seems fair to ask what purpose the Rapture would serve in a scheme where the saints immediately accompany Christ to the earth.” Paul Feinberg, 1:81</p> <p>“...it becomes the great elevator escape: we zip up to the Father’s house, take a quick peek, and zip right back down moments later with Christ in His Glorious Appearing. Such a reading is ludicrous!” (LaHaye, 3:210)</p>	<p>5. The word “to meet” (1 Thes.4:17) can refer to the custom of going out to welcome a distinguished guest in order to accompany him on the remainder of his approach (Matt.25:1/Acts 28:15). There is no promise associated with the Rapture that we will be taken to “the Father’s house”—only into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thes.4:17).</p>

C. Arguments from “impossibility”

<i>The Arguments—</i>	<i>The Arguments cross-examined—</i>
<p>1. Passages about the rapture (John 14:1-4/1 Cor.15:51-58/1 Thess.4:13-18) do not contain the same details as do those about the judgment coming of Christ (Zech.14/Rev.19/ Matt.24:29-31 and parallels)—so the two cannot be speaking of the same event.</p> <p>“These two episodes, the Rapture and the Second Coming, are so different that it is impossible to combine them.” (LaHaye, 3:32)</p> <p>“...there is no clear, indisputable reference to the Rapture in any Second Advent passage.” (Paul Feinberg, 1:81)</p> <p>“No passage dealing with the resurrection of saints at the second coming in either Testament ever mentions translation of living saints at the same time.” (Walvoord, 8:199) [!?!?!?]</p>	<p>1. By the same reasoning, Jesus must have been born on earth twice (since Matt.2 and Luke 2 give very different accounts) and He must have died and arisen from the dead four times or more, since no two accounts give exactly the same details of these events!</p>
<p>2. Christ cannot come “with” His saints (1 Thes.3:13) until He has first come “for” the saints.</p> <p>“It’s important to realize that the Rapture of the Church and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ are completely different. At the Rapture Jesus is coming <i>for</i> His saints. At the Second Coming the Church will return <i>with</i> Jesus Christ.” (Chuck Smith, 9:12)</p>	<p>2. Jesus could come “with” His saints, even if He had come “for” them only moments earlier. However, even without the rapture, there are multitudes of saints already with Him, whom He will bring with Him (1 Thes.4:14).</p>
<p>3. The rise of the man of sin at the beginning of the tribulation cannot occur until the Holy Spirit in church is removed (2 Thes.2:6-8). The “falling away” (v.3) may be a reference to the rapture.</p> <p>“The Holy Spirit as the Restrainer must be taken out of the world before ‘the lawless one,’ who dominates the tribulation period, can be revealed (2 Thess.2:6-8). . . If the expression, ‘except the falling away come first,’ be translated literally, ‘except the departure come first,’ it would plainly show the necessity of the rapture taking place before the beginning of the tribulation.” (Walvoord, 8:196)</p>	<p>3. 2 Thessalonians 2 :6-7 makes no mention of the removal of the church or the Holy Spirit prior to the appearance of the man of sin, and plainly states that the man of sin must appear before our gathering unto Christ [the rapture] (vv.1-3). Thus “he that hinders” (v.7) may mean any number of things, but it <i>cannot</i> mean the church or the Holy Spirit in the church. The <i>apostasia</i> [falling away] (v.3) is not the rapture. The word is used elsewhere only in Acts 21:21 of Jews falling away from Moses.</p>
<p>4. Jesus likened the time of His coming to the days of Noah and of Lot (Luke 17:26-29). Both persons illustrate the pre-tribulation rapture: The flood and the destruction of Sodom represent the tribulation period. Enoch was “raptured” before the flood (Gen.5:24), and Noah’s family (representing the remnant of Israel) were preserved through the flood. Lot (a type of the church) was taken out of Sodom <i>before</i> its destruction. God said He could “do nothing” to Sodom until Lot had been safely removed (Gen.19:22).</p> <p>“It is characteristic of divine dealing to deliver believers before a divine judgment . . . as illustrated in the deliverance of Noah, Lot, Rahab, etc. (2 Pet.2:6-9).” (Walvoord, 8:194)</p> <p>“In Luke 17 when Jesus makes reference to Lot’s escape, Jesus clearly points out that in the same hour Lot was brought out of the city, the judgment of God fell.” (Chuck Smith, 9:4)</p>	<p>4. The flood and destruction of Sodom are nowhere said to represent a time of tribulation, but they are likened to the judgment of sinners at the second coming (2 Pet.3:4-10/Jude 7)</p>

5. If we must endure the tribulation, the “blessed hope” (Tit.2:13) cannot be blessed, but wretched!

“...it would take a masochist to look forward to [the Tribulation] as a time of blessing. . . If Christ does not rapture His church before the Tribulation begins, much of the hope is destroyed, and thus it becomes a ‘blasted hope.’” (LaHaye, 3:62, 63)

5. Titus 2:13 does not equate “the blessed hope” with the rapture, *per se*, but with “the glorious appearing” of Christ. Why would the hope of being raptured *not* be a blessed one to saints in the tribulation?

D. Arguments from “imminency” (the teaching that Jesus could come at any time)

<i>The Arguments—</i>	<i>The Arguments cross-examined—</i>
<p>1. We are to be “looking,” “watching” and “waiting” for the any-moment return of Jesus (1 Thes. 1:10/5:6/ Phil.3:20/ Tit.2:13/Heb.9:28). The doctrine of the Imminency of Christ’s coming (i.e. that Christ might come at any moment) would be invalid if there were events (i.e. the tribulation) that must occur before Christ returns (Matt.24:48).</p> <p>“The exhortation to look for ‘the glorious appearing’ of Christ to His own (Titus 2:13) loses significance if the tribulation must intervene first. . .The church is uniformly exhorted to look for the coming of the Lord, while believers in the tribulation are directed to look for signs.” (Walvoord, 8:196)</p> <p>“To put any event before the coming of Christ for His Church is, in essence, saying that the Lord will delay His coming until after that event has happened. Teaching this is very dangerous, and Jesus Himself warns against it.” (Chuck Smith, 9:35)</p>	<p>1. The doctrine that Jesus “may come at any time” is nowhere taught in the Bible. Paul specifically refutes it in 2 Thes.2:1-8. To wait or watch or look for something does not rule out the possibility that we expect some other things to happen first (see Heb.11:10, 13). The man who said “my Lord delays his coming” was judged for his behavior, not his eschatological beliefs (Matt.24:49).</p>
<p>2. Jesus will come “as a thief” (1 Thes.5:2-3/2 Pet.3:10), meaning “without warning.” This must apply only to the rapture, since there will be signs indicating the time of His coming at the end of the tribulation.</p> <p>“The rapture is described as imminent, while the second coming is preceded by definite signs.” (Walvoord, 8:198)</p>	<p>2. The idea that there will be “signs” indicating the soon-ness of His coming is a proposition resting upon the flimsiest scriptural foundation. The fact that His coming “as a thief” must be only “for the saints” is ruled out by Peter applying it to the end of the world (2 Pet.3:10ff), and Paul applying it to judgment of unbelievers (1 Thess.5:2-3). This phrase is not applicable to Christians specially (1 Thes.5:4).</p>
<p>3. That no one knows the day or the hour of His coming (Matt.24:36) also suggests an early rapture, since the exact day of His coming could be calculated from events occurring in the tribulation.</p> <p>“The Bible says that no man knows the day or the hour. This cannot refer to the day Christ returns to reign on earth, because that exact day has been given to us in Daniel’s prophecy.” (Chuck Smith, 9:34)</p>	<p>3. Jesus’ admission of His own ignorance, and that of everyone else, applied to the time-frame of His comment. There is no reason to apply it to persons living in some future tribulation period. Nonetheless, attempts at calculating the date of Christ’s return, if made by those living in the tribulation, would not be more likely to be accurate than have the many embarrassing attempts to do the same throughout history.</p>
<p>4. The doctrine of imminency is the principal motivator for holy living and evangelism.</p> <p>“Historically, belief in the any-moment-coming of Christ has three vital effects on Christians and their churches.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It produces holy living in an unholy society like ours (1 John 3:3). 2. It produces an evangelistic church of soul-winning Christians, for when we believe Christ could appear at any moment, we seek to share Him with our friends lest they be left behind at His coming.” (LaHaye, 3:18) 	<p>4. It is not necessary to employ falsehood to motivate to holy living or evangelism. If Jesus is not going to come today, there is no reason for God to wish us to believe He will come today. The imminency of <i>death and judgment</i> (to say nothing of love and gratitude to God as motivators!) should be sufficient motivation for all proper conduct (1 Pet.1:17/2 Cor.1:9/5:11)</p>

Conclusion—

None of the arguments for a two-stage coming of Christ is convincing when the relevant texts are exegeted without a pre-trib bias. It would require stronger evidence than this to overthrow the plain (“literal”) teaching of Christ and the apostles that the rapture and resurrection of the church will occur simultaneously with the judgment-coming of Christ on the “last day” (e.g. Matt.25:31ff/John 6:40, 44, 54/ 2 Thes.1:8/2 Tim.4:1/2 Pet.3:10-13, etc., etc.).

Books cited:

1. *The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, Post-, Tribulational?* (Richard R. Reiter, ed., Zondervan, 1984)
2. *When the Trumpet Sounds: Today’s Foremost Authorities Speak Out on End-Time Controversies* (Thomas Ice & Timothy Demy, eds., Harvest House, 1995)
3. *No Fear of the Storm* (Tim LaHaye, Multnomah Press, 1992)
4. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (John Walvoord, Moody Press, 1966)
5. *God’s Final Word: Understanding Revelation* (Ray C. Stedman, Discovery House, 1991)
6. *The Scofield Reference Bible* (C.I.Scofield, Oxford University Press, 1909)

7. *The Blessed Hope* (George Eldon Ladd, Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956)
8. *The Rapture Question* (John Walvoord, Zondervan, 1957)
9. *The Tribulation & the Church* (Chuck Smith, The Word For Today, 1980)

“There are two positions taken in this paper for which no argument is offered. First, it is assumed that following the return of Christ to earth in power and great glory at the end of the Tribulation period, there will follow an earthly reign of Christ...Second, there is presupposed a futuristic interpretation of Daniel 9:24-27 and the Book of Revelation...The justification for not arguing these positions is that the Rapture question has mainly been an issue between pre-millennialists, and also that most recent pre-millennialists have been futurists with regard to Daniel and Revelation.” Paul Feinberg, 1:49-50

Check in Greek Rev.3:10 (with 1:19) “which is about to come on the whole inhabited world...”

on ek tereo, see Prov 21:23 diatero-ek (dia does not change the sense of tereo, but intensifies it. Same combination (diatero-ek) is used in Acts 15:29

In John 12:27, a synonym of tereo (sozo) is used with ek — “Father, save me from this hour.” The same words are in Heb.5:7 — “To the one who was able to save him from death” and in James 5:20 — “Save the sinner’s soul from death.”

John 17:15 is the only other time in classical or biblical Greek where ek-tereo is found.

“Jesus is talking about a well-known time of distress and trouble. This was the Tribulation period (Deut. 4:26-31; Isa.13:6-13; 17:4-11; Jer. 30:4-11; Ezek.20:33-38; Dan.9:27; 12:1; Zech.14:1-4; Matt.24:9-31).” Paul Feinberg, 1:69

“While an a-millennialist can identify Matthew 25:31-46 with Revelation 20:11-15 because the Second Coming comes at the end of the Millennium, a pre-millennialist *cannot* do this. A judgment that occurs *at* Christ’s glorious coming and one that occurs *after* the Millennium are separated by a thousand years.” Paul Feinberg, 1:77-78

“Often in prophetic literature there is the foreshortening of two events so that they appear to be temporally successive, but in fact are separated by many years (e.g., Isa.61:1-2 treats as one the Advent and the Second Coming although they are separated by two thousand years; Dan.12:1-2 and John 5:29 refer to both the first and second resurrections, which will be separated by one thousand years).” Paul Feinberg, 1:78.

Tim LaHaye is concerned about the waning confidence, among the evangelical ranks, in the doctrine of the pre-tribulation rapture of the church. He was shocked, recently, when upon being invited to conduct a family seminar, he was asked by the host pastor not to inject any eschatology into the seminar. “The reason was,” writes LaHaye, “he no longer believed the church would be raptured before the Tribulation. Apparently he was looking forward to going through it.”

This final caustic remark, besides demonstrating LaHaye’s inability to sustain an argument without resorting to sarcasm and ridicule, reveals much more about LaHaye’s motivation for believing in the pre-tribulation rapture than he may have intended to disclose—possibly more than even he is himself aware of. It suggests that, at least to LaHaye’s thinking, a man’s eschatology arises from his preferences.

If it is “apparent” (to LaHaye’s mind) that a person who reaches certain conclusions must necessarily take pleasure in those conclusions, then it must be that LaHaye has told us a great deal about his own methodology for arriving at a theological position. If a person’s belief that he must go through tribulation, in LaHaye’s estimation, necessarily springs from that person’s being favorably disposed to such a prospect, then it is equally “apparent” that LaHaye believes in the pre-tribulation rapture because of his disinclination to go through the tribulation. Now, inclinations and disinclinations do not provide valid rationales for reaching objective conclusions (and it is doubtful that any “post-tribulationist” has ever attained such a position because of a desire to believe it). However, there is reason to suspect, that if any interpreter will be motivated to bend the meaning of a text in order to fit his prior emotional preferences, it is more likely to be the pre-tribulationist than the post-tribulationist. I say this as an objective analyst, since I hold neither view.

Appealing to the emotions of his readers, more than to their critical thinking, and again revealing much of his own heart, LaHaye writes:

Christian mothers now worry that their precious sons and daughters will be forced to undergo the horrors of the Great Tribulation. Christian fathers fret about the impossible task of keeping their families alive through the most gruesome period the world has ever known...

Are you able to look at your children playing in the sunlight and believe firmly in your heart that they will not have to endure the monstrous horrors of the Tribulation?

It has “apparently” not occurred to LaHaye that belief in the pre-tribulational rapture is not the biblically-prescribed remedy for “worry” and “fret” (two attitudes forbidden to the believer). It seems not to be a fact in the fore-front of his mind that, whether there be a pre-tribulational rapture or not, many parents the world over (including Christians) look at their beloved children day by day and wonder how they will be able to keep them alive, even in their present circumstances of war, famine, plague, pestilence, poverty and persecution (the principal aspects of the anticipated Tribulation from which LaHaye expects to escape). It certainly would be wiser (and more biblical) to counsel and comfort such believers in the way of trusting God and being faithful unto death (Rev.2:10), committing themselves to Him as unto a faithful creator (1 Pet.4:19), and looking forward to their part in the resurrection of the just (1 Cor.15:)—than to dangle before them the questionable prospect of being snatched out of present or future troubles by the one-time event that may well never occur in their lifetime.

Is There A World-Wide Tribulation Predicted in Scripture?

I. Features of the tribulation anticipated by popular prophecy teachers:

- A. Global crisis (plagues, famine, persecution, etc.) of unprecedented proportions.
- B. Cashless economy and one-world government under Antichrist (world dictator).
- C. Prominence of Israel and temple as focus of persecution by Antichrist.
- D. Seven-year duration, broken in middle by abomination of desolation.
- E. The Battle of Armageddon (World War III).

II. Scriptural basis for this scenario:

A. Principal passages Daniel 7, 9, 11-12/Revelation 6-19/The Olivet Discourse (Matt.24/Mark 13/Luke 21)

B. Specific details

1. Global

- a. Matthew 24:22 (“no flesh” & “all flesh”—Jer.12:12/25:31/45:5/Eze.21:4f/Dan.4:12)
- b. Rev. 3:10 (“the whole world”—Luke 2:1/ Acts 2:5/ Col.1:6, 23)
- c. Rev. 6:4, 8/ 8:7, 8, 12/ 16:2, 3, 8, 20 (“earth”= Gr. “*ge*” = “land”)

2. Unique in history Dan. 12:1 / Matt.24:21 / Jer. 30:7 / Joel 2:2

(Use of hyperbole: cf. Ex.10:14/ 2 Chron.1:12/ Ezek.5:8-9/ Luke 1:69-70/ John 9:32)

3. Cashless society (Rev. 13:16-17)

(no mention of cashless economy. Economic boycott would fulfill as well.)

4. World-government

- a. Dan. 7:23 (not an end-times prediction; pertains to old Roman empire)
- b. Rev. 13:3, 7-8 (see comments under #1 above)

5. Antichrist (1 John 2:18, 22/ 4:3/ 2 John 7)

- a. Dan. 7:24-25/ 11:36ff (in context, timing is not right for end-times figure)
- b. 2 Thess.2:3-10 (obscure. Timing questionable)
- c. Rev. 13 (not necessarily an individual, nor identified with the previous figures)

6. Focus on Israel

- a. Jer.30:7 (wrong time period—cf. vv.3, 8, 18)
- b. Matt. 24:15-20 (wrong time period—cf. v.34, Luke 21:20ff)
- c. Rev. 7:2-8/ 14:1-5/ 11:8 (wrong time period—Rev.1:1, 3, 19/ 3:10/ 22:10)

7. Temple in Jerusalem

- a. 2 Thess. 2:4 (wrong temple—cf. 1 Cor.3:16-17)
- b. Rev.11:1-2 (wrong temple—cf. Luke 21:24)

8. Seven-year duration

- a. Dan.9:27 (wrong time period)
- b. Rev. 11:2, 3 / 12:6, 14 / 13:5 (assumption of more than one 3 1/2 -year period not valid)

9. Abomination of desolation

- a. Dan.9:27 (wrong time period—cf.v.26)
- b. Matt.24:15 (wrong time period—cf. Luke 21:20)

10. Battle of Armageddon

- a. Rev.16:16 (time period questionable)
- b. Zech. 12:2-4, 9/14:1-1-3 (wrong time period—Luke 21:22)

The Olivet Discourse in Parallel Columns

arranged by Steve Gregg

Luke 21

5 ¶ Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said,
6 "These things which you see--the days will come in which not [one] stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down."
7 So they asked Him, saying, "Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign [will there be] when these things are about to take place?"

8 And He said: "Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am [He],' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them.

9 "But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end [will not come] immediately."

10 Then He said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

11 "And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven.

12 "But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute [you], delivering [you] up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake.

13 "But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony.

14 "Therefore settle [it] in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer;

15 "for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist.

16 "You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put [some] of you to death.

17 "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake.

19 "By your patience possess your souls.

20 ¶ "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near.

21 "Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her.

22 "For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

23 "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people.

24 "And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

The setting

The prediction

The question

False Messiahs

Wars

Disasters

Persecution

Endurance

Abomination of Desolation

Flight

Tribulation

Mark 13

1 ¶ Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings [are here]!"

2 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not [one] stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately,

4 "Tell us, when will these things be? And what [will be] the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?"

5 ¶ And Jesus, answering them, began to say: "Take heed that no one deceives you.

6 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am [He],' and will deceive many.

7 "But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for [such things] must happen, but the end [is] not yet.

8 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These [are] the beginnings of sorrows.

9 "But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them.

10 "And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations.

11 "But when they arrest [you] and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.

12 "Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father [his] child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.

13 "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake.

13b But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

14 ¶ "So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not" (let the reader understand),

14b "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains,

15 "let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house.

16 "And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.

17 "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

18 "And pray that your flight may not be in winter.

19 "For [in] those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be.

20 "And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days.

The setting

The prediction

The question

False Messiahs

Wars

Disasters

Persecution

Endurance

Abomination of Desolation

Flight

Tribulation

Matthew 24

1 ¶ Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple.

2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not [one] stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what [will be] the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

4 ¶ And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you.

5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.

6 "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all [these things] must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

7 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.

8 "All these [are] the beginning of sorrows.

9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.

10 "And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.

11 "Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

12 "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

13 "But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

15 "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),

16 "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

17 "Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.

18 "And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.

19 "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

20 "And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.

21 "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.

22 "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

General Observations

#1. Luke 21 (column 1) records a discourse uttered on the Mount of Olives (verses 5-7 with the parallels in Matthew & Mark (columns 2 &3).

#2. Mark 13 (column 2) follows Luke 21 thought-for-thought with rare exceptions (e.g. Mark 13:21-23, which parallels Luke 17, and v.27, which has no parallel in Luke).

#3. Matthew 24 (column 3) follows Mark 13 thought-for-thought up through Matt.24:36, with rare exceptions (e.g. the reference to preaching the Gospel [Mk.13:10/Matt.24:14] is not quite in the same spot and Mk.13:11 has no parallel in Matt., though it does in Luke 21:14f)

#4. Luke 17 (column 4) gives a different discourse altogether, given in a different setting. This discourse provides parallels to some of the verses in Matthew 24 that have no parallels in Mark 13 or in Luke 21.

#5. Mark 13:21-23 & Matt.24:23-26 parallel each other, but have no parallel in Luke 21, where we would expect to find it. They do, however, have a parallel in Luke 17:22-24, Luke 21 does have essentially the same warning in v.8 and its parallels.

#6. It would appear that Matthew 24:1-42 has condensed two discourses of Jesus (that of Luke 21 and that of Luke 17) into one context. Mark 13 follows only Luke 21, except in verses 22-24.

#7. If Luke 17 speaks of the time of the Second Coming, then so does Matt.24:37-41. However, neither Luke 21 nor Mark 13 seem primarily concerned with this subject. Unlike Matthew, both Mark and Luke limit the disciples' question to that of the timing and the indicative signs relative to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem of which event Jesus had just spoken (which was fulfilled in AD 70). Thus the fulfillment of Jesus' predictions in those chapters should be sought prior to and including AD 70.

#8. This conclusion seems confirmed by the statement, occurring in all three Gospels, that those things predicted would occur within the disciples' own generation (Luke 21:32/Mark 13:30/Matt.24:34)

#9. Further support for this conclusion is seen in the frequent use of the word "you" (referring to the disciples) in Matt.24:4, 9, 15, 20, 23—but not occurring in Matt.24:36-41.

#10. References to cosmic dissolution in Luke 21:25-26 (and parallels) need not be literally pressed any more than the same imagery is in Isa.13:10/34:3/Eze.32:7-8 or Rev.6:12-13.

#11. The references to the "coming" of the Son of Man do not necessarily refer to the Second Coming at the end of the age (compare identical language in Isa.19:1; Dan.7:13 or Matt.16:28).

#12. Where Matthew & Mark speak of "the Abomination of Desolation," Luke's parallel renders the same event "Jerusalem surrounded by armies" (Luke 21:20). This apparently refers to the coming of the Romans in AD 70.

#13. The alteration of the disciples' question in Matthew 24:3 from its form found in Mark and Luke may be Matthew's way of anticipating the material that he includes from the discourse in Luke 17, or may simply reflect the symbolic use of the word "coming" (as in Matt.16:28). It is hardly likely that the disciples, not yet aware that Jesus would be leaving them, would have a concept of what we know as the Second Coming.

Luke 21 (cont.)

25 "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring;

26 "men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken.

27 "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

28 "Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

29 ¶ Then He spoke to them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees.

30 "When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near.

31 "So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near.

32 "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place.

33 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.34

"But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly.

35 "For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth.

36 "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.

True vs false appearing

After the tribulation

Son of Man Coming

Fig tree parable

This generation

Heaven & Earth to pass

No one knows the day

Watch!

Mark 13 (cont.)

21 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here [is] the Christ!' or, 'Look, [He is] there!' do not believe it.

22 "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

23 "But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.

24 ¶ "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light;

25 "the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

26 "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

27 "And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven.

28 ¶ "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near.

29 "So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors!

30 "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.

31 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

32 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

33 "Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.

True vs false appearing

After the tribulation

Son of Man Coming

Fig tree parable

This generation

Heaven & Earth to pass

No one knows the day

Watch!

Matthew 24 (cont.)

23 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here [is] the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe [it].

24 "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

25 "See, I have told you beforehand.

26 "Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; [or] 'Look, [He is] in the inner rooms!' do not believe [it].

27 "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

30 "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

31 "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

32 ¶ "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer [is] near.

33 "So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors!

34 "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.

35 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

37 "But as the days of Noah [were], so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

38 "For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,

39 "and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

40 "Then two [men] will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left.

41 "Two [women will be] grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.

42 "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.

True vs false appearing

After the tribulation

Days of Noah

One taken, one left

Luke 17

22 Then He said to the disciples, "The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see [it].

23 "And they will say to you, 'Look here!' or 'Look there!' Do not go after [them] or follow [them].

24 "For as the lightning that flashes out of one [part] under heaven shines to the other [part] under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day.

25 "But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

26 "And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man:

27 "They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

34 "I tell you, in that night there will be two [men] in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left.

35 "Two [women] will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left.

36 "Two [men] will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left."

The Future of the Church

I. Definition of church

- A. Israel in Old Testament (Acts 7:38, Gr.)
- B. Disciples in New Testament (Matt. 16:18/ 1 Pet.2:9-10)
- C. Not defined institutionally, but spiritually (Heb.12:22-23/ Eph.5:23-24)

II. Survey of opinions about the church at the end of the present age:

- A. Dispensational (pessimistic) church weak and apostate in the end
- B. Postmillennial (optimistic) church triumphant and radiant
- C. Amillennial (either pessimistic or optimistic depending on interpreter)

III. The destiny of the Kingdom of God

- A. Identified with the church
- B. Expansion and infiltration (Dan.2:35, 44/ Matt.13:31-33)
- C. Crushing the dominion of Satan (Gen.3:15/ 1 John 3:8/ Heb.2:14-15/ Col.2:15/ Rom.16:20/ Luke 10:19/ Rev.12:11)
- D. Dominion through evangelism (Ps.2:8/ Acts 1:8/ Matt.24:14)

IV. The ripened harvest

- A. Incremental progress (Mark 4:26-29)
- B. Ripening in the midst of opposition (Matt.13:24-30, 37-43)
- C. Patient endurance until harvest (James 5:7-8)

V. The maturity of the Body

- A. The new man becomes a mature man (Eph.4:11-16)
- B. Unity (love) the measure of maturity (1 Cor.3:1-4/ Col.1:28/3:14/ 1 Cor. 13:9-13)

VI. Preparation of the Bride

- A. Purity (Eph.5:25-27)
- B. Righteous acts (Rev.19:7-8)

VII. The Glory of the Lord

- A. The knowledge of the Glory (Num.14:21/Isa.11:9/Hab.2:14/2 Cor.4:6/ Tit.2:13)
- B. The house of His glory (Ex.40:34-35/ 1 Kg.8:11/ Isa.60:7/ Eph.2:19-22/ 1 Pet.2:5)
- C. Likeness of Christ (John 1:14/ Heb.1:3/ 2 Cor. 3:18/ Eph.4:13-15)
- D. Relation to suffering (Luke 24:25-26/ Rom.8:17-18/ 2 Cor.4:16-17/ 1 Pet.4:12-14/ 5:10)
- E. Dawning of the glory (Isa.60:1-5/ Luke 1:78/ Mal.4:2/ 2 Pet.1:19/ Prov.4:19/ Matt.24:27)

The Biblical Basis (or non-basis) for many Popular Notions of the “End Times”

<i>Popular Notion of the “End Times”</i>	<i>Biblical Basis for this Expectation</i>
1. We are expected to be aware of the “signs of the [end] times.”	The expression “signs of the times” is found only at Matt.16:2-3. However, “the times” referred to are the times of Christ’s FIRST coming, not the “end times.” That no warning signs will precede the Second Coming seems to be implied in Matt.24:42-44. We are to be ready at all times.
2. The book of Revelation is primarily concerned with the future events near the time of Christ’s Second Coming.	This is nowhere stated (nor necessarily implied) in Revelation. No one believed this about Revelation before the sixteenth century, and no Protestants believed it until the nineteenth century. Contradicted in Rev.1:1, 3.
3. The Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24 and parallels) is also about the “end times” and awaits future fulfillment.	Though this may be true of some portions, the passage itself claims to be discussing the time of the destruction of the Temple [i.e., 70AD] (Mrk 13:1-4 & parallels: Matt.24, Luke 21)
4. The Tribulation of which Jesus spoke is yet future.	This is assumed on the basis of the above assumption (#3). However, comparison of Matt.24:15-21 with Luke 21:20-23 would suggest a fulfillment in 70AD.
5. The Tribulation will be seven years in duration.	Nowhere stated in Scripture. Deduced by (strangely) identifying the tribulation with the “70th Week” of Dan.9:24-27.
6. Daniel’s “70th Week” (Dan.9:24-27) has been postponed until sometime in the future.	Nowhere stated or implied in Daniel or elsewhere in the Bible. It is an assumption adopted by the desire to support certain other (equally speculative) assumptions, among dispensationalists, but finds no hint or basis in the relevant Scriptural passage.
7. The Tribulation will be “the time of Jacob’s trouble.”	No basis in Scripture. The expression “time of Jacob’s trouble” occurs only in Jer.30:7, where the context speaks of the Babylonian exile (586BC)
8. The rapture of the church does not occur at the same time as Christ’s judgment coming (i.e., “the Last Day”).	This is not stated nor implied in any direct statement of Scripture, and seems to be contradicted by 1 Thess.4:15-17; John 6:39, 40, 44, 54; 2 Thess.1:6-8,etc.
9. The rapture will occur before the tribulation begins. [Pre-trib]	There is nothing in the Bible stating this. It is often deduced by imagining a reference to the rapture at Rev.4:1, where John is caught up into heaven to see certain visions (not to escape the tribulation, in which he was a participant—Rev.1:9). Other passages appealed to are inconclusive at best.
10. The rapture will occur in the middle of the tribulation. [Mid-trib]	Not stated in Scripture. Sometimes deduced by identifying the two-witnesses (Rev.11) and the “saints” (Rev.13) with the church, persecuted by the beast during the first part of the tribulation.
11. The rapture will occur just prior to the outpouring of wrath in the 7 bowls (Rev.16). [Pre-wrath]	Not stated in Scripture. Sometimes deduced by the absence of reference to the rapture earlier in Revelation, but to uphold an interpretation of 1 Thess.5:9, which (strangely) identifies “wrath” with the events of Rev.16.
12. There will be a revived Roman Empire comprised of ten nations.	Based on an assumption that the ten toes of the image in Dan.2 and the ten horns of Dan.7 and of Rev.13 and 17 refer to a political power of the end times. The actual wording of these passages would more naturally be understood to refer to nations into which Europe was divided after the fall of the ancient Roman Empire.
13. There will be a world dictator, whom the Bible calls	The word “Antichrist” is never used in this way in

<p>“the Antichrist”</p>	<p>Scripture. The expression appears only in 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3 & 2 John 7. In these places, there is no reference to a world dictator. The teaching is that anyone who denies Christianity is “antichrist.”</p>
<p>14. The first “beast” of Revelation 13 is a future dictator called the Antichrist.</p>	<p>This beast is never referred to as the Antichrist. In fact, there is no good reason to understand him to be a human individual. The description of the beast is a composite of the four beasts of Dan.7. Those beasts are not human individuals, but empires.</p>
<p>15. The Man of Sin (2 Thess.2) is the same person as the beast of Revelation 13.</p>	<p>This is widely assumed to be the case, but there is no biblical evidence for this identification. Both demand to be worshipped in their respective careers, but many rulers historically have required this of their subjects and there is no other point of similarity between them.</p>
<p>16. The “little horn” (Dan.7) is the same as the beast of Revelation 13 and of the Man of Sin.</p>	<p>This is assumption merely. No biblical data makes this identification. The various entities have some things in common [e.g., they are all evil and powerful]</p>
<p>17. The world will be required to worship an image of the beast.</p>	<p>This is stated in Revelation 13:14-15.</p>
<p>18. The Man of Sin will sit in the temple of God</p>	<p>This is clearly stated in 2 Thess.2:4.</p>
<p>19. The antichrist will place an image of himself in the temple of God.</p>	<p>There is no evidence of this anywhere in Scripture. It is deduced by assuming the identification of the beast with the Man of Sin, an identification that has no basis in Scripture (see point #15).</p>
<p>20. The temple of God is the Jewish temple in Jerusalem.</p>	<p>This is not stated, and is not likely. Paul never refers to the temple of apostate Judaism as “the temple of God,” though he does use this term of the Church (1 Cor.3:16-17/ 2 Cor.6:16/ cf. Eph.2:21/1 Tim.3:15/Heb.3:6)</p>
<p>21. The Jewish temple will be rebuilt, and animal sacrifices restored in the end times.</p>	<p>The basis for this assumption is the identification of “the temple of God” with the Jewish temple in the end times (see point #20), along with a dispensational interpretation of Zech.14 and Ezek.40-48. Such an interpretation finds no support in the New Testament.</p>
<p>22. The Antichrist will establish a 7-year pact with Israel but then break it after 3 1/2 years.</p>	<p>Not stated in Scripture. Deduced from the identification of “he” in Dan.9:27 with Antichrist. The grammar and context suggest that “he” is Christ, not Antichrist (who is never mentioned in the passage).</p>
<p>23. The Antichrist will establish a cashless, global economy.</p>	<p>This is based on one possible interpretation of Rev.13:17, which only says people cannot buy or sell without the mark of the beast. A cashless society is one possible reason for this. A general boycott against Christians (in a normal economy) would be another possibility.</p>